

June 11th, 2024

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Tuesday, 18th June 2024** at **7:00 pm** in **Church Street, Newtownards.**

# Agenda

## Agenda

 *CS 18.06.2024 Agenda.pdf*

*Page 1*

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Deputation – Conlig War Memorial Project Group**

## Reports for Approval

4. **Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties**

Report attached

 *Item 4 - Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.pdf*

*Page 5*

5. **Request for RIC memorial in Court Square Newtownards**

Report attached

 *Item 5 - Request for RIC memorial in Court Square Newtownards.pdf*

*Page 7*

 *Item 5 - Appendix 1 RIC plaque drawing.pdf*

*Page 9*

6. **ECNI Annual Progress Report**

Report attached

 *Item 6 - ECNI Annual Progress Report.pdf*

*Page 10*

 *Item 6 - Appendix 1 - Annual ECNI Report 2023- 2024.pdf*

*Page 11*

7. **Budget Report & Year-end Outturn**

Report attached

 *Item 7 - Strategic Budget Report.pdf*

*Page 50*

 *Item 7 - Mar 24 Budget Report.pdf*

*Page 51*

## 8. Revised Scheme of Delegation

Report to follow

## 9. Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25

Report attached

📎 *Item 9 - Draft Performance Improvement Plan 202425.pdf* *Page 65*

📎 *Item 9 - Appendix 1 Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 - DRAFT.pdf* *Page 68*

📎 *Item 9 - Appendix 2 - SMR Consultation Report.pdf* *Page 100*

## 10. Recording of In Committee Section of Council and Committee Meetings

Report attached

📎 *ITEM 10.pdf* *Page 133*

## 11. Request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park for a demonstration area

Report attached

📎 *Item 11- Request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafiel.pdf* *Page 135*

📎 *Item 11- Appendix 1 - Map of Spafield Car Park.pdf* *Page 138*

## Reports for Noting

## 12. Performance Reports

~~a)~~ Community Planning (Report attached)

b) Corporate Communications (Report attached)

c) Finance (Report attached)

d) Strategic Transformation and Performance (Report attached)

e) Administration (Report attached)

f) Human Resources (Report attached)

 *Item 12a - H2 Community Planning Performance Report June 2024.pdf* *Page 139*

 *Item 12b- H2 Performance Report Comms and Marketing.pdf* *Page 144*

 *Item 12c - H2 Performance Report - Finance.pdf* *Page 150*

 *Item 12d - STaP Service Plan Update\_Jun 24.pdf* *Page 154*

 *Item 12e - Administration Performance Report Oct-Mar 202324.pdf* *Page 158*

 *Item 12f - Human Resources Performance Report.pdf* *Page 163*

### **13. Quarterly report on Equality and Good Relations**


Report attached

 *Item 13 Quarterly Report on Equality and Good Relations Apr-Jun24.pdf* *Page 169*

### **14. Roadmap to Sustainability 6 monthly update**

Report attached

 *Item 14 - Roadmap to Sustainability June 2024.pdf* *Page 172*

 *Item 14 - Roadmap action update - June 2024.pdf* *Page 174*

### **15. Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators**

Report attached

 *Item 15 - Prudential Indicators and Treasury Mgt.pdf* *Page 193*

### **16. Responses to Notices of Motion**

a)

Response to NoM191 - Deep concern at the poor state of the roads across ANDBC - Report attached

▢ <i>Item 16a - Response to NOM 191 - Deep concern at the poor state of the roads across ANDBC.pdf</i>	<i>Page 200</i>
▢ <i>Item 16a - Appendix 1 Letter to DfI re deep concern about ANDBC roads March 24.pdf</i>	<i>Page 202</i>
▢ <i>Item 16a - Appendix 2 - NOM 191 - Response from DfI - Deep concern poor state of the roads.pdf</i>	<i>Page 203</i>
▢ <i>Item 16a - Appendix 3 Letter to DfI re lowest Roads investment May 24.pdf</i>	<i>Page 205</i>
▢ <i>Item 16a - Appendix 4 - NOM 191 Response from DfI INVESTMENT IN ROADS IN THE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH.pdf</i>	<i>Page 206</i>

## **Notices of Motion**

### **17.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall, Councillor McRandal and Alderman Graham**

This Council notes that, subsequent to submission of a Notice of Motion in 2017, Council agreed to provide funding to assist in the building of a new war memorial in Conlig village; and to liaise with, and assist, the Conlig War Memorial Project Group in their efforts to build a monument to the seventeen men who are known to have lost their lives in World War I.

This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project.

This Council therefore reiterates its commitment to financial and practical support for the Conlig war memorial project, tasking Officers to bring back a report exploring costs of planning permission, site ownership transfer, and any associated legal fees, that will be required to enable the memorial to be completed and installed.

Furthermore, Council agrees to add the Conlig Memorial to the existing list of war memorials across the Borough that are maintained by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

### **17.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and**

## Councillor Martin

8th May 2025 will be 80 years since VE Day- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.

### 18. Any Other Notified Business

**Items 19-25 \*\*\*In Confidence\*\*\***

#### Reports for Approval

### 19. Blair Mayne Bursary Awards

Report attached

 *Item 19 - Blair Mayne Bursary Awards.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 19 - Appendix 1 - Minutes BMBursary 110424.pdf* *Not included*

### 20. Notice of Motion 186 - The Living Wage

Report attached

 *Item 20 - Notice of Motion 186 - The Living Wage.pdf* *Not included*

### 21. Request to vary a covenant - land at North Road, Newtownards.

Report attached

 *Item 21 - Request to vary a covenant - land at North Road, Newtownards.pdf* *Not included*




 *Item 21 - Appendix 1 - Map- Variation of Covenant North Road.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 21 - Appendix 2 -drawing to show fence position - variation of covenant North Rd.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 21 - Appendix 3 - Final Acoustic Fence drawing - Variation of covenant North Rd.pdf* *Not included*



### 22. Request to renew the Lease - Telephone Mast in Castle Park

Report attached

 <i>Item 22 - Renewal of Lease - telephone mast in Castle Park.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 22 - Appendix 1 - Drawings - renewal of Lease telephone mast.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 22 - Appendix 2 - Heads of Term- renewal of Lease telephone mast.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>





## **23. Renewal of licence - request to carry out works at Crommelin Wood**

Report attached

 <i>Item 23 - Licence to carry out works at Crommelin Wood.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 23 - Appendix 1- map - renewal of licence Crommelin Wood.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

## **24. Support options for Sustainability and Climate Change**






Report attached

 <i>Item 24 Support on Sustainability and Climate Change.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 24 Appendix 1 May CSC Report.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 24 Appendix 2 Comparison of support.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 24 Appendix 3 Range of expertise at Sustainable NI.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

## **Reports for Noting**

## **25. Absence Management**

Report attached

 <i>Item 25 - Absence Management.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 25 - Appendix 1 Absence Dashboard Q4 2023- 2024.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 25 - Appendix 2 long term sick.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 25 - Appendix 3 - Absence Action Plan Q4 2023-2024.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 25 - Appendix 4 ANDBC Mental Health Charter Action Plan May 24_.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

11 June 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a meeting of the Corporate Services Committee of Ards and North Down Borough in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on **Tuesday 18 June 2024 commencing at 7pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough  
Chief Executive  
Ards and North Down Borough Council

**A G E N D A**

- 1. Apologies
- 2. Declarations of Interest
- 3. Deputation – Conlig War Memorial Project Group

**Reports for Approval:**

- 4. Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties (Report attached)
- 5. Request for RIC memorial in Court Square Newtownards (Report attached)
- 6. ECNI Annual Progress Report (Report attached)
- 7. Budget Report & Year-end Outturn (Report attached)
- 8. Revised Scheme of Delegation (Report to follow)
- 9. Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 (Report attached)
- 10. Recording of In Committee Section of Council and Committee Meetings (Report attached)



11. Request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park for a demonstration area. (Report attached)

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  - a) Community Planning (Report attached)
  - b) Corporate Communications (Report attached)
  - c) Finance (Report attached)
  - d) Strategic Transformation and Performance (Report attached)
  - e) Administration (Report attached)
  - f) Human Resources (Report attached)
13. Quarterly report on Equality and Good Relations (Report attached)
14. Roadmap to Sustainability 6 monthly update (Report attached)
15. Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators (Report attached)
16. Response to Notices of Motion:
  - a) Response to NoM191 - Deep concern at the poor state of the roads across ANDBC.
17. Notice of Motion
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18. Any other notified business

**ITEMS 19 – 25 \*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

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- 20. Notice of Motion 186 - The Living Wage (Report attached)
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- 22. Request to renew the Lease - Telephone Mast in Castle Park (Report attached)
- 23. Renewal of licence - request to carry out works at Crommelin Wood (Report attached)
- 24. Support options for Sustainability and Climate Change (Report attached)

**Reports for noting:**

- 25. Absence Management (Report attached)

Alderman Brooks	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Graham	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor Irwin (Chair)
Alderman Smith	Councillor Thompson

Councillor Chambers	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Cochrane (Vice Chair)	Alderman McRandal
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Moore

Unclassified

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## ITEM 4

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	16 May 2024
File Reference	EQ 33
Legislation	Section 75 The Northern Ireland Act 1998; Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties
Attachments	None

Council have been approached by a project consortium consisting of members from Ulster University, Foras na Gaeilge, The Ulster-Scots Agency, East Belfast Mission, Comhaltas Uladh, University of the Highlands and Islands, and Galway University to be a beneficiary in their project - Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

The project aims to enhance community relations in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland by fostering mutual respect for the Irish and Ulster Scots language and heritage. It is a four-year initiative from January 2025 to December 2028. The project will primarily focus on three critical activities aimed at cultivating positive relations within the community.

#### Main Activities:

1. Organising Community Level Discussion Workshops: These workshops will involve participants from all segments of society, providing a platform for open dialogue and

Unclassified

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the exchange of ideas to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultural heritage.

2. Capacity Building for Local Authorities: The project seeks to enhance the capacity of local authorities in dealing sensitively with language and cultural issues. This will involve training and support to enable effective management of such issues within the community.

3. Engaging Young People: The project aims to actively involve young people in discussions regarding the shared indigenous heritage of Northern Ireland and the border region, fostering a sense of pride and understanding of their cultural roots.

An invitation has been received for Ards and North Down Borough Council to join the project as an Associate Partner and collaborate with them on Activity 2. The proposal involves working together to develop a tailor-made Continuous Professional Development course for council employees. This course will focus on enhancing the understanding and sensitivity of council staff towards language and cultural issues, ultimately contributing to improved community relations.

This project has the potential to have a meaningful and lasting impact on community relations in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

There are no cost implications to the Council associated with this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council agrees to become a participant with the consortium and works with them as they develop a tailor-made CPD Course for employees, thereby demonstrating the Council's commitment to improving community relations.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 5

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	13 May 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Request for RIC memorial in Court Square Newtownards
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Drawings

A request has been made by Connor Cunningham, Secretary of the R.I.C. Memorial organising committee for permission to site an RIC memorial on Council land (Court Square, Newtownards) and donate it to Council.

All costs for the purchase would be borne by the organising committee, including planning permission. The Council would undertake to do the installation work.

Once installed the memorial would be gifted to the Council and therefore become council property. The Council would look after any future cleaning or maintenance.

#### Significance of a memorial

The RIC Memorial Organising Committee feel *‘that it is a travesty that there is no lasting memorial to the Royal Irish Constabulary on the island of Ireland. This force suffered the loss of 516 officers who were murdered in the execution of their duty throughout the island of Ireland. They were embedded in most towns and villages in*

Not Applicable

*the country. In fact, the original RIC station in Ards still exists in Court Street. A training depot was set up in Ards where the new Ulster Special Constabulary was trained by the RIC. Upon the final disbandment of the RIC 1331 officers joined the new Royal Ulster Constabulary and they were also trained in the Ards depot. This remained the training depot for the RUC until 1936. We feel that Newtownards is therefore inextricably linked to policing in Ireland from 1867.'*

### **Plinth Design and inscription**

The plinth will be rectangle in shape with a sloped face on the top. The plinth will contain the RIC crest and an inscription on 3 sides, which reads as follows:

#### **FRONT**

“THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED TO ALL WHO SERVED IN THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY (1867 -1922), AND TO THE 516 MEMBERS OF THE R.I.C. WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AS THE RESULT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN IRELAND BETWEEN 24th APRIL 1916 AND 31st AUGUST 1922, ALSO TO THE 178 R.I.C. AND 11 DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE VOLUNTEERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES WHILST SERVING IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918.”

#### **SIDE (left)**

THE IRISH CONSTABULARY	1836 - 1867
THE CONSTABULARY OF IRELAND	1822 - 1836
THE PEACE PRESERVATION FORCE	1814 - 1822
THE DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE	1836 - 1925

#### **SIDE (Right)**

“THE ROYAL TITLE AND THE EMBLEMS OF THE HARP AND CROWN WERE AWARDED BY HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA TO THE IRISH CONSTABULARY ON THE 6th SEPTEMBER 1867 IN RECOGNITION OF THAT FORCES' GALLANT CONDUCT, LOYALTY AND DEVOTION, THUS CREATING THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.”

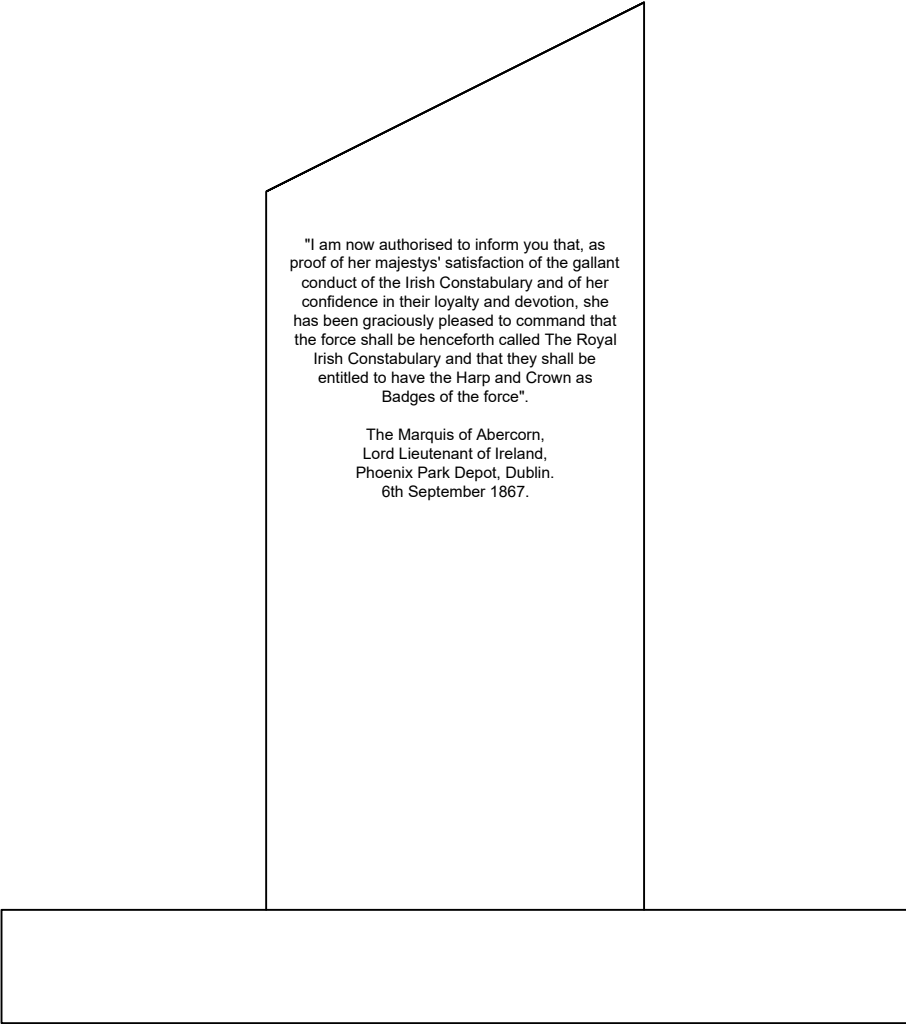
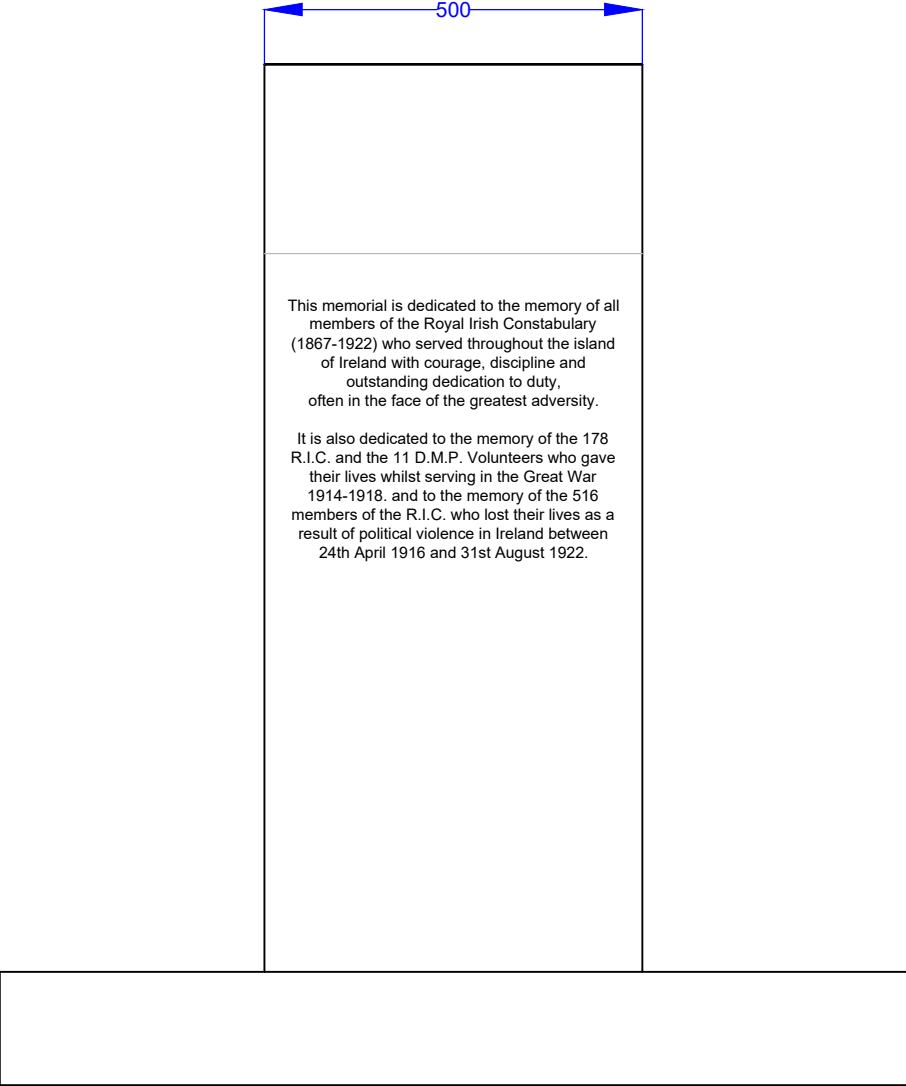
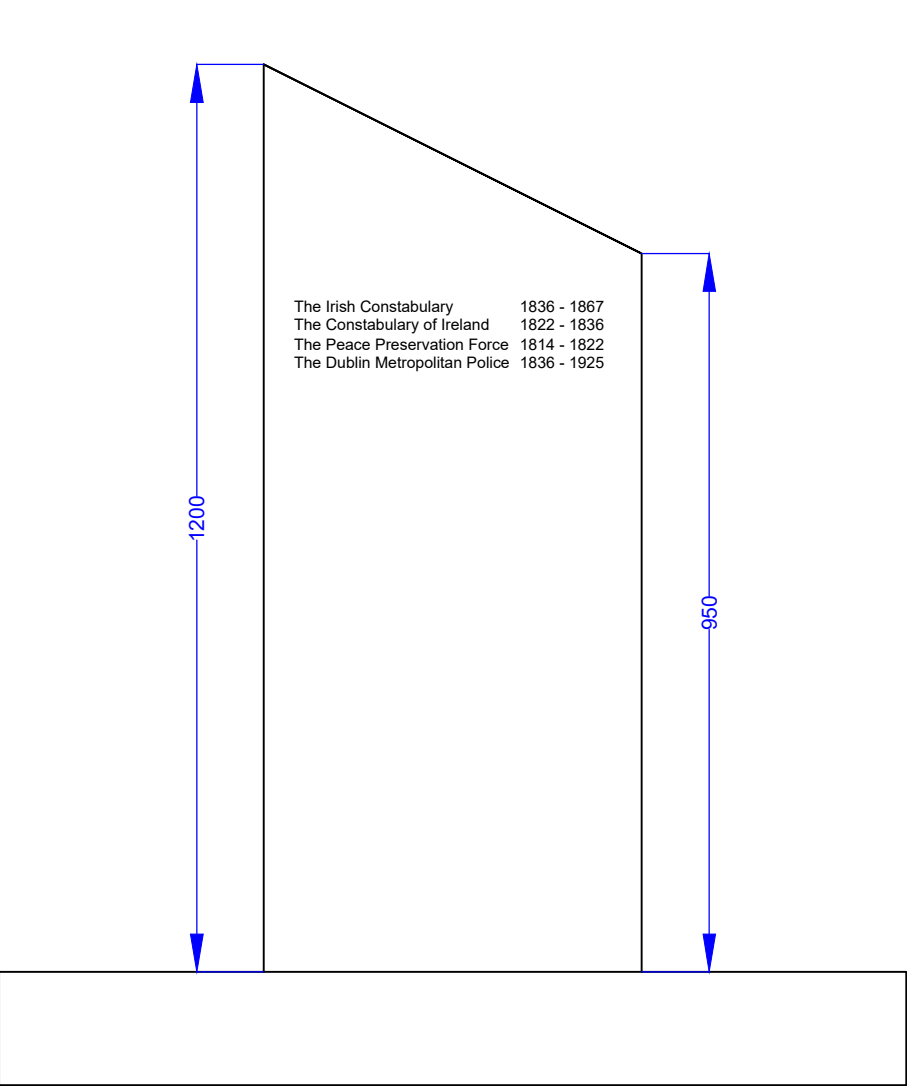
Appendix 1 details the memorial plinth in terms of size, scale and inscription.

### **Location**

Following a site visit with Council officers and the organising committee, it was agreed that the most appropriate location would be adjacent to the existing R.U.C./Emergency Services memorial. This would provide continuity of heritage and historic timeline.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council accedes to this request and accepts the gift of the RIC memorial once installed.





Unclassified

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**ITEM 6****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	26 May 2024
File Reference	EQ 4
Legislation	Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act, 1998 and Section 49a of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act, 1998 and Section 49a of The Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006 - Annual Progress Report 2023 to 2024
Attachments	Annual Progress Report to the ECNI 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) has requested that all Councils complete a template to demonstrate progress on its implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties of The Northern Ireland Act 1998 and progress on implementation of positive duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006. This template covers the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

The completed template is to be returned electronically to the Commission by 31 August 2023.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council's Annual Progress Report for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 be adopted and forwarded to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Insert Name of Public Authority and add Logo in Picture Box

Click or tap here to enter text.



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties  
Annual Progress Report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</li></ul>	<p>Name: Sian McConnell-Porter</p> <p>Telephone: 0300 013 3333</p> <p>Email: sian.mcconnell-porter@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</li></ul>	<p>As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: Click or tap here to enter text.</p> <p>Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text.</p> <p>Email: Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	<a href="#">Welcome, how can we help? - Ards and North Down Borough Council</a>
Signature:	

Contact details:

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

DRAFT for approval

**This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023**

PART A

**PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

- 1** In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

The Equality Commission approved the Equality Scheme 2020-2025 for Ards and North Down Borough Council (the Council) on 31 March 2021.

The Equality Scheme and accompanying Equality Action Plan are available on the Council’s website. In addition, the Action Plan is available in alternative formats where a need is identified. The Council's Compliance Officer for Equality and Safeguarding, along with other officers, are working diligently with senior management and elected members to implement the measures listed in the Equality Action Plan. These measures aim to provide inclusive and welcoming facilities to all residents across the Borough. The Internal Screening Group reviews the Action Plan regularly, which helps in providing insights for the new Equality Action Plan 2025-2030 or the current action plan after an annual review.

**Information in a suitable format**

During 2023- 24 the Council continued to distribute the Big Guide, a guide to services and facilities throughout the borough, amongst the Age Friendly Alliance partners, Council, community, and voluntary organisations. The Big Guide is available to members of the public from reception areas in Council buildings. In addition, Council officers are also handing out copies directly to groups and individuals who may be vulnerable or without access to the Internet. The Big Guide is also available in an audio format where requested.

During this reporting period, the Council has continued to provide and offer services of BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters and interpreters of other languages. The Council's BSL Sign Video service has been successfully delivered across several Council facilities. It is also available through a direct link on the Council webpage, Tourism page, and Leisure pages. The service is advertised through the British Deaf Association and the Council's social media sites. The Sign Video software is located at four Council facilities.

Ards & North Down Borough Council, City Hall, Bangor Castle BT20 4BT

- Ards & North Down Borough Council, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AP
- Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre, 1 Dairy Hall Lane, Newtownards

## PART A

## BT23 4DB

- Ards Visitor Information Centre, 31 Regent Street, Newtownards BT23 4AD

Council supported Deaf Awareness Week (May 2023), the aim is to promote greater awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by the deaf community in accessing communication. The theme highlighted the need for breaking down the communication barriers that prevent deaf people from fully participating in society. To do this Council organised for a BSL signer to interpret Councils services on a video format to highlight how Ards and North Down Borough Council are committed to engaging with people with disabilities including deaf people, their families and carers in order to encourage participation in public life and promote positive attitudes towards disabilities. The video also featured captions in contrasting colours and text to speech for those that are visually impaired. The video received great feedback on social media.

Council Officers have made efforts to ensure that residents and businesses can engage with them in their preferred language by translating a range of publications, including forms and letters, into many different languages. Additionally, the Council offers telephone and face to face translation services to further facilitate communication.

In June 2023 Council received a request from an Afghan family for places within a summer scheme. The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) hired a Farsi translator to enable the children to attend the summer scheme for one week. This was a success, and the children were able to integrate and make friends with children from the local community. This offered a valuable opportunity to all children in the summer scheme as it presented opportunities for personal growth, tolerance, social learning and the development of essential life skills.

Texthelp developed a product called Reachdeck that aims to promote digital inclusion by making online content accessible and usable to everyone. The Council has implemented Reachdeck on their website to enable individuals with visual impairments, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other needs to access information independently. Some images do not have a text alternative, so people using a screen reader cannot access the information. Council plan to add text alternatives for all images within the next 12 months, by March 2025. When Council publish new content on their website we ensure the use of images meets accessibility standards.

**Improving accessibility**

The Council is dedicated to improving accessibility across the Borough and is working diligently with AccessAble to expand the number of audited premises in the area. Our goal is to raise awareness of this valuable resource and make it easier for everyone to access the information they need to plan their visit to any premises with confidence.

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) secured funding from the

## PART A

Department of communities to enable 44 Toilet facilities to be 'stoma Friendly'

The three main requirements for a 'stoma-friendly loo' are:

- A hook on the back of the door so that ostomates can hang their luggage and clothing;
- A shelf or surface space so they can spread out their stoma bags and accessories on a clean, hygienic surface; and
- A disposal bin in each cubicle so that ostomates do not have to dispose of their stoma bag in public view.

This has enabled those with a stoma a safe clean environment in which to change, reducing isolation, tackling loneliness, prejudice and discrimination and empowering people to live life to the fullest.

The Council recognises the importance of creating a safe and accessible environment for all residents, including those with disabilities. As part of its efforts to review the kerbside collections policy, the Council has identified the issue of bins on pavements and parking on pavements causing obstacles for people with disabilities. The Council is currently exploring legislative and educational approaches to tackle this issue.

In this regard, a series of workshops have been conducted in collaboration with Council's Over 50s forum and Ards and North Down Disability forum. The workshops are aimed to raise awareness about the impact of obstacles on pavements and to educate residents on safer pavement areas. The Council hopes this campaign will encourage residents to be considerate of others and to take measures to maintain safer and more accessible pavements.

### **Ensure policy makers and elected members make ANDBC Inclusive and welcoming.**

The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group (the Steering Group) prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity, and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. After a meeting with the steering group members and the Compliance manager, it was decided that the Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) and three elected members will be appointed as the Diversity Ambassador for the Council. The primary responsibility of the Diversity Ambassadors is to work with their Council and community to promote and support the regional Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan. They will also assist in driving behavioural and cultural change across the local government sector by focusing on the action plan. The Council is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace, and the appointment of Diversity Ambassadors is a significant step towards achieving that goal.

### **Inclusive Employer**

Ards and North Down Borough Council has signed up for the Disability Confident

## PART A

scheme. In January 2024, the council joined the scheme's Level 1, which makes it a Disability Confident Committed organisation. The scheme, which has three levels, is designed to support employers to create an inclusive and diverse workplace, where everyone is valued, respected, and given equal opportunities.

Level 2 of the scheme is the Disability Confident Employer, which is the next level that the council aims to achieve with the help of its Human Resources department and the Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding). The ultimate goal is to become a Disability Confident Leader, which is Level 3 of the scheme.

Academies for those with Disabilities:

The Ards and North Down Labour Market Partnership 2023-24 Action Plan awarded the tender for the Academy for People with Disabilities to the NOW Group in November 2023. The academy facilitated three different programs: Employability, Customer Service, and Catering and Hospitality (Pizza Academy). Participants were recruited, and in total, twenty-seven individuals completed the academy. Even though the academy has ended, two participants still require additional support and will continue to receive it.

Out of the twenty-seven participants, eleven have found employment, ten are currently in placements, and the remaining participants are receiving support to search for jobs.

Disability Employment and Support Day:

Disability Employment and Support Day highlighted a need for those students with a disability or neurodiverse condition who are about to leave full time education to be aware of all the programmes and support available to them. This event proved to be a great success in bringing together a wide range of support organisations. The attendees had the opportunity to network and cross-refer during the event, which helped to create a positive and collaborative atmosphere. The exhibitors received a high level of positive interest in their programs and support services, which was encouraging. A BSL sign language interpreter was available for deaf attendees. Due to its success, it was noted that future events would require two interpreters.

One of the main goals of the event was to identify innovative ways for those with disabilities to engage with employers. The discussions and presentations were informative and thought-provoking, providing a promising start to this important initiative. Overall, the event was a great success and holds great promise for the future.

### **Developing and delivering Programmes that ensure S75 categories are involved**

In this reporting year Good relations delivered a number of programmes, these included

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"Shared Voices" is an innovative program co-designed by dedicated staff and volunteers from various ethnic backgrounds within ANDBC. The program aims to promote awareness and combat racism in pre- and post-primary schools and local community groups. It also introduces children and young people to the diversity and similarities between cultures within ANDBC. This initiative is an excellent step towards fostering a more inclusive society and promoting mutual respect and understanding among people of different backgrounds.

An event in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day was held in the City Hall, Bangor. Over 90 people attended the event; all gathered to honour the memory of those who lost their lives during the Holocaust. The event's highlight was a moving speech by Dr. Alfred Garwood, a Holocaust survivor who shared his powerful story with those in attendance. His words and his courage deeply moved the audience. The event also featured students from Millisle Primary School, who recited several poignant poems that highlighted the connection between Millisle and the Holocaust. Their performance was touching and thought-provoking, leaving a lasting impression on everyone in attendance.

To close out the event, singer Andrew McBride delivered a moving performance that left everyone feeling inspired and uplifted. It was a fitting end to a powerful and moving event that reminded us all of the importance of remembering the past and working towards a better future.

The Bangor Carnegie Library and ANDBC Good Relations team hosted a two-week Holocaust exhibition featuring artwork from local schools and community groups. More than 250 visitors attended the event, which aimed to provide insight into the Holocaust and other genocides.

According to post-event evaluations, attendees experienced a significant increase in their understanding of different cultural traditions and backgrounds. They also expressed a sense of unity and togetherness among people from diverse backgrounds. Most importantly, the attendees enthusiastically recommended the event to their loved ones. Overall, the exhibition provided a powerful platform for promoting cultural awareness and understanding, fostering inclusivity, and promoting unity in the community.

A walking tour of Mount Stewart was organised as part of the No Hate Here Campaign. This was to promote cultural exchange and understanding between refugees and residents. The workshop that followed the tour allowed the refugees to share their personal stories and experiences, including the challenges they faced when they first arrived in the country. The participants were able to ask questions and engage in meaningful conversations, fostering a sense of empathy and respect for one another. Overall, the event was a great success and demonstrated the power of community engagement in promoting diversity and inclusion.



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The Diwali Campaign was a vibrant and engaging full-day program that brought together 100 young people from different communities. The event was filled with music, dance performances from India, and insightful discussions about the significance of this memorable Indian holiday. The attendees had an excellent opportunity to learn and appreciate India's cultural richness while fostering cross-community connections and building new friendships.

Greyabbey Primary School and the Ballywalter Seniors group participated in the Ulster-Scots Programme's intergenerational programme. The programme included a production of Rabbin Burns, which was performed for 60 participants. The drama showcased the life and story of the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns. It was a fantastic opportunity for the young and old to come together and learn about Scotland's rich cultural heritage.

### **Community Engagement**

The Council's Cultural Expression programme promotes inclusive local events and festivals that enable communities and groups to celebrate their culture and identity through grant aid. The programme receives 75% financial support from the Executive Office, and the Council provides the remaining 25%.

When bonfires are associated with these local events and festivals, Council support is available, provided that communities agree to core conditions that aim to lessen the negative social and environmental impact of community bonfires.

From April to July 2023, forty-nine sites were managed across ANDBC. A partnership approach has been maintained with statutory agencies such as NIFRS, PSNI, NIHE, and EA. These agencies meet regularly to discuss the sites and manage complaints about bonfires, flags, graffiti, and other contentious issues.

Monitoring the sites has shown a positive working relationship with local bonfire builders, with only a few sites causing safety and size concerns. Observation of the festivals has also demonstrated a positive expression of culture and inclusiveness at many of the festivals.

Evaluations of the local festivals have indicated a positive increase in the knowledge, attitude, and behaviour of those who attended. The festivals have brought people from different backgrounds together.

### **History Talks**

As part of the History Talks programme, two online cross-community seminars and four trips were organised for the local community. One of the trips included a visit to the Siege of Derry and the Free Derry Museum. The initiative had 150 participants, including community groups and individuals.

Evaluation results showed that over 79% of the participants felt that the programme

had helped them improve their skills.

The Rising and Somme event aimed to remember different histories and had 34 attendees. Nearly 38% of the participants had never attended a GR event before.

The evaluations showed that the event successfully achieved its objective, with attendees expressing a positive change in their attitude towards different historical events.

The Theatre of Witness was an interactive performance showcased at Ard's Art Centre. Ten participants shared their personal and collective stories of suffering, transformation, and peace.

The evaluations showed that the event succeeded in bringing people from different backgrounds together. 100% of the attendees felt that the event was positive, and their knowledge, attitude, and behaviour increased noticeably.

The council is committed to ensuring the safety of households in the borough and offers a free home safety visit upon request. This service is specifically targeted towards older adults (over 65 years) and families with children under the age of 5, as these groups are statistically shown to be at a higher risk of home accidents.

Council understand that language barriers can be a challenge, which is why we are arrange an interpreter for groups whose first language is not English when requested. With the householder's consent, we make onward referrals to other organisations/agencies such as Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Occupational Health, Falls Team, Housing Executive, and so on.

In this reporting period Council conducted 231 home safety visits for those over 65 years and 164 visits for households with children under the age of 5. Out of these, 10 visits were conducted for Ethnic Minority, Roma, or Irish Traveller groups.

### **Engagement**

The Over 50s Council continued to meet on a quarterly basis and provides members with the opportunity to be representative of age group. It allows them to

- have their say on local issues.
- participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- meet new people and build relationships.
- work with organisations to develop an Age Friendly Programme that will enable people of all ages to live healthy and active later lives.

The Over 50s Council is made up of two groups to reflect the needs of its members. An

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afternoon group is attended by retired members who told us they are not keen to drive at night. An evening group predominantly comprises people who still work but fall within the age profile. During 2023- 2024 the members have been actively involved in a range of consultations such as DfI Concessionary Fare Scheme, Ards North Down Borough Council Village Action Plan Review, Coastal Pathway and Greenway update, Local Biodiversity Action Plan Consultation, South Eastern Trust’s Active Ageing Programme promotion and Age NI Lived Experience survey. Members were asked to identify key speakers that would be of interest to them and who would be invited to attend the Over 50s Council meetings.

**Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

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- 2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

The Council has recently shown special attention towards supporting Deaf Awareness week because the deaf community faces communication barriers that often lead to social isolation, limited job opportunities, and reduced access to essential services. These barriers arise due to a lack of sign language interpreters, limited captioning and subtitling in videos and online content, and general unawareness of the communication needs of deaf individuals.

The Council has noticed an increase in requests for language interpreters, with most of them being for Syrian and Mandarin languages. This indicates that the Council is reaching out to its audience as the Borough becomes more diverse. The translation service provided during the summer scheme has built trust within the community and demonstrated that ANDBC values diversity. Despite having these services in place, the Council aims to roll out sign video to all areas and explore ways to communicate in any language.

While Ards and North Down Borough Council already provides accessible toilets throughout the area, it is essential to be alert to the diverse needs of disabled people and ensure they are considered throughout the planning, development, and maintenance of accessible washroom facilities. The lack of suitable accessible toilet facilities can negatively impact individuals by causing social exclusion and affecting their self-confidence. Adequate and well-equipped toilets are particularly important for people who require facilities to change their stoma bag. Unfortunately, people often face verbal challenges when using accessible toilets due to poor signage and lack of understanding. To address this issue, the Stoma Friendly project was launched, which added shelves, hooks, and mirrors to 44 accessible toilets in the Ards and North Down Borough. The new signage also reminds people that not all disabilities are visible. This project aligns with the council's other inclusive initiatives, such as playgrounds, leisure facilities, and arts and culture programs, to ensure equal access to facilities for all individuals in the community.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has developed a program called Disability Confident, which aims to help employers understand the needs of disabled people. This program also challenges negative attitudes towards disability, promotes disability awareness, removes barriers for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and ensures that they have equal opportunities to succeed. Ards and North Down Borough Council's involvement in the Disability Confident initiative is a significant step towards creating a more inclusive, diverse, and fair workplace.

The role of Diversity Ambassadors is vital in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in ANDBC. One of their primary goals is to increase awareness of diversity issues within the

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Council. They do this by organising training sessions, awareness campaigns, and facilitating discussions to educate others about the importance of diversity and inclusion. Acting as a link between different communities, the Diversity Ambassadors enhance communication and understanding among individuals with diverse backgrounds. This can lead to better collaboration and reduced conflicts or misunderstandings.

ANDBC aims to foster an inclusive workplace environment that promotes diversity and eliminates systemic biases and discrimination. The Diversity Ambassadors play a crucial role in implementing policies and initiatives that encourage a diverse workforce. However, there is a significant disparity in employment rates for people with disabilities, with only 44.3% employed in 2021 compared to the 81.3% national average. To address this, a specialised academy was established to provide training and support for people with disabilities to increase their chances of employment. Additionally, a Disability Employment and Support Day was created to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to connect with potential employers and receive guidance and support.

The "Equality, Diversity and Good Relations It Takes All Sorts" event took place between September 2023 and January 2024. The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) and the Good Relations team aimed to address issues that were relevant at the time while also looking at the overall diversity concerns in the Borough.

The programs were conducted on Microsoft Teams, except for one that was delivered in a hybrid format. It has been determined that this is the preferable method to engage with staff and stakeholders. It was agreed to hold the sessions between 12 pm and 1 pm to allow staff to attend during their lunch break.

The events this year were as follows:

A series of events were held from October 2023 to January 2024, including discussions on the increasing cost of living, raising awareness about Ukrainian refugees, promoting disability awareness and accommodating diverse needs, and encouraging non-judgmental support for individuals struggling with mental health challenges and suicidal thoughts.

Attendees were advised to acknowledge the interdependence of various forms of inequalities. The objective of the events is to inspire policymakers to contemplate more comprehensive policies that cater to the financial requirements of stakeholders, particularly those that are more vulnerable to economic distress.

The disability awareness event was orchestrated to increase people's understanding and awareness of varying disabilities and challenge any misconceptions or stereotypes. The aim was to assist the staff and the public to interact more effectively and respectfully with individuals who have disabilities. The event promoted an inclusive culture, emphasising the need to accommodate diverse needs and create accessible environments for everyone.

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In January 2024, the Suicide Awareness event highlighted the available support systems for all, including marginalised or underrepresented communities, and addressed the distinctive challenges that people from these communities' encounter. The goal was to encourage a non-judgmental and supportive attitude towards individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges and reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with seeking help.

The events were well attended, and positive feedback was gathered.

The Shared Voices program was a joint effort by Good Relations and the Community Development team to educate children from different areas about various cultures, religions, and backgrounds. This program was included in the Council's summer scheme and was able to reach 125 children. The evaluations conducted after the program showed a positive increase in the understanding of young people towards different cultures, religions, and races. They developed more respect and understanding of people from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, a Library event was organised by good relations which was well received by the attendees. The post-event evaluations revealed that the attendees had a greater understanding of different cultural traditions and backgrounds and felt a sense of unity and togetherness among people from diverse backgrounds. The majority of attendees expressed their willingness to recommend the event to their loved ones. Overall, the exhibition provided an excellent opportunity to promote cultural awareness and understanding, foster inclusivity, and promote unity in the community.

ANDBC has been successful in promoting cultural awareness, understanding, and inclusivity through its various initiatives and programmes. The events and exhibitions have provided a platform for individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together, learn, and appreciate each other's cultures. By working with local agencies and communities, ANDBC has also been able to handle controversial issues, ensuring that events and festivals are safe and enjoyable for all. ANDBC's efforts towards creating a more inclusive society and promoting mutual respect and understanding among people of different backgrounds are praiseworthy. These initiatives serve as a model for communities to unite and celebrate their cultural heritage while respecting each other's differences. Due to budget cuts, the program and events have been reduced. The Good Relations team is exploring innovative ways to deliver their program..

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**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Council have taken a proactive approach to ensure that everyone has equal access to our services. As part of our commitment to accessibility, and the introductions of the HRC booking system Council conducted a thorough assessment of the means through which our customers can contact us. The online booking service, available through our accessible website, allows for an easy and convenient way to book a visit to our centre. For customers unable to use the service who fall under the Section 75 categories, a dedicated phone line in in place for those

A review of tourism events was carried out due to a reasonable adjustment request. Tourism events have reviewed their budget to ensure those with a disability can access the main stage at events and a larger area is reserved for those with a disability.

Review of Councils growth event fund was carried out following advice from ECNI. The growth event fund was revised to exclude any event that does not foster equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group and include a duty for those accessing the fund to anticipate the needs of those with a disability to use the services provided.

The council has recently reviewed its corporate plan, which aims to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion. Although the plan does not target any specific S75 demographic, all demographics will benefit from the seven commitments that will be implemented to achieve this objective. The council recognised that Ards and North Down have an aging population, and the development of the plan takes this into account. One of the commitments ensures that everyone has equal access to council services. The council will also consider opportunities to promote equality of opportunity in the design and delivery of services, as well as in the service unit plans, in order to achieve the outcomes outlined in the plan.

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**3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

The HRC booking system has improved the experience of visitors in a myriad of ways. With features that allow blue badge holders and those in need of assistance to request help during their visit, the booking process has made it easier for people to get the assistance they need. Since its implementation in October 2023, 3227 residents have already benefited from this service. Moreover, the system has led to better management of resources, ensuring that personalised assistance is provided for those in S75 categories who require it. As a result, visitors are experiencing reduced waiting times and enhanced safety measures, making their experience at the HRC more enjoyable and stress-free.

The implementation of accessibility measures at tourism events conveys a warm welcome to all residents and visitors. It not only enhances the experience for people with disabilities but also creates a more inclusive and enjoyable environment for all attendees.

It is anticipated that the review of the events growth fund will prioritise those who are most likely to be socially excluded whilst ensuring festivals meet the compliance aspects of the DDA 1995.

The corporate plan has set the goal of decreasing social inequalities to create a better environment for the elderly in Ards and North Down, where support will be accessible to those who require it. The plan also aims to make the area more welcoming by increasing the number of shared spaces, promoting respect among different communities and cultures, and ensuring safety in homes, communities, and all public spaces.

**3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☒ As a result of the organisation’s screening of a policy *(please give details):*

Equality screening of HRC booking system led to a more robust process for blue badge holders and those that require assistance during their visit.

☒ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise



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*(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text. Ards and North Down has taken significant steps to address social isolation and exclusion of its residents. Through extensive consultation exercises, both internal and external, a new corporate plan has been developed that focuses on reducing social inequalities and enhancing the quality of life for older people in the area. The plan aims to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment by increasing the number of shared spaces and promoting respect among different communities and cultures. It also prioritises safety, ensuring that all public spaces, homes, and communities are secure and free from harm. Overall, this corporate plan is an excellent step towards creating a better living environment for all residents of Ards and North Down, fostering a sense of community spirit and togetherness.

☒ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

The growth event fund has been updated to prioritise events that promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Additionally, those accessing the fund now have a duty to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities to ensure that the services provided are accessible to everyone. This review is a positive step towards ensuring that socially excluded groups have access to the resources they need to thrive, while also ensuring compliance with the requirements of the DDA 1995.

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☒ Other *(please specify and give details):*

In December 2023, a request for reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility to Council events was made. This request has been taken into consideration and has been reflected in the annual tourism budgets. This step will ensure that everyone can participate in the events and have an enjoyable experience.

**Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

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**Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)**

**4** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

All job descriptions must comply with Council Policies and legal requirements regarding equality in the performance of duties. The council's induction program covers training on Equality, Diversity, and Good Relations.

**5** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes, organisation wide
- ☒ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Managers are advised to use SMART indicators to monitor the performance of their directorates and sections in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations. The following indicators should be included:

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- Engage and consult with groups and organisations working with communities that may be hard to reach or currently disengaged.
- Keep track of the number of groups from voluntary and community sectors seeking Community Development Support and other support programs.
- Monitor the number of individuals participating in Community-Based Arts programs and other community programs.
- Keep track of the number of groups/clubs across the borough taking an active role in delivering services.
- Measure the percentage increase of groups availing of Good Relations support.
- Monitor the increased number of users in the borough's parks and open spaces.

6 In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☒ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☐ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan
- ☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-23 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Outcome 5 of the Draft Corporate Plan states that Council aim to create socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming. This involves establishing an environment that is both safe and welcoming, where everyone can prosper. To achieve this goal, it is essential for the Council to prioritise reducing inequality and increasing social inclusion when striving to build communities. By doing so, the Council can contribute to minimising community tension, conflict, and anti-social behaviour, leading to safe communities that promote improved well-being, increased aspirations, and enhanced economic growth. Positive placemaking, which is a collaborative process to

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create public spaces that facilitate social interactions, community engagement, and improved well-being, can be an effective way to achieve these goals.

**Equality action plans/measures**

**7** Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

44

Actions ongoing:

0

Actions to commence:

0

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

The council has taken measures to ensure that all its policies undergo a thorough screening process in relation to Equality, Good Relations, Rural Needs, Sustainability and Data protection. To ensure Council is meeting its statutory requirements and policy makers are well informed to make decisions Council has provided Equality, Diversity and Good Relations Awareness training to all staff through an e-learning platform, whilst training policy makers and elected members in the EQIA and Screening Process.

Additionally, the council has signed up for the Disability Confident Scheme and held employment support days and specific events for individuals with disabilities. It Takes All Sorts events were also held throughout 23/24 to focus on equality, diversity, disability, and good relations. These events were held online and hybrid to encourage staff and the public to attend.

To scrutinise the outcome of the screened policies, an internal and external screening panel (consultative panels) was held over four meeting dates. Moreover, a Disability Forum was held for four meetings to address issues specific to disability and the Borough. The council continues to work in partnership with the Mae Murray foundation to promote the use of inclusive beach and toilet facilities at Groomsport. Finally, the council has made 44 public toilets across the Borough stoma-friendly encouraging those with a disability to be able to participate in activities outside their homes with dignity and independence.

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**8** Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None

**9** In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality

☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way

☐ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

**10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

☒ All the time

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

**11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

During the reporting period, the Ards and North Down Consultative Panel held four meetings, where several important decisions were taken. The panel proposed a draft constitution and appointed the Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) as the chair of the meetings. Additionally, the panel agreed to invite an external facilitator with

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first-hand experience in Section 75 matters and local government working knowledge to facilitate the meetings, if needed. The panel also decided to invite Elected Members annually to meet with the panel members.

Each member of the panel completed a monitoring form related to the nine Section 75 dimensions, which highlighted low representation of Age (under 30) and Ethnic groups. To address this issue, officers contacted organisations working with young people and ethnic minority groups, including refugees, and successfully found five willing individuals to attend the following meetings. Through these meetings, the panel has facilitated a voice for the public and the Council by reviewing policies and decisions to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Disability Forum met four times during this period, welcoming several new members from the previous year. The Diversity and Mental Health Champions are also members of this Forum. The Forum serves as a platform for group members to discuss local issues affecting people with disabilities. It has initiated various new campaigns and policy developments, such as the Stoma Friendly campaign, the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) booking system, and Kerbside collection services. The Forum has also partnered with the Council's over 50s Forum to organise a workshop on more considerate parking. Overall, the Forum has played an instrumental role in promoting the rights of people with disabilities in the community.

Two workshops were organised in relation to the LMP, which included statutory partners, colleagues from across the council, and the results of ongoing borough-wide engagement, as well as consultation with local businesses and the community across the council area. The purpose of these workshops was to discuss the Strategic Assessment laid out by the LMP, agree on key thematic areas, and develop an Action Plan. The consultation focused on areas that had arisen through the workshop and statistical research, with the aim of focusing on identified needs, proven initiatives, and identified barriers faced by economically inactive, long-term unemployed, and NEETs. It also focused on identifying training and development opportunities, enterprise development opportunities, and ways of tackling issues reported by businesses that were having difficulty sourcing skilled and unskilled employees or upskilling their workforce.

Information and consultation sessions to keep residents updated on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment were held in the second half of 2023. They provided information on the overall project, as well as an opportunity to ask questions.

The purpose of the Dementia Friendly Partnership is to collaborate with both statutory and community organisations to create a more dementia-friendly environment in the Ards and North Down area. A dementia-friendly community aims to reduce the stigmatisation of dementia and to be inclusive of those who have been diagnosed with dementia. The Dementia-Friendly Partnership utilises an interactive engagement tool called 'The Big Game', developed by the Community Planning Service of Ards and North Down Borough

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Council, to engage with people. This tool helps to gather feedback from the community and prioritise areas that meet the needs of people living with dementia.

12 In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- ☒ Face to face meetings
- ☒ Focus groups
- ☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- ☒ Questionnaires
- ☒ Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- ☒ Internet discussions
- ☐ Telephone consultations
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*: Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees’ membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Click or tap here to enter text.

All consultees are kept up to date on all aspects of the Council’s Equality Action plan. Consultees were emailed or contacted via telephone, where email was not appropriate.

Younger individuals may be more inclined to utilise online platforms or chat services whilst older individuals prefer traditional face to face meetings or telephone calls. Meetings and consultations continue to be held – hybrid, on Teams or face-to-face. This ensures that attendees can voice their opinion on a platform that suits them.

Council has incorporated an easy read version of the new corporate plan to be easily understood by a wide range of readers.

Council realises the importance of incorporating images illustrations and graphics into consultations and avoid jargon to eliminate industry specific information.

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**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

[<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1795/Completed-Screening-Forms-2023>  
<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1794/Completed-Screening-Forms-2024>, ]

**15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

36

**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23:



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34

36 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

*Although no EQIAs were completed in 23/24 it is anticipated that two Council decisions taken in March 2024 will be subject to an EQIA, this will be completed in 2024 and documented in 24/25 annual report.*

- 17** Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to ensuring that it consults both internally and externally on all major decisions. To this end, the council has set up an internal Screening panel that meets quarterly to discuss the impacts of policies concerning S75, Rural needs, Sustainability, and Data Protection. In addition, the Ards and North Down Consultative Panel holds regular meetings where important decisions are taken. During the last reporting period, the panel reviewed all policies screened by ANDBC. However, more thorough consultation was undertaken on several policies, including the introduction of HRC Booking System, Review of Kerbside collections, Conlig Community War Memorial Proposal, Ards and North Down Borough Council Flags Policy June 2021 (proposed changes), Bangor Waterfront: OBC, and Street Naming and Numbering. The council values the input of all stakeholders and is committed to ensuring that all views are taken into account before making any decisions.

- 18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No concerns were raised

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

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Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No, already taken place

☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

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☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

**23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

The findings from Strategic Assessment were obtained through a desktop statistical audit and engagement/consultation process. The statistical audit involved reviewing key strategic and policy documents, including the Programme for Government, ANDBC's overarching Community Plan "The Big Plan" 2017-2032, ANDBC's Corporate Plan 2021-2024, and ANDBC's Integrated Tourism Regeneration Development Strategy 2018-2030, complaints from council internal system. A desktop statistical audit was also conducted to establish the existing evidence base available, including research from NISRA, the Labour Force Survey, the Business Register and Employment Survey, Census 2021, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the Office of National Statistics, Children and Gender Inequality, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Women in Northern Ireland, Deprivation Report (AND), Labour Market Statistics, Higher Education Statistics Agency, Inter-Departmental Business Register, and UUEPC.

Separate plans for each service unit area within the Council are agreed upon annually, and progress is reported every six months. These Service Unit Plans contain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and provide more detail about how services will be delivered to meet the requirements of S75 and Good relations.

### Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

In order to ensure that our staff are fully equipped to implement the equality scheme commitments under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, we are raising awareness of the provisions of this section and the particular issues that are likely to affect people from diverse backgrounds. To achieve this, we have rolled out Section 75 and diversity training through E learning and the It Takes All sorts program. This pragmatic approach will help our staff understand their role in implementing the scheme and ensure that we create an inclusive and equitable workplace for all.

Our goal is to promote equality and diversity while fostering good relations and reducing inequalities. To achieve this, we have created a dedicated SharePoint site for all staff involved in policy development. This site will provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct effective assessments and proactively promote equality and diversity. By leveraging relevant data and resources, we are confident in our ability to create policies that benefit everyone.

- to provide employees who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- to provide employees involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide employees involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Ards and North Down Borough Council equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Training provided to the Councillors on S75, Disability and the screening process has enabled them to think about different ways to help promote greater access to services

PART A

and remove barriers to employment. The main focus of the training was to emphasise that while reviewing a screening exercise or an equality impact assessment, the focus should not be solely on the data. Instead, it is essential to consider the adverse equality impacts, and think of ways to promote equality of opportunity. Training staff on S75 and the screening process has enabled them to think outside the box and improve services around inequalities, an example of this is the introduction of the HRC booking system.

**Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

**26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

*Click or tap here to enter text.*It was noticed through careful monitoring that the use of QR codes (Quick Response codes) could greatly enhance access to information and services provided by the council. In response to this, the council has implemented QR codes on tourism interpretational signage, providing both audio and links to online content. The plan is to continue using QR codes in the future on such signage when budgets allow. The introduction of QR codes has made the process smoother by enabling instant access to detailed information without the need for additional steps. Customers can easily obtain product details, promotions, or contact information. QR codes have also made information more accessible to those with disabilities. For example, a QR code on a printed document can be scanned to provide the same information in an accessible digital format, such as text-to-speech or larger print.

INSERT ABOUT WEBSITE

**Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here: None

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

*Click or tap here to enter text.*

PART A

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

March 2025

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

?

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

X Employment

X Goods, facilities and services

☐ Legislative changes

X Organisational changes/ new functions

☐ Nothing specific, more of the same

☐ Other (please state):

Click or tap here to enter text.

PART B

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

22	2	1
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
National <sup>iii</sup>	In January 2024, Ards and North Down Borough Council took an important step towards creating a more inclusive workplace by signing up for the Disability Confident scheme, level 1. This scheme, developed by CIPD, offers three levels of certification: Level 1 to become a Disability Confident Committed, Level 2 to become a Disability Confident Employer, and Level 3 to become a Disability Confident Leader.	Working in tandem with the Council's Human Resources department, the Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) will lead efforts to achieve Level 2 of the Disability Confident scheme. This will help the Council to become a Disability Confident Employer, demonstrating its commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and	Through this initiative, the Council aims to challenge attitudes towards disability, increase understanding of disability, remove barriers for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and achieve their goals.

PART B

		supportive environment for all employees.	
Regional <sup>iv</sup>	<p>The Council Members have been informed and educated about the importance of promoting positive actions and addressing the diverse needs of persons with disabilities in public life. The council has appointed 3 Diversity Ambassadors who have been given various opportunities to attend training, community planning events, and workshops to learn and share best practices. To safeguard the well-being of its staff and community, the council has introduced suicide awareness e-learning courses and also held an It takes all sorts event on suicide awareness. Moreover, the council has taken steps to ensure accessibility for all by carrying out an annual update audit of all premises on the Ards and North Down Borough Council access guides, in collaboration with AccessAble.</p>	<p>Appropriately trained representatives and decision makers who promote diversity By sharing knowledge gained by individuals, Council Members, Officers, and Disability Organisations, these forums contribute to better awareness of the diversity of employees and clients of the Council services. Ensuring continual compliance and improvement to council services and functions.</p>	<p>AccessAble Ards and North Down Borough Council site is a one-stop-shop for accessibility information, with over 400 guides and premises available on the regional website, linked to the Council website. Along with two town centre walking routes, the site also provides window stickers for premises and facilities to raise awareness among visitors. Audit workshops were held to educate attendees on how the information is collected and its value, and to encourage them to promote the information through their interest groups, families, and carers. This initiative aims to raise awareness of the data available through the AccessAble website across the province, and it has been successful in achieving this through training and attendance at related events.</p>
Local <sup>v</sup>	<p>The Disability Forum holds quarterly meetings, with representation from a variety of disabilities and their carers across the Borough. The Council is represented by Diversity</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	<p>The AccessAble website is available through all Ards and North Down Borough Council websites it offers more than 400 guides and premises infomation, as well as three walking</p>



PART B

	<p>Ambassadors, and the agenda for each meeting includes presentations, sharing of concerns, events, and best practices to promote mutual learning among all represented groups. The members of the Disability Forum are providing valuable insights for the design and delivery of many of the Council's projects. The meetings are arranged in a manner that is accessible to those with disabilities and their carers. The Council continues to consult with groups representing disabled people and their carers to highlight changes that may need to be made to accommodate a range of disabilities. The Council also conducts regular audits of its premises and facilities to ensure that they comply with relevant regulations and are accessible to all users. Disability-related issues are included in each Quarterly Report on Section 75 and Disability Discrimination Act duties and responsibilities to the Corporate Services Committee of the Council. The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) circulates relevant reports to the Council for information or</p>		<p>routes in the City centre and Groomsport. To raise awareness for visitors to their premises, facilities and premises now have window stickers. The AssessAble app and website was advertised throughout the Borough in an addition of Councils Borough Magazine that is issued to all residents. The Consultative Panel membership and Disability Forum group consist of representatives with disabilities and those who have responsibility for individuals with disabilities, representing a range of S75 categories. During the reporting period, facilities and meetings were face-to-face, and the Council encouraged attendance by people with disabilities and their carers. To improve engagement with all users, the Council officers are empowered to arrange meetings via teleconferencing software and face to face. The Council continues to use Citizen Space questionnaires and prompts about accessible meetings, which has also encouraged monitoring of attendees and responses. As confidence has grown in</p>
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PART B

	<p>consultation, as appropriate. These reports are made available by the Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding). The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding), work closely with Age Friendly Alliance, Mencap, Now Group and Cedar to ensure that the needs of their clients are met through the range of Council services. Additionally, BSL Sign Video is available for users at the ABMWLC and Ards Arts Centre, as well as the City Hall, Bangor, and Church Street Offices, enabling individuals who require BSL to be facilitated with face-to-face contact.</p>		<p>anticipating and responding to the needs of attendees, this has become increasingly effective. Quiet areas have been introduced for children and older people and their carers who require additional support or time out during attendance at activities at larger Council events. The Council's Events team continues to book the mobile toilet facility mobiloo for all larger events. BSL interpreters are provided at the Disability Forum and other meetings and events where needed. Audio and large print information are provided for residents regarding service changes, and the Borough Newsletter is published to assist in communicating with all ratepayers and residents.</p>
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PART B

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Safeguarding Children, Young people and adults who may be at risk.	Face to face level 2 training was rolled out to 270 staff	Training has enabled staff to identify signs and behaviours which indicate the need for safeguarding reporting and to put in place good practice in all the services and programmes they provide. The Council have 3 Designated Safeguarding Officers and a safeguarding manager to deal with any Safeguarding issues that may occur.
2	Equality, Diversity and good relations Awareness through It takes All sorts 2023/2024	Events included of the rising cost of living, promoting disability awareness, Suicide Awareness Event Overall, the events were well-attended and received positive feedback.	The goal was to encourage policymakers to create more inclusive policies that address the financial needs of vulnerable stakeholders. An event was conducted to promote disability awareness and emphasise the importance of accommodating diverse needs. The Suicide Awareness Event was held to discuss the intersection of mental health and suicide risk with various identities. The aim was to encourage a non-judgmental and supportive attitude towards individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

## PART B

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	AccessAble	Improved website access and consultation with AccessAble and the Council's Communications Sections. Promoted Accessible in Council Borough Magazine.	Easier Access to Council services, more venues added.
2	BSL available at various events and Sign Video in main council offices	Real time interpretation for those who are deaf and use BSL.	Targeting those who use BSL and improving services.
	Farsi Interpreter available at Summer Scheme	Available at summer scheme to allow refugees to take part	Diversity and inclusion

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	100% of all policies screened	Ensuring policy makers to consider Equality and Disability in relation to services	More transparency and clear decision making
2	Addition of the measures within the grant aid fund	Ensuring those hard-to-reach groups can apply and encouraging those availing of the fund consider accessibility.	Ensuring disability and equality is promoted throughout

PART B

	Disability employment and support day	To encourage those with a disability into employment and educate on what work is available.	Increasing work placements and employment in the Borough
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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	44 Toilets in the Borough improved for those with a disability	Better access to facilities whilst encouraging independence	More awareness and better services
2	Disability Forum	Encouraging those with a disability to input into Councils facilities and services	Lived experience and better services
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	To ensure all Council premises and car parking arrangements are accessible	Work has been partially completed to make the main services and facilities more accessible, however due to the nature of some facilities e.g. beaches this requires	The topography of the site in a limited number of areas restricts some improvements and car parking. This is also where the Council have shared responsibility for	Councils remit is varied, and accessible areas can be difficult to achieve, however this is mitigated through Reasonable adjustment requests.

PART B

		permissions beyond Council and is a work in progress	some facilities or access routes.	
2	Work Placements	Council has had 2 work placements in the reporting period	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Quiet Areas at Council Events	Due to the nature of events, it has been difficult to implement a quiet area. Council used Gazebos as a quiet area however due to safety concerns in relation to the weather this measure had to be placed on hold.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

## PART B

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5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

### (a) Qualitative

The Disability Forum values the insights shared by its members and speakers during meetings. Many individuals express interest in becoming members of the Forum due to its track record of successfully addressing everyday issues. Additionally, the Forum collects comments and complaints submitted through the Customer Services Comments and Complaints Procedure, which are then carefully reviewed and appropriate actions are taken to improve service standards. The Council also takes into consideration feedback received from public consultations, specifically focusing on any opportunities to improve services for individuals with disabilities and/or their caregivers, as well as any instances where the Council can influence positive changes.

### (b) Quantitative

Take up the range of employee health and wellbeing events.

Take up of those requesting help at HRCs

Numbers of individuals attending training events and requests for more training.

Numbers using SignVideo Software and ReachDeck

Feedback from Stoma Friendly Initiative

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No

PART B

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
3	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
4	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
5	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

The DAP is due for renewal in 2025, this will ensure that, and any inequalities are identified and addressed, with extensive consultation. The DAP will be made prominent on the Council website and in relevant Council literature and correspondence.

<sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>iii</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

<sup>iv</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

<sup>v</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one-off consultations, local fora.



Unclassified

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	10 June 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Strategic Budget Report - March 2024
Attachments	Strategic budget report

Background

This is the final budget report for the previous financial year and sets out the major variances for expenditure and income for the full 12 months. This shows a surplus of £864k for the year which will restore the General Fund to 7.5% of gross expenditure as required by the Reserves Policy.

In addition, the report details the transfers to and from the major fund categories in the Earmarked Funds for Members information. This shows that the strategic funds now represent over 60% of the earmarked funds.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the strategic budget report and approves the fund transfers outlined in it.

February 2024



Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council

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# March 2024 Strategic Budget Report



# Strategic Budget Report

Category	YTD Actual £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000	Year End Forecast £'000
Payroll	36,892	37,185	(293)	37,002
Waste Disposal	7,154	7,577	(424)	7,242
Energy	3,132	5,670	(2,538)	3,234
Maintenance	3,249	2,200	1,049	2,574
Capital Financing	7,867	7,867	(0)	7,906
Other Expenditure	16,826	15,600	1,227	16,254
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>75,119</b>	<b>76,099</b>	<b>(949)</b>	<b>74,213</b>
Service Income	(13,529)	(11,896)	(1,634)	(13,082)
District Rates	(62,122)	(62,743)	621	(62,748)
Non-Service Income	(2,176)	(1,460)	(715)	(946)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(77,826)</b>	<b>(76,099)</b>	<b>(1,728)</b>	<b>(76,777)</b>
<b>Surplus Before EMF Appropriations</b>	<b>(2,708)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,708)</b>	<b>(2,564)</b>



# Payroll

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
36,892	37,185	(293)
<p>Vacancies</p> <p>This equates to approx. 19 vacant FTE posts over the payroll savings budget.</p>		(748)
<p>Other</p> <p>Overtime/Casuals <b>£165k</b>; Holiday Pay <b>£204k</b>; miscellaneous <b>£87k</b>.</p>		<b>454</b>
<p>Payroll expenditure includes agency staff for the HRC Recycling Scheme (£360k). When the 2023/24 budgets were finalised, it was agreed that the cost of these agency staff would be met by budget savings on Waste Disposal costs – see below.</p>		



# Waste Disposal

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
7,154	7,577	(424)
Landfill tonnage down 722 tonnes and gate fee lower than budget by £8 per tonne.		(349)
Blue bin waste up 149T plus lower gate fee than budget (£1.46 per tonne)		(1)
Garden waste down 190T plus gate fee higher than budget (£3.00 per tonne)		11
Food waste up 549T plus gate fee higher than budget (£3.74)		93
Main HRC waste streams – timber, paint and rubble		(149)
The underspend in this area more than offsets the cost of the agency staff and other costs for the HRC Recycling scheme (payroll - £360k, goods & services - £10k)		



# Energy

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
3,132	5,670	(2,538)
Electricity		(1,411)
Gas		(788)
Heating Oil		(13)
Vehicle fuel		(325)
Utility budgets now include the former tariff budgets for NCLT run facilities. The underspends are due to significant decreases in utility prices from when the 2023/24 budgets were set.		



# Maintenance

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
3,249	2,200	1,049
Statutory Maintenance - unplanned essential remedial works Aurora, Balloo ERC, North Rd Depot, Ards Blair Mayne, Bangor Castle		643
Reactive Maintenance - Increased reactive work		200
Refurbishments – additional spend required for Bangor Waste Transfer Station & Whiterock PCs.		102
Vehicle Maintenance		43



# Capital Financing

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
7,867	7,867	(0)
Interest Paid – underspend due to fewer loans taken out during the year than planned.		(85)
MRP – underspend in interest used to fund additional VRP charge.		85
Total Capital Financing spend in line with budget.		





## Other Expenditure

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
16,826	15,600	<b>1,227</b>
Insurance costs (premiums & self-insurance)		<b>494</b>
Election – funded by EMF appropriation.		<b>113</b>
NCLT Contract – The details of the contract extension were not known when 23/24 budgets were set.		<b>(456)</b>
Labour Market Partnership – fully funded		<b>281</b>
Parks & Cemeteries running costs - offset by increased cemetery income and payroll savings.		<b>282</b>
Legal Costs – Planning, A&P, Leisure, EH, HR		<b>205</b>
New leisure system implementation.		<b>100</b>



# Service Income

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
(13,529)	(11,896)	(1,634)
Investment income – Higher interest rates plus statutory interest on Council land disposals.		(722)
Labour Market Partnership – DfC grant		(301)
Other Grant Income – FSA funding for Food Control (£99k), DfC for Social Supermarket (£100k), Access & Inclusion (£37k), GRO grant (£39k)		(275)
Cemeteries		(150)
Leisure – Contract Income (£210k), Londonderry Park (£25k), Leisure Centres (£87k) and Community Centres (£103k).		(473)
Assets & Property – Wind Turbine		(77)
Planning Fees – No major applications received. General reduction in number of applications in NI.		261
Waste Collection & Recycling income		215
Car Parks		189



# District Rates & General Grants

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
(62,122)	(62,743)	621
LPS have indicated the 2023/24 Actual Penny Product will result in a clawback of £608k. £400k from the Council's Rates Bad Debt Fund has been released to reduce the impact of the clawback (this is included in the 23/24 Earmarked Fund Appropriations).		608



# Non-Service Income

YTD Mar 24 £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance £'000
(2,175)	(1,460)	(715)
Non Service Income consists of transfers from Earmarked Funds and transfers from Revenue Grants Unapplied Account. These are grants received in previous financial years but are now being released to the General Fund as the spend to which they relate was incurred in 2023/24.		
Appropriations from Earmarked Fund - £400k from Bad Debt Fund, £110k from Election Fund		(519)
Transfer from Revenue Grants Unapplied Account		(197)



## By Directorate

	Year to Date Actual £'000	Year to Date Budget £'000	Variance £'000	Annual Budget £'000	Year End Forecast £'000
Community & Wellbeing	10,907	12,588	(1,681)	12,588	10,675
Environment	27,102	28,135	(1,033)	28,135	26,210
Prosperity	4,361	4,564	(203)	4,564	4,605
Place	1,598	1,888	(290)	1,888	1,682
Corporate Services	7,780	8,199	(419)	8,199	7,671
Chief Executive	1,896	1,986	(90)	1,986	2,300
Payroll Savings Budget	-	(1,100)	1,100	(1,100)	-
<b>NET COST OF SERVICES</b>	<b>53,642</b>	<b>56,259</b>	<b>(2,617)</b>	<b>56,259</b>	<b>53,144</b>
Other Income and Expenditure	(54,467)	(56,259)	1,793	(56,259)	(54,744)
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>(824)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(824)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,600)</b>



# Use of Surplus

	Budgeted Surplus £'000	Surplus Before EMF Appropriations £'000
	nil	(2,708)
Appropriations to Earmarked Fund – see page 14		1,884
Final Surplus to the General Fund		(824)



# Earmarked Fund Transfers

	Opening Balance £'000	Transfers (Out) £'000	Fund Reallocation £'000	Transfers In £'000	Closing Balance £'000
<b>Contingencies</b>	4,853	(639)	(344)	-	3,870
<b>Periodic Expenditure</b>	897	(600)	-	150	447
<b>Strategic Funds</b>	4,740	(228)	1,108	1,230	6,850
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformation</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Tax Base Development</li> </ul>					3,000 2,000 1,850
<b>Interest</b>	260	-	(764)	504	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,750</b>	<b>(1,467)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,884</b>	<b>11,167</b>

Unclassified

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## ITEM 9

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance
Date of Report	06 June 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25
Attachments	Appendix 1: Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 Appendix 2: Social Market Research Consultation Report

### Context

Members will be aware that Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) each year, by 30 June, that sets out at least one of the main short-term issues (improvement objectives) it wants to improve for people living and working in the Borough during the year ahead.

Our Performance Improvement Plan for 2024/25 (**Appendix 1**) sets out 4 improvement objectives which have been carried forward from the improvement objectives for 2023/24, with some alterations. Whilst the Performance Improvement Plan focuses specifically on the key areas identified for improvement this year, we are



Not Applicable

still seeking to bring about improvement in other areas. The plan is not designed to describe all of the Council’s day to day work.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

Improvement Objective 1	We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs
Improvement Objective 2	We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our borough
Improvement Objective 3	We will improve the borough’s recycling rates
Improvement Objective 4	We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

The selection of the improvement objectives was originally informed by:

- Outcomes identified in the Big Plan for Ards and North Down
- Priorities identified in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Feedback from Big Conversation Panel Surveys 1 and 2
- Feedback from Age Friendly Surveys carried out during the latter part of 2020
- Feedback from our Resident Survey conducted during early Summer 2021
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2023
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2023

and has been further supplemented by information derived from:

- Review of Election 2024 Party Manifestos and identification of common themes
- Resident Survey completed late 2023
- Priorities identified in the new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Areas for improvement identified during the 2024/25 Budget and Service Planning process.
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2024  
4 Focus Groups undertaken by Social Market Research (32 participants)
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2024  
Online survey published on the Council’s consultation platforms and advertised on 3 separate occasions via social media and also advertised in the local press, emails to all staff and statutory partners (42 responses).

The objectives have been developed within the context of the Council’s PERFORM framework ensuring:

- There are clear links to The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032, Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and Annual Service Plans
- They are based on evidence provided by the residents of the Borough
- They are aligned to at least one of the seven aspects of improvement.

Key Conclusions from Consultation

It should be noted that no significant changes were proposed to draft objectives following consultation process. Some changes were made to measures as a result of consultation to add clarity and baseline data where possible.

Not Applicable

The findings from the focus groups show that a substantial majority of residents are supportive of the Council’s performance improvement objectives. “Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs” was considered to be the most important of the Council’s objectives, followed by “Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough”.

The Council’s actions to achieve the objectives also drew strong support, though some thought that the actions were not stretching enough and not all of them were time bounded. Some residents commented that performance objective 4, “Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing”, can only be achieved in partnership with others and the objective should reflect this.

Overall, the consultation provides robust evidence for the Council that its strategic direction, in terms of performance improvement objectives, aligns closely with the views, expectations and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

The consultation has also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of each objective and to identify other areas of focus within each of the performance improvement objectives. Participants welcomed the opportunity to make their views known and would welcome regular feedback from the Council on progress towards reaching the objectives.

Detailed Consultation Report attached at **Appendix 2**.

The following table illustrates the levels of support for the Improvement Objectives.

		FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY CONSULTATION RESULTS		
		Very supportive / Supportive	Not very supportive / Not at all supportive	Not answered
Improvement Objective 1   We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs	Focus Group Online	94% 69%	6% 31%	
Improvement Objective 2   We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough	Focus Group Online	100% 79%	21%	
Improvement Objective 3   We will improve the recycling rates	Focus Group Online	97% 64%	3% 36%	
Improvement Objective 4   We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing	Focus Group Online	91% 74%	9% 26%	

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve the Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 attached at **Appendix 1** for publication.

# Performance Improvement Plan **2024/2025**



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## 1. Introduction

Ards and North Down Borough Council was established in 2015 as part of government's Local Government Reform programme. The Council consists of 40 elected councillors to represent the people of the Borough across 7 District Electoral Areas with the 5 main towns of Bangor, Newtownards, Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood and 19 smaller villages of Balloo, Ballygowan, Ballyhalbert, Ballywalter, Carrowdore, Conlig, Cloughey, Crawfordsburn, Greyabbey, Groomsport, Helens Bay, Killinchy, Kircubbin, Lisbane, Millisle, Portaferry, Portavogie, Seahill and Whiterock. The Council has a population of 164,223 people and covers an area of over 228 square miles and has around 115 miles of coastline, one of the longest in Northern Ireland.

## 2. Duty to Improve and arrangements for continuous improvement

The Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan each year that sets out at least one of the main short-term issues (improvement objectives) it wants to improve for people living and working in the Borough during the year ahead.

### Definition of Improvement

"Improvement" in the context of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 means more than just quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or the internal effectiveness of the Council.

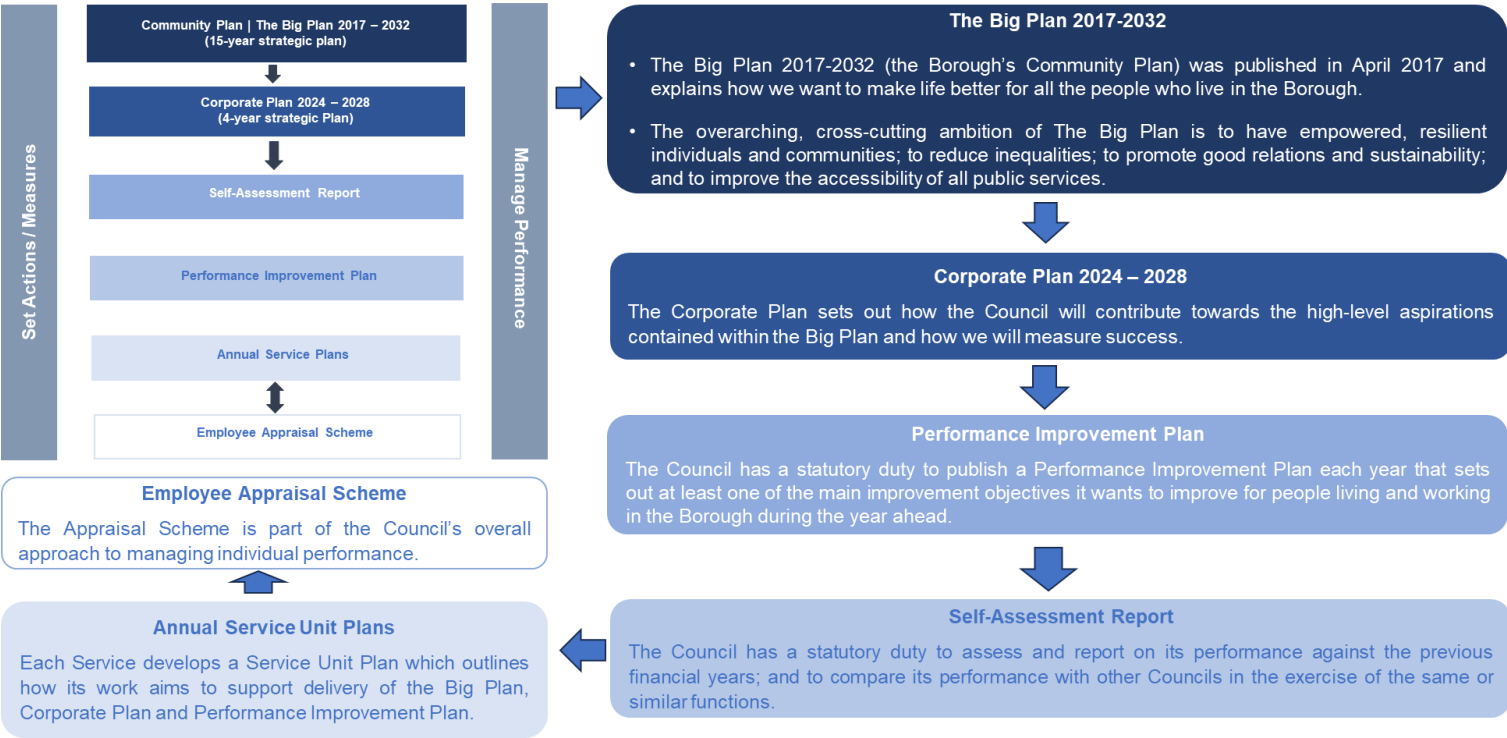
Improvement for Ards and North Down Borough Council focusses our efforts on the issues that are most important to our residents and customers, ensuring that the things we do will enhance the sustainable quality of life and environment for our citizens helping us to create a better future for all.

To demonstrate our commitment to improving the areas that matter most to our residents, our annual improvement plan and objectives are aligned to the outcomes set out in [The Big Plan](#) 2017-2032 (the Council's Community Plan) and supports the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

The Council has put in place arrangements to support performance management and improvement which will drive and provide assurance that we are delivering on our vision, shared outcomes and improvement objectives. To support its approach to continuous improvement and performance management Council has put in place a bespoke framework, PERFORM (see [Appendix 1](#)), which is used in recognition that successful performance is multi-faceted, that is, it is not sufficient to only prepare plans and monitor performance, as much else is necessary to deliver effective performance including engaging, developing, and inspiring staff, working with partners, having excellent processes and systems and communications with our customers, and stakeholders.

The diagram below illustrates how strategic objectives within the Community and Corporate Plans cascade through the organisation to each employee. Each plan sets out the expected outcomes and key actions to allow us to continuously monitor, report and review performance.



## The Big Plan 2017-2032

The Big Plan 2017-2032 (the Council's Community Plan) was published in April 2017 and provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years.

The Vision is "Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be".

The overarching, cross-cutting ambition of The Big Plan is to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities, to reduce inequalities; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services. The Big Plan for Ards and North Down explains how we want to make life better for all the people who live in the Borough.

The Big Plan contains five outcomes. These are ambitious statements that we aspire to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032:

- **Outcome 1:** All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential.
- **Outcome 2:** All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- **Outcome 3:** All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
- **Outcome 4:** All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.
- **Outcome 5:** All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

## Corporate Plan 2024-2028

This is the third Corporate Plan for Ards and North Down Borough Council.

It aligns with the long-term aspirations of the Borough's Community Plan (The Big Plan 2017-2032).

The Corporate Plan serves as the Council's strategic framework for 2024-2028, setting out our vision to be **A Sustainable Borough**.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a range of strategic and service unit plans, which set out in more detail how we will deliver and resource the activities needed to work towards our vision.

The plan is driven by three corporate priorities:

1. **Economic** - Increasing economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses.
2. **Environmental** - Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero.
3. **Social** – Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequalities.

The Plan outlines seven outcomes that support the three priorities. Each outcome is supported by strategic actions detailing the commitments the Council is making for the next four years.

Measures of success, to monitor progress and demonstrate if we have achieved what we set out to, have also been identified within the Corporate Plan.



Ards and North Down is a Sustainable Borough
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses</li> <li>2. Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero</li> <li>3. Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment</li> <li>2. We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets</li> <li>3. We have a thriving and sustainable economy</li> <li>4. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors</li> <li>5. We have safe welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing</li> <li>6. We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy</li> <li>7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation</li> </ol>
17 Strategic Action to achieve the outcomes and priorities
Annual Service Plans developed in tandem with the rate setting process to specific each service areas annual activities aligned with the Corporate Plan

## Annual Service Plans

The Council's Service Planning process takes place between September and March each year. The Service Plans are working documents that:

- detail how the organisation will deliver its services to meet the Corporate Plan Outcomes, Priorities and Vision to be A Sustainable Borough;
- identify areas for improvement; and
- detail the Key Performance Indicators that will be used to measure if it is achieving its purpose and progress towards its vision.

Service Plans are agreed by Directors and Heads of Service and adopted by the relevant standing committee annually with progress being reported every six months.

## Employee Appraisal Scheme

The Employee Appraisal Scheme is a mutually beneficial 1 to 1 conversation that an employee has with his/her line manager annually. Resulting in joint agreement on enhancing performance and identifying learning and development needs, there are 4 main steps:

1. Review of progress
2. Colleague ideas for service improvement
3. Setting individual objectives for the year ahead
4. Agreeing learning and development needs

The emphasis is on the quality of the conversation and resulting outcomes.



## Our Values

The Council is committed to delivering on its Improvement Objectives within the context of our core values:



**Progression:** We will be proactive, ambitious, innovative, forward thinking and outward looking.

**Respect:** We will treat everyone in a fair and equitable manner, respecting diversity and each other's roles.

**Integrity:** We will always be open, honest, transparent, trustworthy and accountable in our business relationships.

**Delivery:** We will ensure a "can do" attitude, being passionate about achieving results, performance-driven and outcome focussed.

**Excellence:** We will strive to deliver continuously improving and excellent quality services whilst ensuring value for money.

## Performance Management System

Council has in place an electronic performance management system which allows it to:

- Analyse data on a range of frequencies for trends and comparison
- Track the progress of indicators and actions
- Provide and communicate regular and robust performance information to Managers, Elected Members and the public.

Further information on our how we are performing can be found [here](#).

## Strategic Planning Timetable

Timeline	Activity
<b>October – March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Planning process</li> <li>• Identification of areas for improvement</li> <li>• CLT/HoST consultation on Service Plans and key areas for improvement</li> <li>• Citizen Satisfaction Survey (every 3 years)</li> <li>• Budget Planning Process</li> <li>• Strike the Rate</li> <li>• Employee Appraisals begin</li> <li>• Report on Performance to December Standing Committees (Quarter 1 and 2)</li> <li>• Report on Performance to December Audit Committee (Quarter 1 and 2)</li> </ul>
<b>April – May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with stakeholders</li> <li>• Consultation with employees</li> <li>• Consultation with Elected Members</li> <li>• Service Plans approved by Standing Committees</li> <li>• Employee Appraisals complete</li> </ul>
<b>June</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Improvement Plan to CLT, Corporate Committee and ratification by Council</li> <li>• Publish on Council website by 30 June</li> <li>• Begin Self-Assessment review of prior year's performance</li> <li>• Submit Benchmarking statistics</li> <li>• Report on Performance to June Standing Committees (Quarter 3 and 4)</li> <li>• Report on Performance to June Audit Committee (Quarter 3 and 4)</li> </ul>
<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NIAO Fieldwork</li> <li>• Draft Self-Assessment Report to CLT and HoST</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Assessment Report to Corporate Committee and ratification by Council</li> <li>• Publish Self-Assessment Report by 30 September</li> <li>• Budget Setting and Service Plan preparation</li> </ul>

### 3. Performance improvement objectives for 2024/25

Our Performance Improvement Plan for 2024/25 sets out 4 improvement objectives which have been carried forward from the improvement objectives for 2023/24, with some alterations. Whilst the Performance Improvement Plan focuses specifically on the key areas identified for improvement this year, we are still seeking to bring about improvement in other areas. The plan is not designed to describe all of the Council's day to day work.

#### Summary Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

Improvement Objective 1	We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs
Improvement Objective 2	We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough
Improvement Objective 3	We will improve the Borough's recycling rates
Improvement Objective 4	We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

The selection of the improvement objectives was originally informed by:

- Outcomes identified in the Big Plan for Ards and North Down
- Priorities identified in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Feedback from Big Conversation Panel Surveys 1 and 2
- Feedback from Age Friendly Surveys carried out during the latter part of 2020
- Feedback from our Resident Survey conducted during early Summer 2021
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2023
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2023

and has been further supplemented by information derived from:

- Review of Election 2024 Party Manifestos and identification of common themes
- Resident Survey completed late 2023
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- Areas for improvement identified during the 2024/25 Budget and Service Planning process.
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2024
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2024

The objectives have been developed within the context of the Council's PERFORM framework ensuring:

- There are clear links to The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032, Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and Annual Service Plans
- They are based on evidence provided by the residents of the Borough
- They are aligned to at least one of the seven aspects of improvement (see [Appendix 2](#)).

The tables in the following section set out the expected improvement (Improvement Objectives), how it links to Programme for Government, The Big Plan for Ards and North Down and the Corporate Plan 2024-2028. For each improvement we state:

- why we chose it;
- what we hope to achieve;
- how we plan to do it;
- how we will measure progress;
- the Senior Responsible Owner; and
- how it aligns to the seven aspects of improvement.

<b>Improvement Objective 1:</b>	<b>We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs</b>
<b>Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s)</b>	Outcome 1   We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy Outcome 6   We have more people working in better jobs Outcome 10   We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
<b>Associated Community Plan Objective   Outcome 4</b>	<b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy</b>
<b>Corporate Plan Priority</b>	<b>Economic</b>
<b>Why are we focussing on this priority?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023, residents identified the top two Council priorities as: attracting jobs and investment into the local economy (1st) and ensuring annual rate increases are kept at or below inflation (2nd).</li> <li>The Council receives over 80% of its funding through the local property tax. Rates are paid by householders (domestic rate) and businesses (non-domestic rate). The more ratepayers there are, the less each will have to pay, and the more money is available to invest in our communities.</li> <li>Economic growth is important because it can lead to higher living standards, better employment opportunities and greater economic security for all.</li> <li>Economic growth can help create jobs and reduce poverty, which is essential for ensuring that everyone benefits from the transition to a sustainable future.</li> <li>The non-domestic (business) rate base has decreased year-on-year since 2015.</li> <li>There are 4,815 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in Ards and North Down (2023) with 63% of these businesses with turnover over £100k and 19% with turnover over £500k.</li> <li>The GVA per head at current basic price was £13,327 in Ards and North Down, continuing to be lowest among all NI Local Government Districts (2021).</li> <li>23.6% of Ards and North Down working age population (16-64 years) were economically inactive (2021).</li> <li>The median gross weekly earnings for Ards and North Down residents working outside the Borough was £464 and only £394 for those working within the Borough, both below the NI average of £498 (2022).</li> </ul>
<b>What we hope to achieve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support more local businesses to start-up, develop and grow by focusing on employability opportunities, business support, employability skills and required infrastructure.</li> <li>Greater prosperity through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy.</li> <li>Help people maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability.</li> <li>Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.</li> <li>Participation in partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g. digital) across the Borough.</li> <li>Develop the cultural and heritage assets of the Borough.</li> <li>Manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice.</li> </ul>
<b>How are we going to do it and how will we measure progress?</b>	<p>Council plans to.....</p> <p><b>Manage and deliver projects to enhance physical and digital infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena in keeping with the agreed Quality Specification as part of the Queen's Parade redevelopment scheme – anticipated 50% completed by March 2025.</li> <li>Approval of Outline Business Case (OBC) and creation of action plan by 31st March 2025 to progress Innovation Hub concept to support the growth of the Creative and Digital Tech sectors in Film and TV production.</li> <li>Develop a master plan and OBC by 31st March 2025 for the delivery of a business park at the former NIE site on Balloo Road, Bangor.</li> <li>Design teams appointed and planning application progressed by 31st March 2025 for Newtownards Citizen Hub.</li> <li>Design teams appointed by 31st March 2025 to take forward a number of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment projects.</li> <li>Implement Social Value in Council Procurement Policy by 31st March 2025 to consider how the services we commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Develop regeneration improvements in conjunction with City and Town Advisory Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create five new Town/ City Advisory Groups following review that was undertaken.</li> <li>• Create two additional village partnership groups by 31st March 2025 - North Down and Strangford (equivalent to the Ards Peninsula Partnership Group).</li> <li>• Undertake a review of the existing village plans by 31st March 2025 and agree with the partnership groups key priority projects.</li> <li>• Develop 5 Urban/Rural projects to procurement stage to access funding streams.</li> </ul> <p><b>Deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete delivery of the Portaferry Public Realm by 31st March 2025 using funding secured from the Small Settlements Grant.</li> <li>• Develop and deliver four capital projects using the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Grant.</li> </ul> <p><b>Work to optimise funding and collaborate with key partners to create and deliver innovative transformation support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 17 businesses in 2024/25 through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund programme.</li> </ul> <p><b>Deliver NI Enterprise Support Service 'Go Succeed' and other general business support programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create 117 new jobs in 2024/25 through "Go Succeed" (Statutory Indicator).</li> <li>• Deliver 12 projects in 2024/25 through Labour Market Partnership Action Plan (subject to funding).</li> </ul> <p><b>Manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability Checklist for events to be developed and applied to Council's tourism events and grant aided events by 31st March 2025.</li> <li>• Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales in 2024/25 – experiences and walks and tours to 50%.</li> <li>• Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales in 2024/25 – food and drink experiences to 33%.</li> <li>• Deliver 3 training seminars to the tourism/food and drink sectors.</li> <li>• Deliver 4 training/capacity building sessions via the Festival Forum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Meet the Schedule 3 Planning Indicators of the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major Planning applications processed within an average of 30 weeks (Statutory Indicator)*</li> <li>• Local Planning applications processed within an average of 15 weeks (Statutory Indicator)*</li> <li>• 70% of planning enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks (Statutory Indicator)*.</li> </ul> <p>*Statutory Planning targets being met are reliant on receipt of timely input from various external statutory bodies</p>						
Senior Responsible Owner(s)	<p>Director of Place Director of Prosperity Director of Corporate Services</p>						
7 aspects of Improvement	Service Effectiveness ✓	Service Quality ✓	Service Availability ✓	Fairness	Sustainability ✓	Efficiency	Innovation ✓

Improvement Objective 2:	<b>We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough</b>						
Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s)	Outcome 2   We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment						
Associated Community Plan Objective   Outcome 5	All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.						
Corporate Plan Priority	Environment						
Why are we focussing on this priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most common suggestions for Council improvement in the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023 included: keeping areas clean and tidy, reducing litter, reducing fly tipping, street cleaning and keeping grassed areas weed free.</li> <li>81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019).</li> </ul>						
What we hope to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the standard of cleanliness of our Borough.</li> <li>Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment.</li> <li>AND residents feeling pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.</li> <li>A clean, attractive, environmentally responsible place, including our city, towns, villages, countryside and coast.</li> </ul>						
How are we going to do it and how will be measure progress?	<p>Council plans to.....</p> <p><b>Target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve or exceed the NI average Cleanliness Index score of 75 (Measured by an independent Litter Cleanliness Survey that produces the Local Environmental Audit and Measure Score (LEAMS) - Cleanliness Index score)</li> <li>Increase total number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued to a minimum of 375; targeting areas of concern to reduce issues (2023/24 Target: 178)</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitor and improve the cleanliness of our public toilets across the Borough</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve 100% success in 'Loo of the Year' Awards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Invest in 'In Bloom' Projects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£21,000 to be invested in 'In Bloom' Projects.</li> <li>4 'In Bloom' / Best Kept Awards retained.</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide open spaces and parks that are well maintained, managed in an environmentally sustainable manner, accessible to all and to improve biodiversity in the Borough</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant 15,000 trees across the Borough in 2024/25.</li> <li>Retain the Borough's 7 Green Flag awards.</li> <li>Increase the m2 of rewilded Council maintained ground from 90,000 to 120,000.</li> <li>Increase Community Gardening projects organised from 30 to 40.</li> </ul>						
Senior Responsible Owner(s)	<p>Director of Environment</p> <p>Director of Community and Wellbeing</p>						
7 aspects of Improvement	Service Effectiveness ✓	Service Quality ✓	Service Availability ✓	Fairness	Sustainability ✓	Efficiency	Innovation ✓

Improvement Objective 3:	We will improve the Borough’s recycling rates						
Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s)	Outcome 2   We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment						
Associated Community Plan Objective   Outcome 5	All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.						
Corporate Plan Priority	Environment						
Why are we focussing on this priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 for Northern Ireland, along with interim targets including at least 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030.</li><li>Residents being fully committed to recycling is key to the Council delivering on its waste management strategy. The most recent Resident survey completed late 2023 found that most residents stated their commitment to recycling is high (58%), however this level of commitment has fallen significantly from the figure of 67% recorded in 2021.</li><li>81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019).</li><li>Ards and North Down Municipal Recycling Rate - 51.7% (2020/21).</li><li>£4.1 million paid in landfill costs in 2023/24.</li></ul>						
What we hope to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work towards an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough.</li><li>Increase the Council’s recycling rate across the Borough and reduce landfill costs.</li><li>Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment.</li><li>AND residents feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.</li></ul>						
How are we going to do it and how will be measure progress?	<p>Council plans to....</p> <p>Encourage householders to recycle more to reduce the tonnage of household waste being sent to landfill through:</p> <p><b>Improve the Council’s overall re-use, recycling and recovery rates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use) to 60% (Statutory Indicator: 55.5%).</li><li>Reduce amount (tonnage) of biodegradable waste that is landfilled to less than 14,395 tonnes (Statutory Indicator). (Previous year’s target: 17,124 tonnes)</li><li>Reduce the amount (tonnage) of Local Authority collected municipal waste arisings to less than 83,740 (Statutory Indicator). (Previous year’s target: 85,976 tonnes)</li><li>Improve recycling rates at Council’s Household Recycling Centres to 70%.</li></ul> <p><b>Improve kerbside collection service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deliver a new kerbside collection model by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Commence new kerbside textiles collection service to increase tonnage of textiles diverted from landfill (2024/25 Target is 250 tonnes).</li></ul> <p><b>Improve recycling rates at Council delivered events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Embed and expand the recycling model at Council delivered events by 31st March 2025.</li></ul>						
Senior Responsible Owner(s)	Director of Environment						
7 aspects of Improvement	Service Effectiveness ✓	Service Quality ✓	Service Availability ✓	Fairness	Sustainability ✓	Efficiency ✓	Innovation ✓



Improvement Objective 4:		We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing					
Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s)		Outcome 4   We enjoy long, healthy, active lives.					
Associated Community Plan Objective   Outcome 2		All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.					
Corporate Plan Priority		Social					
Why are we focussing on this priority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023, residents identified supporting businesses and residents' health and wellbeing as a top priority for Council (top 3).</li><li>Living in greener areas is associated with less income-related health inequality, weakening the effect of deprivation on health. Access to outdoor spaces and leisure activities has been linked to improved mental health and wellbeing.</li><li>3.6 (male) and 2.5 years (female) - the gap in life expectancy between AND residents living in deprived areas (2019-21).</li></ul>						
What we hope to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Greater awareness of health in the business community.</li><li>Improved use of parks and outdoor spaces.</li><li>Provide safe and accessible public spaces for all to enjoy.</li><li>Enjoying long, healthy, active lives.</li><li>All residents to enjoy good health and wellbeing.</li><li>Enhanced physical and emotional wellbeing of residents through provision of services, facilities and partnerships.</li></ul>						
How are we going to do it and how will we measure progress?	<p>Council plans to....</p> <p><b>Provide additional resource and support for health and wellbeing opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Community planning partnerships - participate in at least 20 external group sessions with an impact on wellbeing.</li><li>Increase the number of businesses registering for Health and Wellbeing initiatives to 24.</li><li>Continue to develop as a Dementia Friendly Council and Borough by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Move to stage 3 and working towards stage 4 of the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Plan by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Develop a Leisure Strategy for the Borough 2025-2035 by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Deliver 220 Fitness Classes per week by Leisure Ards and Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT)/Serco.</li><li>Increase Active Ageing Memberships across Leisure Ards from 400 to 450.</li><li>Increase numbers enrolled in Swim programmes delivered by Leisure Ards and NCLT/Serco from 3,500 to 4,250.</li><li>Review of Council's grants policy by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Produce and implement a final PEACEPLUS Local Authority Action Plan in 2024/25.</li></ul> <p><b>Manage and deliver projects to enhance physical infrastructure for health and wellbeing opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Development of Greenway - Floodgates to Green Road Project to be onsite 2024/25.</li><li>Development of Greenway - Comber to Newtownards Project to achieve planning permission and contractor procurement to commence by 31st March 2025.</li><li>Planning application to be submitted by 31st March 2025 for Whitespots redevelopment project.</li><li>Construction contractor appointed 2024/25 for the Ward Park redevelopment project.</li></ul>						
Senior Responsible Owner(s)	Director of Community and Wellbeing Director of Place						
7 aspects of Improvement	Service Effectiveness ✓	Service Quality ✓	Service Availability ✓	Fairness ✓	Sustainability ✓	Efficiency	Innovation ✓

## 4. Consultation

Our Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 process commenced in September 2023 with the Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service Team being asked to identify service development/improvement areas during the 2024/25 Service Planning and Budget process.

The Plan has been developed taking account of:

- The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032
- Corporate Plan 2024-2028 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Big Conversation Panel Surveys 1 and 2 where we asked what the public sector should prioritise to support Covid recovery and what improvements could be made to create a better Ards and North Down. There were 717 responses to the surveys with 266 giving us their opinion on what should be prioritised to help recovery and 300 offering their views on what could create a better Ards and North Down.
- Age Friendly Surveys which were carried out during the latter part of 2020. There were 455 responses gathered through Zoom Focus Groups and telephone interviews.
- Residents' Survey that was carried out in June 2021 and identified the key priority areas of Prosperity (jobs and the economy), Life (health and wellbeing) and Excellence (improving Council performance) for Council. The Residents' Survey was based on a representative sample of 406 residents and was conducted by telephone in accordance with the ISO20252 Standard.
- Residents' Survey that was undertaken in October and November 2023 and identified the key priority areas of attracting jobs and investment into the local economy (1st); ensuring annual rate increases are kept at or below inflation (2nd) and supporting residents and businesses' health and wellbeing (3rd). The survey was based on a representative sample of 1004 residents covering all areas of the Borough. The survey was conducted by telephone and in accordance with the ISO20252 Standard.
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2023.
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2023.
- A review of Election 2024 Party Manifesto and identification of common themes.

Following approval from Corporate Leadership Team a public consultation was undertaken and included:

- 4 Focus Groups
- Online survey published on the Council's consultation platform
- Emails to all staff requesting their views on the proposed improvement objectives

- Emails to Statutory Partners seeking their views
- Promotion through the Council's social media platforms
- Local press advertisement

A summary of the results of the consultation can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

## 5. Linking our improvement objectives to our available budget

Council receives income from the District Rates, specific Government Grants and charging for some of its services.

The level of rates income is the major driver determining how much financial resources the Council has to deliver its services.

Figure 1 illustrates how Council funds its 2024/25 Gross Budget.

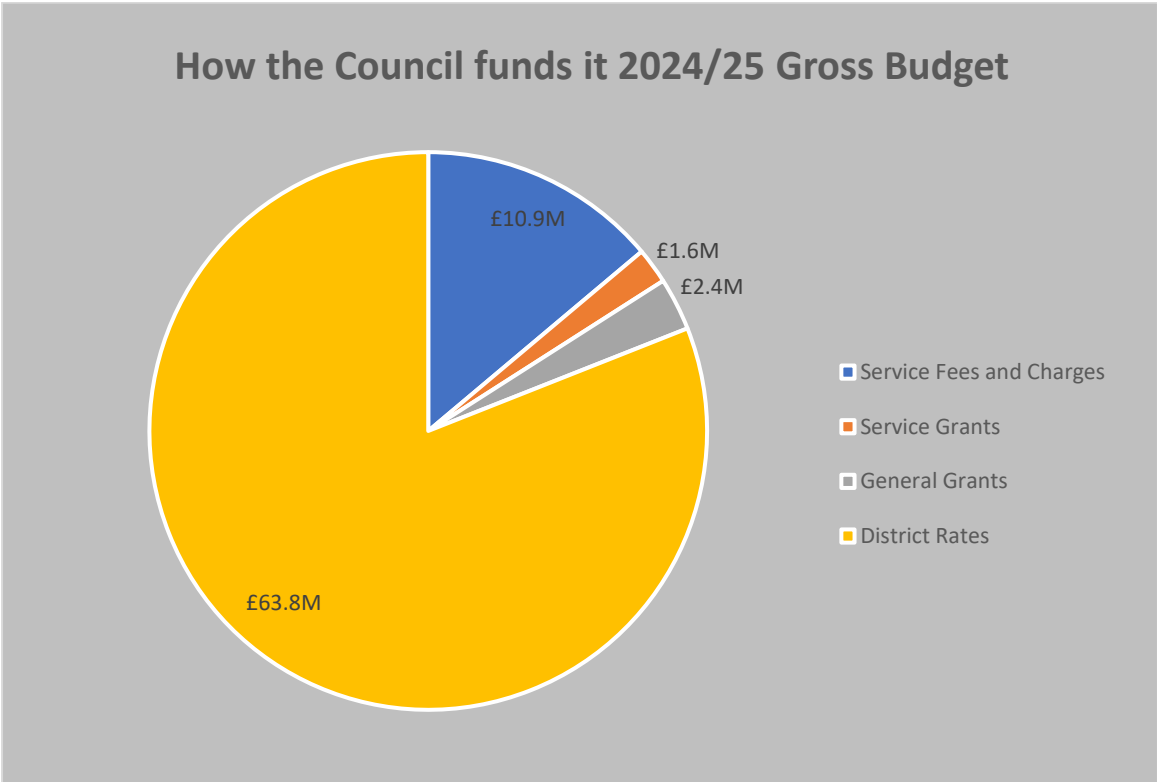


Figure 1

Table 1 sets out how we have allocated our revenue budget across our services for the 2024/25 financial year and gives the previous two years for comparison.

		2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
		Gross Expenditure Budget	Gross Expenditure Outturn	Gross Expenditure Outturn
		£	£	£
110	Environmental Health	2,843,300	2,707,000	2,710,100
120	Community and Culture	3,463,500	3,659,800	3,382,300
140	Parks and Cemeteries	5,446,100	4,897,200	4,794,400
150	Leisure	5,770,900	5,825,700	6,129,000
210	Waste and Cleansing Services	18,974,000	18,583,900	17,768,300
220	Assets and Property Services	9,682,000	9,390,400	9,359,800
230	Regulatory Services	2,850,200	2,666,600	2,701,500
600	Chief Executive's Office	1,901,800	1,896,500	1,547,000
720	Economic Development	1,821,100	2,079,800	2,107,300
730	Planning	2,836,800	2,560,400	2,432,600
740	Tourism	2,019,600	1,653,500	1,833,000
810	Regeneration	1,233,300	1,152,100	1,219,400
820	Strategic Capital Development	749,000	490,900	394,500
1020	Finance & Internal Audit	1,395,000	1,221,400	1,147,600
1030	Strategic Transformation and Performance	2,434,200	2,185,700	1,973,500
1040	HR & OD	1,326,800	1,115,900	1,159,200
1050	Administration	4,728,800	4,755,500	4,663,200
910	Capital Financing	8,781,600	7,899,100	8,164,600
		78,258,000	74,741,400	73,487,300

Table 1

A full list of the Services we provide is included within [Appendix 4](#).

## 6. Statutory and Corporate Indicators

The Council has a suite of Corporate Indicators on which it reports. This suite is made up of the Statutory Indicators as set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and a range of self-imposed (non-statutory) indicators with corresponding targets (standards) to be achieved to enable us to monitor and compare our performance.

### STATUTORY INDICATORS

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the standards set for the statutory performance indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being reported to the Audit Committee half-yearly;
- Inclusion within the relevant Annual Service Plans with progress being reported half-yearly to the relevant Standing Committees; and
- Data submission to relevant Government Departments, with reports being issued to monitor the performance of each Council, outlining regional trends and comparisons.

The seven statutory performance indicators and standards are set out in the following table:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATOR	Annual Standard
ED1: Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	117
PLANNING INDICATOR	Annual Standard
P1: Average processing time of major planning applications*	<30 weeks
P2: Average processing time of local planning applications*	<15 weeks
P3: Percentage of enforcement cases processed and concluded within 39 weeks*	70%
<i>*Statutory Planning targets being met are reliant on receipt of timely input from various external statutory bodies</i>	
WASTE MANAGEMENT INDICATOR <sup>1</sup>	Annual Standard
W1: Percentage of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use).	60% (55.5% statutory)
W2: The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable waste that is landfilled.	<14,395 tonnes
W3: The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority collected municipal waste arisings	<83,740 tonnes

<sup>1</sup> Annual report with fully validated figures for 2024/25 is scheduled to be published in November 2024 available from [DAERA website](#)

SELF-IMPOSED (Corporate) INDICATORS

Performance against corporate indicators is reported half-yearly to Standing Committees for consideration before being approved by Council and will be published in our Annual Report.

Indicator	2024/25 Target
Staff Absence	6.00%
Resident Satisfaction (conducted every two years)	≥83%
Annual Prompt Payment of invoices	
Within 10 days	≥80%
Within 30 days	≥95%

We will continue to progress performance on the following priorities, outcomes and strategic actions, set out in our Corporate Plan 2024-2028, and report progress on them in the Self-Assessment Report.



Ards and North Down is a Sustainable Borough

1. Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses

2. Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero

3. Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

2. We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

3. We have a thriving and sustainable economy

4. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

5. We have safe welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

6. We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy

7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

17 Strategic Action to achieve the outcomes and priorities

Annual Service Plans developed in tandem with the rate setting process to specific each service areas annual activities aligned with the Corporate Plan

## 7. Recording and reporting progress

The Improvement Objectives are delivered alongside all other Council work included in the Service Plans for 2024/25. These plans are developed for a one-year period at the beginning of each financial year and run concurrently with the Council's Improvement Plan.



Through our PERFORM framework (see Appendix 1) we will continually assess how we are doing against targets and ensure we are making a difference to our stakeholders.

Progress on delivery of our improvement objectives against performance will be monitored and reported throughout the year and are subject to the Council's usual governance arrangements: report to Audit Committee; consideration by Standing Committee; and ratification by Council.

Each year we will publish by 30 September an assessment of the Council's performance for the previous year.

## 8. Promotion of Equality

The Improvement Plan, which reflects our responsibility to promote Equality and Good Relations, is embedded as a part of the duty to secure continuous improvement and the process of choosing its Improvement Objectives is in keeping with the Council's Equality Scheme.

Details of Equality Scheme can be found on our website at

[Equality and Safeguarding - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

## 9. Your opinion matters

The Council is committed to improving its services and it is important that we listen to what the community have to say. We welcome your comments or suggestions at any time of the year and suggestions for improvement initiatives can be sent to us by emailing [yom@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:yom@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) or writing to us at the address in section 10.



## 10. Further information

If you would like any further information, or to request a copy of this plan please contact:

Transformation Team  
Ards and North Down Borough Council  
City Hall  
The Castle  
BANGOR  
BT20 4BT

Email: [pim@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:pim@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0300 013 3333

## 11. Alternative formats

This document can be provided in alternative formats if required in relation to language or disability by contacting the Transformation Team.

## 12. Appendices

## Appendix 1| PERFORM Framework

### Plan

**Stating what we will do and why** - the Performance Planning and Management process will be used at the following levels:



**Community Planning and Reporting**, where a plan will be developed every 10-15 years, setting out shared objectives for the local area and its people, to be fulfilled by a range of organisations working in partnership. A review of the plan will be carried out every four years in advance of its fourth-year anniversary.

**Corporate Planning and Reporting**, where a plan will be developed every 4 years to set out objectives for the Council.

**Performance Improvement Plans** which set out the Council's plan for a single year.

**Service Planning and Reporting**, where a plan will be developed every year by each council service.

**Individual (and/or collective Team level) Planning and Reporting**, where a plan will be delivered every year.

This approach is designed to facilitate alignment between Community, Corporate, Service and Individual plans, activities and the needs of our stakeholders. It will also focus on assessment of key risks, alignment of the Council's resources, processes and systems to consistently achieve strategic objectives.

### Engage

**Working together to achieve it** - to inspire and motivate staff and stakeholders to be engaged with what the organisation seeks to deliver. It is likely to include focus on developing leadership, culture and values and will typically involve effective inductions, team building, cross-council team working and staff forums.

## Resource

**Putting our people and budgets where they are needed** - to improve organisation and structural design, budget setting and management. It will involve recruitment, learning and development and system investment. It should also ensure a coordinated approach to the development of resources including staff.

## Focus

**Doing the right thing right** – to ensure system and process alignment with organisational objectives. It is likely to involve carrying out service reviews, ongoing coaching, identifying process improvements, reviewing potential suitable systems and ensuring optimum use of systems, technology and equipment.

## Operate

**Getting on with the job** - to ensure continuous improvement. It is designed to promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice. This will typically include ongoing benchmarking exercises to ensure we continually improve our practices and any other identified activities that would encourage continuous improvement.

## Relate

**Communicating with our stakeholders** - to have successful communications. The aim is to encourage engagement and transparency; this stage will include decisions on communication and delivery, including internal/external communication methods, carrying out stakeholder surveys and receiving feedback including complaints. Stakeholder analysis and Partnership working are also likely to be included.

## Manage

**Reviewing how we are doing and managing improvements** - to monitor, reward good performance and address under performance. This will involve reviewing scorecards, feedback etc. for each of the parties involved and determining actual measurement achieved against original objectives/targets.

## Appendix 2 | Specified aspects of improvement (as defined in Section 86 Local Government Act 2014)

**Strategic effectiveness** is key to linking the community plan (or corporate plan, in the absence of a community plan), and the ongoing processes that underpin it, with a council's improvement processes. The Department would expect that a council's community planning outcomes and objectives should be central to that council's improvement activity. In doing this, councils should be able to develop a clear narrative around their plans for improvement that will resonate with the citizens and communities that they serve.

Strategic effectiveness is likely to be a key focus for a council's performance improvement activity, and the Department acknowledges that councils will require time to build the required consensus to establish their community plans.

**Service quality, availability and fairness** 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.

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. Equally, 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.

The **innovation** aspect is slightly different. It covers 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.

## Appendix 3 | Consultation Results

The following are the key findings from the Focus Groups and Survey. The Council wish to thank all of the participants for contributing to this.

### Performance Improvement Objective 1: We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs

- The majority (91%) in the focus groups agreed that increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs was an important objective for the Council. The bulk of managerial and higher paid jobs were perceived to lie in Belfast rather than in the AND Borough.
- Among the different actions associated with this objective, manage and deliver programmes to enhance physical and digital infrastructure (34%) was identified as the most important, followed by manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice (31%), and deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (13%).
- Overall, 94% of residents in the focus groups were supportive of this objective.
- 69% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 31% unsupportive.

### Performance Improvement Objective 2: We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough

- All residents (100%) agreed that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups were "supportive" or "very supportive" of the list of actions that the Council has set out to meet the performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- The most important objective was "target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities" (75%).
- All residents (100%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- 79% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 21% unsupportive.

### Performance Improvement Objective 3: We will improve the Borough's recycling rates

- All residents (100%) in the groups agreed that improving the Borough's recycling rates is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups said that "improving the Council's re-use, recycling and recovery rates" is the most important action under this objective.
- Almost all residents (97%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of "improving the Borough's recycling rates". The reason for non-support was that the targets were said to be not stretching enough.

- 64% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 36% unsupportive.

#### **Performance Improvement Objective 4: We will support out businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing**

- 91% of residents in the groups agreed that supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- Residents were mostly in support of the actions (62%). However, they queried "working within existing budgets" and felt an increase in budget would be appropriate. Others commented on the need for the Council to work in partnership with those agencies that are in the lead.
- Overall, 91% were supportive of the Council's Performance improvement objective of supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing.
- 74% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 26% unsupportive.

#### **Most Important Performance Improvement Objective**

- The most important performance improvement objective, according to participants in the focus groups, is "Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs." 50% of all the participants placed this as the most important, many commenting that economic growth could help support the other three objectives. Second most important (25%) was "Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough". Relatively fewer residents said the other objectives are most important "supporting businesses and residents to protect their health and wellbeing", 12.5%: and, "improving the Borough's recycling rates", 12.5%).
- Just over half (53%) of residents in the Council survey said that increasing economic growth and creating jobs is the most important performance improvement objective, with 21% saying supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is most important. 21% felt that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is most important.

#### **Other Areas for Improvement suggest by Residents**

- Other areas of improvement residents believe the Council should focus on included: dog litter, potholes (in conjunction with the relevant Executive Department) and regular updates to residents. Some commented that the improvement objectives themselves should be improved so that they become more stretching, time-bounded and have clear targets that are above the minimum or statutory standard.

#### **Key Conclusions**

The findings from the focus groups show that a substantial majority of residents are supportive of the Council's performance improvement objectives. "Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs" was considered to be the most important of the Council's objectives, followed by "Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough".

The Council's actions to achieve the objectives also drew strong support, though some thought that the actions were not stretching enough and not all of them were time

bounded. Some residents commented that performance objective 4, “Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing”, can only be achieved in partnership with others and the objective should reflect this.

Overall, the consultation provides robust evidence for the Council that its strategic direction, in terms of performance improvement objectives, aligns closely with the views, expectations and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

The consultation has also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of each objective and to identify other areas of focus within each of the performance improvement objectives. Participants welcomed the opportunity to make their views known and would welcome regular feedback from the Council on progress towards reaching the objectives.

The following table illustrates the levels of support for the Improvement Objectives.

		FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY CONSULTATION RESULTS		
		Very supportive / Supportive	Not very supportive / Not at all supportive	Not answered
Improvement Objective 1   We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs	Focus Group Online	94% 69%	6% 31%	
Improvement Objective 2   We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough	Focus Group Online	100% 79%	21%	
Improvement Objective 3   We will improve the recycling rates	Focus Group Online	97% 64%	3% 36%	
Improvement Objective 4   We will support our business and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing	Focus Group Online	91% 74%	9% 26%	



## Appendix 4 | The services we provide

### Council Services

- waste collection and disposal
- recycling and waste management
- local planning functions
- civic amenity provision
- grounds maintenance
- street cleaning
- cemeteries
- public conveniences
- food safety
- health and safety
- environmental protection
- environmental improvement
- estates management - building design and maintenance
- building control - inspection and regulation of new buildings
- dog control
- licensing, such as entertainment licensing
- enforcement byelaws such as those around litter
- sports, leisure services and recreational facilities
- parks, open spaces and playgrounds
- community centres
- community development
- arts, heritage and cultural facilities
- registration of births, deaths and marriages

### Planning

- local development plan functions
- development control and enforcement

### Roads

- off-street parking (except Park and Ride)

### Local economic development

- Start a Business Programme and Enterprise Shows
- youth entrepreneurship (such as Prince's Trust)
- social entrepreneurship
- Investing for Women

### Local tourism

- providing business support including business start-up advice, along with training and delivery of customer care schemes
- providing advice to developers on tourism policies and related issues

### Heritage

- control of alterations, extension and demolition of listed buildings
- conservation area designation and management

- listed building enforcement notices
- compensation where listed building consent has been revoked or modified
- issuing of Building Preservation Notices. This will allow a council to temporarily list a building for a period of six months pending Northern Ireland Environment Agency assessment of permanently protected status as a listed building. [This is commonly called spot-listing]
- issuing notices to require Urgent Works to preserve a building
- community listing (previously called Local Listing) of buildings of special architectural or historic interest

### Other services

- neighbourhood renewal funding relating to enterprises initiatives
- local water recreational facilities
- local sports (greater involvement of local government in local sports decisions)
- Donaghadee Harbour



# Ards and North Down Borough Council

## Resident Views on the Council's Performance Improvement Objectives

**Final**

**6 June 2024**



**SMR**

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This report presents the findings from research with residents and other stakeholders on the Council's performance improvement objectives. The research is based on four focus groups with residents and data from the separate Council survey. The research was conducted independently by Social Market Research ([www.socialmarketresearch.co.uk](http://www.socialmarketresearch.co.uk)) and undertaken in May 2024.

### Key Findings

#### Performance improvement Objective 1: Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

- The majority (91%) in the focus groups agreed that increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs was an important objective for the Council. The bulk of managerial and higher paid jobs were perceived to lie in Belfast rather than in the AND Borough.
- Among the different actions associated with this objective, manage and deliver programmes to enhance physical and digital infrastructure (34%) was identified as the most important, followed by manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice (31%), and deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (13%).
- Overall, 94% of residents in the focus groups were supportive of this objective.
- 69% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 31% unsupportive.

#### Performance improvement Objective 2: Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough

- All residents (100%) agreed that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups were "supportive" or "very supportive" of the list of actions that the Council has set out to meet the performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- The most important objective was "target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities" (75%).
- All residents (100%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- 79% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 21% unsupportive.

#### Performance improvement Objective 3: Improving the Borough's recycling rates

- All residents (100%) in the groups agreed that improving the Borough's recycling rates is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups said that "improving the Council's re-use, recycling and recovery rates" is the most important action under this objective.
- Almost all residents (97%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of "improving the Borough's recycling rates". The reason for non-support was that the targets were said to be not stretching enough.
- 64% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 36% unsupportive.

#### **Performance improvement Objective 4: Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing**

- 91% of residents in the groups agreed that supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- Residents were mostly in support of the actions (62%). However, they queried "working within existing budgets" and felt an increase in budget would be appropriate. Others commented on the need for the Council to work in partnership with those agencies that are in the lead.
- Overall, 91% were supportive of the Council's Performance improvement objective of supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing.
- 74% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 26% unsupportive.

#### **Most Important Performance Improvement Objective**

- The most important performance improvement objective, according to participants in the focus groups, is "Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs." 50% of all the participants placed this as the most important, many commenting that economic growth could help support the other three objectives. Second most important (25%) was "Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough". Relatively fewer residents said the other objectives are most important ("supporting businesses and residents to protect their health and wellbeing", 12.5%: and, "improving the Borough's recycling rates", 12.5%).
- Just over half (53%) of residents in the Council survey said that increasing economic growth and creating jobs is the most important performance improvement objective, with 21% saying supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is most important. Twenty-one percent felt that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is most important.

#### **Other Areas for Improvement Suggested by Residents**

- Other areas of improvement residents believe the Council should focus on included: dog litter, potholes (in conjunction with the relevant Executive Department) and regular updates to residents. Some commented that the improvement objectives themselves should be improved so that they become more stretching, time-bounded and have clear targets that are above the minimum or statutory standard.

#### **Key Conclusions**

The findings from the focus groups show that a substantial majority of residents are supportive of the Council's performance improvement objectives. "Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs" was considered to be the most important of the Council's objectives, followed by "Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough".

The Council's actions to achieve the objectives also drew strong support, though some thought that the actions were not stretching enough and not all of them were time bounded. Some residents commented that performance objective 4, "Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing", can only be achieved in partnership with others and the objective should reflect this.

Overall, the consultation provides robust evidence for the Council that its strategic direction, in terms of performance improvement objectives, aligns closely with the views, expectations and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

The consultation has also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of each objective and to identify other areas of focus within each of the performance improvement objectives. Participants welcomed the opportunity to make their views known and would welcome regular feedback from the Council on progress towards reaching the objectives.

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## 1. Introduction

Effective resident engagement and consultation is a key strategic commitment of Ards and North Down Borough Council, with resident feedback critically important. Given this commitment, the Council appointed Social Market Research (SMR) to undertake four focus groups with residents to elicit their views on the Council's Performance Improvement Objectives. The focus groups were undertaken in May 2024.

### 1.1 Council's Performance Improvement Objectives

The Council's Performance Improvement Objectives have been developed under the following 4 themes:

- **Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs**
- **Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough**
- **Improve the Borough's recycling rates**
- **Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing**

In relation to each performance improvement objective, the research focused on:

- The importance of each performance improvement objective
- The Council's rationale for each performance improvement objective
- What the Council hopes to achieve from each objective
- Council actions under each performance improvement objective
- Resident support for actions relating to each performance improvement objective
- Measuring progress towards meeting each performance improvement objective
- Overall support for each performance improvement objective

### 1.2 Research Method

The research is based on four focus groups with residents and a survey of 42 consultees conducted by the Council. The groups were held online using ZOOM between 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 and were attended by 32 residents. Residents were drawn from all areas of the Borough including: Bangor; Newtownards; Holywood; Clondeboy; Ballygowan; Comber; Kircubbin; Greyabbey; Portavogie; Killinchy; and, Portaferry. Residents were recruited to reflect the broad characteristics of all residents aged 16+ in the Council area. Each focus groups ran for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Each resident received a monetary incentive (£35) to participate. A copy of the topic guide is included as Appendix 1. The focus groups were supplemented with data from a Council survey based on 42 responses with the findings also included in this report.

The research was conducted independently by Social Market Research (SMR) and conducted in accordance with ISO20252:2019 of which SMR is fully accredited.

## 2. Focus Group Findings

### 2.1 Profile of Participants

Table 1 presents the profile of the 32 group attendees and shows that an equal number of males and females with all age groups and social classes represented.

Table 1: Profile of focus group participants (n=32)		
		All Groups (n)
Gender	Male	16
	Female	16
Age	16-34	10
	35-59	12
	60+	10
Social Class	ABC1	16
	C2DE	16

### 2.2 General Views on the Council

#### Q. What are your general views on Ards and North Down Borough Council?

At the start of each focus group residents were asked about their general views on the Council. Some of the comments made at this point were reiterated later under specific topics. The fact that they were mentioned in an overall question about the Council, shows that these issues are uppermost in residents' minds. Overall, residents made the following points:

- Most residents were generally happy with the Council, and some compared it favourably with other areas they had lived in, for example Armagh and Newry Mourne and Down.
- The overall tenor of resident's comments was that the Council does what it is supposed to do satisfactorily.
- Some were vocal about what they saw as poor economic performance within the Borough, particularly in relation to small business closures.
- Some said that they felt the Council focused its activities too much on the Borough's larger towns and not enough in smaller settlements such as Ballygowan and in the outlying districts.

Residents made the following supporting comments:

- "I think the Council do everything that they are supposed to do. I have no issues; my bins are collected and everything seems to work fine."
- "In Ballygowan, we have to water and look after the flowers in our public spaces. In Newtownards and Bangor, the Council looks after them."
- "I've been living in Newtownards for three years now and I think the Council does a good job, no complaints really."

Residents made the following comments that were both positive and negative:

- "There are too many small business closures. The Council should do a lot more to help businesses stay in place and to make trading in the towns as economic as possible for business owners."
- "Public transport is not what it should be, the Council should encourage better links in outlying areas."
- "It is great to have the kerbside collections, but they are not frequent enough."



- ✚ *"You know it kills your vibe a bit when the grass is long, there's weeds and rubbish about the place. It also doesn't look good or help local businesses, if the place is covered in rubbish which is not your fault."*

## 2.3 Objective 1: Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

### Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

The majority (91%) in the groups agreed that increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs is an important objective for the Council. Some commented on the importance of having well paid job opportunities within the Borough so that they did not have to travel to Belfast to work. The bulk of managerial and higher paid jobs were perceived to lie in Belfast rather than in the AND Borough.

### Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Residents in the groups made the following points:

- Some residents focused on making business rates more attractive so that fewer businesses fail and new ones are attracted into the Borough.
- Others said that local jobs either didn't suit their skills or were at a lower level than their current employment outside the Borough.

Residents made the following comments to support their views:

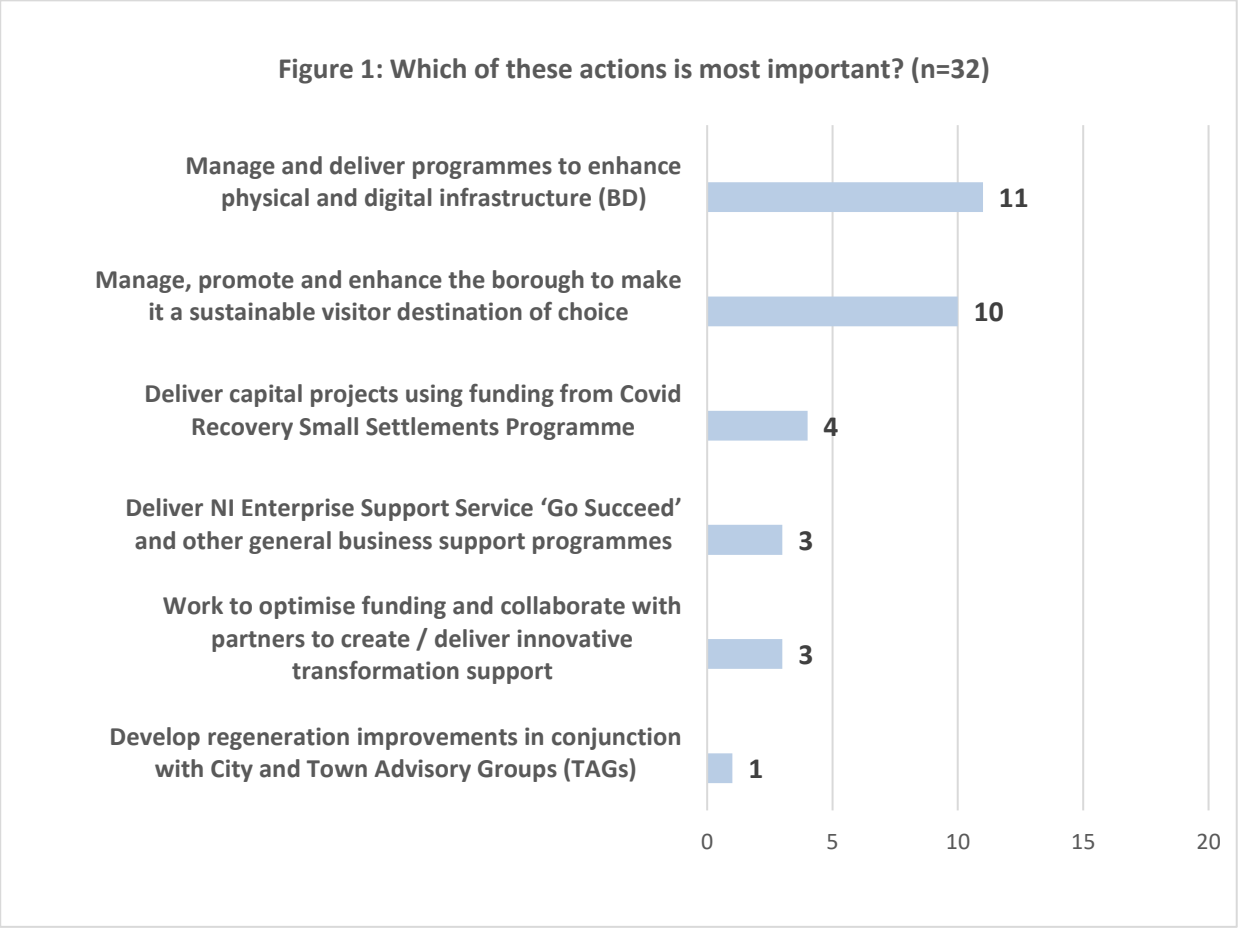
- ✚ *"Helping local business, it is super-important to work hand in hand with them to promote and develop the economy."*
- ✚ *"It's difficult to find a quality job locally, I'll have to travel out of the area or get extremely lucky to find a permanent job locally, so, yeah, more local business and more local jobs are very important."*
- ✚ *"Very important. Before my current position, it took me a long time to find a job, and when I did it meant I had to travel all over the place. It took me a long time to find somewhere local. But I'm happy enough in my job now, but before that it was a nightmare."*
- ✚ *"Yeah, I'd say so. I think if there is more economic growth the impact flows downstream and improves a lot of things. I think Bangor is a little bit dead at the minute, because everything is in Belfast."*
- ✚ *"There's a lot more opportunity in Belfast. I feel like there's just more opportunities, more jobs and better paying jobs in Belfast as well."*
- ✚ *"Yes it is important but it's difficult for me to say as I am employed at the moment. I have always had to travel to Belfast, which isn't the worst commute in the world, but it would be nice to be able to work closer to home. But if you are at managerial level you would need to travel to Belfast for these types of roles."*
- ✚ *"To be honest. I'm a lorry driver, and I work in Belfast as there are no real transport jobs around Bangor. This is more of a geographical issue as Belfast is closer to the motorway network so more work is based there."*

### Q. Are you supportive of these actions?

All residents (100%) in the groups were supportive of the list of actions that the Council has committed to in meeting the performance improvement objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs.

Q. Which of the Council’s actions is most important?

Among the different actions to deliver the objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs, manage and deliver programmes to enhance physical and digital infrastructure was identified as the most important (34%, n=11), followed by manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice (31%, n=10).



Residents made the following points:

- Some residents said that the actions were difficult to understand because they did not have enough background knowledge.
- “I think we need to know more. Why aren't new businesses coming into the area? Why are businesses closing? Why are businesses failing, is it rates? Is there enough footfall to support new businesses.”

Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?

Residents made a number of points in relation to measuring progress in meeting the performance improvement objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs:

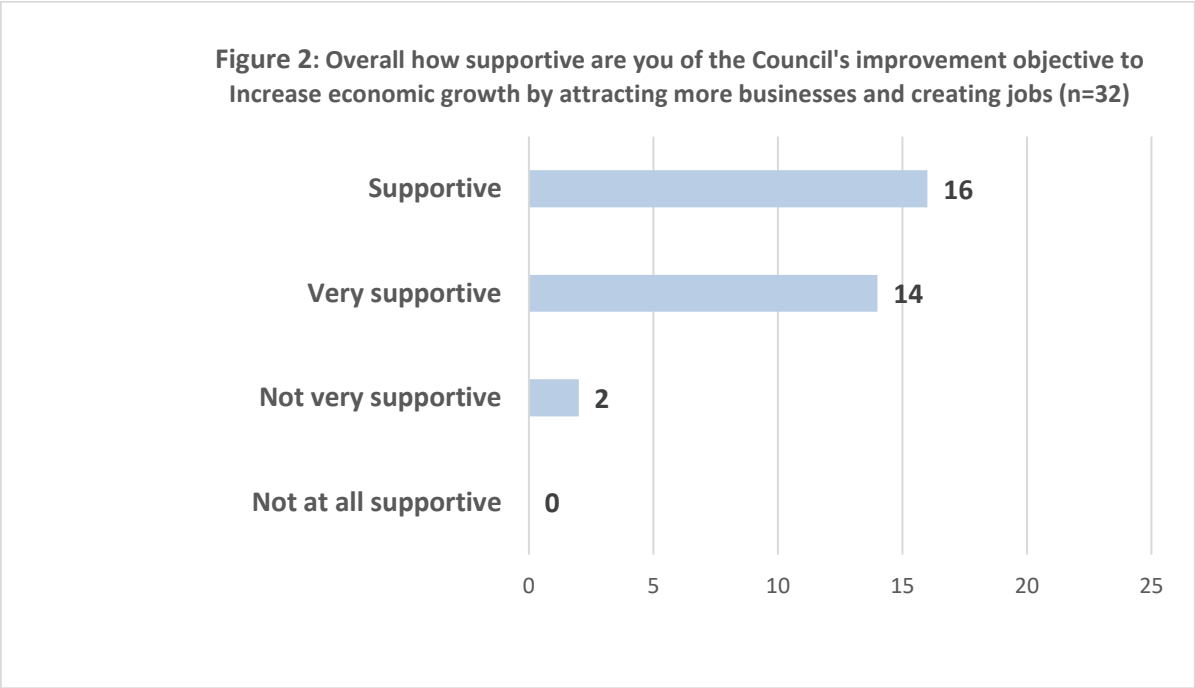
- We saw 164 new jobs up there on the slides, we would need to create a lot more than that. Are these new jobs in the private sector or public sector?
- “Bangor waterfront, it is a shame that the action is to appoint the design team, no-one says when the work will start.”
- “I would also like, from my point of view, even investment and funding. That should be tracked, you know who's investing in the area and what loans are being given to businesses. Are they being repaid? How can we get more funding? Is it being utilised correctly? Is it failing? Why is it failing. How many new businesses were opened last year? How many of them have closed? Why did they

close? Obviously, there's lots of different factors. But a lot of the factors would also be very, very similar and focus where we need to improve."

- "Ask tourists who visit the area what they think of the area. See what they think of the waterfront area and other areas within the town and maybe get more information fed back about what is needed from an outsider's view."
- "A lot of what is outlined should be coming from Stormont, there seems to be a lot of duplication, doubling up on spending."

**Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council's improvement objective to Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs**

The majority of residents (94%, n=30) were "supportive" or "very supportive" of the Council's performance improvement objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs.



## 2.4 Objective 2: Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.

### Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

All of the 32 residents agreed that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.

### Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Residents made a range of suggestions:

- A clean and attractive Borough is welcoming to visitors and residents.
- A clean and attractive Borough is desirable in its own right, but it has a wider impact on the Borough's economy.
- There are social and community knock on effects related to pride in the area and the maintenance of house prices.
- Flags and emblems are allowed to stay up too long and illegal flags should be removed.

Residents made the following comments in support of their views:

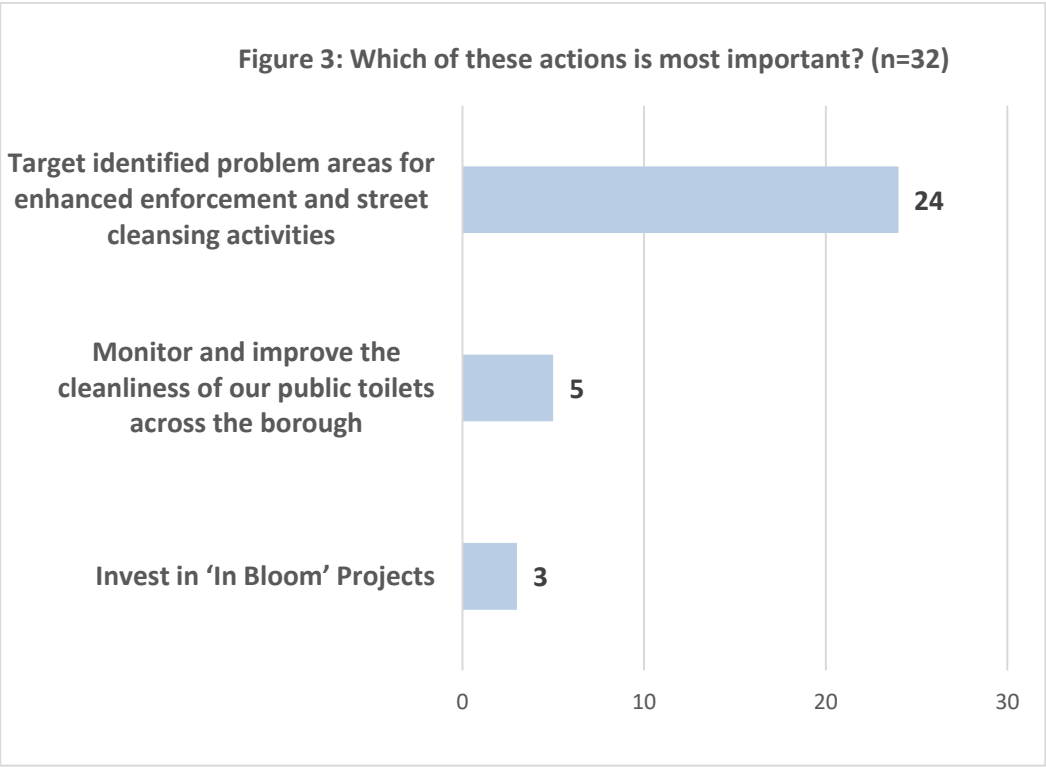
- ✚ *"Very important for residents and visitors. If the place looks nice it brings pride and people will not mess it up."*
- ✚ *"Clean public toilets would be my thing, both for residents and visitors. Clean toilets say something about the whole attitude of the Council."*
- ✚ *"There should be more on cutting verges and killing off weeds to keep the place attractive and welcoming."*
- ✚ *"Actually, that is very important, even just for the overall aesthetics of the area. I've been tracking house prices in the area as I am looking to move house. It's important to be able to attract new people into the area to maintain house prices. I mean, a tidy, clean Borough has a whole knock on effect both social and economic."*
- ✚ *"If you're going to start up a business in a new location you want to be sure it is somewhere that looks clean and tidy. You want to locate somewhere that that you know is going to attract the right type of foot fall of the right type of people to support your business. It should be done already, but definitely, very important."*
- ✚ *"If the council is making an effort to tidy up, I think it encourages residents to do the same. And that just has a knock on effect, but the buck has to stop with the Council. That's what you're paying your taxes for to keep the place looking well, whether it's your own neighbourhood or the town centre."*
- ✚ *"I know this is an issue maybe that some people in the group might feel strongly about, one way or the other, but flags and emblems are a big problem in regard to cleanliness and attractiveness. I think the Council should be working with the police on this. There should be a specific agreed length of time that they are allowed to stay up, at the moment they just stay there until they get dirty and torn and fall down. The traditional flags of the country should be allowed, but paramilitary flags should be taken down immediately, they are illegal."*

Q. Are you supportive of these actions?

All residents (100%) in the groups were “supportive” or “very supportive” of the list of actions that the Council has set out to meet the performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.

Q. Which of the Council’s actions is most important?

The majority of residents (75%, n=24) in the focus groups said that targeting identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities is the most important.



Residents made the following points:

- “You definitely have to start with the problem areas, they need to be prioritised for cleaning up.”
- “I mean, a lot of that could be just, you know, installations or cleaning up community. Even the likes of murals and things and walls instead of graffiti, you know a lot of this needs to be the basics. Sort of just making everything cleaner.”

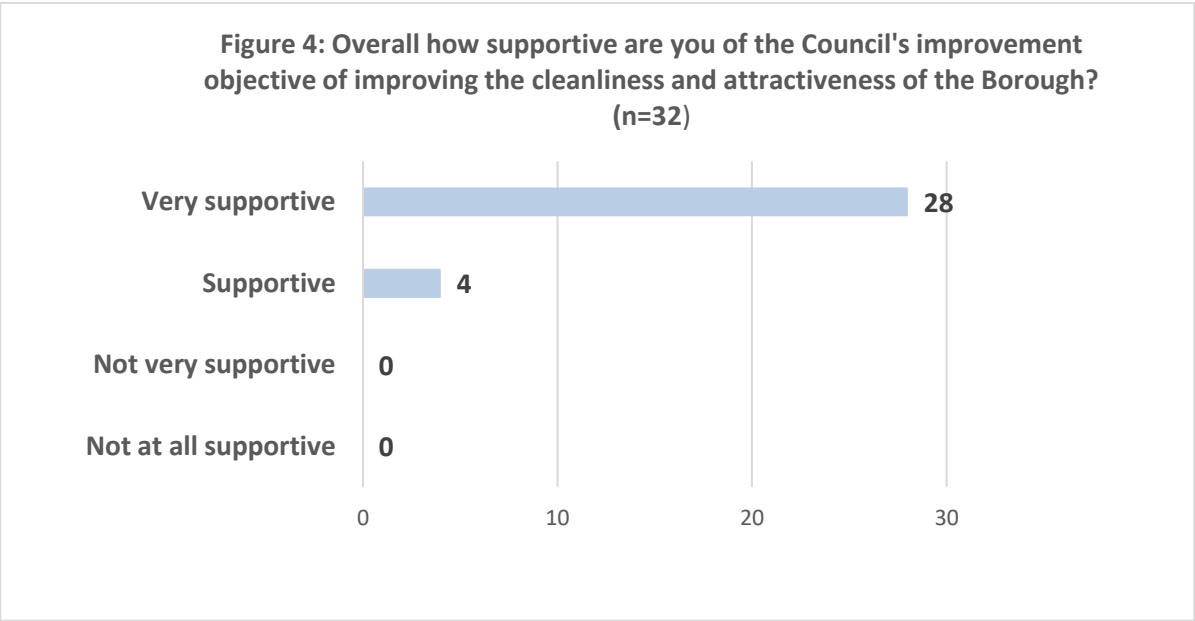
Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?

Residents made a number of points in relation to measuring progress in meeting the performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough:

- “They could ask people, ask the tourists/visitors what they think of Bangor? Whatever way they want to do it! Probably a survey of some sorts.”
- “I think a potential way to measure it is to get feedback from the residents. So, whether that's some sort of survey. You know, the open and honesty being put up on like the Council website to show how well they've been doing. So we can get a sort of a measure of how well the Council is working.”

**Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council’s improvement objective of Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough?**

All residents (100%) were either ‘very supportive’ or ‘supportive’ of the Council’s performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.



**2.5 Objective 3: Improving the Borough’s recycling rates**

**Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?**

All residents (100%) in the groups agreed that improving the Borough’s recycling is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.

**Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?**

- Residents would like more support from the Council on recycling. More frequent bin emptying was suggested by many.
- Residents were shocked by the cost of sending refuse to landfill.
- Having to book online to make use of recycling centres was unpopular, particularly the apparent quota on the number of times residents can book in a given period.

Residents made the following comments in support of their views:

- ✚ *"There needs to be an increase in collections. If it was even once a week, then you'd be more inclined to keep on top of it."*
- ✚ *"We need different bins for recycling different things. Other Council areas have much better systems."*
- ✚ *"But I do think there are simply people who just don't care and just put everything in the normal bin. I think that's going to be very hard to change these people's behaviour."*
- ✚ *"I think kerbside collection service is very important as we're trying to all recycle more."*
- ✚ *"Those landfill costs, that's a mad amount, it's very important to focus on recycling to get this amount down. Think what we could do with that money."*

✚ “We are penalised for going too often to the recycling when booking online. There seems to be a quota and once you have used it up you can’t recycle any more. That’s seems stupid to me and it could discourage people and lead to more fly tipping.”

**Q. Support for Council’s plans to meet this objective.**

All residents (100%) in the groups said that “improving the Council’s re-use, recycling and recovery rates” was the most important action under this objective.

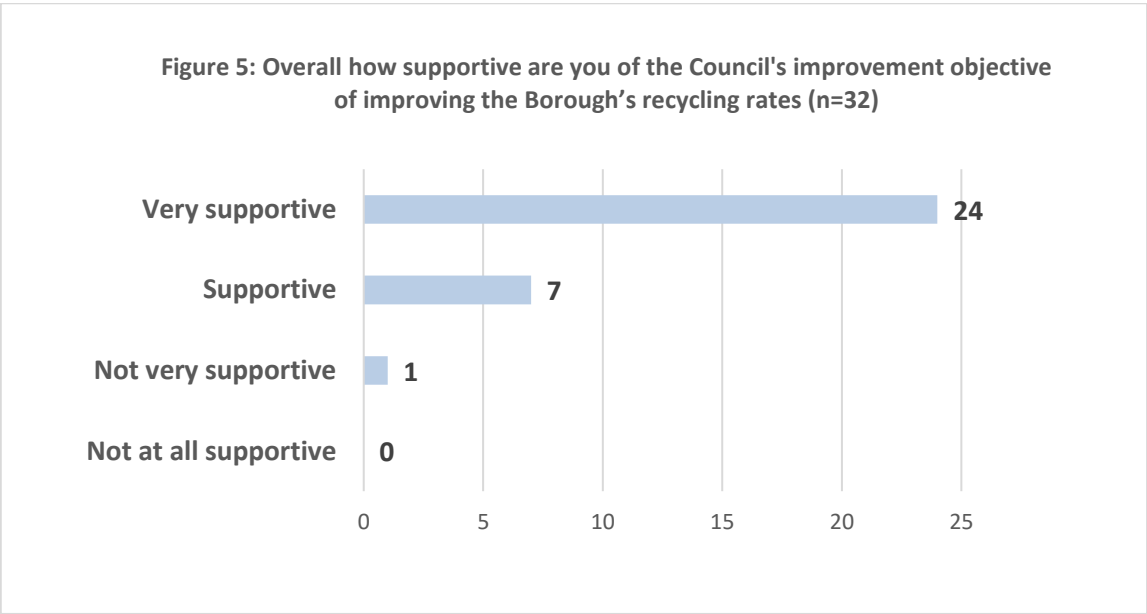
**Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?**

Residents generally thought that the proposed measures were good but offered some thoughts:

- ✚ “I see a lot of “improve” but not how they are going to do it, what are the benchmarks?”
- ✚ “All the figures quoted are focused on the amount of waste that goes to landfill, from 35,000 to 31,500. There’s nothing here that mentions raising the tonnage of recycled stuff.”
- ✚ “35,000 reducing to 31,500 does not seem very much, a year by year trajectory would be better.”
- ✚ “Why are people not recycling? Can they just not be bothered? Is it down to a lack of kerbside boxes? They’re going to have to look at the contamination rates as well. You know how high are they really? I think they need to analyse the contamination rates or recycled items for example cans.”
- ✚ “I would like to see how we are progressing with this. The current rate seems very low. Could we have a progress report, say, every six months in a newsletter?”
- ✚ “This is a very unambitious plan; it seems to be just what they should be doing to reach statutory targets. Come on, if this is an important issue, that’s not stretching enough.”

**Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council’s improvement objective of Improving the Borough’s recycling rates.**

Almost all residents (97%, n=31) were either ‘very supportive’ or ‘supportive’ of the Council’s performance improvement objective of improving the Borough’s recycling rates. The “not very supportive” participant said that the targets are not stretching enough.



## 2.6 Objective 4: Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

### Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

Whilst 91% of residents in the groups agreed that supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on, some thought that this was something that is the responsibility of other agencies in the health domain.

### Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Residents made a range of comments:

- ✚ *"Yes, it's very important. At the end of the day your businesses and your residents are your community so if we don't have our health, we have nothing."*
- ✚ *"I think a lot of it has to start with children. You know healthy children lead to healthy adults."*
- ✚ *"What I feel is lacking at the minute is any kind of psychological or physical help that is free and easily accessible when you're young and not at school. I think the level of uptake of this type of service would be a really good indicator. It seems to be you need to have a very big problem with your mental health before you can seek any help which is too late then."*
- ✚ *"Parks and outdoor spaces are very important to physical and mental health. Maybe the Council could add more parks."*

### Q. Are you supportive of these actions?

Residents were mostly in support of the actions. However, they queried "working within existing budgets" and felt that the responsible part of the Council should be arguing for an increase in budget, if their objective is to be believed as important. Others commented on the need for the Council to acknowledge its subsidiary role in health and wellbeing and emphasise the need for partnership working with those agencies that are in the lead.

Residents made the following points:

- ✚ *"I don't think this is within the purview of the Council. Surely this is the Public Health Agency's turf. The Council should be saying that they will work in partnership with the PHA and the Trusts to deliver improved health and wellbeing."*
- ✚ *"I wouldn't be very supportive because I don't think this is feasible. They need to increase the budgets dedicated to health and wellbeing, not work within existing ones."*
- ✚ *"What are the existing budgets used for? It sounds like they haven't done enough in the past if they are able to make improvements within existing budgets."*
- ✚ *"I can't see how they can do this within existing health budgets. If it's from existing health budgets, how are they going to improve?"*

### Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?

Residents made a number of points in relation to measuring progress in meeting the performance improvement objective of supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing:

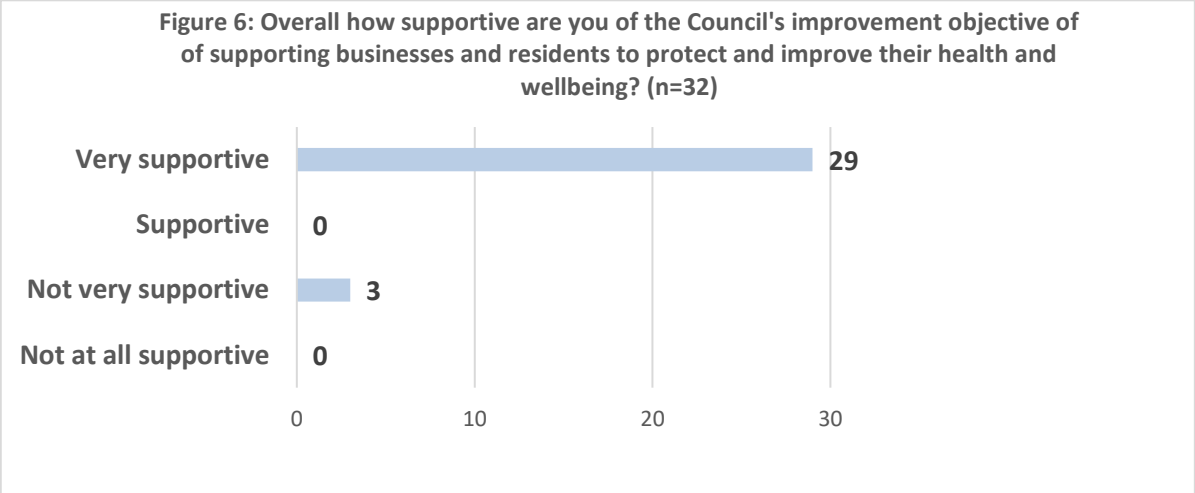
- ✚ *"I would like to see a measure on how the Council's actions fit in with the health strategy and the work of the Trusts and PHA. Also measure the number of partnerships entered into to deliver this objective."*



- ✚ “I don’t know what they mean by community health, it sounds good, but I don’t really understand it. Do they mean community health or the health of the community?”
- ✚ “Yeah, sorry. I’m don’t quite understand the first statement “Provide additional resources for community health and wellbeing and support, utilizing existing budgets”. Do they mean existing health budgets or Council budgets?

**Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council’s improvement objective of supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing?**

Overall, 91% (n=29) were not supportive of these actions. One participant was not very supportive because they felt that the Council is not in the lead on health and wellbeing and two queried whether improvement could be delivered within existing budgets.

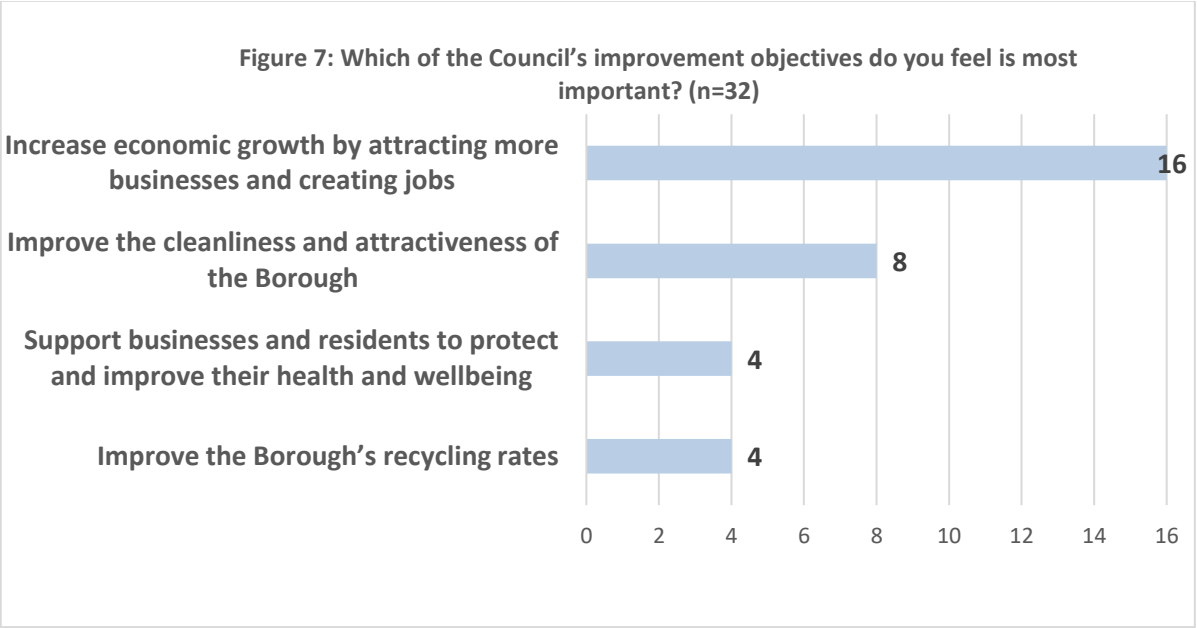


2.7 Most Important Performance Improvement Objective

The most important performance improvement objective, according to participants in the focus groups, is “Increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs.” Half (50%, n=16) of all the participants placed this as the most important, many commenting that economic growth could help support the other three objectives.

Second most important (25%, n=8) was “Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough”. Some commented that this objective could help to lever more business and jobs because it would make the Borough a more attractive place to invest.

Relatively fewer residents said the other objectives are most important (“supporting businesses and residents to protect their health and wellbeing”, 12.5% (n=4): and, “improving the Borough’s recycling rates”, 12.5% (n=4).



2.9 Other Areas for Improvement Suggested by Residents

Other areas of improvement residents believe the Council should focus on included: dog litter, potholes (in conjunction with the relevant Executive Department) and regular updates to residents. Some commented that the improvement objectives themselves should be improved so that they become more stretching, time-bounded and have clear targets that are above the minimum or statutory standard.

Residents made the following supporting comments:

- “I would like to see an improvement on how stretching the Council’s improvement objectives are. I think the aims and objectives that we are saying that we’re very supportive of or not very supportive of are pitched quite low and should be a given anyway, some of them are very basic.”
- “Dog poo is still an issue throughout the Borough. We don’t seem to have any, or very many, doggie poo bins or the plastic bag dispensers that other places have for owners to collect the poo in.”
- “I know the Council is not in charge of the roads, but they do represent us, the residents. The Council should be putting pressure on Department of Infrastructure to mend the potholes.”
- “I think this information should come through our letterboxes. It would need to be more understandable by the average person, but it would be good in terms of engaging with residents.”

### 3. Results from Citizens Space Survey

The Council also took the opportunity to use its Citizens Space survey function to seek the views of residents and other stakeholders on the Council's Performance Improvement Objectives. This provided all residents and other stakeholders with an opportunity to give their views, with question content and structure similar to those questions used in the resident focus groups.

#### 3.1 Profile of Participants

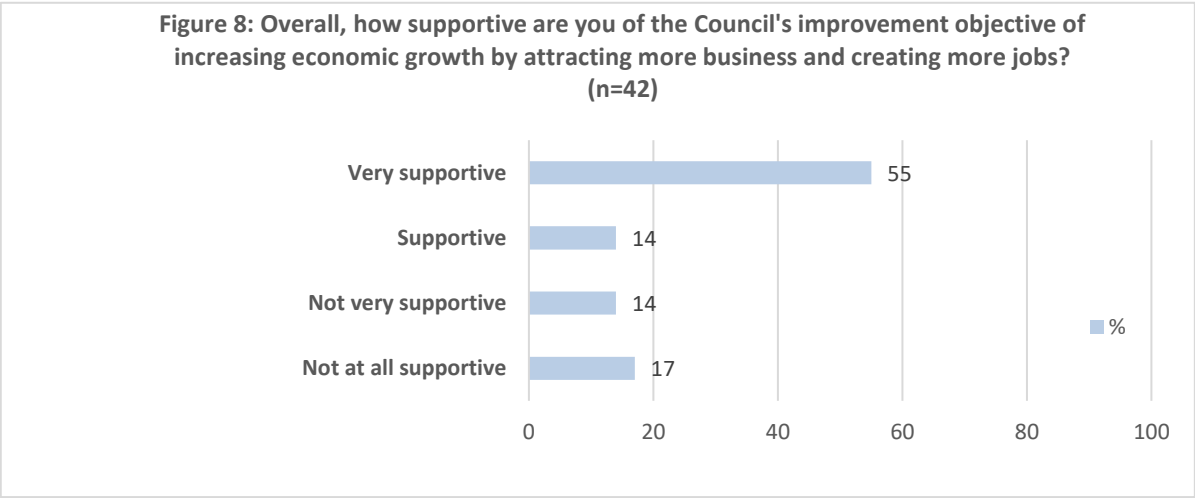
Table 2 presents the profile of the 42 residents who took part in the Citizens Space survey.

Table 2: Profile of consultees (n=42)			
		%	(n)
Consultee <sup>1</sup>	Resident	90	38
	Business	12	5
	Community representative	7	3
	Employee	7	3
	Work in the Borough	2	1
Gender	Female	45	19
	Male	45	19
	Prefer to self-describe	2	1
	Prefer not to Say	7	3
Age	Under 25	-	-
	25-35	2	1
	35-44	45	19
	45-54	21	9
	55-64	21	9
	Over 65	9	4
Community Background	Roman Catholic	14	6
	Protestant	36	15
	Other Christian	9	4
	No religion	24	10
	Prefer not to Say	17	7
Day-to-day activities limited because of a health issue or concern that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months	Yes, limited a little	5	2
	Yes, limited a lot	7	3
	Prefer not to say	14	6
	No	74	31
Disability	Physical disability	7	3
	Hearing impairment	2	1
	Long standing illness	2	1
	Prefer not to say	9	4
Ethnicity	White	83	35
	Caribbean	2	1
	Prefer not to say	14	6

<sup>1</sup> Note that total number for consultee status does not sum to 42 as some consultees said they were both residents and employees, residents and business etc.

3.2 Support for Objective 1: Economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating more jobs

Overall, 69% of consultees were either 'very supportive' or 'supportive' of the Council's performance improvement objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more business and creating more jobs. Thirty-one percent were either 'not very supportive' or 'not at all supportive'.



Comments in relation to Objective 1 (Increasing economic growth by attracting more business and creating more jobs)

Those completing the survey made a number of points:

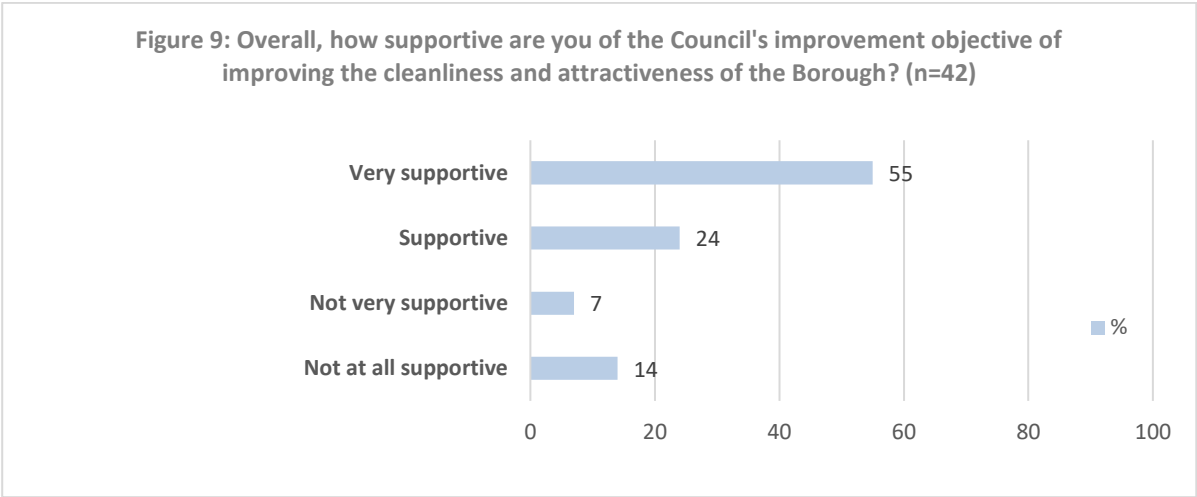
- Council is dependent on rates and Bangor has the largest population so improvements should be Bangor-centric. Call for a focus on vacant properties with one consultee questioning why Councillors continue to be given the opportunity to focus improvements on Newtownards.
- Given this policy has been unsuccessful in the past, the Council should concentrate on areas that it has responsibility for (e.g. planning application responses) and concentrate on core duties.
- Council should employ more apprentices, trainees etc.
- Growth is down to business owners, and Council efforts to attract businesses are not working.
- Questioned how increasing business rates can attract more business.
- Given the Council claim that business rates are at a steady level since 2015, then Council should explain a lack of businesses and business closures in the last 5-10 years.
- The Council is not in touch with problems faced by businesses in the Borough.
- Business activity is so poor that any new business activity would be seen as an improvement.
- Questioned why businesses would come to Bangor ('dirty', 'unkempt' and 'empty'). Bangor City Centre and main roads into Bangor are run down and unattractive.
- More shops in Hollywood and not just charity shops and cafes.
- Reduce the number of charity shops. The number of fast food, fast coffee, and fast food litter outlets is depressing, while beautiful local coffee shops and bakeries are losing out.
- Current objectives seem to favour large international corporations that depress local enterprise.
- Council should provide a baseline from which they intend to measure improvement. Not clear at the moment.

Ards and North Down Borough Council: Views on Council’s Performance Improvement Objectives (2024)

- Questioned whether or not the Council has control of all the areas that it is seeking to improve.
- Zero investment in Bangor for years and the Council needs to be proactive and do something.
- Ensure rates are more affordable for new start-ups and established businesses.
- Council should engage with the community on spending priorities and manage rate payer expectations.
- Supportive of planned activities but would also like to see improvements in Ards town centre and surrounding housing areas.
- Not enough being done to attract businesses to Main Street Bangor.
- Numerous empty properties in Bangor with not enough being done to encourage use.
- Council should focus on the Queen’s Parade project as a matter of priority.
- Bangor should be playing to its reputation as a seaside resort. Visitors still come to Bangor but may be disappointed because of a lack of things to do. There needs to be more in the way of seaside shops like gift shops, arcades, entertainment venues etc.
- More should be done to revive the Flagship Centre.
- There are forgotten towns in the Borough such as Millisle. No bus routes of note to or from Millisle, to Ards or Bangor, and residents can only travel by car or taxi.
- There has been zero investment in Bangor for years.

3.3 Support for Objective 2: Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough

Overall, 79% of consultees were either ‘very supportive’ or ‘supportive’ of the Council’s performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough. Twenty-one percent were either ‘not very supportive’ or ‘not at all supportive’.



Comments in relation to Objective 2 (Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough)

Those completing the survey made a number of points:

- Council should encourage community initiatives to help deliver this objective (e.g. community buy-in to keep it clean and save Council from incurring unnecessary costs).
- Residents also need to take responsibility for the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.

Ards and North Down Borough Council: Views on Council's Performance Improvement Objectives (2024)

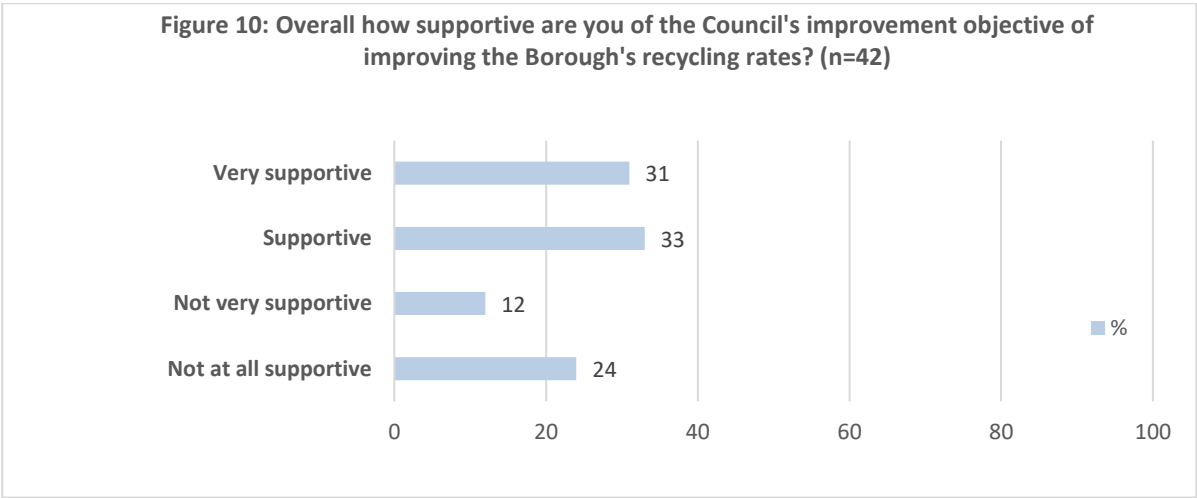
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- Council needs to allocate more resource (street cleaners, cameras) especially around side streets and shore fronts.
- More education in schools focusing on littering and the link between litter and vermin to help change attitudes.
- More fixed penalties / enforcement for dog owners as a deterrent to dog fouling. Need to be observant to avoid dog foul and problem is escalating.
- Given the beauty of the Borough, the natural attractions and tourist destinations, it is vital that the Borough is well presented.
- The cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough should be a priority. Ratepayers expect a level of service and cleanliness with one consultee suggesting that if the Council were a supermarket and was maintained to current street cleaning standards, it would be closed down.
- Concern about over grown verges, and litter from fields carried out onto footpaths and roads. A general sense of tardiness.
- The allocation of £21K doesn't seem a huge investment, with the question asked if this is additional for existing funding.
- Improvements good to see but stop spending money on projects to create spaces and then not adequately maintain them. Ensure that improvements are focused on areas that can then be maintained. The plant boxes and planted areas from Abbey Street to High Street looked great initially, but not adequately maintained.
- Improve the standard of the toilets at Ballyholme.
- Consider an anti-pollution campaign (beaches and parks) and provide litter picking stations like the one that was in Ballyholme. Also provide this service in Castle and Ward Park.
- Provide discounted dog poo bags via small vending machines at strategic points to raise awareness and encourage use.
- Improve the aesthetics of Bangor Marina with concern about the environmental impacts of cutting down of trees in the area. Encourage greater use of the marina and beach front areas generally.
- A commitment to 'keeping grassed areas weed free' is inconsistent with the Council's biodiversity policies given the need to reduce the use of weed killer chemicals.
- More street cleaning resource should be allocated to Bangor City. Council has allowed Bangor to become run down.
- Improve parks.
- Street cleaning should be a priority now. Merger with Ards and North down has seen a decline in the street cleaning service in Bangor.
- Verges and grassed public areas overgrown. Lack of maintenance for planters.
- Council not replacing bespoke town centre lamp posts with like for like, with footpaths being replaced with tarmac.
- The Council should be doing more to reduce waste going to landfill.
- Council should review its household recycling policy in relation to booking slots with a concern that limiting the number of visits will encourage fly tipping.
- Better support for community groups tackling environmental issues may help reduce the number of areas that the Council has responsibility for.

- Consider improvements to the toilets in Donaghadee as the centre has become more popular with visitors over that past 4 years.
- In Bloom and best kept awards are achieved by community volunteers not council. The awards would not be achievable if it was left to the council.
- The council has no interest in making Bangor better.
- It is the responsibility of DfI to cut grass and verges.

3.4 Support for Objective 3: Improve the Borough's recycling rates

Overall, 64% of consultees were either 'very supportive' or 'supportive' of the Council's performance improvement objective of improving the Borough's recycling rates. Thirty-six percent were either 'not very supportive' or 'not at all supportive'.



Comments in relation to Objective 3 (Improving the Borough's recycling rates)

Those completing the survey made a number of points:

- Council should put pressure on local businesses to have their products fully recyclable or at least 90% recyclable so that Council can meet its targets and reduce unnecessary costs.
- The three bins option is very good for recycling.
- Greater focus on Household Recycling Centres to include providing residents with assistance and more education. Acceptance that larger towns may need a booking system for the HRC but questioned why smaller rural towns need a booking system. Smaller amenity centres can still request identification to ensure resident status but questioned the need for a booking system. Need to ensure fly tipping does not increase and in smaller rural towns there are more opportunities to fly tip due to the countryside areas and less volume of people moving in these areas.
- Sustainability is important.
- Council need to consider the demographic of the Borough in the context of the HRC service. High number of residents commute to work which restricts their use of the HRC service to weekends.
- Non-residents that work in the Borough cannot avail of recycling access at lunch time. There needs to be some better thinking on how best to share recycling responsibilities so that everyone can get fair access, and not just those who are retired or unemployed.

Ards and North Down Borough Council: Views on Council's Performance Improvement Objectives (2024)

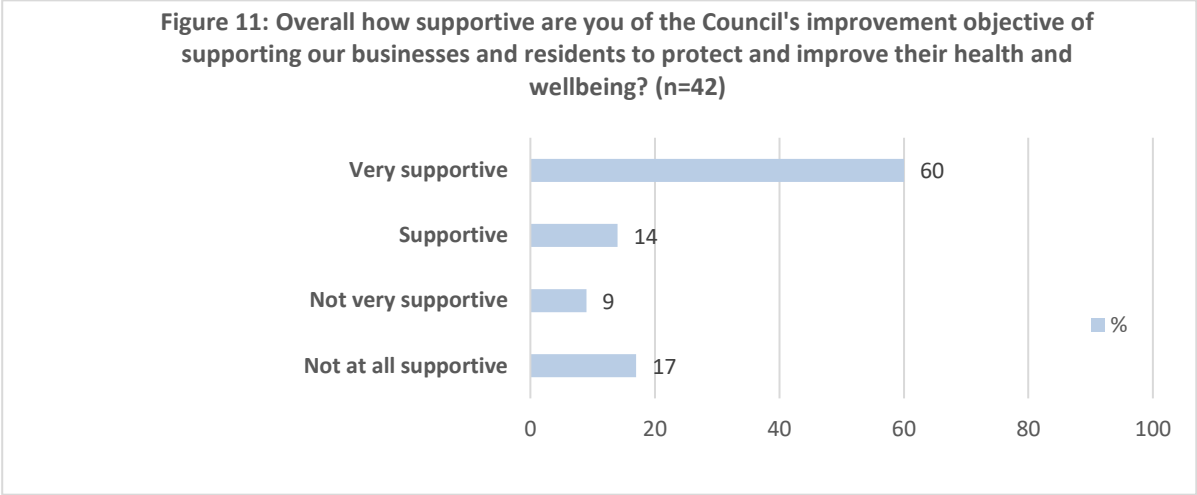
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- Council should not be making HRCs more difficult to access / use and restrictions may encourage fly tipping.
- Actions under this improvement objective poor, unambitious and ambiguous. Council needs to be clearer on how this objective will be achieved.
- Clarify / educate residents on what waste is appropriate for different bins and this should be connected to the Council's overall net zero strategy.
- Would like to see investment in infrastructure for electric charge points, cycle routes and support for active travel to help reduce carbon emissions and achieve targets. Would like to see reference to these issues, not just recycling.
- Collaborate with local businesses (e.g. Peppery Cat, Life Foot etc.) regarding the installation of vending machines to allow the purchase of products in glass bottles and jars to incentivise recycling (example initiatives in Austria and Germany).
- Concern that bonfires involve burning toxic materials and subsequent impact on health.
- A call for larger recycling bins with guidance. Lids and bottle caddies should be more robust.
- Recycling service should be running effectively.
- Questioned the nature of the site at Balloo and the Council's role.
- Concern about the environmental impacts of the Council exporting waste.
- Residents are possibly less likely to recycle because of restricted access to HRCs.
- HRC booking system is working only because residents are not using HRCs with a concern around where waste is going.
- Current HRC booking system has other impacts such as pensioners who don't have cars and are dependent on neighbours taking items to the HRC which makes it difficult for everyone concerned.
- A greater emphasis on recycling in the Borough compared with other Boroughs.
- Council should consider improvements in recycling in the context of apartment living and shared bin areas would be beneficial.
- The most hard working staff within the council are the visible bin men. They are the only reliable efficient unit within the organisation.
- It is the intention of Councillors to make our black (not grey) bins monthly. We already recycle a lot.



3.5 Support for Objective 4: Support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

Overall, 74% of consultees were either 'very supportive' or 'supportive' of the Council's performance improvement objective of supporting our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing. Twenty-six percent were either 'not very supportive' or 'not at all supportive'.



Comments in relation to Objective 4 (Support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing)

Those completing the survey made a number of points:

- Some more outdoor gyms, near playgrounds would help.
- Council should consider the potential of introducing a Park Run in Portaferry to encourage residents in areas such as Portaferry, Cloughy, Ballygalget, Kircubbin, Portavogie, Ballyhalbert etc.). A positive step towards health and wellbeing. The Council have lands at Exploris and there is potential to integrate this with National Trust for Bluebell Wood and perhaps speak to Beverlands with a view to requesting access to a portion of ground. Perhaps funding would be available to support this cross community project.
- A lack of investment in leisure services may lead to the Council losing memberships to other gyms. Also there is a concern that by not providing indoor gyms, children involved in sports clubs are disadvantaged as they rely on indoor facilities in the winter months.
- Consider cost free provision of services given that everything is expensive these days. Focus on cost free children's services.
- The Borough is an unwelcome space for non-drivers. Create more green spaces.
- Concerned about a lack of parking enforcement or barriers to protect footpaths being used as car parks (e.g. Portaferry Road on match day with footpaths used as carparks).
- Provide safer treelines walkway.
- New housing areas should include green play areas (West Winds is a good example).
- No new housing estates in the Borough in the last 30 years seem to have anything but tightly packed housing.
- Question if the measure of number of classes is appropriate as number of classes does not reflect participation (i.e. how many engage with the classes).

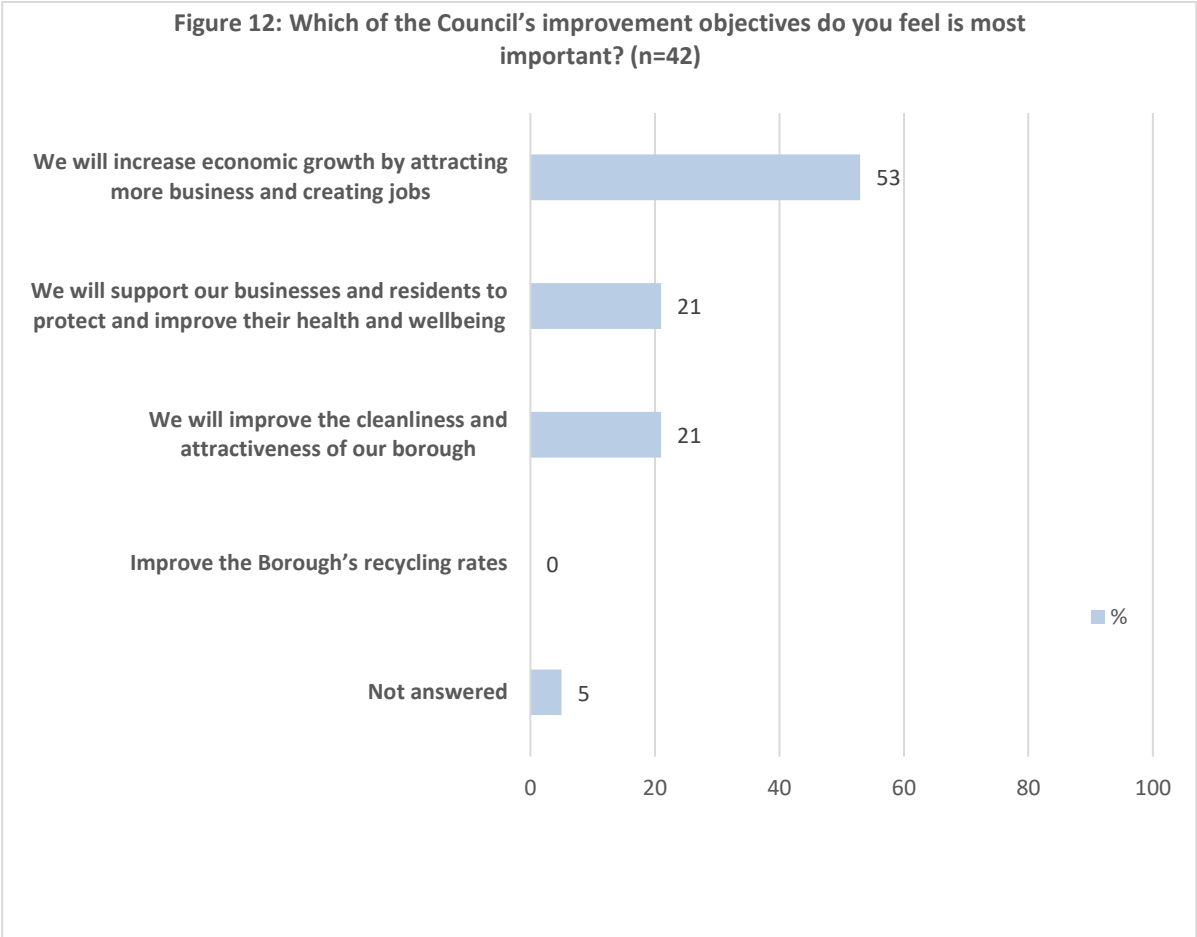
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- Concern that commitments are not concrete objectives as delivery of a Leisure Plan and review of policy on grants should be day to day issues which suggests that these are not business as usual.
- Would like to see the Council's vision for encouraging residents to get more active more often.
- Consider well-lit spaces for women, especially over winter months.
- Support social sport, and working with schools to help young people. Also support national and international events to come to the area and inspire the population to get involved. This needs reviewed and improved.
- Cease supporting costly well-being and cultural events.
- Inconsistent to advertise and promote well-being events and then apply high participation fees (e.g. £95 per person) as many residents struggle with affordability. Focus on providing events that are accessible to all.
- Improve health and wellbeing by improving footfall to Bangor and provide rate free periods / incentives to attract businesses.
- Make Council processes more transparent (e.g. bids/tenders for various services etc.) and don't just employ 'your own'.
- The planners should be creating more green space areas and leisure facilities.
- Bangor should become a 15-minute City (i.e. ensuring all necessary amenities are within a 15-minute walk to reduce car use and improve wellbeing)
- Newtownards has no walkable parks / green spaces and Londonderry Park is not near where people live.
- Council policies induce stress among residents which impacts on mental health.
- Bangor has sufficient open spaces.
- Concern about quality of the Aurora Leisure Centre.
- Questioned if the Council can achieve these goals with one consultee noting that 'it reads like a brain storm session'.
- Council keeping areas safer and cleaner may improve resident mental health.
- Health and wellbeing an area that needs improvement.
- Money wasted on consultations and the end product is poor.
- A resident perception that the Council is content to see the demise of Bangor.
- Health and wellbeing begins by providing spaces for people to come together. More support for groups attempting to regenerate derelict sites would be extremely helpful.

3.7 Most Important Performance Improvement Objective

Just over half (53%) of residents said that increasing economic growth and creating jobs is the most important performance improvement objective, with 21% saying supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is most important. Twenty-one percent said that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is most important, with none of the consultees saying that improving the Borough's recycling rates is most important. Five percent of consultees did not answer this question.



3.8 Other Areas for Improvement Suggested by Residents

Other suggested areas of improvement which residents believe the Council should focus on included:

- Car Parks need investment. Some are not fit for purpose.
- Holywood is viewed as an affluent area. However it is not the case for the majority of residents and free services/amenities would be welcome for residents.
- Dog fouling around Holywood needs to be seriously looked at and tackled by the council.
- Economic growth needs to be grouped with daring innovation. Need to move away from traditional approaches (e.g. street markets).
- Use some of the old Council buildings for business startups, or for remote meeting facilities / hot desks.
- Get Councillors into a superhub where we can visit and discuss issues with everyone or find out which party can help best with issues.
- Start now on a model for Christmas lights 2024, to get them turned off after 10pm. It is shocking that rate payers are expected to pay for lighting streets when no shops are open.

- Rates are high and use rate incentives to bring back the High Street not kill it.
- Reduce waste, reduce rates and improve services.
- More events for residents and visitors outside the Borough. Showcase what Bangor has to offer.
- Involve town centre businesses and residents from the Borough who have businesses.
- Less pressure on recycling and letting recycling centre workers be more hands on helping residents.
- Clear pathways and clean areas outside of main towns.
- Have street ambassadors back that speak more freely to the residents and visitors to our area and getting face to face information on what differences can be made.
- More support for older people (e.g. getting out and about, providing offers and more things leisurely for them instead of constantly concentrating on those who are able to attend gyms, able to walk without aid and those who simply do not sit at home daily).
- More support for teens (e.g. youth clubs, mixing teens of different backgrounds).
- More support and marketing of businesses.
- Provide the best services and always maintain high standards of co-operation with Council health and safety teams.
- Need a closer watch on businesses operating illegally in the Borough including businesses, community groups, regeneration groups etc. who get council funding but who may not be legitimate.
- Greater transparency within council and accountability for decision making in relation to public money (questioned spending £1m on a sculpture and suggested that this funding could have been allocated to other areas to the greater benefit of residents).
- Community groups are struggling due to lack of funding and unable to provide services.
- Bangor needs a pop in room / 'cafe' where councillors spend at least one or two days a week getting feedback / interacting / engaging directly with residents. People need to be heard and seen at the grassroots level.
- Planners should have greater focus on opportunities for walking and not planning for the needs of car users. Planning policy needs to include more walking connections with more green spaces, food growing (allotments) and local shops. The 15 minute city should be adopted.
- Expected to see climate and Net Zero goals in the plan.
- Biodiversity should be an objective and needs to be improved within the Borough.
- Focus on communication by senior staff within Council (could improve).
- Better communication and regular updates regarding the development of the sea front.
- Focus on redevelopment of Bangor and Millisle. Donaghadee and Ards are thriving.
- Council should be engaging with other government agencies to improve the economy of the Borough and connectivity between the towns and villages of the Borough should be part of that.
- Bus routes between Millisle and Bangor would boost local tourism.
- The council actually listening to and working for the residents.
- Council should stop having closed meetings.

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- Conduct an audit of resident opinion of the HRC booking system.
- Council should be more accountable, truthful and provide greater value for money.
- Support social enterprise and think outside of the box when it comes to economic growth.
- The Courthouse in Bangor has been inspirational in bringing art and music to the area. Ards, on the other hand, is severely lacking.
- There are very few pubs that host entertainment.
- Outdoor park space is virtually non-existent.
- Cultural events tend to be aimed at the more affluent.
- More staff resource on the ground and reduce inhouse Council staff.
- Become a more open, trustful, effective, transparent, approachable organisation.
- Put more effort into supporting current businesses by supporting and helping improvement.
- Urgently look at a cleaning campaign for Donaghadee to deal with litter and dog fouling and introduce a constant visible employee to monitor on a daily basis.
- Prioritise the Commons area to improve park, grounds and facilities
- Continuing to promote the work of LMPs.
- Improve all services which the Council has responsibility for.

[Appendix 1 \(Topic Guide\)](#)



Resident Views on the Council's Performance Improvement Objectives

May 2024

Introduction

- Why we are doing this research
- Your contribution
- What we will talk about
- Focus group guidelines
- Request to voice record
- Confidential and not attributable
- GDPR
- What happens to your feedback



What are your general views on Ards and North Down Borough Council?

- Council's 4 Improvement Objectives
- Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs
- Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough
- Improve the Borough's recycling rates
- Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

Objective 1: Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

- **Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?**
- **Reasons council is focusing on this objective...**
  - Top priority in most recent resident survey (keeping rate increases at or below inflation ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - 80% of Council funding from rates (more rate payers means residents / businesses pay less)
  - Economic growth can lead to better living standards, more employment opportunities and economic security
  - Improved economic wellbeing leads to better health, wealth and happiness but must be sustainable / inclusive
  - Economic growth reduces poverty helping everyone to benefit from the transition to a more sustainable future
  - Rates from businesses have decreased year on year since 2015
  - Economic growth will increase the number of VAT / PAYE paying businesses in the Borough
  - GVA per head lowest across all NI Councils
  - 24% of working age residents economically inactive
  - Average earnings for AND residents below the NI average
- **Council hopes to achieve...**
  - Support more local businesses to start-up, develop and grow
  - Greater prosperity through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy
  - Help people to realise their life-long potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability
  - More people working in better jobs
  - Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
  - Partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g. digital) across the Borough
  - Develop the cultural and heritage assets of the Borough
  - Manage, promote and enhance the Borough making it a sustainable visitor destination

Objective 1: Increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Council plans to...

- Manage and deliver programmes to enhance physical and digital infrastructure (BD)
- Develop regeneration improvements in conjunction with City and Town Advisory Groups (TAGs)
- Deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme
- Work to optimise funding and collaborate with partners to create / deliver innovative transformation support
- Deliver NI Enterprise Support Service 'Go Succeed' and other general business support programmes
- Manage, promote and enhance the borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice
- Meet the Schedule 3 Planning Indicators of the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015

Q. Are you supportive of these actions?  
*(very supportive, supportive, not very supportive, not at all supportive)*

Q. Which of these actions is most important?

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Office of the Mayor  
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Objective 1: Increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

Measuring progress with meeting this objective

- Development works at Marine Gardens and McKee Clock Arena - 60% completed by March 2025
- Action Plan for Innovation Hub concept by 31 March 2025 to support Creative / Digital Tech Sectors
- Develop master plan / outline business case by 31 March 2025 for delivery of business park (former NIE site on Balloo Road, Bangor)
- Develop Greenway - Droopdaun to Green Road Project to be ready 2025/26
- Develop Greenway - Corridor to Newlands Park Project to secure planning permission and contractor procurement to commence by 31st March 2025
- Planning application to be submitted by 31st March 2025 for Whiteports redevelopment project
- Design Briefs completed and planning application progressed by 31st March 2025 for Newlands Park Citizens Hub
- Construction contractor appointed 22/03/25 for the World Park redevelopment project
- Business case completed 15/11/2024 to increase cemetery provision within the Borough
- Design teams appointed by 31st March 2025 to take forward a number of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment projects
- Implement Social Value in Council Procurement Policy by 31st March 2025
- Create 6 new Town City Advisory Groups following advice from key stakeholders
- Create 2 additional village partnership groups by 31 March 2025 - North Down and Strangford (equivalent to the Ards Peninsula Partnership Group)
- Undertake a review of the village plans by 31st March 2025 and agree with the partnership groups key priority projects
- Develop Urban Rural projects to encourage people to access hilltop streams
- Complete delivery of the Portlerry Public Realm by 31st March 2025 (using funding secured from the Small Settlements Grant)
- Develop and deliver 4 capital projects using the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Grant
- Support 17 businesses through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund programme
- Deliver 12 projects through Labour Market Partnership Action Plan
- Sustainability Checklist for events to be developed and applied to Council's Tourism events and grant aided events by 31st March 2025
- Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales - experiences 600 walks and tours to 30%
- Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales - food and drink experiences to 35%
- Deliver 2nd training seminar to the tourism food and drink sector
- Deliver 2nd training seminar to the tourism food and drink sector
- Major Planning applications processed within an average of 35 weeks (Statutory Indicator)
- Local Planning applications processed within an average of 16 weeks (Statutory Indicator)
- 70% of planning enforcement cases concluded within 99 weeks (Statutory Indicator)

Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Office of the Mayor  
SMR

Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council's improvement objective of increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs

1. Very supportive
2. Supportive
3. Not very supportive
4. Not at all supportive

Objective 2: Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough

Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

Reasons Council is focusing on this objective...

- Keeping areas clean and tidy, reducing litter and fly tipping, street cleaning and keeping grassed areas weed free were the most commonly suggested improvements in a recent resident survey (2023)
- 81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019).

Council hopes to achieve...(tied with PFG, Community Plan, Corporate Plan)

- Improve the standard of cleanliness of the borough
- Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment
- AND residents feeling pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment
- Grow a clean, attractive, environmentally responsible place, including our city, our towns, villages, countryside and coast

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Office of the Mayor  
SMR

Objective 2: Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough

Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Council plans to...

- Target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities
- Monitor and improve the cleanliness of our public toilets across the borough
- Invest in 'In Bloom' Projects

Q. Are you supportive of these actions?  
*(very supportive, supportive, not very supportive, not at all supportive)*

Q. Which of these actions is most important?

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Office of the Mayor  
SMR



Objective 2: Improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough

Measuring progress with meeting this objective

- Achieve or exceed the NI average Cleanliness Index score of 75.
- Improve (increase) total number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued to 375.
- Achieve 100% success in 'Loos of the Year' Awards.
- E21,000 to be invested in 'In Bloom' Projects.
- 4 'In Bloom' / Best Kept Awards retained.

Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?



Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council's improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough

1. Very supportive

2. Supportive

3. Not very supportive

4. Not at all supportive



Objective 3: Improve the Borough's recycling rates

Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

Reasons council is focusing on this objective...

- Fall in proportion of residents who say their commitment to recycling is 'high' (down 67% in 2021 to 58% in 2023)
- 81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019).
- Commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions within NI Climate Change Act.
- AND Municipal Recycling Rate - 51.7% (2020/21).
- E4.1 million paid in landfill costs in 2023/24.

Council hopes to achieve...

- Work towards an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and borough.
- Improve the Council's recycling rate and reduce landfill costs.
- Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment.
- AND residents feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.
- Grow a clean, attractive, environmentally responsible place, including our city, towns, villages, countryside and coast.



Objective 3: Improving the Borough's recycling rates

Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Council plans to...

- Improve the Council's overall re-use, recycling and recovery rates
- Improve kerbside collection service
- Improve recycling rates at Council delivered events

Q. Are you supportive of these actions?  
(very supportive, supportive, not very supportive, not at all supportive)



Objective 3: Improving the Borough's recycling rates

Measuring progress with meeting this objective

- Reduce the tonnage of municipal solid waste sent to landfill from 35,000 to 31,500 tonnes (Statutory Indicator).
- Increase % of household waste recycled, reused and composted to 60% (Statutory Indicator).
- Reduce biodegradable waste that is diverted from landfill to 19,017 tonnes (Statutory Indicator).
- Improve recycling rates at Council's Household Recycling Centres to 70%.
- Deliver a new kerbside collection model by 31st March 2025.
- Commence new kerbside textiles collection service to increase tonnage of textiles diverted from landfill (2024/25 Target is 250 tonnes).
- Embed and expand the recycling model at Council delivered events by 31st March 2025.

Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?



Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council's improvement objective of improving the Borough's recycling rates ?

- 1. Very supportive
- 2. Supportive
- 3. Not very supportive
- 4. Not at all supportive



Objective 4: Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

Q. Is this an important objective for the Council to be focusing on?

Reasons council is focusing on this objective...

- Residents have identified supporting businesses and residents' health and wellbeing as a top 3 priority.
- Living in greener areas linked with less income-related health inequality (weakens effect of deprivation on health).
- Access to outdoor spaces and leisure activities has been linked to improved mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.6 (male) and 2.6 years (female) - gap in life expectancy between AND residents living in deprived areas (2019/21).

Council hopes to achieve...

- Greater awareness of health in the business community
- Improved use of parks and outdoor spaces
- Provide safe and accessible public spaces
- Resident enjoying long, healthy, active lives
- All residents to enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Enhanced physical and emotional wellbeing of residents through services, facilities and partnerships



Objective 4: Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

Q. What should the Council be doing to meet this objective?

Council plans to...

- Provide additional resources for community health and wellbeing and support utilising existing budgets
- Provide open spaces and parks that are well maintained, managed in an environmentally sustained manner accessible to all and to improve biodiversity in the Borough

Q. Are you supportive of these actions?  
(very supportive, supportive, not very supportive, not at all supportive)



Objective 4: Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

Measuring progress with meeting this objective

- Increase the number of businesses registering for Health and Wellbeing initiatives to 24.
- Continue to develop as a Dementia Friendly Council and borough by March 2025.
- Move to stage 3 and 4 of the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Plan by 31st March 2025.
- Develop a Leisure Strategy for the Borough 2025-2030 by 31st March 2025.
- Deliver 220 Fitness Classes per week by Leisure Ards and NCLT/Serco.
- Increase Active Aging Memberships across Leisure Ards from 400 to 450.
- Increase numbers enrolled in Swim programmes delivered by Leisure Ards and NCLT/Serco from 3,500 to 4,250.
- Review of Council grants policy by 31st March 2025.
- Produce and implement a final PLACERPLUS Local Authority Action Plan in 2024/25.
- Plant 15,000 trees across the Borough.
- Retain the borough's 7 Green Flag awards.
- Increase the m2 of rewilded Council maintained ground to 120,000.
- 40no. Community Gardening projects organised.

Q. Are there any other ways that progress should be measured?



Q. Overall, how supportive are you of the Council’s improvement objective of supporting our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing?

- 1. Very supportive
- 2. Supportive
- 3. Not very supportive
- 4. Not at all supportive



Which of the Council’s improvement objectives do you feel is most important?

- Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs
- Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough
- Improve the Borough’s recycling rates
- Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing



Q. Finally, are there any other areas you would like to see the Council improving on?



Thank you!



Unclassified

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## ITEM 10

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	30 May 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Recording of In Committee Section of Council and Committee Meetings
Attachments	

As members will be aware the Council currently records all Council and Committee Meetings and those recordings are then placed on the Council's website for anyone with an interest. Currently the recording is switched off when a meeting goes 'into committee' and the public and press are excluded from this point.

Often the 'In Committee' section have reports which are particularly technical. This makes taking of the minutes difficult to follow and subsequently scribe. Councillors often speak from prepared notes which hastens their delivery. With no back-up recording it can be very challenging for the Democratic Services Officers to get a full and accurate minute if the speaker deviates from the speech or doesn't provide a copy of it. This is often not known until after the event. It is worthy of note that the 'In Committee' section of the meeting is in the latter part of the evening, when concentration levels can wane, if the meeting is particularly lengthy.

Officers request the consideration of recording the entire meeting with only the public recording being available on the website. This would be recorded in 2 parts to

Not Applicable

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ensure there is a distinction between publicly available recording and the recording made to aid minute taking. This would allow the 'In Committee' section to be recorded for the use of the minute takers and would ensure complete accuracy of the minutes.

### **Risk considerations and mitigations**

To ensure that the recording of the 'In Committee' section would only be used by the minute takers, a secure link would be sent from the technicians to the Democratic Services Manager and minute taker(s) of that particular meeting. The recording would be retained until the minutes have been ratified at the subsequent Council meeting. Once the minutes have been ratified the recording will be deleted. The recordings will only be used to aid minute takers.

As part of the consideration of this matter, contact was made with Democratic Services Managers in the other ten councils. Six responses were received as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>Approach</b>
Antrim and Newtownabbey	The 'In Committee' items are recorded to assist with the production of the minutes. Recordings are held for reference post meeting and deleted following ratification.
Armagh Banbrige Craigavon	The Council only keeps the confidential recording for the purposes of the minute taking. Once the minutes have been approved through Council the confidential recording is disposed of.
Belfast City Council	No recording will take place of a meeting, or those parts of a meeting, where confidential matters, as described in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, are being discussed and where the public have been excluded.
Causeway Coast and Glens	The Council holds its In Committee audio recording of the relevant Council meetings and committees meetings (as we do not record all), for a period of 6 years.
Derry and Strabane	Generally, they do not record the In Committee section of a meeting. The Committee Clerk however can request on occasion (for complicated meetings) for a recording to be taken. In these instances, the recording is deleted once the Minute has been approved by Officers.
Newry Mourne and Down	No recording is taken of the In Committee section of Council or Committee meetings.

From the responses above, it is clear that many Councils record the In Committee section of Council and Committee meetings, purely to aid the production of minutes.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council records the 'In Committee' section of Council and Committee meetings to aid the production of minutes and destroys the recordings once the minutes have been ratified.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 11

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	31 May 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park for a demonstration area.
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Map of Spafield Car Park

The Council has received a request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park, Holywood for a demonstration area as part of the annual last Saturday parade on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. They have requested to use the car park as a demonstration area to host around 2,000 people involved in the parade. There will be portaloos in various locations and a temporary stage set up for a drumhead service with a battery-powered PA system.

Council officers were consulted and have no objections to the usage.

In accordance with Council policy the use will be subject to the following terms and conditions.

The Applicant must:

## Not Applicable

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- i. Ensure that the use of Council land or property is limited to a demonstration area on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 from 9am to 5pm for up to 2,000 participants.
- ii. Pay a refundable bond to Council of £1,000, with all monies to be paid at least 14 days in advance of the event.
- iii. Provide a risk assessment and event management plan at least 14 days in advance of an event.
- iv. Display public notices for at least 14 days before an event to notify the public that said event is due to take place in the area. Signage to be agreed in advance with the appropriate Council Officer.
- v. Public notices must be removed after the event within seven days.
- vi. Provide evidence of relevant insurances at least 14 days in advance and fully indemnify Council against all risks, including injury to persons and/or damage to land or property, associated with the use of the land or property.
- vii. Employ enough stewards to efficiently and effectively protect the premises as well as to attend to the control of entrances and side gates/doors with a view to ensuring the comfort and safety of the public/audience/spectators etc. and /or to prevent any anti-social/ rowdy or obnoxious behaviour.
- viii. Provide appropriate welfare facilities at own cost.
- ix. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage is present.
- x. Make good any damage caused during the use and pay to the Council the cost of any repair work the Council is required to undertake or items the Council considers necessary to replace as a result of the usage.
- xi. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the usage e.g., staging or fencing (timescale for removal to be agreed with Council Officers).
- xii. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all litter and other debris from the main event and adjacent areas during the event, as well as once the event has concluded. However, should the Council have to do any additional cleaning the costs will be recovered from the applicant.
- xiii. Put in place measures to ensure that all litter generated during the event by the organisers, their contractors or by attendees is recycled to the full extent possible. Applicants should consider how to minimise any waste produced and ways in which they can make the event more sustainable.
- xiv. Agree to provide maps or any other document deemed appropriate by Council Officers.
- xv. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the event. Any plans to fence off or exclude the public from any areas should be agreed in advance with Council Officers.
- xvi. Accesses to adjacent properties or businesses must be maintained during the event.
- xvii. Ensure that where appropriate, the car parking facility at the location remains available for use by the general public and that contractors/attendees do not park on grass areas.
- xviii. Where electric supplies are being used this must be agreed in advance with Council Officers. Additional costs may apply depending on the services required.
- xix. No petrol generators are to be used. Where other generators are being used, ensure appropriate spill provision is in place.

Not Applicable

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- xx. No chemicals, oils or other substances should be poured down drains and where cooking oil is being used, appropriate spill provision should be in place.
- xxi. Ensure any statutory or regulatory permissions, licences or permits are sought and obtained in advance or usage.
- xxii. Comply with any other relevant legislative provision including byelaws and have due regard to the Disability Discrimination Order.
- xxiii. Comply with the Council's Safeguarding Policy where children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable will be in attendance.
- xxiv. Where animals will be used as a part of any event, the Council's officers must be notified so that checks to ensure that welfare arrangements are in place can be undertaken, and the Animal Welfare policy must be adhered to.
- xxv. Ensure that only the designated area, or areas specified by Council Officers are used for the event and for the purpose agreed.

The Council:

- i. Shall not be responsible for any loss, damage or injury to any property or person(s), including the applicant's entities suffered by reason of act, neglect or default of the Council, its agents, servants, or workmen.
- ii. Accepts no responsibility as regards loss or damage to property belonging to persons using the premises.
- iii. Does not guarantee the suitability of the premises being used for any purpose whatsoever and the applicant shall in all events be deemed to have satisfied themselves as to the suitability and safe condition of the premises as no liability shall attach to the Council in respect of same.
- iv. Cannot guarantee exclusive use of the land and is not responsible for the actions of any other users of the space.
- v. Shall always have the right to have a duly authorised Officer of the Council present and have access to all parts of the premises for the purposes of inspection.
- vi. May require a pre-event and post event inspection to be carried out in conjunction with a Council Officer.
- vii. Reserves the right to cancel the booking at any time if the applicant does not comply with the Terms and Conditions.
- viii. May withdraw or change permission to use Council land or property at short notice due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council accedes to the request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park, Holywood for a demonstration area on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, subject to the terms and conditions outlined above.



# Spafield Car Park



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This Map is ONLY for use within Ards and North Down Borough Council



Scale: 1:1,250

Date: 31/05/2024

Author:

Unclassified

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## ITEM 12a

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Choose an item.
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Community Planning Manager
Date of Report	24 May 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Performance Report
Subject	Half Yearly Performance Report Community Planning
Attachments	

### Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2024)

Choose an item.

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The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

## Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half 1	April – September	December
Half 2	October – March	June

The report for October 2023 – March 2024 is attached.

## Key points to note:

- During the second half of 2023/24 the Community Planning Manager was involved in additional work projects outside of community planning. This included helping to develop Council's new Corporate Planning (including consultation and engagement activities) and the Charter Plus accreditation for Elected Members.
- Ards and North Down is the first location to move forward with the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity project and it has been slower than anticipated. Issues have been identified in our efforts to translate Public Health England guidance into the Northern Irish system. Phase II of the project was completed in June 2023 and the last 12 months have been spent, with PHA and the Health Trust, identifying the best way to take forward Phase III. Phase III involves complex systems mapping. We are reliant on PHA to appoint a provider to help us, and our stakeholders, completed Phase III and Phase IV.
- In early February the services Community Planning Officer left Council, and the post remained vacant for the rest of the reporting quarter. This contributed to the recorded budgetary underspend.
- The Community Planning Manager has represented the Community Planning Officers Network on a Regional Integrated Care System Board. This Board has been established to share learning from a shadow Area Integrated Partnership Board (AIPB) established in the Southern Trust area. New AIPBs will replace the previous Integrated Care Partnerships.

## Key achievements:

- Age Friendly – Working with the Over 50s Council plus the Council's Disability group to develop the concepts for a Considerate Parking campaign. This is being done using a community planning co-design approach. Age Friendly activities were used to demonstrate Elected Member influence within the community as part of the Charter Plus Accreditation.
- Dementia Friendly – working as part of South Eastern Region Dementia Friendly subgroup we have gathered evidence from carers and people living with dementia to help develop an action plan of support. Work was started to

Choose an item.

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plan an information event for Dementia Action Week and to provide longer-term information stands throughout the Borough.

- Involvement in a Northern Ireland Community Planning Conference. This was organised by the Community Planning Officers Network and was used to identify what has worked well with community planning and how progress can be made to re-enforce its importance in terms of being each Council areas sovereign document.

### **Emerging issues:**

- Slow progress of the WSA to Obesity project.
- Work is needed to re-engagement partners and wider stakeholders in community planning. This will involve a programme of communication demonstrating some of the achievements that have happened because of community planning in Ards and North Down. 2025 is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of community planning in Northern Ireland.

### **Action to be taken:**

- Continue to work with PHA to move forward the WSA to Obesity Project.
- Develop a plan to raise awareness of community planning achievements.

## **RECOMMENDATION**














It is recommended that Council note this report.

Choose an item.




Half yearly Performance Report - Community Planning

Generated on: 24 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Performance Scorecard (Big Plan Priorities)	1	1
	Performance Update Report	1	1
	Promotional campaigns associated with Big Plan priority issues	2	2
	% spend against budget	87.85%	100%
	No. of 3rd Sector CP Forum meetings per year	1	1
	Submission of Statement of Progress	Yes	Yes
	Research Report	0	0
	Events	1	1
	Statistical updates	4	4
	Whole system map to obesity/healthier weight	0	1
	Participation in external groups with an impact on wellbeing	11	10
	Facilitate 4 partner workstream meetings	10	10
	No. of SCCP meetings per year	3	3

Choose an item.

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% staff attendance	99.44%	93%
	Delivery of team briefings	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%

Unclassified

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**ITEM 12b****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Comms and Marketing
Date of Report	28 May 2024
File Reference	CMR_H223
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	H2 Performance Report, Comms and Marketing
Attachments	N/A

**Context**

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Unclassified

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## Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for H2, October to March, is attached.

## Key points to note:

- This report details progress made against Service Plan KPIs. It should be noted that some KPIs are reported on a half-yearly and some on a full yearly basis. All KPIs will be reported against during the course of the reporting year.
- The period under review saw the delivery of a **new website platform** for the Council ([www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)). This was a resource intensive piece of work requiring significant focus by the Corporate Communications team. Delivery required engagement with all council service areas to review content and the updating/ migration of over 1,200 pages of information. The new updated site went live on 25 March. It has a fresh, clean design and more powerful search engine. It has been well received both internally and externally. The transformation team will be working with a number of service areas to try to move more of our customer services online (in line with the feedback from our resident survey).
- Bangor Waterfront – over the past six months the focus for this project has been finalisation and issuing of procurement documents. As such public messaging has been limited – resulting in a lower than anticipated number of visits to the website. This will change moving forward with public announcements around contractors being appointed, etc.

## Key achievements:

- During the period we launched a new **digital participation platform** – [CitizenLab](#) to enable residents to find out more, and provide feedback on, council investment projects. The platform currently holds information on the Ward Park Environmental Improvement Project and was launched to coincide with a public engagement session at the park – allowing us to run traditional and digital engagement approaches together. To date 250 people have registered for the platform and we have received positive engagement and commentary on the scheme. We are compiling learnings from this first use to share with service areas that will be using the platform moving forward including the Bangor Waterfront Development and Whitespots.
- All Council **social media** channels have seen growth over the period – averaging a 31% increase in followers. The 'Time Together' Autumn Destination Awareness campaign that ran in October made a significant contribution to this generating 4.3 million digital impressions (number of times the ads were seen).
- Completion of the biennial **Resident Survey** that recorded an overall satisfaction rate with the Council of 83% (comparative figure for all GB Councils in June 2023 was 60%). Detailed findings were reported to Council in February, are being considered



Unclassified

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by all service areas and will be used to inform several of our performance improvement publications.

- Several successful events took place during the period including the Taste Autumn Food Festival, Puppet Festival, Remembrance events across the Borough and Christmas Switch Ons. Support including **graphic design, technical support, marketing and PR** was provided to each. Promotion of Taste Autumn (including Tide and Turf) was particularly strong, resulting in early and high ticket sales across all events and significant positive media coverage including TV and radio.
- **Internal comms:** the annual staff business conference was delivered in January, with a focus on digital transformation. It was held at the BT Tower in Belfast, with support from BT who are the Council's digital transformation partner.
- From January to March 2024 marketing campaigns were delivered to support the work of the **Labour Market Partnership** (Careers Convention, Jobs Fair, Disability Employment and Support Day, and a general awareness campaign). These ran across digital and traditional channels. Messaging was tailored to the target audience for the specific campaign - including school leavers, job seekers, those re-entering the workforce, etc. A digital campaign strategy, focused on Pay Per Click (PPC) google ads and a social media advertising campaign, to drive traffic through to the LMP landing page delivered significant impressions, reach and uplift in sessions to the website.
- A Borough-wide **Support Local campaign** ran in March 24 across digital and traditional channels (Out-of-Home sites, 30 bus rears, 150k total readership via local weekly newspapers, Cool FM, Downtown, Q Radio and U105). Social media reach was 28.7k. The promotion showcased 73 offers from local businesses covering a broad range of goods and services including hospitality, tourism attractions, gifts, healthcare, homeware and beauty. 1.5k promotional in-store assets were distributed to businesses (posters, display boards and decals), including 'evergreen assets' for long term window and counter display that remain in stores to continue to reinforce the 'support local ' message.
- Ongoing programme of **communications** (PR/ graphic design/ technical event support/ social media content) work to promote a range of Council initiatives including the In Bloom Programme/ Mobile Orchards Launch/ Recycling Programme/ Grants/ Tourism Development Activity/ Community Initiatives.

### Emerging issues:

- To support work by Transformation on the development of the Corporate Plan, focus groups were undertaken on the priorities and overall vision of a 'Sustainable Borough'. This was specifically focused upon assessing residents understanding of, and engagement with, some of the language we use around sustainability. This has highlighted the need for more clarity and more realistic aspirations in this respect, which will be factored into communications messages moving forward.
- Resources continue to be prioritised on employee engagement and communications activity, including actions from the People Plan and a range of activities and initiatives to engage staff with the Council's Behaviour Charter and Values.

### Action to be taken:

- In line with the Borough Events Strategic Direction paper, delivery of Council run events is changing and more support is being given e.g. via grants to third parties. A review of communications and marketing support is being undertaken to maximise

Unclassified

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opportunities while encourage third parties to undertake their own promotional schedule.

- A number of service areas are keen to explore sponsorship opportunities that support core activities either directly or indirectly. To facilitate the development of commercial relationships that are in line with the Council's values and strategic priorities it is proposed to develop a sponsorship policy. This will be progressed in line with the agreed policy development process and come before Council in due course.
- As outlined in the new service plan work is ongoing on the development of a new digital Borough Magazine, the first edition will be live in September 2024.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note this report.

Unclassified





Half yearly Performance Report - Communications and Marketing

Generated on: 30 May 2024

Last Update H1 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% service areas actively engaged in PR planning	95%	95%
	% Multimedia requests delivered to timescales	95%	95%
	% client satisfaction	93%	95%
	% spend against budget	95.41%	100%
	Develop a new .gov.uk website	YES	YES
	% increase in unique page views for Bangor Waterfront website section	14%	20%
	% resident awareness of Council services	78%	80%
	% resident satisfaction with Comms	81%	80%
	% satisfaction with engagement	87%	80%
	% satisfaction with website	93%	90%
	% staff attendance	95.21%	93%
	% increase in engagement with Council social media (cumulative)	31%	6%
	Time invested in briefing, training etc. (Comms staff)	73 days	70 days
	Launch digital engagement platform	YES	YES
	% staff receiving team briefings	100%	100%

Unclassified

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% completed Employee appraisal in the period Sept 23 – March 25	78%	100%
	% savings in advertising spend	4.5%	3%
	% employee satisfaction with engagement (cumulative)	76%	80%
	% employees consider council a great place to work	72%	75%

Unclassified

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## ITEM 12c

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	31 May 2024
File Reference	FIN76
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Performance Report - Half Year
Attachments	

### Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

Unclassified

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The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

### Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for October 2023 to March 2024 is attached.

### Key points to note:

- Although, spend against budget is showing a red status, this is because interest received is significantly higher than budgeted – over £723k above budget. If this was excluded the status is green, 98%.

### Key achievements:

- Policy work has progressed well this year, with 3 new planned policies agreed in the second half of the year. In addition, a further two were completed, although not originally planned.
- Transaction activities are all above target and performing well.
- Budget reporting having is back on track this year, having struggled to hit the 9 working day target last year, has been on time each month this year.

### Issues:

- Month end reconciliation processes are not hitting their target, due to staff vacancy. This post has now been filled.
- Unplanned workload still is affecting the ability to deliver improvement initiatives with only 5 out of 16 delivered over the course of the year.
- Although the finance service has not engaged formally with every service twice over the past year. 12 engagement meetings have taken place, and it is planned to further roll these out in the coming months, particularly focussed around estimates and year-end financial statements processes.

### Actions to be taken:

- A number of the improvement initiatives not addressed last year will be considered as part of the implementation of the new financial management system, which will also consider which business processes need to be reviewed in order to adapt to the new software.
- The two policies that had been planned for completion last year, but which are outstanding will be in draft by the Audit Committee meeting on 22 June. As both

Unclassified

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are staff related, they will go through the normally Human Resources policy consultation process which it is hoped to complete by March 2025.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note this report.

Unclassified

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Status	PI Code	Short Name	H1 2023/24		H2 2023/24	
			Value	Target	Value	Target
	FN02.001	% statutory deadlines met	47%	48%	95%	100%
	FN03.001	To pay employees on time	99.7%	100%	99.6%	100%
	FN03.002	% Debtors payments received within 30 days of invoice date	77%	75%	81%	75%
	FN03.003	% creditors paid within 30 calendar days	97%	96%	96%	96%
	FN04.001	To issue monthly budgetary control reports in a timely fashion	9	9	9	9
	FN04.002	To complete account reconciliations within 9 working days of month end	45	9	30	9
	FN05.001	% satisfactory internal audit reports	N/A	100%	100%	100%
	FN05.002	To have an unqualified audit opinion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	FN06.001	% spend against budget	56.1%	100%	14%	100%
	FN01.001	% staff attendance	96.4%	93%	96.6%	93%
	FN01.002	% staff receiving team briefings	70%	100%	81%	100%
	FN02.001	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	-	-	50%	100%
	FN02.001	Implement Development Initiatives	1	8	5	16



Unclassified

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## ITEM 12d

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance
Date of Report	04 June 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Strategic Transformation and Performance Service Performance Report Q3 + Q4 2023/24
Attachments	Six-monthly performance report (Q3 + Q4) 2023/24

## Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (30 September 2023)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Unclassified

## Reporting approach

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The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a six-monthly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October - March	May

The report for Quarter 4 2023-24 is attached.

### Key points to note:

- Spend against budget is slightly lower than expected (96.66%) due to the vacant Performance Improvement Officer post.
- Attendance (at 91.13%) is slightly below the target of 93% and this is a result of one member of staff being on long-term sick leave. This is also the reason for the percentage of time invested in team briefing, training, development and performance conversations being slightly under target (4.91 % versus a target of 5%).
- The Head of Service lead the facilitation and development of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, which is currently being prepared for publication.

Digital Services	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft IT Disaster Recovery Plan approved by CLT in November 2023.</li> <li>• Systems and network uptime is 99%.</li> <li>• 92.1% of service calls are satisfactorily addressed within timescales (against a target of 97%). It should be noted that this figure only reflects those calls logged through the helpdesk. Many staff continue to email Digital Services staff and contact them in person, and these service requests/ response times are not captured. This should be resolved with the new helpdesk, which will go live in September 2024.</li> <li>• Digital Services lead the development of our Digital Strategy, in collaboration with our external specialists, BT. This was completed in February 2024.</li> <li>• Significant work has been undertaken to progress recommendations from our Cyber security review and the majority of staff have completed the Cisco Cyber Security Essentials training.</li> <li>• Council's telephony estate has been reviewed and implementation of new solution commenced in late November 2023 with 'go live' timetabled for May 2024.</li> <li>• Wide Area Network (WAN) project implementation is well progressed.</li> <li>• Transitioning of the mobile phones is well progressed.</li> <li>• All outstanding Priority 1 audit recommendations have been closed.</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging Issues</b>	Succession planning is an identified risk within the service.

Unclassified

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<b>Action to be taken</b>	Further staff training and development, particularly in relation to cyber-security profiled for 2024.
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Transformation Service	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since being established in September 2023 (temporarily for a period of two years) the Transformation Service has completed the following projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of service planning process.</li> <li>- Post project Evaluation (PPE) of the Core system.</li> <li>- Business Continuity Plan developed.</li> <li>- South Street office relocation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The following projects are underway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leisure transformation.</li> <li>- Review of Corporate Grants Policy and Processes (Phase 1).</li> <li>- Ongoing review of the Core system.</li> <li>- Review of Events Strategy.</li> <li>- Community centres/ halls review.</li> <li>- New finance system.</li> <li>- Migration of telephony.</li> <li>- Mobile phone transitioning.</li> <li>- Legal services review.</li> <li>- Review of Procurement Service.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All audit recommendations have been closed.</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging Issues</b>	Two of the Transformation Officers are on agency contracts. In order to ensure we retain this talent the Council is investigating the viability of moving these staff onto temporary contracts.
<b>Action to be taken</b>	The Transformation Team will continue to gather and collate evidence to demonstrate the value add of their activities with a view to securing permanent funding for their posts from September 2025.

Procurement Service	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement savings for the Council are over target for the year to date (£361,139 versus £250,000). Figure achieved through Procurement engaging with Service areas to define project budgets, and tenders received being under this stipulated budget.</li> <li>• There have been zero procurement challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging Issues</b>	Historically, over the last 5 years, the PSU (with a full team of 3 staff: Procurement Manager; Procurement Officer; and Procurement Assistant) managed an average of 25 tender exercises per year.

Unclassified

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	<p>Circa 43 tender exercises were programmed for the year 2023.</p> <p>There are approximately 30 procurement exercises already identified for 2024.</p> <p>This represents an increase in tenders of circa 70% for the PSU.</p> <p>Whilst the Procurement Officer post was filled in June 2023, the PSU has been without a Procurement Assistant since early August, again reducing the staff complement to two.</p> <p>The current structure (FTE 3) does not have the capacity to address the increased workload nor to identify corporate tenders which can achieve significant efficiencies across the organisation both in terms of monetary savings and also process/ transactional savings.</p>
<b>Action to be taken</b>	<p>The Transformation Team has commenced a review of the PSU to understand the optimal staffing compliment and structure required to deliver the ever-increasing volume of procurements required across the organisation.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report.

## Half yearly Performance Report - Strategic Transformation and Performance

Generated on: 03 June 2024

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	96.66%	100%
	No. of successful procurement challenges	0	0
	% service calls satisfactorily addressed within timescales	92.1%	97%
	% systems and network uptime	99%	99%
	Attendance at ED organised SME training events	1	1
	% staff attendance	91.13%	93%
	% staff receiving regular team briefings	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	% time invested in team briefing, training, development and performance conversations	4.91%	5%
	No. of live transformation and efficiency projects supported	10	5
	£ Procurement savings (cumulative)	£361,139	£250,000

Unclassified

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## ITEM 12e

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	N/A
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Administration
Date of Report	24 May 2024
File Reference	ADM 19
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 201
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Administration Performance Report June 2024
Attachments	

### Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

N/A

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## Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for April – September 2023 is attached.

### Key points to note:

The majority of targets in the Administration Service Plan are measured annually.

### Key achievements:

Despite the number and complexity of information requests (FOI/DSAR) the Council has continued to respond within the statutory timeframe for 97% (FOI) and 100% (DSAR).

The Council introduced a new Complaints Handling Procedure in line with the NIPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure which reduces the procedure from 3 to 2 Stages before the complaint can be escalated to NIPSO. This was launched in October 2023 and the first report will be in March 2024 on Jan - Mar 2023.

### Emerging issues:

It is apparent that high impact weather is now hitting the Borough more frequently than in the past. The Risk Management team have robust reporting mechanisms to alert officers and provide horizon scanning and live information to the public and Elected Members (through the Communication team).

### Action to be taken:

We continue to work towards all of the KPIs.

## RECOMMENDATION
















It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

N/A




















Half yearly Performance Report - Administration

Generated on: 24 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24








Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Complete Climate Adaption and Actions Plans (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Review and update Roadmap to Sustainability	75%	100%
	EMS - Retain accreditation and use framework in all Council buildings	Yes	Yes
	% spend against budget	111.38%	100%
	% agenda circulated within 5 day notice periods	100%	100%
	FOI/EIR Information response times in compliance with legislation	81%	100%
	DSAR response time in compliance with legislation	100%	100%
	Compile database of all data sharing agreements (cumulative)	80%	100%
	Ensure all staff are up to date with data protection training (cumulative)	60%	100%
	Complete eLearning module to accompany the CCTV policy (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Update CCTV Policy with required amendments	100%	100%
	Ensure the Protecting our Data group continues to monitor data protection issues (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Train CLT/HOST in emergency planning response protocol	100%	100%
	Complete annual reconciliation of the insurance schedule	80%	100%
	Provide guidance on risk tolerance and appetite	100%	100%

N/A

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Online incident report form Risk Strategy guidance for risk tolerance and appetite (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Risk Strategy - Aligning service risks to corporate register (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Monitor and deliver 5 year Equality Action Plan (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Screen 100% of all new and revised policies	100%	100%
	Monitor the implementation of the action plan in the Roadmap to Sustainability	100%	100%
	Update Customer Service Excellence Strategy and Action Plan for 2020-2024	75%	100%
	Resolution rate for issues or enquiries at first point of contact for Customer Service	99%	100%
	Monitor Customer Services Management Reports	100%	100%
	Monitor and analyse social media compliants and compliments using Te-care	100%	100%
	Complete roll-out and provide training on Te-care to all staff responsible for logging complaints	100%	100%
	Implement new customer complaints handling procedure to all staff	100%	100%
	Carry out Trend analysis	100%	100%
	Hold 4 Corporate Health and Safety Meetings (cumulative)	4	4
	Develop a corporate health and safety and wellbeing risk register	100%	100%
	Number of Emergency Planning Implementation group meetings held (cumulative)	2	2
	Publish map of all asserted PROWS on Council website (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Amalgamate and enhance Title deed register (cumulative)	50%	100%
	Finalise updated Lands Policy (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Review and update Lease register (cumulative)	100%	100%



N/A

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Review information from 3rd parties for use of land and/or event grant applications (cumulative)	100%	100%
	Have 2 emergency planning test activations	2	2
	% staff attendance	92.82%	93%
	% employees om whom time invested in Team Briefings	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	Develop Claims Management Policy (cumulative)	75%	100%
	Deliver It takes Allsorts programme quarterly to address current identified issues of minority populations	100%	100%

Unclassified

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## ITEM 12f

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of HR and OD
Date of Report	06 June 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	HR and OD Performance Report Q4
Attachments	Table showing performance indicators

### Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

Not Applicable

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for quarter 4, 2023-2024 is attached

Key points to note:

- This report gives an update on performance against the 16 Service Plan KPIs with 9 being totally achieved, 2 being borderline to bein achieved and 5 showing as not being achieved.

Key achievements:

All candidates have been notified of results and interviews within a 2 week period.

An Agile working policy has been consulted on and has been fully implemented

The Agency policy has been reviewed and updated, including an update of all relevant policies

The new digital Appraisal Scheme is in place and managers are being encouraged to complete appraisals using the new more efficient approach

An Absence Action Plan and Absence Dashboard have been created and are updated on a quarterly basis for presentation to Managers and Elected Members

The absenteeism within the HR and OD Service is extremely low with an attendance level of 97.24%

Team Briefings are delivered to the HR team in a timely manner

Targets not Achieved

Number of sick days lost per employees who are sick across the organisation is 16 days, the target is currently 12 days.

Not Applicable

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A formal Corporate Induction process is not in place, however, there is a thorough and well documented departmental induction programme in place.

Although there has been considerable progress made in the formulation of a Workforce Strategy, this has not yet been completed.

A target showing which is showing as not achieved is the number of appraisals which have been completed for HR staff. This is showing at 50%, the target was 100%. However, as this is the first year of the new Appraisal Scheme, a period of 18 months is being given to have these completed.

Similarly with the People Plan 70% of the People Plan was completed at the end of March 2023, however an 18 month period is also in place with regard to this target being met.

#### Action to be taken:

- Focus on encouraging managers to carry out staff appraisals under the new Scheme
- Continue to analyse absence statistics and constantly develop and review ideas to encourage higher attendance at work

#### RECOMMENDATION














It is recommended that Council note this report.

Not Applicable



Half yearly Performance Report - Human Resources and Organisational Development

Generated on: 06 June 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	97.87%	100%
	Main HR and OD policies to be reviewed and consulted on	100%	100%
	% of recruitment exercises completed within 6 weeks	94%	95%
	% of candidates not shortlisted to be informed within 2 weeks from date of shortlisting	100%	100%
	% of candidates not sucessful at interview to be notified within 2 weeks from date of interview	100%	100%
	Develop a Corporate Induction Programme for all new Council staff so that all staff will be able to settle in more quickly and therefore be more productive	No	Yes
	Formulation of an Agile Working policy	100	100
	Complete Agency tender	100%	100%
	% staff attendance	97.24%	93%
	Delivery of Team Briefings	100%	100%
	Average number of days lost per employee (Council Wide)	16	12
	% of actions on the People Plan completed	70%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	50%	100%

Not Applicable

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Implement an updated Staff Review and Development Scheme for all staff	100	100
	Develop an Action plan for Absenteeism (APSE recommendations)	100	100

Last Update 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Implement a formal Workforce strategy	No	31-Mar-2024

Not Applicable

Unclassified

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## ITEM 13

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Organisational Development and Administration
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	10 June 2024
File Reference	EQ 33
Legislation	Section 75 The Northern Ireland Act 1998; Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Quarterly Report on Equality and Good Relations (Section 75 of The N.I. Act 1998) 1 April 2024- 30 June 2024
Attachments	None

In accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme, a progress report is required to be submitted to the Council's Corporate Services Committee every quarter. This ensures the Council complies with its obligations to meet its equality and good relations duties and responsibilities, as identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

This report lists the actions of Council officers to meet the statutory duties between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024.

#### Consultative Panel

The Consultative Panel did not meet within this reporting period, however the next meeting is scheduled for 30 July 2024 at The Marquis Hall, Bangor. The panel members will review Council policies. Suggestions and comments will be added to the screening forms.



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**Screening of Council policies**

The Internal Screening Panel met in May 2024. Officers from across the Council directorates screened five Council policies. This enabled comments to be received, considered, and addressed.

**Quarterly Consultations**

The Council has a requirement within the Equality Scheme to publish the outcome of screened policies quarterly. A quarterly report will be uploaded onto the Council's website on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**Equality Action Plan**

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) continues to review and ensure that items outlined in the plan are in place and on track. Officers are reminded of their responsibilities during the quarterly Screening Panel meetings. A review of the Equality Action Plan (EAP) is required and a new EAP for 2025 – 2030 is underway.

**Disability Booklet**

A disability booklet has been drafted by the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) and the Councils' training co-ordinator. This booklet is a reference guide to meeting the needs of those with a disability who use Council Services. The booklet is currently in draft form and it is hoped that this will be distributed to all staff via email and made available on the ANDI portal.

**Training**

30 Casual Staff from the events team have been trained in disability awareness and safeguarding. Training plays a crucial role in helping staff develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of people with disabilities. The training equips them with effective communication strategies and use of appropriate language when interacting with individuals with disabilities, leading to more respectful and meaningful interactions.

The training explained the tools and resources to address challenges and support the needs of people with disabilities, ultimately equipping them with the knowledge and skills to feel confident and competent in providing support.

**Disability Forum in conjunction with Council Events**

To gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities at Council events, a productive meeting was arranged with representatives from the Ards and North Down Disability Forum, along with Council's Event Manager and a member from the Council's communications team.

During the meeting, valuable suggestions were contributed, such as creating a 'quiet hour' prior to the main opening time at Sea Bangor events for registered groups, to address the concerns of wheelchair users and large crowds. Furthermore, the issue of limited parking was addressed, resulting in the exploration of hiring specially adapted buses and organising park-and-ride options. It was agreed that this would be investigated further for next year's event.

The need for disabled viewing areas was carefully considered, leading to the establishment of a dedicated viewing area in partnership with the Royal Scottish

Unclassified

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Pipeband Association at this year's UK Pipeband Championship in Ward Park. Additionally, the strategic placement of accessible toilets near these areas was recommended for the convenience of attendees. The Council was commended for its existing facilities, particularly the consistent use of Accessaloo at all tourism events.

A walkability audit was thoughtfully conducted the day before the Sea Bangor event, allowing the Forum to provide real-time suggestions to encourage and support those with disabilities in attending. The Forum is eager to conduct a further walkability audit in Comber prior to the Comber Earlies event.

This proactive collaboration has not only addressed existing challenges but has also set a promising precedent for inclusive and accessible events in the future.

### **Disability Action Plan**

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) continues to work to deliver the Disability Action Plan (DAP). This is reported through the Internal Screening Group and the Disability Forum. At these meetings, any identified concerns may be added to the plan to ensure appropriate actions are identified and undertaken promptly to enable the Council to remain compliant with the relevant legislation. A review of the DAP is required and a new DAP for 2025 – 2030 is underway.

### **Complaints**

During this period, no Section 75 complaints have been received.

### **It Takes All Sorts**

The 'It Takes All Sorts' team are meeting in July to discuss the upcoming events for 24/25, this will be reported in the next quarterly report.

### **Carers Event, supporting Carers Week.**

Ards and North Down Borough Council hosted its tenth annual carers event on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024 as per the agreed Equality Action Plan (2020 – 2025) The event is organised by SEHSCT to mark careers week which is held in June. The event allows Council to celebrate and acknowledge the work of unpaid-paid carers in the Borough. The event was for a maximum of thirty carers who took a tour of Bangor Walled Garden and then enjoy a light lunch in the Craig Room at City Hall. The Deputy Mayor attended the event and expressed gratitude to the carers for their invaluable work and the positive impact they have on the lives of others. The event was oversubscribed, (50 carers attended the event), the current constraints of the equality budget do not allow for hosting this type of event. If the event is to be included in the next Equality Action Plan (2025-2027), the Council would need to agree on a budget to facilitate this event.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 14

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	29 May 2024
File Reference	Sus 1
Legislation	Climate Change Act Northern Ireland NI (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Roadmap to Sustainability
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Update on Roadmap Actions

The Roadmap to Sustainability (the Roadmap) was agreed by Council in March 2021. It has been developed to formalise the Council's commitment to becoming more sustainable and to act as a key enabler in this regard.

The Roadmap runs from the period 2021 to 2028 to coincide with 2 Corporate Plan phases. It will be updated periodically, with the accompanying Action Plan reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The first update report summarising progress against the key actions agreed in the Roadmap was provided to Council in December 2021 with further updates provided every six months since. The latest six-monthly update against actions has been prepared for Members and is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

As reported in June 2023 Corporate Committee it is our intention to review the Roadmap in line with recommendations from internal audit. This is ongoing. We will update Members once this is complete.

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**Environmental Management System (ISO14001)**

The Council obtained full recertification of its Environmental Management System (ISO14001) in May 2024. The auditor identified no aspects for improvement. This accreditation is for 3 years. This accreditation demonstrates the continuous improvement and commitment officers have in relation to environmental practices throughout all services.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this update report.

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

Key:

Complete
Underway
Not started

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
1	Rethink the Council model of working – complete a strategic review of the existing staff working of flexible home working arrangements, working hours/contracted hours of 9-5 to avoid high overtime and toil for those working ‘out of hours’ and office accommodation requirements following the Covid 19 pandemic. What became apparent was the ability of council staff to be flexible in how and where they worked. As a result, transport, pollution and carbon emissions decreased. Flexible working can also benefit through reducing office space requirements. This could also potentially benefit the Council through the closure of inefficient office accommodation and the use of effective space planning through, for example, hot desking arrangements. Review contractual working arrangements to reflect service needs, reducing OT and TOIL for weekend working where this is the norm, not the exception.	HoS Human Resources (all Service Units to contribute)	underway by July 2021/completed by April 2022	Work in progressing on the Office Rationalisation project. Analysis of current office usage is due to commence around September time. The aim of this is to collect actual real data on specific usage.
2	Review of existing, funded projects, e.g., Belfast Region City Deal - how can these now be completed with Sustainability at their core and particularly with renewables and energy efficiency and social value as a priority. Ensure that Sustainability Champions (see action 3) are at all capital or regeneration projects meeting.	HoS Strategic Capital Development	Underway by March 2021/ ongoing	As part of the overall review of the Roadmap we will combine actions 2 & 12.

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
3	<p>Train all staff on Sustainability awareness and Climate Change.</p> <p>In addition, train a small team of officers/managers as Sustainability Champions utilising Sustainable NI – these champions will be selected by the Roadmap Working Group and approved by relevant line managers. The Sustainability Champions will act as ‘leads’ on Sustainability to work across all service areas to sense check and challenge where sustainability should be considered. They will not be ‘experts’ but trained to a level that they are competent and confident to questions decisions made and perhaps refer back to the Compliance Officer - Sustainability for wider consideration and guidance.</p>	HoS Administration	June 2021	COMPLETE - Training is now live, launched on 21 March 2023. This will be refreshed with staff every 3 years. Platform has changed so it did stall for a short time but is going live again shortly.
4	<p>Develop a Sustainable Food Strategy for the Council and Borough</p> <p>Following the Sustainable Food Places approach, key deliverables may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establishing a food partnership to lead on the development of the strategy</li> <li>2. Development of the Sustainable Food Strategy</li> </ol> <p>Establishing ‘Revive and Refresh’ arrangements to ensure that the partnership and strategy is working and being implemented effectively.</p>	HoS Administration	underway by June 2021/ ongoing	<p>Some work has progressed on Sustainable Food Places but a Strategy can only be progressed with additional resourcing.</p> <p>The sustainable food growing strategy (Let’s Grow Together) is in place: <a href="http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grow">www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grow</a></p> <p>A business case has been prepared and submitted to the sustainability fund for a post to support and deliver this action.</p>
5	<p>Develop a Tree &amp; Woodland Strategy for the Borough.</p> <p>Key deliverables/ steps may include: The document will have three main aims:</p>	HoS Parks and Cemeteries	March 2021 (strategy developed by – work ongoing beyond March 2021)	<p>Since the start of the STAND4TREES initiative in March 2021, 45,000+ trees have been planted along with 12 new community orchards.</p> <p>Community groups and schools involved with the above tree and orchard plantings are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comber Regeneration Community Partnership</li> <li>• Donaghadee Community Development Association</li> <li>• Holywood Shared Towns</li> <li>• Parks Volunteers</li> </ul>

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engaging - to actively engage and collaborate with the community and others in valuing trees as a vital community asset.</li><li>Increase Accessibility i.e. % of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m. Move towards the NI Average of 10.3% cover from present 7% position by 2025 and UK average of 21.1% by 2030.</li><li>Planting Woodland % population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km. Move towards the NI Average of 31.4% access from present 33.9% position by 2025 and UK average of 12.1% by 2030.</li><li>Managing to ensure good tree care, through sustainable management of the tree population and reducing risk.</li></ul> <p>Document will link directly to the DAERA initiative ‘Forests for our Future’.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hollywood Primary School</li><li>Rudolf Steiner School</li><li>Priory Integrated College</li><li>Glencraig integrated Primary School</li><li>Sullivan Upper &amp; Preparatory School</li><li>St Columba's College Strangford Integrated College</li><li>Bangor Academy</li></ul> <p>Site Surveys Completed since Jan 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Play Area, Helens Bay</li><li>Cairn Wood, Newtownards</li><li>Castle Park, Portaferry</li></ul> <p>Scheduled Tree Works Completed on Council Land Since Jan 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Linear Park, Bangor</li><li>Brice Park, Bangor</li></ul> <p><b>Tree Map</b></p> <p>Over the past year, council officers have been developing a new interactive tree map which will be available for public view via the council website. The Ards and North Down Borough Council's new tree map reflects a progressive commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement. This initiative aims to catalogue and display the diverse array of trees within Ards and North Downs Borough Woodlands, Parks, and Urban areas, promoting awareness of the region's rich biodiversity.</p> <p>The tree map serves as an interactive tool, allowing residents to explore and learn about individual tree species. The map contributes to a sense of community involvement, as residents can actively participate by reporting tree-related issues or suggesting potential locations for new tree plantings.</p> <p>The technology helps create a user-friendly and accessible tree map and demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to environmental conservation and community engagement, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility among residents for their local green spaces. This map will also allow residents to view upcoming scheduled tree works.</p> <p>Council has requested Treeconomics to produce a Tree Asset Valuation report based on the council’s current tree data. This report will quantify and highlight the ecosystem services provided by our trees. This reports also give detailed information on species composition, and pest and disease resilience. The Tree Asset Valuation report is locally specific; they show the real benefits of these natural assets to the local communities in which they are planted. Having an evidence-based understanding of our trees can help council to make informed and strategic management decisions.</p> <p>A Tree Asset Valuation will provide a robust evaluation of our tree stock, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number of trees</li><li>Canopy cover</li><li>Tree density</li><li>Species composition</li><li>Structural diversity</li><li>Replacement cost</li><li>Amenity value (CAVAT)</li></ul>

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An estimation of their ecosystem services, including: carbon storage, carbon sequestration, pollution removal, avoided runoff, and information on pest and disease resilience</li> </ul> <p>Since Jan 2024, a total 19 community tree and woodland projects events where held, his included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Hedgerow Planting Day: Londonderry Park, Newtownards - Council Employee Health and Wellbeing Group teamed up with parks section to offer a volunteering opportunity for staff to plant a new hedgerow.</li> <li>Community Orchard Planting: Laurel Bank Lane, Comber – Members of Comber Regeneration Community Partnership and pupils from Comber Primary School came together to plant a new community orchard in Laurel Bank Lane.</li> <li>7x Hedgerow Planting Volunteer Days: Ballymenoch Park, Holywood, Londonderry Park, Newtownards and Bowtown Rewilding site, Newtownards - Ards and North Down Borough Council invited local volunteers to be a part of our STAND4TREES initiative to enhance the local environment! These 7 hedgerow planting days seen parks volunteers come together to plant native hedges in the borough parks.</li> <li>Commemorative Tree Planting: Castle Park, Bangor – to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RNLI, council agreed to plant 200 oak trees in Castle Park, Bangor. Park officers organised a tree planting event with the local Sea Cadets and RNLI stations.</li> <li>Community Orchard Planting: The Green, Kircubbin – Members the local community in Kircubbin and pupils from St Marys Primary School came together to plant a new community orchard in Kircubbin.</li> <li>2x Tree Planting Event: Castle Park, Bangor – In partnership with Norther Ireland Forestry School Association (NIFSA), pupils from Bangor Academy and parks officers held a tree planting event with Serc students which seen 2,000 trees planted.</li> <li>2x Community Orchard Planting and Hedgerow Planting: Hunts Park, Donaghadee – With help from parks officer, members of the Donaghadee Community Development Association were awarded a tree grant from the Internal Tree Foundation to plant a new community orchard and Native Hedgerow in Hunts Park.</li> <li>4x Welling Events: Every Thursday throughout summer 2024 will see Breathwork sessions being held in the councils' parks and woodlands.</li> </ul> <p>In October 2023, EM’s agreed a proposal for development of a Network of Community Tree Nurseries and associated Seed Gathering Projects. Community tree nurseries allow the local community to come together and gather local tree seeds, plant them and care for them to become young trees. Locally sourced trees are vitally important and the act of growing a tree can help create a link to nature for many people. Community tree nursery offers a range of benefits including Reforestation and Habitat Restoration; Carbon Sequestration and Climate Change Mitigation; Community Engagement and Empowerment; Environmental Education and Awareness.</p> <p>A selection panel comprised of Parks and Cemeteries Officers evaluated the applications and choose the most suitable community groups to participate. After thorough review and consideration, the panel selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portaferry In Bloom</li> <li>Millisle &amp; District Community Association</li> </ul> <p>The selection criteria included factors such as the groups commitment to sustainability and environmental education, the availability of space and existing infrastructure for growing activities and the potential for community involvement.</p> <p>Parks officers have embarked on a partnership with the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA) aimed at establishing and nurturing three forest schools annually. This collaboration underscores the council's commitment to environmental education and community engagement.</p>



Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
				<p>The Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA) has developed the only nationally recognised Forest School qualification specifically for Northern Ireland. NIFSA have trained hundreds of teachers to become accredited Forest School Level 3 Leaders in the process. There are now over 200 official NIFSA Forest Schools supporting over 5,000 pupils a month learning outside.</p> <p>Applications to become a Forest School opened 4th January 2024 and 31st January 2024. In total, 8 schools from across the borough applied. A selection process by parks officers selected the following schools to be the new Forest Schools within Ards and North Down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrews Memorial Primary School, Comber</li> <li>• Camphill Community, Holywood</li> <li>• Portavogie Primary School, Portavogie</li> </ul> <p>The selection criteria included factors such as the school's commitment to sustainability and environmental education, the availability of space and existing infrastructure for growing activities.</p>
6	<p>Review and update the Council's Sustainability and Environmental Policy including current topics such as climate change and social value in procurement.</p> <p>The Policy was introduced in 2015 and is therefore somewhat dated. It currently does not reference important sustainability issues such as climate change and the need for carbon emissions reduction. With particular emphasis on impacts on "designated" areas of the borough i.e., ASSIs, AONB</p>	HoS Administration	Mar 2021	COMPLETE – this is now live and available on ANDi and Council website.
	<p>Develop a Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The Council will develop a strategy for maximising the sustainability of its energy use, looking at minimising the amount of energy we use to run our estate and deliver our services as well as maximising opportunities to incorporate renewable energy supplies where possible.</p> <p>An action plan will be produced to identify what we can do at each of our properties to deliver on the strategy</p>			Planning to bring Draft Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to the Environment Committee in June 2024 (and if not, September 2024).

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
	and allow us to prioritise our interventions in a way that helps us to get most gain as quickly as possible. All of the councils energy is supplied through 'green electricity' contract with Electric Ireland for the next 2 years.			
8	Develop a Car Park Strategy –  A Car Park Strategy has been drafted and is currently being finalised. This will aim to ensure that the Council's public car park estate works in the best possible way for sustainable development of the Borough – in particular the main town centres. The Strategy will promote a shift towards more sustainable forms of transport – including cycling, public transport and electric vehicle uptake.	Head of Regulatory Services	Underway by April 2021	'FASTER' project funded via Interreg Funding, now complete – with installation of new rapid EV charge points in Council car parks across the Borough.  Procurement for installation and operation of additional charge points via funding from the UK Government's ORCS (on street residential charge point scheme), in progress via DCS Council.  New Off Street Car Park Order for the Borough approved for regulation of parking in legacy Council car parks, planned implementation date 1 July 2024.  Still awaiting review of legislation by Assembly to allow making of new Council Car Park Order for transferred DfI Car Parks.
9	Ongoing review and implementation of Council's Sustainable Waste Resource Management Strategy to ensure sustained progress in maximising the achievement of Circular Economy goals.	HoS Waste and Cleansing Services	Underway/ Ongoing To 2030	Work of Members' Task and Finish Working Group ongoing. Timeline for public consultation on a preferred new kerbside model uncertain at present, anticipated Autumn 2024.  High level strategy for Review of HRC Estate proposed for tabling at Environment Committee in September 2024, with recommendation on way forward.  Procurement for interim residual waste treatment contract estimated to commence by Autumn 2024 via arc21.
10	Development of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan with nature recovery approach	HOS Parks & Cemeteries	Underway By April 2021	The Local Biodiversity Action Plan was agreed and approved by Council in April 2023 and launched in November 2023.  Successful and steady progress has made during 2023 against the plan's 84 actions and 3 objectives. Please note activities reported on can contribute to and be relevant to more than one objective.  <b>Theme 1. Education &amp; Awareness –</b> During the period 2023 a total of 4 actions were addressed under this theme, including: <b>Action:</b> Support participation in national and international biodiversity awareness campaigns <b>Action:</b> Encourage participation in citizen science wildlife projects and engage the public in biodiversity recording and awareness <b>Action:</b> Promote 'Gardening for Wildlife' and support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 <b>Action:</b> Publicize the BAP within the council and beyond through existing information centres and museums (e.g. Bangor Library)  <b>Update:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the spring and summer of 2023, a variety of successful events were carried out promoting national and international biodiversity days and citizen science, including: International Dawn Chorus Day, National Insect Week, International Bat Night, Minibeast Event, Rewilding Event</li> <li>Promoting and supporting Gardening for Wildlife and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan have been met through variety of Park initiatives and projects including the rewilding initiative, stand4trees initiative, sustainable planting and in bloom community competitions.</li> </ul>

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Local Biodiversity Action Plan was launched at the signal centre, Bangor November 2023. A total of 2 roadshows promoting the new plan and community involvement were carried out between 2023 and 2024. Hard copies of the LBAP were distributed across council buildings and 2024. The LBAP is also available on the ANDBC website for public viewing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Theme 2. Land Management</b> During the period 2023 a total of 10 actions were addressed under this theme, including:</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Secure funding to commission a feasibility study to explore the options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Restore or plant new native species-rich hedgerows for biodiversity with emphasis on connecting woodlands and other habitats. These hedgerows should act as demonstration sites for good practice hedgerow management.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Continue to manage and monitor lowland meadows under the council rewilding initiative and increase the extent of species-rich wildflower meadow habitat by creating new meadows and expanding the area of existing meadows, in both urban and rural locations. Opportunities to connect to other habitats should be identified and prioritised.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Actively pursue the use of local provenance seed (tree and wildflower) and hold workshops on seed harvesting, collection, storage and growing. Including the establishment of local / community tree nurseries.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Ensure all built structures and mature trees on council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of bats prior to any works (even minor works such as limb / ivy removal) occur.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Creation of a council grassland management strategy.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Investigate with our partners the feasibility of providing wild bird cover for farmland birds</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Reduce, replace and where possible eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers on council land</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Ensure a collection of diverse tree colonies through the planting of native trees across the Borough with the creation of an equitable canopy map.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Develop an ambitious planting plan starting with the planting of 160,000 native trees across the Borough with further increased planting to contribute to regional and national targets</p> <p><b>Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks are now in receipt of a feasibility study in relation to options for restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen.</li> <li>Our rewilding portfolio has increased to 90,000m2. New areas added include former Conacre sites at Kircubbin and Bowtown Road. In addition the creation of new wildflower meadows took place at two locations along the coastal path in 2023. The seed was harvested from Crawfordsburn Country Park less than 2km from the new sites. Both wildflower meadows are situated along one of Buglife's B-lines. By creating a wildflower meadow at these sites, the Council is helping to meet the vision of this project. B-Lines are an innovative solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators.</li> <li>The Council has an annual tree/hedgerow-planting programme. Through planting season 2023-2024 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planted in the borough. To date, council has planted over 45,000 new trees which have seen the creation of new woodland, orchards and hedgerows. 18,000 planted in 2023/4 tree planting season.</li> <li>Council officers have been developing a network of Community Tree Nurseries and Community Seed Gathering Projects. The new initiative is called Seed2Leaf.</li> <li>Council approved tree surgeons have the responsibility of scoping for bats before any work is carried out on trees.</li> <li>A draft grassland management strategy has been produced.</li> <li>A habitat management plan was produced for Bowtown Road rewilding site. Council officers are investigating the opportunity of this site providing wild bird cover.</li> </ul>

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	Urgent Actions 6 months January 2021 – July 2021	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024 (current)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the creation of a Herbicide Reduction Task and Finish Group herbicide free sites were evaluated in terms of control success and also public perception. The Task and Finish Group identified a number of key areas for the further reduction in the use of herbicide. Further details are located in section 11 of this report.</li> <li>Over the past year, council officers have been developing a new interactive tree map which is available for public view via the council website. This initiative aims to catalogue and display the diverse array of trees within Ards and North Downs Borough Woodlands, Parks, and Urban areas, promoting awareness of the region's rich biodiversity.</li> <li>STAND4TREES initiative aims to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that is approximately 160,000 trees. Through planting season 2023-2024 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planted in the borough. To date, council has planted over 45,000 new trees.</li> </ul> <p><b>Theme 4. Building Partnerships</b> During the period 2023 a total of 2 actions were addressed under this theme, including:</p> <p><b>Action:</b> <i>Work in partnership with bodies, NGO's and local groups to support the conservation of the red squirrel and pine marten and identify road mortality black spots where warning signs can be erected.</i></p> <p><b>Action:</b> <i>Improve the value of urban green spaces for biodiversity by setting up 'Friends of' Groups at selected sites</i></p> <p><b>Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Group (NDRSPMG) receive ongoing support from ANDBC in relation to the control of grey squirrels on council owned land, including supplementary food resources and camera equipment.</li> <li>Council officers have been working with the local community in relation to the establishment of 'Friends of Groups'</li> </ul>
11	Integrated Weed Control Approach to reduce heavy reliance on herbicides.	HOS Parks & Cemeteries	Underway By April 2021	<p>The policy roll out has seen a reduction of 30% in the use of herbicide across the service. All 7 Green Flag sites are now herbicide free and further sites are being trialled.</p> <p>Funding has been secured for the infrastructure upgrade to Hunts Park which will allow this site to remain a herbicide free zone without negative feedback.</p> <p>In addition, a successful business case was submitted for 2 mechanical sweeping units. These will be purchased in the 2025/26 financial year. The success of the business case was assisted by the reference to the policy and also the Roadmap targets.</p> <p>Staff reviewed the effectiveness of the 'FoamStream' system. Trial control was carried out at Movilla Cemetery. This proved to be very effective control and will form a further element of the integrated control program. A business case will be submitted for funding in the 2025/26 financial year.</p>

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Short Term Actions August 2021 – July 2023	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024 (current)
12	<p>Develop Sustainable Construction guidance for the future redevelopment of the Council's buildings and spaces.</p> <p>Key deliverables/ steps may include: Completing a review of existing arrangements in commitments for building/ area refurbishment and new builds to ensure that new building construction and upgraded existing building fabric reach effective standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop sustainable construction considerations for different construction projects i.e. from low project cost refurbishment of public realm spaces and buildings to the construction of new Council buildings and spaces</li> <li>Ensure relevant refurbishment and new builds which have used sustainable construction practices and materials are promoted through the use of educational and awareness signage e.g., for new builds, awareness and education signage in the main reception area(s) outlining the key practices used. This will benefit both the Council through positive PR and also building users and visitors to the building through education and awareness.</li> </ul>	HoS Strategic Capital Development	Dec 2022	No response from CLT until May 2024. Have asked for a review of current capital portfolio to indicate which projects are already implanting BREAM
13	<p>Develop an awareness campaign and supporting materials to promote sustainable working and living within the Council and wider Borough.</p> <p>The campaign may focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a sustainable working and living programme to encourage and promote the adoption of sustainable behaviours within the Council and Borough.</li> <li>An introductory communications programme to outline the Council's sustainability Roadmap and explain</li> </ul>	HoS Administration/supported by Corporate Communications	Underway by Dec 2021/ ongoing	<p>Ongoing press and social media activity in support of a number of key themes under #StANDforSustainability Topics include: increasing recycling at home with a focus on soft plastics and blue bin items/ recycling education and in practice at events/ AND Sustainable Giants / Tree planting.</p> <p>A number of good practice case studies have been added to the council website to further share good practice - <a href="https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/stand-for-sustainability/sustainability-case-studies">https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/stand-for-sustainability/sustainability-case-studies</a></p>

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	Short Term Actions August 2021 – July 2023	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024 (current)
	<p>what sustainability means to the Council and Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness training for all staff to outline what key sustainable working practices and behaviours are to be adopted e.g. energy and water conservation/ efficiency, waste reduction, safer working practices, responsible procurement and consumption, respect for fellow colleagues</li> </ul> <p>Awareness communications and campaigns for sustainable living and working to encourage and promote the adoption of sustainable behaviours within the Borough for business owners and residents. Content may include sustainable food provision, waste reduction, water and energy conservation, reducing litter and dog fouling, staying safe, respecting your neighbours, preserving Borough facilities for the enjoyment of all, reducing vandalism and crime, supporting and participating in economic development activity.</p>			
14	<p>Set up a central group for funding so as to better capitalise and co-ordinate what the Council applies for.</p> <p>The group could also enhance value through joint projects rather than standalone funding projects/ applications.</p>	HoS Administration	March 2022	COMPLETE – sits within Climate Working Group
15	<p>Develop a Community Food Growing Strategy</p> <p>Key deliverables to include: Develop borough opportunities for our citizens to grow food in a variety of community setting including Community Gardens and Allotments.</p>	HOS Parks & Cemeteries	Sept 2021	<p>School Growing Clubs – School growing clubs have been successful to date We are currently open for applications for 24/25 due to close on the 31<sup>st</sup> May and have had good interest so far. We aim to accept four schools this year for the growing club, while still supporting the existing six from this year. Children have been learning how to grow food with an aim to come together around a meal in September with their produce. Officers will meet with the school to discuss a plan that outlines essential steps and provides resources to creating a growing club encouraging participation from PTA groups, parents/guardians, residents with a keen interest. We aim to deliver 4 sessions to each school from planning and preparing the garden to harvesting. At this point we intend to encourage the children to make a meal with the food they have grown. Each school will be given a ‘Pack’ to include seeds, tools, gloves etc’ Using comms throughout the process will be essential to promote the initiative and the let’s grow together strategy.</p> <p>As part of Councils commitment to successfully implement the Tree and Woodland Strategy, the Parks Service has planted twelve community orchards in the Borough at the following locations:</p>



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	Short Term Actions August 2021 – July 2023	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024 (current)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ann Street, Portaferry</li><li>• Lawson Gardens, Portavogie</li><li>• Village Hall, Greyabbey</li><li>• Brice Park, Bangor</li><li>• Londonderry Park, Newtownards</li><li>• Cottown Open Space, Six Roads Ends</li><li>• Dickson Park, Ballygowan</li><li>• Kerr Park, Holywood</li><li>• Holywood Nature Park, Holywood</li><li>• The Green, Kircubbin</li><li>• Laurel Bank Lane, Comber</li><li>• Hunts Park, Donaghadee</li></ul> <p>A further three orchards planned for 24/25 in the locations: Groomsport (Springwell Crescent Play Park); Linear Park in Bangor and Helens Bay Play Park The new intake will have their first session in November 2024 with a following 4 sessions to take through to September 2025.</p>
16	<p>Develop an overarching Climate Change Mitigation/ Carbon Reduction Strategy for the Council</p> <p>Key deliverables/ content might include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Establishing the Council’s operational carbon footprint which may include:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. scope 1 &amp; 2 emissions sources (e.g. electricity, gas, oil, diesel, petrol)</li><li>b. additional sources under scope 3 emissions (e.g. water consumption, waste generation, business travel) to encompass the Council’s wider environmental impact</li></ol></li><li>2. Set an agreed net zero carbon target and timescale</li><li>3. Complete a strategic energy review of the Council and develop an accompanying action plan to improve efficiency and reduce emissions. Key tasks may include:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Review of consumption data, completing targeted half hourly consumption profiling of high consuming buildings.</li><li>b. Completion of energy audits of targeted buildings to identify current energy management arrangements</li></ol></li></ol>	HoS Assets & Property	Underway by September 2021	<p>An internal working group continues to gather all data required for scope 1 &amp; 2 into a central environmental dashboard system.</p> <p>This will allow us to measure our baseline, develop targets and meet any reporting requirements.</p> <p>Scope 3 can only be achieved through the use of an external 3<sup>rd</sup> party/consultant. Resources required for this do not exist within council.</p> <p>To further develop a clear, target led Carbon Reduction/Climate Action Plan, again, an external 3<sup>rd</sup> party/consultant will be required. Resources required for this do not exist within council.</p> <p>These pieces or work will align with the councils Sustainable Energy Strategy.</p> <p>A small working group continues to develop a Net Zero Fleet Strategy.</p> <p>In addition the council underwent a full external audit for ISO 14001 Environmental Management System which we passed in May 2024. This ensures our accreditation for another 3 years.</p>

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	Short Term Actions August 2021 – July 2023	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024 (current)
	<p>and opportunities to improve performance through consumption reduction and the use of low/ zero carbon technologies.</p> <p>4. Assess the potential for the Council to achieve net zero carbon emissions.</p> <p>Complete a review of the Council’s owned fleet of vehicles and develop a sustainable fleet management strategy to optimise fuel consumption and reduce carbon emission.</p> <p>Review how mileage policy is interpreted to reduce total actual miles covered by the non-Council owned fleet.</p>			
17	<p>Develop a Climate Adaptation Plan for the Council and Borough</p> <p>Key deliverables to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the creation of a Council wide working Group for Climate Change with the initial focus on Adaptation</li> <li>development of the Adaptation Plan with support from Climate NI</li> <li>Invest in nature-based solutions to climate change that can deliver for jobs, nature and the economy.</li> </ol>	HoS Administrat ion	Mar 2023	<p>Climate Adaptation Plan is completed and was approved by Corporate Committee and Council in April 2024. Due to go live on the council website in due course.</p> <p>In addition, all councils were asked to submit, to DAERA, projects for the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2019-2024 (NICCAP2). These are being finalised at the minute but the following projects have been provided to Climate NI who are actioning for DAERA in co-ordinating responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenways</li> <li>Bangor Waterfront</li> <li>ANDBC Nature Enhancement Initiatives – this is collective title suggested by Climate NI to combine our projects on Rewilding, Ward Park Redevelopment, Tree &amp; Woodland Strategy and Whitespots development.</li> </ul>
18	<p>Take a Natural Capital approach to new infrastructure and decision making.</p> <p>Natural Capital involves understanding the environment in terms of the value and benefits it provides to people. It can be defined as ‘The elements of nature that directly and indirectly produce value or benefits to people, including ecosystems, species, fresh- water, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions.’ (Natural Capital Committee, 2014)</p> <p>Key deliverables to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Natural Capital Asset Register to determine the economic value of our</li> </ul>	HoS Parks & Cemeteries	Underway by Dec 2021	<p>Following agreement at Council in May 2024, preparation is in place for a further 15,000 trees to be planted this winter and 3 new Community Orchards plus a mobile orchard that will act as an educational tool.</p> <p>A Grassland Management Strategy is almost completed and is scheduled to be presented to committee in June 2024. This will assist our completion of the green infrastructure strategy. The purpose of the GI strategy is to review the extent to which GI assets are functioning well, to identify where there are existing and anticipated future gaps in GI provision and to set out what actions and interventions could enhance the current provision.</p> <p>Our rewilding portfolio has increased to 120,000m2. These sites will provide a vital habitat in a coastal, highly urban area, providing refuge and food sources for our pollinators as well as improving overall biodiversity within the local area.</p> <p>A transformation business case has been agreed to for tree software that will assist the service in determining the economic value of our natural assets.</p> <p>As part of our events programme, 10,000 wildflower seed packets to be distributed to create a pollinator network across the borough, encouraging people to sow out in a pot or patch whatever they have available.</p>



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	Short Term Actions August 2021 – July 2023	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024 (current)
	<p>natural assets and therefore their protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a landscape-led approach to planning all new developments</li> <li>Develop a green infrastructure strategy that sets standards for quantity, quality, and accessibility of green infrastructure, including parks and green spaces, including measures of equity ensuring the needs of local communities are at the heart of their design.</li> <li>Prioritise green infrastructure investment, especially parks and green spaces, in those places which have the greatest need and exhibit the greatest inequalities. And provide improvement support to local places that helps secure the benefits that flow from good quality green infrastructure</li> </ul>			<p>This is building on the work carried out in summer 2023, where 1,500 wildflower seed packets were distributed.</p> <p>ANDBC's second Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was agreed and approved by Council in April 2023. Within this plan there are a total of 84 actions focused on several priority habitats and species important within our Borough. One of the four key Themes in the LBAP is 'Land Management' under which there is a total of 33 actions. In 2023 ANDBC have met several actions under this Theme, please refer to section 10 for further update. With appropriate land management ANDBC can help safeguard and protect our natural assets for future generations. In addition, as part of the audit process for the second LBAP, ecological appraisals were carried out at a total of 27 council owned sites. These reports helped to provide baseline ecological data for each site, identifying any important ecological features, the potential for protected species and recommendations for protection, restoration, or enhancement. These reports are key to identifying the best of our natural assets.</p> <p>A LBAP can help an organisation begin to develop its understanding and approach to natural capital.</p> <p>The Rewilding Initiative continues to deliver from a green infrastructure perspective. To date we currently manage over 120,000m2 of council owned land under the rewilding portfolio. These areas are multi-functional providing opportunities for outdoor learning, public enjoyment and biodiversity. Pathways mown and maintained in these areas provide an opportunity for local communities to experience the outdoors in a more natural setting. Reducing mowing regimes in our green open spaces have also helped to reduce our overall carbon footprint.</p>
19	Review of Use of Lands by a Third-Party documentation	HoS Administration	December 2022	COMPLETE – approved by Council November 2023
20	Use Community Planning priorities to work with partners to join up and expand on health and wellbeing initiatives.	Community Planning Manager	September 2021/underway	<p>Action has been reworded and combined with Action 25.</p> <p>Use Community Planning priorities to work with partners to join up and expand on health and wellbeing initiatives.</p> <p>Work on Phase III will start in July following PHAs appointment of an external provider to undertake systems mapping. Working with PHIRST to review the process used to apply a whole systems approach in Northern Ireland.</p>
21	Work with AND Poverty Forum and community planning partners to develop a borough wide poverty action plan	Community Planning Manager	September 2021/underway	Report on Poverty and Hardship in Ards and North Down is on the agenda of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership meeting in June 2024. The report includes recommendations to be considered within the context of an Anti-poverty Action Plan.
22	Skills and Employability Forum A collaborative network of businesses and education providers to match skills provision with business needs.	Head of Economic Development		The LMP Action Plan for 2023-24 was developed to continue the success of the 2021-23 Action Plan as well as building on local experience, knowledge of providers and expertise, and marry this with opportunities to address key areas of need within the AND Council area. Completed LMP projects include: An Academy for People with Disabilities, Careers Convention, Disability Employment and Support Day, Job Fair and PR Campaign. The Transport Academy and 2 Classroom Assistant Cohorts have been extended into the 24-25 financial year.

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				<p>The 22-23 Action Plan created 74 sustainable jobs (10 from the Academy for People with Disabilities, 38 from the Transport Academy, 20 from the Job Fairs, 4 from the Reskilling for Job Vacancies Programme and 2 from the Enterprise Skills Programme).</p> <p>The 23-24 LMP Action Plan has currently created 37 jobs with 3 academies accrued into the 24-25 financial year (11 from the Academy for People with Disabilities, 13 so far from the Transport Academy, 4 from the Classroom Assistant Cohort 1 and 9 from Cohort 2).</p> <p>The 24-25 Action Plan has been developed and presented to the Regional LMP and an outcome of the funding decision is hoped to be received by the end of June 24.</p>
23	Pilot the Big Conversation Panel for 12 months to encourage increased level of community engagement. A series of three surveys to encourage sustained public engagement with Council and Community Planning Partner's activities. A way to demonstrate the public sector is listening to its stakeholders by directly communicating with Panel Members how the information they provide via each survey is used to make better decisions regarding the services provided.	Community Planning Manager	Started September 2020 (1 <sup>st</sup> survey)  3 <sup>rd</sup> survey scheduled for June 2021	<p>Report on engagement re Dementia will be finalise at the end of June.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement by way of the Over 50s Council (Age Friendly). ANDBC is helping them to develop a Considerate Parking Campaign. This was an issue they raised.</p>
24	<p>Reflect on the SD goals within the review of the Big Plan (Community Plan).</p> <p>Part of the 'golden thread' running through the community planning is being able to demonstrate how the performance monitoring links across actions plans, Community Plan indicators and the Programme for Government. Ards and North Down's action plans for each Big Plan priority also include reference to the relevant SD goals demonstrating how sustainable development is integrated in the delivery actions.</p>	Community Planning Manager	September 2021/ underway	COMPLETE

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Medium Term Actions July 2023 – June 2029	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024
25	Develop partnerships with other agencies to promote health and wellbeing and empower people to take control of their own wellbeing.	HoS Environment al Health, Protection & Developmen t	March 2028	Merged with action 20.
26	<p>Continue to assess Planning Applications within the planning policy framework (which include but not limited to those related to natural and built heritage, renewables) and relevant design guidance</p> <p>Develop Sustainable Planning and Design response in Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy to support the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy</p> <p>Review of supplementary planning guidance required to accompany plan.</p> <p>Carry out ongoing Enforcement function including trees and conservation.</p> <p><b>Please note this action has been updated to more accurately reflect the work being done.</b></p>	HoS Planning	March 2025	<p>Draft Plan Strategy to be agreed for publication in 2024 (QT 4)</p> <p>Response submitted to DFI Call for Evidence in relation to Climate Change and potential future update by central government of regional strategic planning policy in relation to Climate.</p> <p>Engagement with DFI (as the responsible government department) on Transportation Policy in relation to DFI Eastern Transport Plan and (pending) Active Travel Plans.</p>
27	Seek external accreditation, frameworks such as Customer Service Excellence and Investor in People or develop good practice frameworks.	HoS Administrati on	March 2024/ ongoing	Completed - NIPSO complaints handling procedure implemented by council in October 2023.
28	Invest in talent development through mentoring and coaching staff and continued learning and development	HoS Human Resources	March 2028/ ongoing	Our Mentoring to Inspire Scheme is in its 3 <sup>rd</sup> year with feedback continuing to be excellent. We have now launched our internal Coaching Framework meaning that employees can avail of 6 sessions with an accredited internal Coach. Using internally accredited coaches and mentors is both cost-effective and sustainable.
29	Review employee recognition to encourage consistency and a clearer link to performance	HoS Human Resources	March 2028/ ongoing	The internal working group for the People Plan met in May 2024 with progress starting on drafting a <b>Total Reward Strategy/Policy</b> before the next IIP assessment in December 2025. This will build on existing recognition methodologies and provide a best practice approach at the strategic level.
30	Promote and support local enterprise including start-up, incubation, business development programmes and Sustainable Procurement information within any training to local SMEs.	HoS Economic Developmen t	March 2024	<p>March 23-Oct 23 The VITAL programme. 23 active participant businesses attended 5 masterclasses (Vision, Innovation, Teamwork, Achievement and Leadership) and benefited from 170 hours of 1:1 Mentoring including addressing Sustainability issues. Outcomes included 20 Strategic Growth Plans, 8 Jobs created and significant sign-posting to wider support services, including</p> <p>Nov 23 –May 24 – Go Succeed Growth and Scaling 144 local enterprises onboarded. Sustainability has been identified as a focus for a Peer Support Network within the programme.</p> <p>March 24 onwards – The Council is supporting an Invest NI wider programme Industrial Decarbonisation NI and is hosting a stakeholder/employer meeting on 3 July 2024 to highlight the IDNI programme and recruit employers. The Council has identified two possible cluster groups for consideration.</p>

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Medium Term Actions July 2023 – June 2029	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024
				<p><b>Idea 1: Balloo Industrial Estate Cluster</b> To consider a micro-generation grid (Solar, PV and Battery storage) that could service the combined businesses within the Balloo Industrial Estate. Around 15-20 years ago ANDBC erected a wind turbine on the Ind Est with the aim of multiple business connections. Planning and regulations of the day meant that the turbine it could only be connected to one business site with the remaining unused energy diverted to the grid. We think some 20 years on this model could be revisited and perhaps some of the original aims realised. We would seek to use this current IDNI project to explore the feasibility/legislation for an expanded smart micro-generation grid for Baloo Ind Est.</p> <p><b>Idea 2: Shared Industrial Fleet Facility Cluster</b> To consider appropriate site(s) to facilitate de-carbonisation of fleet vehicles and working towards a regional Nett Zero Fleet Strategy. The site(s) would be a shared facility generating electricity for EV charging where appropriate, common use of a storage/fuelling depot (Hydrogen/HVO/other), possible other synergies could be shared maintenance and/or pooled vehicles. Potential cluster partners (ANDBC refuse collection vehicles, lorries and vans, Dept for Infrastructure gritters, lorries and vans, Translink busses, and private haulage and coach companies). We would seek to use this current IDNI project to explore the feasibility/legislation for such a partnership.</p>
31	Ensure that actions included within the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030, such as protecting our Built Heritage, Sustainable Transport Strategy and Continuous Coastal Route are facilitated through other plans and strategies such as the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan.	HoS Jointly Regeneratio n, Economic Developmen t, Tourism & Leisure & Amenities	March 2024	Ongoing ITRDS actions being reviewed alongside budget allocation and objectives. DAERA funding ongoing for the Seal Sanctuary with year one of five complete.
32	Setting up a council 'Select Committee' on Sustainability – to monitor/review the sustainability of major policy/project proposals. To comprise of senior officers/managers/elected members and possibly relevant external stakeholders – suggested external members should include but not limited to Sustainable NI and other key members of the Councils Community Planning Partnership. The aim of this group would be to scrutinise all policies, strategies, projects, funding etc at the very highest level.	HoS Strategic Transformati on & Performance	Dec 2023	This action will be reviewed as part of the overall Roadmap review to address when it can be achieved within the resources available.
33	Develop a Borough Marketing and Communications strategy attract investment, visitors and new residents.	HoS Regeneratio n, Economic Developmen t, Tourism	Dec 2023	COMPLETE

**Table 6.1: Summary of Actions**

	Medium Term Actions July 2023 – June 2029	To be action by (HoS lead)	Completion date	June 2024
34	Introduce a citizens assembly – consider better ways to gather feedback from AND residents by direct engagement via a Citizens Assembly with membership across all demographics.	HoS Administrati on & Community Planning Manager	Dec 2023	COMPLETE
35	Incentivise behaviour change through a revised Recycling Community Investment Fund.	HoS Regulatory Services	Dec 2023	Project ELLA has been ongoing and has included a groundbreaking Atlantic Salmon conservation project that was delivered with 3 local primary schools. Resource availability have impacted the full delivery of the Project.  The Recycling Community Investment Fund continues to support Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and the Live Here Love Here campaign. This is a
36	Develop a Community Empowerment/ Resilience Programme.	HoS Regulatory Services	Mar 2025	Small internal, task and finish working group to be developed to look at how to progress this action.
37	Develop customer service including enhancement of online/mobile service offering.	HoS Administrati on	Dec 2023	As December, timeline changed to March 2025
38	Invest in technology to support paperless office.	HoS Administrati on	Dec 2023/ ongoing	Developing scope of works for this work currently.
39	Develop and promote volunteering opportunities within Council (including staff) and with partner organisations.	HoS Human Resources	March 2028	As with previous update – no formal policy on staff volunteering has been developed. There continues to be opportunities for staff to volunteers, eg Christmas foodbank volunteering. A ‘friend of’ policy continues to be delivered through Parks & Cemeteries.
40	Develop approaches to promote cross-council working.	HoS Administrati on	March 2028	COMPLETE

Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

New actions


	Actions – under way	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024																																																																								
41	<p>Sustainable Events – Events have committed to improving sustainability at Events within their Service Unit Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ongoing work to improve sustainability at events has been undertaken during the past years, however we wish to put this on a formal footing</li><li>2. In line with the Council’s action on climate change we would seek to mitigate any ramifications on climate change of our events</li></ol>	HoS Tourism	Ongoing	<p>This Recycling initiative has been continued successfully this season to date. Improvements have been made to the appearance of the stations – making the centres more easily identifiable. There are also branded uniforms for team members.</p> <table><tr><th>Event</th><th>Dry Recycling (kg)</th><th>Glass (kg)</th><th>organic (kg)</th><th>landfill (kg)</th><th>% recycling</th></tr><tr><td>2023</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Comber Earlies</td><td>680</td><td>86</td><td>1260</td><td>48</td><td>97.69%</td></tr><tr><td>Pipe band</td><td>480</td><td>0</td><td>560</td><td>16</td><td>98.48%</td></tr><tr><td>Tide &amp; Turf</td><td>1060</td><td>0</td><td>1870</td><td>50</td><td>98.32%</td></tr><tr><td>Sea Bangor</td><td>1632</td><td>420</td><td>1782</td><td>60</td><td>98.46%</td></tr><tr><td>Bangor Christmas light switch ons</td><td>308</td><td>0</td><td>620</td><td>240</td><td>79.45%</td></tr><tr><td>Ards Christmas light switch ons</td><td>300</td><td>0</td><td>180</td><td>260</td><td>64.86%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>May Day</td><td>280</td><td>0</td><td>340</td><td>200</td><td>75.61%</td></tr><tr><td>PipeBand</td><td>780</td><td>0</td><td>390</td><td>130</td><td>90.00%</td></tr><tr><td>totals/average</td><td>4460</td><td>506</td><td>6272</td><td>674</td><td>89.54%</td></tr></table>  <p>To note average recycling rate for events is almost 90%.</p> <p>The Events team has also increased the availability of buses to events. These were previously free, however, to ensure management of the demand a small charge will be introduced from Comber Earlies Food Festival onwards.</p> <p>A full review of the power supply at events will be undertaken, with a desire to trial the use of hybrid generators.</p>	Event	Dry Recycling (kg)	Glass (kg)	organic (kg)	landfill (kg)	% recycling	2023						Comber Earlies	680	86	1260	48	97.69%	Pipe band	480	0	560	16	98.48%	Tide & Turf	1060	0	1870	50	98.32%	Sea Bangor	1632	420	1782	60	98.46%	Bangor Christmas light switch ons	308	0	620	240	79.45%	Ards Christmas light switch ons	300	0	180	260	64.86%	2024						May Day	280	0	340	200	75.61%	PipeBand	780	0	390	130	90.00%	totals/average	4460	506	6272	674	89.54%
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42	<p>Sustainable Tourism – Community Plan To develop programmes and partnerships that establish Ards and North Down as a sustainable tourism destination.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Agreeing a Priority Performance Measure and Performance Scorecard</li><li>2. Creation of a Green Network – AND Sustainable Giants<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with tourism operators and support them to increase their green credentials and to help create a sustainable choice for visitors</li><li>• Gather stories from operators that can be used to sell AND as a green tourism destination</li><li>• Support operators to develop skills in marketing and promoting</li></ul></li></ol>	HoS Tourism		<p>The Sustainable Giants have recently agreed a restructure. There are seven core members and two associate members. Criteria for both types of membership have been agreed. An EOI has just closed for associate members. There were 11 applications received and these will be reviewed by the core members.</p> <p>An initial draft business case has been submitted to HOS Finance for the Sustainable Fund. If successful, funds will be used for mentorship, accreditation and experience development. This support would ensure that the group can work independently from Council from Summer 2025.</p> <p>In 2023/24 The Giants worked through their action plan, both individual and collaborative actions.</p> <p>Collaborative actions are as follows: Skill sharing sessions on the following: Creating a sustainable experience Energy efficiency Local wildlife and heritage Leave no trace</p>																																																																								



Table 6.1: Summary of Actions

	Actions – under way	To be action by (HoS lead)	Timescales	June 2024
	<div>their story via appropriate platforms</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Encourage collaboration</li></ul>			<div>The group also took part in a learning journey to the North Coast where they learnt about sustainable experience development.</div> <div>Marketing – the group has requested support with marketing their collaborative offering. A training course was set up to showcase how the Glants could talk collaboratively. They are currently using their own platforms to do this. Further content is being being collated currently.</div>

Unclassified

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## ITEM 15

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	15 May 2024
File Reference	FIN161
Legislation	Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not applicable
Subject	Prudential Indicators & Treasury Management – 2023/24 Qtr 4 (Final Out-turn) Report
Attachments	

### Introduction

The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the Prudential and Treasury Codes issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), supported by guidance issued by the Department for Communities, require the Council to approve financial policies and strategies for its capital financing and treasury management activities. As a minimum, the Council is required to receive and approve annual capital and treasury management strategies at the commencement of each year, quarterly updates and an annual report after the close of each financial year.

This report meets the last requirement of an annual report for the 2023/24 financial year. The purpose of this report is to highlight performance against the Prudential Indicators (PIs) which were set for capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activities set out in the Council's annual strategies, which were approved in February 2023.



Not Applicable

194

## 1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The PIs for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to these PIs are set out below.

Table 1.11 below summarises the total amount of capital expenditure incurred during 2023/24 compared to the original estimate approved by Council.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.11	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure 2023/24	17.406	6.512	10.894

The variance shows that the actual expenditure for the year is below the estimate by £10.9m. This is primarily due to programme slippages in the planned major capital schemes, particularly

- Greenway Schemes, Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Bangor, due to delays in the planning process, including awaiting responses from statutory consultees.
- Bangor Aurora Pool Floor following a detailed assessment of business needs.
- Portaferry Public Realm which started later than initially expected but is now well underway and due for completion by mid 2024.

Table 1.12 below summarises how the capital expenditure for 2023/24 of £6.512m has been financed.

	Actual
	2023/24
Table 1.12	£m
Capital Expenditure	6.512
<b>Financed by:</b>	
Grants	(1.356)
Capital Receipts	(0.625)
Revenue/Reserves	(0.330)
<b>Balance to be met from borrowings</b>	<b>4.201</b>

The unfinanced balance of £4.201m is required to be met from borrowings. This forms part of the Capital Financing Requirement (see 1.2 below) and is financed through an annual charge for minimum revenue provision (MRP).

Not Applicable

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## 1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). It is simply a measure of the total cumulative historic capital expenditure which has not yet been met from either revenue or capital resources.

The CFR increases as new debt-financed capital expenditure is incurred and reduces as MRP (minimum revenue provision) is charged to revenue. See section 1.4 for further information on MRP.

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The actual positions on the CFR and Gross Borrowing at 31 March 24 compared to the estimates set are shown in table 1.21 below.

	Estimate	Actual
	31/03/24	31/03/24
Table 1.21	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	81.235	75.068
External Gross Borrowing	63.034	59.651
<b>Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement</b>	<b>18.201</b>	<b>15.417</b>
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represents the Council's underlying need to borrow (£15.4m March 2024) and indicates that historic capital expenditure has been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. This has been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in the current and previous years. The position has been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018.

In order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term, the Council's gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and following two financial years. The forecast CFR for 31 March 2026 (based on the Council's latest approved capital investment plan) is £90.3m. In this regard, it is considered that the Council's borrowing level at 31 March 2024 of £59.6m is prudent.

When making borrowing decisions, management will continue to work with its treasury advisors, Arlingclose, to develop the most appropriate borrowing strategy. This is expected to consider the benefits, risks, and impacts of both short-term and long-term loans, with the aim of minimising long-term interest costs.

Not Applicable

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### 1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit each year, known as the 'Authorised Limit'. In line with statutory guidance, a lower 'operational boundary' is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit. The maximum gross borrowings at any point during the year was £63.7m. This means that Council maintained its borrowings within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year, as shown in table 1.31 below.

Table 1.31	2023/24
Operational boundary – borrowing *	£ 81.235m
Authorised limit – borrowing ^	£ 86.235m
Maximum Gross Borrowing during 2023/24	£ 63.725m

\* **The operational boundary** – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year and is based on expenditure and cash flow modelling. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the operational boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

^ **The authorised limit** - Section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to set an authorised limit for borrowing at the beginning of each financial year. During the year, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level.

### 1.4 Capital - Revenue Budget Implications

Capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead, interest payable on borrowings and MRP (minimum revenue provision), together known as capital financing costs, are charged to revenue. These financing costs are compared to the net revenue stream ie. the amount funded from District Rates and general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which is made up of capital financing costs. The final position against the budget set for the 2023/24 year is set out in table 1.41 below.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.41	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
Capital financing cost (£m)	£7.867m	£7.867m	£0.0m
Net Revenue Stream	£62.743m	£62.122m	£0.621m
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	12.5%	12.7%	0.2%

Not Applicable

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## 2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

**Long-Term Loans** During 2023/24, no new long-term loans were taken out and loan principal repayments of £4.1m were made against existing loans. This resulted in a level of long-term borrowings at 31 March 2024 of £59.6m, as shown in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.11				
Lender	Balance 01/04/23	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 31/03/24
Dept of Finance	£ 56.450m	£ -	(£ 3.074m)	£ 53.376m
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 7.275m	£ -	(£ 1.000m)	£ 6.275m
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£ 63.725m</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>(£ 4.074m)</b>	<b>£ 59.651m</b>

**Short-Term Loans** Council does not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

## 2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The table below shows the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2023/24	Actual at 31/03/24
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	2%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	98%

Table 2.22			
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2023/24	Upper Limit 2023/24	Actual 2023/24
Under 12 months	0%	15%	4.7%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	6.0%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	13.8%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	27.2%
10 years and above	30%	90%	48.3%

## 2.3 Treasury Management - Debt Rescheduling and Average Interest Rates

Officers were not able to avail of any debt rescheduling opportunities during the year as the differential of 1% between new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates on government loans did not create any viable options. At 31 March 2024, the average interest rate for the Council's total debt portfolio was 3.87%.

Not Applicable

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## 2.4 Treasury Management - Investment Activity

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy are safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its investments on time, with the investment return being a secondary objective. The current investment climate continues to be one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. In line with advice provided by treasury management consultants, officers continue to implement an operational investment strategy of placing short-term investments with approved high-quality counterparties.

For the year to 31 March 2024, Council earned interest of £633k on investment deals with approved financial institutions, comparing favourably to the budget set for the year of £220k. This was due to larger than anticipated investment balances and higher than expected interest rates. The activity for the year is summarised in table 2.31 below.

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£2.9m	Call A/c	4.98%	£149,552
State Street Global Advisors	£2.8m	Call A/c	4.96%	£145,467
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£2.7m	Call A/c	5.09%	£127,717
Bank of Scotland	£2.0m	Call A/c	4.92%	£99,647
Barclays Bank	£1.6m	Call A/c	4.86%	£69,505
Santander	£1.1m	Call A/c	2.91%	£10,065
Other Local Authorities	£3.0m	3 mths	4.20%	£31,414
<b>Totals</b>				<b>£633,367</b>

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement includes controls regarding diversification of balances among financial institutions to mitigate security risk. These limits allow for the higher of £3m or 30% of total investments to be held with one counterparty, except for periods of up to 4 days for administrative purposes. Due to an administrative oversight Council breached this policy by 1% for 8 days. Steps have been taken to remind staff of the importance of correctly monitoring these thresholds.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts at 31 March 2024 was £10.5m. The table below shows the risk and return metrics on these investments against other NI Councils.

	Counterparties	Investments	
Table 2.32	Credit Rating	Liquidity	Rate of Return (%)
ANDBC	A+	100%	5.22%
NI Council Average	A+	59%	5.30%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Mar-24

Not Applicable

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The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days is £500k. The Council has not entered into any such investments.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

Unclassified

200

## ITEM 16a

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	18 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	'-
Date of Report	28 May 2024
File Reference	NOM 191 - Deep concern at the poor state of the roads across ANDBC
Legislation	'-
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NOM 191 - Deep concern at the poor state of the roads across ANDBC
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter to DFI March 24 Appendix 2 - Letter from DfI April 24 Appendix 3 - Letter to DFI 14 May 24 Appendix 4 - Letter from DfI 28 May 2024

### BACKGROUND

The following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council at its meeting in February 2024:

“That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DFI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20 millimetres from the current 50 millimetres in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.”

Unclassified

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This item was deferred at the meeting of 14 May 2024 for a further letter be sent by the Interim Chief Executive in relation to the following amendment agreed by Council on 28 February:

“Further that Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure expressing concern that Ards and North Down continues to receive the lowest Roads investment across Northern Ireland Councils and requests an increase in funding to make road repairs and resurfacing a priority and for fair allocation in funding for coastal defences, roads and pavements resurfacing and street lighting investment across our Borough as a matter of urgency.”

On 14 May 2024 a letter was sent from the Interim Chief Executive and a reply was received on 28 May 2024. A copy of this letter is attached.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

If is recommended that the Council notes the attached response.





# Ards and North Down Borough Council

SR/cd/CS13.2.2024, item 6b

13 March 2024

Mr. John O'Dowd MLA  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Department for Infrastructure  
Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GB

Dear Minister

At a recent meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council it was discussed and unanimously agreed that this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again, express its deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DfI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20 millimeters from the current 50 millimeters in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.

I would be grateful if you could please consider this letter and respond accordingly.

Yours sincerely

**Stephen Reid**  
**Chief Executive**



From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure  
**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**

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Your reference: SR/cd/CS13.2.2024, item 6b  
Our reference: COR-1267-2024  
26<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Stephen, a chara,

## POOR ROAD CONDITIONS

Thank you for your letter of 13 March 2024 expressing the council's concern regarding the condition of roads in the council area and also to ask that my Department amend the current policy in relation to potholes.

I recognise that many roads are in need of repairs and I understand your frustration at the current situation. However, in the current fiscal environment I can only work within the financial envelope provided to my Department. That has had a significant impact on the ability to deliver our essential maintenance functions. Constrained budgets have also impacted on my Department's ability to fill staff vacancies resulting in understaffing across many of its functions.

Whilst my officials and maintenance crews have worked very hard to maintain the road network, they have, nonetheless, been forced to concentrate only on the highest-priority repairs. To be clear, this is not a position that any of us want to be in and does not represent good maintenance practice.

In response to this situation, I recently addressed the Assembly to announce the allocation of an extra £1million to target areas of highest priority with small scale resurfacing schemes, designed to repair areas that have suffered the most and where localised repairs are less effective.

Further to that, I announced an additional £8.1million of funding for my Department's Structural Maintenance Programme to deliver additional resurfacing schemes and continue to address the poor condition of our road network.

My Department has been operating in a difficult financial environment for a number of years due to underfunding and austerity by the British Government. The value of our infrastructure cannot be overstated, and I will continue to work with Executive colleagues to ensure appropriate investment is made.



The level of repairs that can be carried out in future financial years will ultimately depend on the 2024-25 final budget determination for my Department. I hope that critical services and infrastructure such as our roads are provided with the investment we need.

Is mise le meas,

**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**  
**Minister for Infrastructure**



# Ards and North Down Borough Council

SMcC/cd/C28.2.2024, item 8.4

14 May 2024

Mr. John O'Dowd MLA  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Department for Infrastructure  
Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GB

Sent via email only: [info@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:info@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Dear Minister,

At a meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council it was discussed and unanimously agreed to put on record:

'Further that Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure expressing concern that Ards and North Down continues to receive the lowest Roads investment across Northern Ireland Councils and requests an increase in funding to make road repairs and resurfacing a priority and for fair allocation in funding for coastal defences, roads and pavements resurfacing and street lighting investment across our Borough as a matter of urgency.'

I would be grateful if you could please consider this letter and respond accordingly.

Yours sincerely

**Susie McCullough**  
Interim Chief Executive



**From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure**  
**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**

Susie McCullough  
Interim Chief Executive  
Ards & North Down Borough Council

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Your reference: SMcC/cd/C28.2.2024, item 8.4  
Our reference: COR-1366-2024  
28<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Susie, a chara,

## **INVESTMENT IN ROADS IN THE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH ROADS FUNDING – ARDS AND NORTH DOWN**

Thank you for your letter dated 14 May 2024 expressing concerns about under investment in the roads in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area as a result of what you suggest is an unfair allocation of funding.

In distributing the resources available for road maintenance, allocations are made to the Department's four Roads Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators tailored to each maintenance activity (i.e. resurfacing, patching, gully emptying, grass cutting etc). Divisions also use these indicators when apportioning funds across local maintenance areas which aims to ensure, as far as practicable, an equitable distribution of funds across the whole of the North. Therefore, I can assure you that the Ards & North Down area receives a fair and proportionate share of the funding that is made available to my Department for road maintenance.

While my officials and maintenance teams have worked very hard to maintain the road network, they have, nonetheless, been operating with a higher than acceptable vacancy rate and are under significant pressure. This is the situation across all of the roads section offices including the Ards & North Down Borough Council area. While staff have been doing all they can to manage this under resourcing it is evitable that it will impact on my Department's ability to carry out essential work such as road maintenance.

I would also advise that my Department has been operating in a difficult financial environment for a number of years due to underfunding and austerity by the British Government. This has had a significant impact on my Department's ability to deliver essential services such as road maintenance. My officials are aware of the condition of the roads in the Ards and North Down area and they will continue to do all they can to carry out inspections and repair any defects meeting the current Limited Service maintenance policy.

The value of our infrastructure cannot be overstated, and I will continue to work with Executive colleagues to ensure appropriate investment is made across all of the North.

Is mise le meas,



**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**  
**Minister for Infrastructure**