


March 5th, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Tuesday, 11th March 2025** at **7:00 pm** in **Church Street, Newtownards.**

Agenda

Agenda

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2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

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13. Notice of Motion

13a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor McLaren


Postponed to April Corporate Services Committee.

14. Any Other Notified Business

ITEMS 15-21 ***IN CONFIDENCE***

Reports Delegated to Committee - for Approval

15. Renewal of Tender for Printing Services

 *Item 15 - Renewal of Tender for Printing Services v2.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 15 - Appendix 1 - Ards and North Down Contract Extension until 31 Apr 2026.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 15 - Appendix 2 - Northside Contract Extension Letter 2025-26.pdf* *Not included*

16. Renewal of Tender for Employee Assistance Programme

 *Item 16 - Renewal of Tender for Employee Assistance Programme v2.pdf* *Not included*

17. Renewal of Tender for Occupational Health Services

 *Item 17 - Renewal of Tender for Occupational Health Services v2.pdf* *Not included*

Reports for Approval

18. Lease to Origin Gymnastics

 *Item 18 - Lease to Origin Gymnastics.pdf* *Not included*

 *Item 18 - Appendix 1 - Map - Origin Gymnastics.pdf* *Not included*


19. Request from Dfl to Use Part of Kennel Lane Car Park, Newtownards as a Site Compound

 *Item 19 - Request from Dfl to use part of Kennel Lane Car Park, Newtownards as a site compound.pdf* *Not included*





 *Item 19 - Appendix 1 - Map.pdf* *Not included*

Reports for Noting

20. Year End 2024/25 Outturn Forecast

 *Item 20 - Year End 2024-25 Outturn Forecast.pdf* *Not included*

21. Absence Management Update

 <i>Item 21 - Absence Management Update.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 21 - Appendix 1 - dashboard q3 2025.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 21 - Appendix 2 - absence action plan q3 2025.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 21 - Appendix 3 - benchmark survey.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

4 March 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee of Ards and North Down Borough in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom on **Tuesday 11 March 2025 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

Reports for Approval

3. Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policies (Report attached)
4. Service Plans:
 - a) Finance (Report attached)
 - b) Community Planning (Report attached)
 - c) Communications and Marketing (Report attached)
 - d) Administration (Report attached)
 - e) Human Resources (Report to follow)
 - f) Strategic Transformation & Performance (Report attached)
5. Periodic review of Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy (Report attached)
6. Scheme of Allowances 2024-25 (Report attached)
7. Scheme of Allowances 2025-26 (Report attached)
8. Reviewed Learning, Training and Development Policy April 2025 – March 2028 (Report attached)
9. Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review) April 25 to March 26 (Report attached)

- 10. Learning and Development Strategy, April 25 to March 26 (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

- 11. Living Wage Employer Accreditation (Report attached)
- 12. EQIA requirement for Request to hold Orange Victims’ Day service of commemoration at the Ward Park Cenotaph (Report attached)
- 13. Notice of Motion:
 - a.) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor McLaren:
 - **Postponed to April Corporate Services Committee**
- 14. Any other notified business

ITEMS 15 – 21 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

Reports Delegated to Committee – for Approval

- 15. Renewal of Tender for Printing Services (Report attached)
- 16. Renewal of Tender for Employee Assistance Programme (Report attached)
- 17. Renewal of Tender for Occupational Health Services (Report attached)

Reports for Approval

- 18. Lease to Origin Gymnastics (Report attached)
- 19. Request from Dfl to use part of Kennel Lane Car Park, Newtownards as a site compound (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

- 20. Year End 2024/25 Outturn Forecast (Report attached)
- 21. Absence Management Update (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF COPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Alderman Graham	Councillor Moore
Alderman McRandal	Councillor Gilmour

Alderman Smith	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Brooks	Councillor Thompson
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor Cochrane (Vice Chair)
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor W Irvine
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McCracken
Councillor S Irvine	Councillor Irwin (Chairman)

Unclassified

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ITEM 3**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	21 February 2025
File Reference	359
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policies
Attachments	App 1 - Internal - Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour. App 2 - External - Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

Background

To effectively and consistently handle persistent and unacceptable behaviour, it is essential that the Council has a corporate Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy in place both for internal (Appendix 1) and external (Appendix 2) use.

These policies aim to help managers and employees promote positive engagements with service users, including in difficult situations, and to appropriately manage any challenging behaviour when it presents itself.

Not Applicable

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These policies have been developed in accordance with NIPSO guidance and the Council's Policy Development Process.

Once approved these will be communicated to all employees and available to the public on the council website.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Council approve the following policies:

- Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy (External)
- Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy (Internal)

Internal Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour v1

Document Control

Policy Title	Internal - Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour
Document Reference	Admin- 360– v1
Policy Summary	This guide aims to help managers and employees promote positive engagements with service users, including in difficult situations, and to appropriately manage any challenging behaviour when it presents itself.
Review Requirements	Every 3 years
Document Owner/Job title	Customer Services Manager
Document Owner is responsible for ensuring that it is reviewed in line with the requirements of the Council's Policy Review Procedure and is kept up to date.	
Approval Signature & Date	

Version Control Record

Version Number	Version Date	Author(s)	Comments
1.0	11/11/24	CSM	For consultation with HOST

Consultation

	CLT	HOST	SCC	Unions
Date completed				

Screening

Reference No	360
EQIA Required?	No

The current version of this document is available to all individuals accessing the Council's information and other associated assets and is published on the Council's intranet.



Internal

Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour In Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Introduction

This guide aims to help managers and employees promote positive engagements with service users, including in difficult situations, and to appropriately manage any challenging behaviour when it presents itself.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is aware that most service users behave respectfully even in situations where they are justifiably disappointed and frustrated with a service and have suffered poor service through no fault of their own. Most service users are able to manage their disappointment and frustration; and productively engage with us to resolve the issue.

However, we recognise that there is potential for conflict to arise between service users and employees in times of frustration and disappointment. We understand that from time to time, a small number of service users, for various reasons, may display unacceptable behaviour and create difficult situations that we need to respond to and manage. Although they may be few, we recognise the resources allocated to managing such conduct by some service users can be substantial and may seriously impede a complaint investigation process. We therefore want to support managers and employees to put in place processes that will help promote positive engagements between them and service users whilst effectively managing relationships and difficult situations.

Empowering our employees to proactively manage relationships and de-escalate difficult situations can help us meet the needs of those whose situation means they may act in ways others find difficult to understand. Key elements of this approach are:

- governance and support for employees, helping to have oversight and to create those open conversations with mutual respect
- setting boundaries as a keyway to keep conversations respectful (and this needs to be maintained consistently across the council)
- contingency planning and a risk-based approach – this needs to include how we respond to zero-tolerance situations and events which may make it difficult for our employees to provide a service.

This guide emphasises the need to use neutral language and non-judgemental approaches, focusing on building/maintaining relationships and managing difficult situations rather than apportioning blame and responsibility. Positive engagement

supports service users to express concerns about public services easily and in a constructive manner.

It is all of our responsibility to create spaces where we reduce conflict and ensure we listen with respect and kindness to each other and support employees and service users to engage positively with each other. At the same time, there is a need to protect employees from behaviour which can have a significant negative impact. Thinking about the rights and perspectives of all those involved can help to ensure we balance these.

Why we have created this guide

One of the main challenges for employees dealing with difficult behaviour is that it can be challenging to know what the most appropriate course of action is in different situations. This guide is designed with *complaints handling in mind* and therefore aims to promote positive behaviour whilst ensuring that complaints are handled in the best way possible. The purpose of the guide is to equip employees with the right skills and tools to promote positive engagement and deal competently and confidently with service users' behaviour during difficult situations, such as our complaints handling process. This guide may also help all employees take a systemic and consistent approach to managing their interactions with service users who sometimes engage in unreasonable, challenging and unacceptable conduct.

Who can use this guide?

This guide principally looks at engagement and unacceptable conduct in the complaints handling process.

Frontline employees and Complaints handlers

Frontline employees with a customer-facing role and complaints handlers who may witness, and experience challenging behaviour first-hand will find this guide helpful. The guide provides frontline employees and complaint handlers with information and a series of tips, tools and strategies which can help to de-escalate problems and identify where action is needed to manage engagement during the complaints process. The guide supports these employees to respond to service users in a way that ensures the service users' right to have their complaint heard and responded to are not denied or undermined. In this way, complaints can be sufficiently investigated and responded to whilst promoting positive engagement and behaviour.

Importantly, this guide should be used alongside other council policies, for example Health and Safety. If employees are seeking general information, sections 1: **Promoting Positive Engagement** and 2: **Managing Unacceptable Behaviour** contain helpful tips to employees trying to promote positive engagement whilst dealing with difficult behaviour. Appendix 1 also contains some useful suggested phrases and techniques on how to respond in different scenarios. This guide may be used across directorates and services to influence practice and support customer-facing employees.

What this guide will not do

Whilst this guide provides employees with a range of tips and tools to support them to manage unacceptable conduct, it will not cover every situation or solve every problem. Each situation is unique and therefore it is not possible to say what the appropriate response is in every instance of challenging behaviour. In some cases, employees may be required to use their own judgement. A key principle is the need to treat all service users with dignity and respect.

Behaving in this way is important for both employees and service users to help promote positive behaviour. The focus should always be on the behaviours, actions and conduct of service users, not the individual. It is also not helpful to make personal judgements about service users' actions. Service users do not always act at their best, particularly when they are frustrated and stressed by a problem. Language that focuses on the situation, rather than the individual, can help employees discuss with service users how best to move things forward.

Throughout the guide, the term 'service users' also refers to family members and other designated representatives for the complainant. NIPSO acknowledges other public bodies may use different terms including 'customers' or 'clients'.

Section 1: Promoting Positive Engagement

It is the responsibility of council to support employees to effectively promote positive engagement with our service users. We can promote positive conduct by building a strong foundation of welcoming and valuing complaints and ensuring our complaints handling procedure is accessible to service users. Positive engagement also requires employees to 'start off right' by managing expectations, listening to, respecting and communicating with complainants in a clear and straight-forward manner to ensure complaints are dealt with promptly. This section of the guide helps to inform employees, and in particular, senior management employees and managers, on how to promote positive engagement and conduct.

Welcome complaints

From the outset, it is important for our senior management and managers to establish a culture of welcoming and valuing complaints as opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. Negative and defensive responses to complaints can undermine public confidence, raise suspicions and encourage unacceptable conduct. It is therefore helpful to promote the importance of complaints to employees and service users by clearly demonstrating how the council values and welcomes complaints. It is equally important to communicate and explain to both how complaints are vital to produce service improvements and promote high quality service delivery.

Manage expectations

Service users do not always understand what council does and how it works. Service users may believe we have unlimited resources or powers to fix a problem. They may expect an instant response, or - "the customer is always right" - approach. They may have unrealistic views about outcomes and remedies, such as compensation or getting someone removed from their post. If they do not get an accurate understanding of what council can and cannot do to help them at the beginning of their contact, they may be even more frustrated if employees inform them later in the process that they cannot assist them reach the remedy they desire.

Start off right

It is therefore important to 'start off right' by explaining to service users, our role and complaints handling process. At a minimum, it is best practice to communicate:

- the council's role

- the complaints handling procedure
- how employees will deal with a complaint
- what issues employees can and cannot consider
- how service users will be involved in the complaints process and to what extent
- the roles, responsibilities and behaviours expected of service users during the process
- the expected timeframe for a response
- the possible outcomes of the complaint
- a point of contact
- any available advocacy and support services (where appropriate).

Starting off right requires good communication to help reduce frustration and prevent service users from developing unrealistic expectations. If service users demonstrate unacceptable actions during these early discussions, this is the opportunity to set ground rules. Our *vision, customer charter and corporate plan as well as our responsibilities of complainant's principles* can help establish what we expect from those making a complaint, and what they can expect in return.

Be accessible

An accessible and open complaints procedure demonstrates that we listen to our service users to improve services and service delivery. Including, removing barriers to making complaints for some service users, for example:

- those who have a disability
- the elderly
- those who speak a different language
- those who struggle with literacy
- the homeless.

It is crucial that everyone can easily access our complaints procedure. To ensure this is the case, we recognise the barriers that some service users may face when seeking to raise a complaint. These may be physical, sensory, communication or language barriers, but can also include their own personal anxieties and concerns. Service users may need support to overcome these barriers. Best practice to remove such barriers is to continue to consult with different communities and service user groups about what their access needs are and how we can best meet those needs.

We address some of the barriers to complaining by:

- offering alternatives to writing a complaint and accepting complaints by telephone, email, letter, online and in person
- providing information about the complaints process in a range of languages and different formats. For example, 'easy read' and sign language, and formats suitable for those with a visual impairment. Organisations should also provide interpretation and/or translation services for those who need them
- providing information in various accessible formats
- providing support to service users to make complaints (if needed)
- accepting complaints from authorised representatives if service users are unable to complain by themselves
- asking employees to proactively check whether members of the public who wish to complain require additional support to do so
- helping service users access independent advocacy relevant to the issues being raised in the complaint.

Respond promptly

Service users' first contact with us can set the tone for the entirety of all future interactions. If a service user has had to speak to multiple employees to find out how to complain, they are likely to become frustrated. Delays and failures in communication during the complaints process are one of the main reasons service users become annoyed with us. Service users can interpret a lack of contact in ways unintended by council. They may assume we do not care about their issue and are doing nothing. That's why we have realistic and public targets for acknowledging and responding substantively to complaints,

while being clear these timescales may vary depending on the complexity of a complaint. Our CHP clearly defines appropriate timeframes to respond to complaints.

Treat service users with respect

When service users complain they want someone to listen and take them seriously. It is widely accepted that if people who make a complaint see the complaints handling process as fair and reasonable, are treated with respect and given enough information, they are more likely to accept decisions or outcomes, even those outcomes that are unfavourable to them. Being treated with respect during the complaints handling process is therefore as important as the overall outcome. Complaint handlers can demonstrate respect by:

- dedicating time, free from interruption, to give service users a fair opportunity to present their issue(s) of complaint
- using active listening skills to show they are listening and taking the complaint seriously
- in some cases, allowing service users to discuss or comment on preliminary findings before employees close the complaint
- taking the time to explain their decision, how they reached it, and their reasons.

Practice active listening

When some service users feel ignored or marginalised, this may lead to unacceptable behaviour or conduct. Active listening is one tool employees can display that can support service users to feel heard and understood. Active listening is a skill that improves understanding and communication in conversations. It involves focusing on the speaker, trying to understand what they are saying and then responding thoughtfully. It can help both employees and service users maintain control of the issue/s at hand and their own emotions.

Employees can demonstrate active listening through facial expressions, body language and verbal affirmations. Maintaining direct eye contact; a positive demeanour; nodding; and repeating what the person has said all affirm active listening. However, once the brain starts thinking of an answer to the person they are listening to, active listening stops. Effective active listening, therefore, involves staying consciously present in the conversation. Active listening requires practice to master.

Tip for Employees

Some verbal affirmations that can demonstrate active listening are:

- “I understand”
- “I hear you”
- “Yes, I agree”
- “That makes sense”

Understand service users’ point of view

When investigating a complaint, it’s valuable to take time to reflect on a service users’ point of view. Asking questions to clarify their needs can help develop a better understanding of a service users’ point of view. This can help demonstrate to the service user that employees are genuinely interested in their concern/s and in helping to resolve their complaint.

Empathy skills can also help with understanding a service users’ point of view, including their feelings, intentions and present emotional state.

Tip for Employees

To practice empathy, try to:

- ask service users for their ideal remedy or solution#
- Do not use language like “Vexatious service user”
- take responsibility by using phrases such as, ‘You’re right, we did that wrong’ (where appropriate)
- reserve judgement

Maintain professional communication

It is important to keep language professional, friendly and respectful. Remember employee behaviour reflects on you and your colleagues and Ards and North Down Borough Council always thank service users for bringing their issue/s to the organisation's attention and explain that complaints are welcomed, valued and essential to improving services and service delivery. When service users have finished explaining their complaint, employees should reiterate their complaint to ensure understanding and clarity from the service user and in an attempt to assess if they have any other concerns. Sometimes services users are so focused on the original issue they forget about other issues they want to raise. A conversation that thoroughly explores the complainant's issue/s will demonstrate to them that employees respect and appreciate the time taken to

Tip for Employees

Elements of professional and responsive communication can include maintaining an even tone of voice; a positive demeanour; and direct eye contact.

complain.

Avoid using official language and jargon

Managers and employees may habitually use official language/jargon and may sometimes use that language when speaking with service users. However, it is important to be aware that service users may not understand this language and jargon. Service users usually respond better if employees come across as personable and communicate with them using accessible language. For example, employees could:

- use personal introductions and offer contact details
- speak or meet with service users in person
- explain legal or bureaucratic terms in plain language, for example "We ask service users to do X because it helps Y" instead of "It's our policy to do X".

The best communicators will firstly listen to the way service users speak and adapt their language accordingly. If service users can communicate well with employees because of the language used, they are less likely to feel confused or overwhelmed and more likely to act courteously.

Tip for Employees

Employees may have colleagues who have particularly good interpersonal skills; shadow them; observe and learn from their language and practice.

Engage in difficult conversations

Sometimes employees have to deliver unwelcome news to service users. It may not be possible to resolve a problem as quickly as service users would like, or at all. It is natural to feel anxious about delivering bad news, particularly to service users who already feel annoyed or distressed. However, avoiding these conversations may only make the situation worse.

Employees should communicate unwelcome news at the earliest opportunity. If we cannot help service users or the outcome of the investigation is not what they had hoped, employees should explain this clearly and as soon as possible. It is important when doing so to be respectful and acknowledge service users' feelings and disappointment, but consistently be open and honest.

Where service users have not understood or appear distressed by the unwelcome news it can be useful to confirm the response in writing. This will enable a complaint handler to refer to this in future discussions, particularly if it is taking some time to resolve the complaint.

Identify situations that can be managed with support or training

Before handling any complaint, it is important employees feel supported, empowered and have access to their manager if a complaint requires a manager's decision, or someone who has the appropriate authority to make the decision. This will help employees deal with complaints promptly and, where possible, 'fix it early' by achieving early resolution.

However, there are different types of situations when dealing with complaints which may need to be managed with additional support or training. These include:

- anger
- distress and upset
- confused, illogical communication
- someone raising concerns that they may be a harm to themselves

- repetitive and circular communication
- unpleasant language which is below the level of abusive.

By 'manage' in this context we mean 'deal with appropriately'. The aim is to make your communication more effective and work better for both you and the service user.

Behaviour that one employee may find particularly difficult may not present the same challenge to a colleague. Some employees may find it difficult to communicate with service users who seem emotional, ignore their advice, question their competence, or insist on speaking with a manager. There is a strong subjective element to what each employee finds difficult. To handle complaints well, it is therefore helpful for employees to identify and understand what they personally find difficult so that they can seek additional support from colleagues or request more formal training.

Tip for Employees

Observe employees who have particularly good interpersonal skills and learn from their practices. Share experiences which have worked well and poorly. If it is possible to do so, try to take a break and discuss difficult experiences with a colleague before your next contact. This will help to make sure you do not carry one bad experience into the next contact with the service user. Ask for formal training (where appropriate).

It is important to be aware of situations which may escalate, and employees should bear in mind that if at any point the situation becomes threatening or dangerous, they will need to move to a zero-tolerance position and end the contact.

In these circumstances, employees may need to end the contact and seek support, even if the situation is one, they would normally expect to manage. If an employee is in a situation where they are finding behaviour, or their response to that behaviour, difficult to manage, their reaction to the situation may worsen matters. In these circumstances, an option is to seek advice from a colleague or a senior employee.

Recognise trigger points

Everyone reacts differently to different situations. 'Trigger points' are situations that employees may find difficult to handle as they have a heightened reaction to them. This is perfectly normal. It may, therefore, be helpful for employees to know their trigger points and be honest about what types of service user behaviour they find difficult. If there are

Internal Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour v1

conversations where employees later think 'I wish I had said' or ones where a break was needed before the next conversation, this may be identified as a trigger point.

A trigger point is behaviour/language that is consistently irritating or annoying, may be offensive or makes a employees member feel vulnerable and unsure what to do.

Employees may have an emotional reaction; feel flustered or angry; and tend to prejudge the person behaving in the way they find difficult.

Employees may also have an emotional reaction to a trigger. They may feel flustered or angry or tend to prejudge service users behaving in the way they find difficult. When this happens, employees may say or do things that are unhelpful or make matters worse. Even if the situation handled well, employees may find the contact stressful and have less energy for the next contact.

Some issues employees may find triggering are:

- patronising or sarcastic language
- someone being rude about them, colleagues or both
- certain phrases service users repeat too often such as 'I am a council taxpayer' 'You are a public servant and are supposed to serve' and 'You are not listening'
- someone who is very distressed and crying or threatening to self-harm
- someone who may be telling deliberate mistruths or is being manipulative.

It is very unlikely the person who pressed a trigger point knows this is a particular issue. They may not even be aware they are acting in a way someone may find difficult. There may be many reasons a person is behaving in a particular way, and usually not enough is known about their context to judge this.

Tip for Employees

Recognise and try to control trigger points as best as possible. Remain calm; repress any impulses to take the service users' actions personally; recognise and try to control any increase in stress levels; take a comfort break; ask a colleague for help or to manage the situation.

Manage trigger points

Once trigger points have been identified, employees should try to be aware of them when confronted with those situations. Employees should also make active efforts to relax and stay calm. They may need to debrief; share with colleagues what they find upsetting or annoying. This may help employees to manage their emotions. For colleagues, if they do this, they should empathise with their colleague, but not reinforce the emotional reaction.

In dealing with trigger points, it can be useful to have a strategy or approach in mind. For example, create prompt cards with some suggested strategies and approaches or phrase cards with suggested wording that employees can skim through and use as prompts when on the telephone. This can help to build confidence, particularly for new employees who may worry they will forget what to do. Any phrase cards are not meant to be used word for word, but it can be helpful to have some prompts or to be aware of language to use or avoid. However, it is important to remember that conversations need to be personal to be effective, and standard or clichéd phrases will likely have the opposite effect to the one intended.

Tip for Employees

If there are areas you are nervous about, you can print out a prompt or phrase card or have a selection of scenarios to hand to assist you manage the situations (see **Appendices 1 and 2** which provide scenarios of persistent behaviour and unacceptable actions along with suggested response phrases and techniques).

Recognise your limits

Recognising our limits in any given engagement is useful, as it may not be possible or advisable for employee to handle everything. Having support from other colleagues is an important element of managing control of the workload and responding appropriately. Asking for additional support from a line manager or another colleague may help to resolve service users' complaint sooner or answer their questions more effectively. In some cases, it may be important to accept limitations and ask a colleague to take charge of the complaint.

Debrief

A debrief is a structured and usually voluntary process that aims to provide clarity about incidents and help employees reflect upon and emotionally recover from challenging engagements. A debrief session can explore what happened, employee reactions and ways to manage emotional responses. It may be useful to conduct a debriefing after any incident in which an employee experiences negative emotions.

Incidents of unacceptable actions can have a substantial impact on well-being, productivity and relationships with service users. If an incident negatively affects employees, it is important to seek support to reflect on and recover from what took place. The reflection may include what went well and, if feasible, what they might do differently the next time unacceptable actions occur.

Maintain detailed records

It is imperative that any decisions to manage engagement are based on accurate, detailed and reliable records. Maintaining appropriate records is essential to the complaints process and will be helpful if service users challenge any decisions or request further information. Good record keeping is the responsibility of every employee. Those at a senior level can be responsible for fostering a good record-keeping culture to help ensure employees record decisions properly.

Employees should be aware of organisational requirements and best practices regarding the recording of telephone and face-to-face discussions which may be described as abusive, offensive, obscene or threatening. A clear and detailed record of these calls and interactions in writing is helpful. Without a detailed record, it may not be possible to take effective action to manage the situation. It is also important that the record of the engagement is factual and unemotional. Policies and procedures can help to ensure there is clarity about how and where employees record and store these records. More information and guidance can be found in section 4: **Governance Matters**.

Section 2: Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

What do we mean by unacceptable behaviour?

To manage unacceptable behaviour, the first step is for employees to know what unacceptable behaviour is or what it can include. The following are some examples of unacceptable behaviours (but is not exclusive to):

- unreasonable demands that can affect the service we provide.
- communication in a manner which causes offence to employees.
- the threat of harm to employees, others and themselves
- aggressive and abusive conduct towards employees
- dishonesty, provision of intentionally misleading information and deliberately withholding information that is relevant
- lack of cooperation
- repeated and unnecessary telephone calls
- frequent emails providing large amounts of irrelevant information
- insistence on things they are not entitled to and outcomes that are clearly not possible, realistic or appropriate in the circumstances
- (when a complaint is finalised) unwillingness to accept decisions and continually demand further action when they have exhausted all available internal review options.

Identifying unacceptable behaviour

The next step for employees is to identify whether behaviour or conduct is unacceptable. In deciding whether the action is unacceptable, it may be helpful to consider:

- The merits of the service users' case
 - Does the complaint have substance?
 - Have they suffered a substantial loss or impact?
- The service users' circumstances

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- Are the service users' actions and requirements proportionate to the service failure they have suffered?
- Service users' responsiveness (if known)
 - Is this the first time they have behaved this way?
 - Have you previously warned them about their action?

Tip for Employees

It is important to maintain a neutral and objective way of identifying what behaviour is unacceptable.

Responding to unacceptable behaviour

It can be difficult for employees to know the appropriate approach to take when faced with unacceptable behaviour. They may be unsure as to the relevant process to follow and the range of actions to tolerate when trying to provide a reasonable level of service. This section of the guide helps to inform employees how they might respond to specific unacceptable conduct.

Anger

Anger can be particularly difficult to manage. To best manage anger, employees should firstly try to listen carefully to what the service user is saying to decipher what has angered them. If appropriate, employees could offer the service user an apology on behalf of the service/council. An apology can often help to calm the situation to help move into a more productive conversation.

Anger can cause some service users to raise their voice. In responding, it would be helpful to keep speaking at a normal level. It may even be helpful to speak softer and quieter so that the service user might have to stop to listen. The most important aspect of managing anger is to remain calm, in control and not mirror the angry behaviour.

Tip for Employees

Some examples of what employees might say to service users who demonstrate demanding behaviour:

- "I am sorry there has been an issue with your bin collections. I will contact the appropriate manager immediately and ask them to call you, if not today, then tomorrow to discuss this issue".
- "Unfortunately, I am unable to fulfil this request. If you would please hold the line, I will speak to my manager who will help you or signpost you to someone who can help you".

Indecision

Some service users may take a long time to decide on the complaint or issues of complaint they want resolved. One way to help them decide is by determining their specific concerns about the service or service delivery. Employees can speak confidently about the service and share as much useful information as possible so the service user can pinpoint and decide on what issue/s they wish to complain about.

A few ways to handle indecision include:

- asking specific questions to help identify their concern/s
- explaining details about the service and how the organisation delivers it
- offering suggestions to alleviate their concern/s.

This may offer service users an opportunity to imagine themselves benefitting from the particular service they are concerned with.

Demanding

Service users who demonstrate demanding behaviour often demand employee time and attention. Service users who are demanding may have a misunderstanding of how the council can help them. They may ask employees to do something they are not authorised

or otherwise able to complete. It may be helpful to assure them that employees will do whatever is possible to meet their needs.

Criticalness

Service users who demonstrate critical behaviour often find fault in our services or service delivery. They may be quick to highlight their dissatisfaction. To manage this, employees should listen patiently and try to understand the service user's point of view. Sometimes, these service users' honesty offers helpful feedback that can improve services and service delivery.

Tip for Employees

Some examples of what employees might say to service users who demonstrate critical behaviour towards the organisation' or its services are:

"Honestly, that is a great suggestion, thank you. I am going to submit it to our service user focus programme so they can consider it".

"I understand this aspect of our service may not be for everyone, and I appreciate your honesty".

Persistence

Persistence is often seen as a significant problem in the complaints process and can be difficult to deal with. Employees can be unsure what to do when someone who has completed the complaints process continues to:

- correspond on the same issue
- repeatedly try to raise the same issue using new arguments or claims they have new information and supply copious documents
- pursue completed complaints by approaching elected representatives
- use more than one route to raise the same issue.

Also, to handle a person who constantly questions the actions and decisions of the service but, refuses to enter the complaints process and insists they are simply seeking clarification.

However, the decision of an individual to disagree with us is legitimate. It is also an individual's decision to refer matters to elected representatives, if they so wish, or to

pursue their disagreement by approaching external organisations and agencies. The use of their own energy and resource to continue to pursue an issue important to them is a matter purely for that individual.

This means it is not appropriate to use an unacceptable actions policy when the only issue is that an individual is persistent. However, it is important that employees remember they are responsible for managing their resources and time. If employees have reached a final decision and effectively communicated that decision to the individual, **there is no obligation to continue to explain that decision multiple times.** The continual explanation of that decision may also be unhelpful to the service and the individual. Examples of persistent conduct, suggested strategies and phrases are available at **Appendix 1.**

Tip for Employees

You cannot prevent people disagreeing with you. However, you can and should prevent situations where unhelpful, circular correspondence occurs, and you both restate the position in different ways meaning both you and the complainant get stuck in a correspondence loop.

Strategies for managing difficult conversations

The first strategy employees may find helpful when managing difficult conversations is to address service users directly and politely. Employees should act professionally and demonstrate genuine attempts to diffuse the difficult situation. Employees should also be wary of becoming overly involved with someone for whom they feel genuine compassion and sympathy for. This can sometimes lead to employees feeling overwhelmed by the difficulties the service user is facing. Whilst demonstrating empathy towards the service user is appropriate and immensely powerful, if employees are to genuinely help, they must balance empathy with the need to remain objective, impartial and professional.

Acting as a role model

Employees can act as role models to demonstrate appropriate behaviour in difficult situations. In some circumstances, service users can feel frightened and out of control. It can therefore be helpful for employees to implement some of the following actions:

- slow down the conversation

- ask service users to repeat what they said
- be clear and specific about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour.

If the unacceptable action or behaviour continues, employees can ask service users to stop and explain that if they choose not to, the employee will remove themselves from the situation/end the call.

Helping service users to manage their emotions

When service users are upset, the following skills may be used (where appropriate) by employees to help manage emotions:

- maintain eye contact
- keep facial expression neutral
- ensure body language is professional but open
- keep a level tone and volume of voice
- talk at a steady pace and avoid rushing
- ask open and relevant questions
- paraphrase and repeat back what the service user has said to demonstrate active listening
- acknowledge their emotions.

Managing written incidents

Sometimes unacceptable actions may appear in written correspondence. Although difficult to respond to, there is time in these instances to reflect and collaborate with colleagues on the best way to respond to the unacceptable behaviour. Some actions that may help with written incidents are:

- taking time to thoughtfully read the email or letter
- identify the points that need responding to and evidence of any unacceptable action
- consider whether it would be more constructive to call the service user to discuss their email or letter, and employ the relevant skills mentioned at **Strategies for communicating a decision** and associated 'Tip for employees' sections below

- if the choice is to write back, be clear and polite, acknowledging their concerns
- highlight where the unacceptable action has potentially breached the managing unreasonable behaviour policy and supply a copy of the policy if required.
- ask the service user to be respectful in future correspondences and explain that if they choose not to, employees may restrict future communications.
- talk to a more senior colleague or manager for further advice on handling the situation.

Communicating a decision

A clear, evidence-based, rationalised, and personalised response should help someone understand a decision and appropriately signpost them if they remain unhappy. The decision should make clear the evidence employees used and the actions they completed to investigate the complaint. This should allow service users to accept that the process was fair even if they disagree with the decision.

If the decision is negative, being clear and letting service users know sooner rather than later can also help. In circumstances where a written response is used to communicate a negative decision, it is good practice to call the person before they receive the written response. This can help to forewarn the complainant and manage their expectations. It can also help prepare the person to be able to better absorb the information when they receive the decision letter/email, meaning any subsequent questions from them may be better framed. Subsequently, this can help employees provide a better response to the questions and focus on any genuine outstanding issues.

Tip for Employees

If employees feel nervous about contacting the service user by telephone to communicate a negative decision, they can, consider using phrases like:

○ "I wanted to call to let you know I have reached my decision. Having spoken to you at the start of the process, I know you may find it disappointing".

○ "I know you may have a lot of questions; I can give you a general idea of the reasons behind the decisions".

○ "I would ask you to take your time to read the letter and I will be happy to answer any more detailed questions at that stage".

Managing disagreement with a decision

It is not possible to ensure everyone who complains will agree with the decision. If someone disagrees with our final decision at the end of the complaints process, there is no need to continue interaction with them on the issue. Employees may provide additional explanations or answers to service users about the complaint. However, employees should be clear that it is only clarification they are providing to the service user and not an extension or opportunity for the service user to continue to discuss the complaint. If service users seek clarification more than once, employees should consider whether it is an attempt by the individual to reopen the complaint. Employees should remind the service user that the complaint will not be reopened and, again, signpost them to NIPSO.

Disagreement with the decision is not a problem and there is no need to label it as unacceptable behaviour. It is simply a case of referring service users to the next stage in the process. If the next stage is NIPSO, employees should remind service users of this and that there will be no further response from the organisation to their complaint.

The DESC Model

Sometimes engagements with service users can create difficult situations and are problematic to manage. In these circumstances, service users' actions can result in situations which affect the ability of employees to complete their work. Employees can identify these types of situations by considering the impact the engagement has on their time and resources. Impact on resources can also include the impact on the emotional resources of employees. When a disproportionate amount of time and resources are allocated to a single complainant, employees need to consider whether this conduct is unacceptable and, if so, effectively manage the situation. One strategy, and the general approach, to managing problem engagements is to apply the DESC (Describe, Explain, Suggest, Consequences) model.

The DESC model is simple and effective. The stages of the DESC model are:

- **D** - Describe the situation
- **E** - Explain the impact the situation is having
- **S** - Suggest how the engagement needs to change
- **C** - Consequences (what will happen if the engagement changes and what will happen if it does not).

The first two steps are particularly important. Describing the situation and explaining the impact the situation is having may help the service user to understand how their behaviour is producing a negative impact. This may also allow employees and the service user to work together to agree a suggested approach to resolving the issue that may benefit both parties.

Describe the situation

Employees should be able to describe and identify specific behaviour and explain why it is a problem. In these circumstances, employees should describe the situation neutrally, focusing on the situation and behaviour, rather than the service user. It can be helpful to also think through as a service what behaviour, in general, causes employees problems and why. This helps to ensure that employees can fairly and consistently identify behaviour which has a negative impact on them or the service's resources.—It is worth noting that such behaviour can be a one-off interaction or can be the result of a build-up of communication over time.

The level of resource employees should use for an individual complaint will vary from one service to another and depending on the needs of the service user. It is important to consider the individual service's size, capacity and role when assessing the impact of any problem engagement. The needs of service users and why they may require more of employee time should also be carefully considered. In these circumstances, it is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible. We must always take into account their commitment and responsibilities to equality and relevant equality legislation. Alternatively, a service user may genuinely simply need more time to explain their complaint.

Employees should bear in mind the following points:

- some service users will exceed the average amount of time taken with the complaints process without this being a problem – their complaint may be more complicated, and the extra engagement may be useful
- some complaints are more sensitive and/or complex
- some service users will have specific communication needs that employees need to consider and may take more time
- some service users find the complaints process difficult and may need extra support.

The person handling the complaint may feel the time taken in handling the complaint, though more than usual, is reasonable and necessary. It may, therefore, be helpful for employees to record this on the complaint file so that any employee dealing with the complaint thereafter firstly considers the recorded reasons before taking action to limit the level of contact.

At this initial stage, employees should:

- describe what engagement we would normally expect
- describe the level of engagement the employee is experiencing
- describe any disparity between what is expected and what has been experienced
- ensure employees have considered whether there are additional needs that may require reasonable additional support to the service user.

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made from a complainant may cause problems. The level of contact usually becomes unacceptable when the amount of time devoted to telephone calls, reviewing files, responding to emails or written correspondence and otherwise managing the contact, impacts on our ability to provide a service to that person or others.

Explain the impact the situation is having

Employees should clearly explain to the service user why their behaviour is a problem and the impact of that conduct on them and the service and council. It is important that this is acted upon early and as soon as possible so that the conduct does not become an established pattern of behaviour. It can feel very unfair to an individual who has been allowed to act in a way for some time to then be told that it is unacceptable and that their contact will have to be controlled. They can quite rightly feel aggrieved that this was not raised with them sooner or that no one explained this to them. They may feel that the reason employees are now labelling the engagement unacceptable is not their behaviour but some other reason. It becomes very difficult at this point to find a way to rebuild the relationship.

Once employees explain the unacceptable behaviour and its impact, service users will be in a better position to understand what amount and types of contact are acceptable and those that may cause problems. As part of this process, employees can more easily identify early signs of the conduct developing. This allows employees to address the

situation before it becomes unacceptable. The advantage of raising the issue early is that employees can do so in a more exploratory, neutral fashion. They can ask why the engagement is occurring in that way, and this may well help employees to solve the problem together with the service user. In these circumstances, employees should record that they have raised the issue. If they come to an agreement with the service user, employees may want to record this in writing, to let the service user know that employees will honour this or to record any undertakings they have made.

Suggest how the engagement needs to change

Once employees describe the situation and explain the negative impact, ideally the change/s needed will be obvious. However, if this early contact does not work or is inappropriate because the specific situation has already become unacceptable, it is important to make it clear to the service user why the conduct is a problem, ask them to amend their behaviour and suggest ways forward. Examples of scenarios of unacceptable conduct and suggested strategies and phrases are attached at **Appendix 1**.

Employees can make suggestions by telephone, in person or writing. If employees choose verbal communication, they can follow this up in writing to make sure service users understand the next steps. It is important to identify the specific behaviour and the impact it is having in the current situation. Again, employees should try to do this neutrally, focusing on the situation and behaviour, rather than the service user. The goal is to maintain or rebuild a good working relationship and increase the productivity of the engagement, where possible.

It is not recommended that employees advise service users that their standard of behaviour needs to improve more than once, or at most twice, before acting on the consequences explained. Otherwise, service users may think it is not the truth. Service users may be more likely to feel employees are acting unfairly if employees subsequently put restrictions in place.

Consequences

It is important to give service users an opportunity to manage or modify their behaviour themselves by letting them know the consequences of their unacceptable conduct. In some situations, employees may need to implement measures to manage a difficult interaction by informing the service user of any potential consequences. When employees are deciding on any restrictions to introduce, it can be helpful to link this to the problem. For example, if someone is making excessive contact through multiple personnel,

restricting them to one point of contact may be helpful. In some cases, employees may further restrict access by insisting on one point of contact and contact only in writing, or one point of contact and by telephone. It is important to always aim to put in place the least possible restriction to manage the problem engagement.

Restricting contact

In exceptional circumstances, it may be proportionate and appropriate to manage or restrict service users' access to the complaint's procedure for a set period of time. This should always be a last resort, and the service should be careful to balance the person's right of access to the complaint's procedure with the impact on the council. Examples of behaviour which may result in this exceptional action being taken are:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour towards employees
- Actions preventing employees from pursuing a legitimate aim
- Actions preventing employees from implementing a legitimate decision.

Again, it is important to give service users a chance to manage or modify their behaviour themselves by letting them know the consequences of continuing with their behaviour. Only if the situation continues should employees consider implementing any restriction. It is important that employees apply any restrictions incrementally and that they ensure there is always at least one avenue for a service user to contact the organisation. Restricted contact with the service/council may be limited to either written communication (including email) or through a third party.

The complaints process is an important safeguard, and therefore the decision to restrict access to it will need the most senior possible sign-off. It will also be necessary to regularly review the decision.

In the most severe cases, the individual should be notified in writing of the following:

- what restriction the organisation has put in place
- the reason/s why the restriction was put in place
- the time limit on the restriction and when it will be reviewed
- information on how service users can challenge or appeal this decision where appropriate.

Appealing a decision to restrict contact

A service user should be able to appeal a decision to restrict contact. A member of senior management who was not involved in the original decision should consider any such appeal. Having considered the service user's appeal, they should advise the complainant in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements continue to apply and for what period of time or that a different course of action has been agreed.

Recording and reviewing a decision to restrict contact

Where it is decided to restrict service user contact, a recorded entry noting this should be made in the complaint file. The relevant department/service should also maintain a register of all individuals who are subject to contact restrictions. A decision to restrict contact may be reconsidered if the service user demonstrates a more acceptable approach. A relevant member of senior management should regularly review the status of all service users with restricted contact arrangements including any time frames in place.

Section 3: Zero tolerance situations

There are some situations which are not appropriate and should not be tolerated in the workplace. Such situations need to be managed by employees immediately. Whilst this is another form of managing unacceptable conduct, the risks and challenges associated with 'zero-tolerance' situations are extremely significant and therefore have been included in this separate Prohibition of Access and Use of Council Facilities Policy.

Identifying zero-tolerance situations

Zero-tolerance situations can occur unexpectedly and at any time; at the beginning of any contact with a service user or when the relationship with a service user has been established and ongoing for a long period of time. There is a wide range of types of language and actions to consider when deciding whether service users' engagement has fallen into the zero-tolerance category including-

Physical violence is the most obvious example and will always fall under the zero-tolerance category.

Threats can come in different forms, such as:

- *Direct threats*, like physical violence, which is never acceptable.
- *Indirect threats* which can range from statements close to a direct threat, for example, "I know where you live", to much more vague suggestions and hints and may be as much about the tone used as the words themselves. If you feel at risk, you should always take steps to ensure you and others around you are safe.
- *Threatening postures and/or body language*. Sometimes it is not the words but the posture or body language that is threatening.

Employees need to know and understand when they feel threatened and are at risk or potential risk of danger. It is important that employees understand they do not need to maintain contact simply because a service user has not threatened them directly.

- *Threats to others*. These are always unacceptable and will need a response. Employees will need to consider informing the person threatened and/or the police. Individuals should not be able to make threats to others without consequences and employees should not have to listen to detailed or aggressive threats to others.

Abusive or degrading language is also unacceptable behaviour. This includes language, which is personally insulting, for example, allegations of criminal behaviour, or sexist, racist, homophobic, language which is directed to employees or to others. It would include abusive name-calling i.e., the person swearing directly at employees aggressively.

Please bear in mind, however, swearing in a casual context may not necessarily be regarded as abusive or degrading to the extent of requiring a zero-tolerance approach. Employees may also be able to manage some situations where allegations are made about competency that are not at the level of abusive or degrading. This does not suggest unpleasant language is acceptable but that, in some cases, it is possible to deal with this behaviour in other ways rather than using a zero-tolerance approach.

Strategies and techniques for zero tolerance situations

This section includes some strategies and techniques that employees can use when they are confronted with zero tolerance behaviour, such as physical violence, threats or abusive language.

Physical violence

Contact should be ended immediately, and employees need to make sure they and their colleagues and anyone in the immediate area are safe.

People can be unpredictable. Employees should ensure they are familiar with all the exits from meeting rooms, that they are always closest to the exit and know the location of any panic buttons. Services may have specific guidance for home visits. Employees should always follow these.

Tip for Employees: The dangerous situation

If employees feel they, or others, are at immediate risk of physical violence, quick and decisive action needs to be taken. One example of such action is the **three Ds** which encourage employees to **Divert, Deflect, and Distract**. The three Ds technique may allow employees time and space to move to safety, to get help, or to help the aggrieved person calm down. However, in situations where employees believe they or others are in immediate physical danger, with no opportunity to apply the three Ds technique, they should contact the emergency services immediately. Personal safety is always the priority.

Threats

As noted above, there can be a range of types of threat and below are some scenarios and suggested responses. These should only be taken as a guide. If you feel at immediate

risk, employees' primary responsibility is their own safety and the safety of others. This may mean leaving the area without any further comment.

If employees receive a threat in written correspondence, they should reply with a statement that this is not acceptable. You may also need to let the author of the threat know that this has been recorded and has already/may be sent to the police. As stated in the defining section, the method of delivery does not change whether something is or is not acceptable behaviour.

If a threat has been withdrawn, the following wording may be used:

"I am really glad you said that. I am sure you'll appreciate we have rules, and we usually have to end discussions if someone makes a threat and let the police know. I can see you didn't mean it so we can go on. I have to let you know, however, if you make a threat again, I will need to end the discussion and may need to call the police."

Direct threats

It is not acceptable for employees to be threatened, and this behaviour needs to be stopped immediately. When deciding how to respond, employees should think first about vulnerability and risk. How they react will depend very much on their location at the time.

If an employee is on the telephone and receives a direct threat, they should address any threat politely but firmly. It cannot be ignored. You should let the caller know you are ending the call and why. You should also let them know that you will either call the police or discuss with a manager whether to call the police (this will depend on your own policy). Again, if the threat is immediately withdrawn the strategy above could be appropriate.

If employees are threatened within the same location or space, generally, employees should politely end the contact and leave the area or ask the person to leave. It may also be appropriate to telephone the police. In all cases, a member of senior management should be informed immediately, and any subsequent contact should be dealt with by senior management accompanied by an officer. The individual should be politely asked to remove themselves from the premises if they persist in demonstrating unacceptable behaviour.

It can be tempting to take someone to a private space to help them calm down. However, in the circumstances of a direct threat, this may increase personal vulnerability. This does not mean this approach should not be used if employees think it could be effective. However, they should use it with care and know that any space they move to still allows

them to access help if needed. Suggesting someone moves to a quiet area can be used to divert someone while employees seek assistance.

Employees may find the threat is withdrawn or it is clear that this is part of a general 'rant'. Employees still need to address this behaviour, and it may be appropriate to let the person know that making threats may be a risk for them as it could lead to them being reported to the police.

Abusive language

If employees receive an abusive correspondence – Employees should not normally deal with correspondence (letter or email) that includes abusive language. When such correspondence is received, the service user should be advised that their language is considered to be offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful.

It would be appropriate to confirm this with a manager before doing so and to record the main points: the date the correspondence arrived, what was unacceptable and a copy of the return statement. Employees can, and in most cases, it would be appropriate to, keep a copy of the correspondence as evidence. However, this should be stored in a way that ensures it cannot be read easily. These correspondences can cause considerable stress and if it has been decided some correspondence is so abusive, employees should not be exposed accidentally or repeatedly each time they pick up/or access the normal systems. Employees can either store in a separate file with a note on the main file or if kept on the main file it should be sealed in some way. In an electronic file the heading can be used to identify that it contains disturbing content.

Where we decide to respond specifically to the abusive correspondence, the service user should be asked to refrain from using such language and advised that they will not receive a response to their correspondence until they do.

If employees receive an abusive telephone call - An employee may decide to terminate a telephone call if the caller uses aggressive, abusive or offensive language. However, before terminating a telephone call, the caller should normally be informed that their behaviour is unacceptable; that the council has a policy which says employees should end contact if the language continues; and that the call will be terminated if the unacceptable behaviour does not stop. If a call is terminated in such circumstances, the employee should record a description of the behaviour or abusive words used (the actual words used), action taken and the reasons for doing so. The matter should also be brought to the attention of their line manager.

If a service user who calls at council offices appears to be abusive - In

circumstances, where a service user who appears to be aggressive or abusive calls to our premises and employees feel it is safe to move the service user to a designated room, this should be done so with care and good judgement. It is best to have a colleague with you. However, employees should not do this in cases where it is the clear that it may endanger them to be confined to a room. In all cases, a member of senior management should be informed immediately, and any subsequent contact should be dealt with by the senior manager accompanied by an officer. The caller should be politely asked to remove themselves from the premises if they persist in demonstrating unacceptable and abusive language.

After the engagement

Whenever employees apply a zero-tolerance approach, they should record it appropriately. As a minimum, it is recommended that when recording, employees should:

- describe what happened and factually record the actions, behaviour and/or language on the appropriate record-keeping system
- record the length of time the behaviour was experienced
- record details of any witnesses
- discuss with a manager how the situation was handled and if there are any learning or additional steps required.

Additional steps employees and management may consider are:

- informing relevant parties e.g., the police and/or colleagues of the incident
- issuing a formal written warning to the service user from a senior member of the organisation

*If a formal written warning is issued, it should follow the process set out at the 'Restricting Behaviour', section 2 above, and, where appropriate, include:

- identification of the behaviour clearly giving the date, time and details (including additional supporting evidence if available)
- an explanation of why the behaviour was unacceptable
- an explanation of the steps the council has taken

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- advice to the individual that if they repeat the behaviour there will be restrictions put in place or alternatively that the incident was so serious that restrictions will be in place immediately
- guidance on what the individual can do if they wish to appeal the decision.
- Ensuring employees are supported - regular debriefings should occur with colleagues and/or management.
- Employees should be encouraged to take appropriate steps to help protect their own mental health.

DRAFT

Section 4: Governance matters

The basic requirements

NIPSO's published MCHP requires Local Government to develop and practice a policy to manage unacceptable actions.

The MCHP does not prescribe a particular policy or approach. However, as a minimum, we would recommend public bodies should be able to demonstrate:

- a policy on managing unacceptable actions exists and is readily available to employees
- employees make service users aware of the policy and use it to manage unacceptable actions (where appropriate)
- reasonable adjustments are being made (where applicable)
- a clear procedure for logging incidents and recording actions taken, the rationale for any decision-making and the communication of these decisions to service users
- any restrictions on contact by service users is applied by employees incrementally
- at least one option is available to service-users to always contact the organisation ()
- employees inform service users of a right of appeal
- regular review of all cases where the policy on promoting positive engagement and managing unacceptable actions has been applied
- a regular management review of the policy.

Recording and monitoring

It is vital that any decisions to manage unacceptable conduct are based on accurate, reliable and appropriate information. Maintaining meticulous record-keeping is essential, in particular, in the event that any decisions are challenged, or further information is requested.

Services should ensure employees are aware of council's requirements and best practices regarding the recording of telephone discussions and face to face interactions which they consider abusive, offensive, obscene or threatening. Employees should always record these calls and interactions in writing, documenting the discussion as far as

it is possible in the exact words used by the person. Employees should be made aware that, without a detailed record, it may not be possible to take effective action to manage the situation. The record of the unacceptable conduct should always be factual and unemotional. Public bodies and employees should be aware that this information may be released. Policies should be in place to ensure that there is clarity about how and where these records are stored.

Moving towards best practice

The following elements can support best practice in managing unacceptable conduct:

- providing support and training for individual employees who may face difficult situations e.g., frontline and customer-facing employees
- demonstrating clear ownership of the **Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy** at a senior level, so employees feel supported, confident and empowered to implement the policy
- providing clear information to employees and service users to allow them to understand what standards of engagement the council expects
- offering service users an early opportunity to raise any concerns, particularly around any needs they may have for reasonable adjustments
- proactively considering the impact of technology such as social media and whether it needs to be included in any policy.

Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

All members of the community have the right to equal access to the complaints handling procedure. It is important, therefore, to be clear that any Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy does not interfere with the need to ensure that any service provided is accessible to all on an equal basis. In each situation, you will have to consider whether you need to make reasonable adjustments to your service to allow the person to make a complaint. This may mean that you respond differently to individuals who have genuine access needs.

On occasions employees may have to approach behaviour which they think may be occurring as a result of a mental health problem. Employees who are not clinically qualified should never attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem or to make assumptions about what the impact of a particular condition may be on an individual.

Each case will be different, and the organisation has a responsibility to consider specific accessibility needs in relation to each individual.

Freedom of information and data protection

This guide looks at engagement and unacceptable conduct in the complaints handling process. It is important employees understand that they may have other legal responsibilities. If employees restrict service users' contact regarding a complaint, service users are still entitled to make Freedom of Information, Environmental Information or Subject Access Requests. Employees should therefore be able to understand and identify when they need to consider other organisational legal obligations when responding to a complaint.

Creating a culture of collective commitment to good complaints handling

There is a very close link between the culture, policies and training council has in place and the way employees respond to difficult situations. One of the potential challenges for employees managing service users who display challenging behaviours is that some employees may struggle to communicate, deal with and manage service users whom they view as demonstrating "difficult" behaviour. In such circumstances, employees sometimes actively avoid engaging with the service user; assign the complaint to an employee's member who is considered to be 'naturally good' at dealing with difficult behaviour; and only escalate to senior management once the situation has spiralled out of control. These approaches often increase stress levels for both employees dealing with the complaint and the complainant.

However, good complaints handling requires all employees to be involved in creating a culture where there is a collective commitment to welcoming, valuing and embracing complaints.

Directors, senior management and managers can set a positive cultural tone to welcoming and valuing complaints by:

- talking with employees about the benefits of complaints, such as opportunities for organisational learning and improvement
- ensuring all employees who handle complaints receive adequate training and support

Internal Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour v1

- including the complaints policy and procedure in employee induction and delivering regular refresher training
- establishing processes for analysing and reporting complaints data and acting on individual issues as well as more general trends.

Similarly, all employees, including contractors, can contribute to a culture that welcomes complaints by:

- frequently familiarising themselves with the council's complaints policy and processes
- helping service users access the complaints procedure
- helping service users understand the complaints procedure and how to submit a complaint
- treating service users who complain respectfully and professionally.

Appendix 1 – Examples of persistent/unacceptable conduct scenarios with suggested strategies and phrases.

The strategies and phrases below can be used in one conversation or used in stages across a number of contacts but remember it is important to stop negative patterns of behaviour becoming established.

Scenario	Suggested strategies and phrases
A person is repeatedly asking questions or for more information but is refusing to enter the complaints process	You may need to make it clear you have done all you can and if they do not engage with the complaints process, you will no longer respond to questions about this. Remember they have a right to make FOI/ Data Access Requests, therefore, this can only apply to requests for comment or further clarification on a complaint or concern.
The person has asked an elected representative to make the same complaint on their behalf	You can simply restate the decision you have already made to the elected representative and let them know you have informed the person of their rights to take this further. It is appropriate for a representative to support a person in making a complaint. However, once the decision has been made and unless the representative has new evidence or information, there is no reason to change your decision simply because someone is writing on their behalf; indeed, it would be inappropriate to do so.
The person has been contacting lots of different colleagues	You may want to use variations of the following: “I know you have spoken to my colleague today/this week on the same point. I have

	<p>explained I am looking at your complaint and the timescales for response”.</p> <p>“My colleagues know I am dealing with your complaint and will refer to me to answer your questions. Can we agree if you have concerns you will contact me direct? If I am not here, you can leave a message for me”.</p> <p><i>If you are not receiving agreement you could add:</i></p> <p>“Whilst we have a policy which says if someone is contacting us too often, we can restrict contact, I don't want to use it. So, I am hoping and would like for us to reach an agreement about your contact”.</p> <p><i>If not achieved:</i></p> <p>“I am sorry we are unable to agree today about this. I would like to give you some time to think about this a bit more and I will write to you explaining why I am concerned about your contact with a leaflet/copy of policy explaining what steps we can take”.</p>
<p>The person has completed the process but is now contacting different officers to pursue their concerns about you.</p>	<p>You need to make sure that your response is co-ordinated and that whatever route is used, your response is consistent. If you identify a problem as a result of external contact, you should consult your line manager for advice.</p>

<p>The person is sending you lots of detailed but irrelevant information</p>	<p>You may want to use variations of the following:</p> <p>“I am calling about to thank you for the documents you sent me today. However, I am not sure how some of them relate to the matters I am looking at. I am considering xxx and would be grateful if you could explain the relevance of the documents you have sent in relation to xxx.”</p> <p>“I appreciate you are concerned to make sure I have all the information I need to make a decision. However, I think it would be best if we agree that I will ask you for any information I need? ...”</p> <p>“When you receive my response, you will see what information I used to consider your complaint, and we can discuss if I've missed anything at that point.”</p>
<p>The person has completed the complaints process but is unhappy and wants to raise the same issue with you again</p>	<p>You may discuss the outcome of the complaint with the complainant again to provide clarification. You should not normally expect to have to do so more than once or twice. If you have done this, you should remind the complainant that the final decision letter they received from the organisation has informed them of their right to approach an independent body if they so wish. You may want to use variations of the following:</p> <p>“I hope this additional clarification is helpful. Our consideration of your</p>

	<p>complaint is now at an end and will not be reviewed by us further. We have told you of your right to approach NIPSO and I include their contact details again”.</p> <p>“Thank you for your letter. Your disagreement with our decision has been noted on file. Having done so, I have to explain that our consideration of your complaint is now at an end and this complaint will not be reviewed by us further. If you remain dissatisfied with our final decision you can contact NIPSO”.</p> <p>“Thank you for your letter. I appreciate you remain disappointed with our decision. As you know, our consideration of your complaint is now at an end. We can only consider the complaint if there is new evidence that we did not consider previously. We will also be happy to consider any new complaints but will not consider this complaint again (in some cases it may help to detail exactly what that complaint is). In line with our normal procedures, if you write to us again on this matter, we will file your correspondence but will not acknowledge nor respond (or will simply respond with an acknowledgement). This is because it is not helpful to let you think we will review this again”.</p>
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The person insists you need to consider new arguments or new evidence

The first time or the second time this happens, you should have a look to see if this is new and significant. It is not enough that this is new, it needs to make you feel your original decision has been undermined by such evidence.

If someone insists, they have new arguments or evidence, you can request they present them in a way you can process them.

You may want to use variations of the following:

“I have reviewed the points you consider to be new evidence. Thank you for agreeing to set these out in summary form, that has been very helpful. I know you will be disappointed to learn that I do not consider the points you have made to be new, significant information which would lead us to review your complaint. As you know, you can ask NIPSO to consider your concerns and I repeat their details here”.

“You have asked me again to consider new information. We have reached our decision on your complaint and have done so on the basis of the best evidence available to us. I have also reviewed the evidence you provided recently. I have explained your right to approach NIPSO and do not intend to consider this matter further”.

<p>You are receiving short but very frequent contact, with no additional significant information being provided</p>	<p>Clarify why they are contacting you so often.</p> <p>You may want to use variations of the following:</p> <p>“Since we last spoke has anything changed in relation to xxx?”</p> <p>Do you have any new information?”</p> <p>or</p> <p>“Can you maybe explain why you are contacting me so often?”</p> <p><i>Dealing with the response:</i></p> <p>“I appreciate you would like an early resolution. The timescales we have are to allow us to look at matters thoroughly and contacting me more often will delay rather than speed the process up.”</p> <p>“I will be in contact when I promised. Can we agree you will only contact me before then if something significant happens?”</p> <p><i>If you think there is a genuine need for additional contact by the complainant, you can put an agreement in place.</i></p> <p><i>You may want to say:</i></p> <p>“I know this process is making you anxious would it help if I arranged to call you at a specific time each week while I am looking at your complaint?”</p> <p><i>If the above does not work restate the position:</i></p> <p>“We have spoken a number of times today/over the last few days. I have explained</p>
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	<p>I won't be able to respond in detail until the end of next week."</p> <p><i>Explain the impact.</i></p> <p>"I just wanted to let you know that every time you contact me, I have to take time away from dealing with your and other people's complaints."</p> <p><i>If you are not receiving agreement you could add:</i></p> <p>"Whilst we have a policy which says if someone is contacting us too often, we can restrict contact. But I don't want to use this so I would really like to reach an agreement with you about your contact."</p> <p><i>If this does not achieve the desired outcome:</i></p> <p>"I am sorry we are unable to agree today about this. I would like to give you some time to think about this a bit more and I will write to you explaining why I am concerned about your contact with a leaflet/copy of policy explaining what steps we can take."</p>
The person keeps visiting the office	<p>The process is similar to the above. You could also advise them they have to book an appointment or explain the organisation's policy on meeting service users. You may need to put this in writing if an initial verbal explanation does not work.</p>
Each call is very lengthy and detailed	<p>Let the person know at the start of the call that you only have a limited amount of time. You</p>

	<p>may also reflect back if each contact is not progressing the matter.</p> <p>You may want to say:</p> <p>“Last time we spoke, we talked about similar issues, and I think we are spending a lot of time talking around the issue without this moving forward. The longer I spend talking to you on the same points the less time I have to investigate your and other complaints. Please be assured that I will contact you when our response is ready. Can we agree we will wait to discuss your complaint again then when you have seen our response?”</p> <p>Some people do need more time. If this is the case, you can manage this by agreeing times for calls in advance. This means you can give the person the attention they need without worrying that you need to end soon to deal with another issue.</p>
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External A Guide to Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour V1

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The current version of this document is available to all individuals accessing the Council's information and other associated assets and is published on the Council's intranet.



External

A Guide to

Promoting Positive Engagement

and

Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

In

Ards and North Down Borough

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External A Guide to Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour V1

Introduction

This guide aims to help service users and employees promote positive engagements with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

We know that most service users behave respectfully, even in situations where they are justifiably disappointed and frustrated with a service and have perhaps suffered poor service. Most service users are able to manage their disappointment and frustration and productively engage with us to resolve the issue.

However, we recognise that there is potential for conflict to arise between service users and staff in times of frustration and disappointment. A small number of service users, for various reasons, may display unacceptable behaviour and create difficult situations that we need to respond to and manage. Although they may be few, we recognise the resources allocated to managing such conduct by some service users can be substantial, disproportionate and may seriously impede a complaint investigation process or resolution to an issue.

Empowering our staff to proactively manage relationships and de-escalate difficult situations can help us meet the needs of those whose situation means they may act in ways others find difficult to understand. Key elements of this approach are:

- governance and support for staff, helping to have oversight and to create those open conversations with mutual respect
- setting boundaries as a keyway to keep conversations respectful (and this needs to be maintained consistently across the Council)
- contingency planning and a risk-based approach – this needs to include how we respond to zero-tolerance situations and events which may make it difficult for our staff to provide a service.

This guide emphasises the need to use neutral language and non-judgmental approaches, focusing on building/maintaining relationships and managing difficult situations rather than apportioning blame and responsibility. Positive engagement supports service users to express concerns about public services easily and in a constructive manner.

It is all of our responsibility to create spaces where we reduce conflict and ensure we listen with respect and kindness to each other and support staff and service users to engage positively with each other. At the same time, there is a need to protect staff from

behaviour which can have a significant negative impact. Thinking about the rights and perspectives of all those involved can help to ensure we balance these.

Why we have created this guide

This guide is designed with complaints handling in mind (but may apply to other circumstances) and therefore aims to promote positive behaviour whilst ensuring that complaints are handled in the best way possible with service users who sometimes engage in unreasonable, challenging and unacceptable conduct.

Responsibilities of complainants

The frequency of contact with the Council can hamper the consideration of complaints and officers' ability to provide a quality service.

The Council believes it is important to distinguish between people who make different complaints because they genuinely believe things have gone wrong and people who are simply being difficult. Each complaint must be considered, and a decision made as to whether it is genuine or not.

As a service user of Ards and North Down Borough Council, you have the right to expect the best possible services. If we fall short, you have the right to complain. When you complain, we ask you to follow these guiding principles:

- provide adequate details of your complaint
- set out clearly the cause for dissatisfaction
- provide accurate details and supporting correspondence or other relevant supporting evidence
- if there has been a delay in submitting your complaint explain the cause of that delay
- explain what you believe to be a satisfactory outcome
- treat our staff with good manners, politeness and civility at all times
- accept that we will act fairly and promptly in dealing with your complaint
- be reasonable and open minded and listen to reasonable explanations
- be realistic. It may not always be possible to achieve the outcome you want.

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A note on language

To promote positive engagement and manage unacceptable behaviour it is important to use appropriate and helpful language. Therefore, language that may indicate service users as 'vexatious' or 'difficult' will not be used. Our focus will always be on the behaviours, actions and conduct of service users, not the individual. We accept that service users do not always act at their best, particularly when they are frustrated and stressed by a problem. Language that focuses on the situation, rather than the individual, can help our staff discuss with service users how best to move things forward.

Throughout the guide, the term 'service users' also refers to family members and other designated representatives of the initial/primary complainant.

Section 1: Promoting Positive Engagement

It is the responsibility of the council to support staff to effectively promote positive engagement with our service users. We promote positive conduct by building a strong foundation of staff behaviour which welcomes and values complaints and ensures our complaints handling procedure is accessible to all our service users.

Welcome complaints

From the outset, we always aim to establish a culture of welcoming and valuing complaints as opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. Negative and defensive responses to complaints can undermine public confidence, raise suspicions and encourage unacceptable conduct. It is therefore helpful to promote the importance of complaints to staff and service users by clearly demonstrating how the council values and welcomes complaints. It is equally important to communicate and explain to both how complaints are vital to produce service improvements and promote high quality service delivery.

Manage expectations

We appreciate service users do not always understand what council does and how it works. Service users may believe we have unlimited resources or powers to fix a problem. They may expect an instant response, or - "the customer is always right" - approach. They may have unrealistic views about outcomes and remedies, such as compensation or getting someone removed from their post. If they do not get an accurate understanding of what the public body can and cannot do to help them at the beginning of their contact, they may be even more frustrated if staff inform them later in the process that they cannot assist them to reach the remedy they desire.

Be accessible

Our accessible and open complaints procedure demonstrates that we listen to our service users to improve services and service delivery. Including, removing barriers to making complaints for some service users, for example:

- people who have a disability
- older people or people with a diagnosis of dementia
- people who do not have English as their first language

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- people who struggle with literacy
- homeless people.

It is crucial that everyone can easily access our complaints procedure. In order to ensure this is the case, we recognise the barriers that some service users may face when seeking to raise a complaint. These may be physical, sensory, communication or language barriers, but can also include their own personal anxieties and concerns. Service users may need support to overcome these barriers. Best practice to remove such barriers is to continue to consult with different communities and service user groups about what their access needs are and how we can best meet those needs.

We address some of the barriers to complaining by:

- offering alternatives to writing a complaint and accepting complaints by telephone, email, letter, online and in person
- providing information about the complaints process in a range of languages and different formats. For example, 'easy read' and sign language, and formats suitable for those with a visual impairment. We also provide interpretation and/or translation services for those who need them
- providing information in various accessible formats
- providing support to service users to make complaints (if needed)
- accepting complaints from authorised representatives if service users are unable to complain by themselves
- asking staff to proactively check whether members of the public who wish to complain require additional support to do so
- helping service users access independent advocacy relevant to the issues being raised in the complaint.

Respond promptly

We try to ensure that there are no delays or failures in communication during the complaints process as we know this is one of the main reasons why service users become annoyed with us. We also know that complainants can interpret a lack of contact in ways unintended by council. They may assume we do not care about their issue and are doing nothing. That is why we have realistic and public targets for acknowledging and responding substantively to complaints, while being clear these timescales may vary depending on the complexity of a complaint. Our Complaints Handling Procedure clearly defines appropriate timeframes to respond to complaints.

Treat service users with respect

When service users complain they want someone to listen and take them seriously. It is widely accepted that if people who make a complaint see the complaints handling process as fair and reasonable, are treated with respect and given enough information, they are more likely to accept decisions or outcomes, even those outcomes that are unfavourable to them. Being treated with respect during the complaints handling process is therefore as important as the overall outcome. We train our employees to demonstrate respect by:

- dedicating time, free from interruption, to give service users a fair opportunity to present their issue(s) of complaint
- using active listening skills to show they are listening and taking the complaint seriously
- in some cases allowing service users to discuss or comment on preliminary findings before staff close the complaint
- taking the time to explain their decision, how they reached it, and their reasons.

Understand service users' point of view

When investigating a complaint, we find it's good practice to take time to reflect on a service users' point of view. Asking questions to clarify your needs can help develop a better understanding of a service users' point of view. This can help demonstrate that our staff are genuinely interested in your concern/s and in helping to resolve your complaint.

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Maintain professional communication

It is important to keep language professional, friendly and respectful. Always thanking service users for bringing their issue/s to our attention and explain that complaints are welcomed, valued and essential to improving services and service delivery. We also recognise that sometimes services users are so focused on the original issue they forget about other issues they want to raise. A conversation that thoroughly explores the complainant's issue/s will demonstrate to them that staff respect and appreciate the time taken to complain.

Engage in difficult conversations

Sometimes staff have to deliver unwelcome news to service users. It may not be possible to resolve a problem as quickly as service users would like, or at all.

Staff aim to communicate unwelcome news at the earliest opportunity. If we cannot help service users or the outcome of the investigation is not what you had hoped, staff will explain this clearly and as soon as possible. It is important when doing so to be respectful and acknowledge service users' feelings and disappointment, but consistently be open and honest.

Where service users have not understood or appear distressed by the unwelcome news we will confirm the response in writing. This will enable our staff to refer to this in future discussions, particularly if it is taking some time to resolve the complaint.

Identify situations that can be managed

However, there are different types of situations when dealing with complainants which may need to be managed. These include:

- anger
- distress and upset
- confused, illogical communication
- someone raising concerns that they may be a harm to themselves
- repetitive and circular communication
- unpleasant language which is below the level of abusive.

Or we need to address,

- patronising or sarcastic language
- someone being rude about them, colleagues or both
- certain phrases service users repeat too often such as 'I am a council taxpayer' 'You are a public servant and are supposed to serve' and 'You are not listening'
- someone who is very distressed and crying or threatening to self-harm
- someone who may be telling deliberate mistruths or is being manipulative.

By 'manage' in this context we mean 'deal with appropriately'. The aim is to make our communication more effective and work better for you the service user.

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Section 2: Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

What do we mean by unacceptable behaviour?

The following are some examples of unacceptable behaviours (but is not exclusive to):

- unreasonable demands that can affect the service we provide
- communication in a manner which causes offence to staff
- the threat of harm to staff, others and themselves
- aggressive and abusive conduct towards staff
- dishonesty, provision of intentionally misleading information and deliberately withholding information that is relevant
- lack of cooperation
- repeated and unnecessary telephone calls
- frequent emails providing large amounts of irrelevant information
- insistence on things they are not entitled to and outcomes that are clearly not possible, realistic or appropriate in the circumstances
- (when a complaint is finalised) unwillingness to accept decisions and continually demand further action, through modifications of requests when they have exhausted all available internal review options.

Identifying unacceptable behaviour

The next step for our staff is to identify whether a complainant's behaviour or conduct is unacceptable. In deciding whether the action is unacceptable, we will consider:

- The merits of the service users' case
 - Does the complaint have substance?
 - Have they suffered a substantial loss or impact?
- The service users' circumstances
 - Are the service users' actions and requirements proportionate to the service failure they have suffered?

- Service users' responsiveness (if known)
 - Is this the first time they have behaved this way?
 - Have you previously warned them about their action?

Responding to unacceptable behaviour

Anger

Anger can be particularly difficult to manage. To best manage anger, we will firstly try to listen carefully to what the service user is saying to decipher what has angered them. If appropriate, staff may offer the service user an apology on behalf of the council. An apology can often help to calm the situation to help move into a more productive conversation. For our staff the most important aspect of managing anger is to remain calm, in control and not mirror the angry behaviour.

Indecision

Some service users may take a long time to decide on the complaint or issues of complaint they want resolved. One way to help them decide is by determining their specific concerns about the service or service delivery. Staff can speak confidently about the service and share as much useful information as possible so the service user can pinpoint and decide on what issue/s they wish to complain about.

A few ways we will handle indecision include:

- asking specific questions to help identify their concern/s
- explaining details about the service and how the organisation delivers it
- offering suggestions to alleviate their concern/s.

This may offer service users an opportunity to imagine themselves benefitting from the particular service they are concerned with.

Demanding

Service users who demonstrate demanding behaviour often demand staff's time and attention. Service users who are demanding may have a misunderstanding of how the council can help them. They may ask staff to do something they are not authorised or

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otherwise able to complete. It may be helpful to assure them that staff will do whatever is possible to meet their needs.

Criticalness

Service users who demonstrate critical behaviour often find fault in our services or service delivery. They may be quick to highlight their dissatisfaction. To manage this, staff will listen patiently and try to understand the service user's point of view. Sometimes, these service users' honesty offers helpful feedback that can improve services and service delivery.

Persistence

Persistence is often seen as a significant problem in the complaints process and can be difficult for staff to deal with. Staff can be unsure what to do when someone who has completed the complaints process continues to:

- correspond on the same issue
- repeatedly try to raise the same issue using new arguments or claims they have new information and supply copious documents
- pursue completed complaints by approaching elected representatives
- use more than one route to raise the same issue.

Also, to handle a person who constantly questions the actions and decisions of the council but, refuses to enter the complaints process and insists they are simply seeking clarification.

However, we fully recognise that the decision of an individual to disagree with us is legitimate. It is also an individual's decision to refer matters to elected representatives, if they so wish, or to pursue their disagreement by approaching external organisations and agencies. The use of their own energy and resource to continue to pursue an issue important to them is a matter purely for that person.

This means we will not use an unacceptable actions policy when the only issue is that an individual is persistent. However, it is important that staff remember they are responsible for managing their resources and time. If staff have reached a final decision and effectively communicated that decision to the individual, *there is no obligation on the council to continue to explain that decision multiple times*. The continual explanation of that decision may also be unhelpful to the service and the individual.

Managing difficult conversations

When managing difficult conversations, we will address service users directly and politely. Staff will act professionally and demonstrate genuine attempts to diffuse the difficult situation. Staff will balance empathy with the need to remain objective, impartial and professional.

Acting as a role model

Staff will act as role models to demonstrate appropriate behaviour in difficult situations. In some circumstances, service users can feel frightened and out of control. It can therefore be helpful for staff to:

- be clear and specific about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour.

If the unacceptable action or behaviour continues, staff will ask service users to stop and explain that if they choose not to, the staff member will remove themselves from the situation/end the call.

Helping service users to manage their emotions

When service users are upset, staff will try to help manage emotions by:

- maintain eye contact
- keep facial expression neutral
- ensure body language is professional but open
- keep a level tone and volume of voice
- talk at a steady pace and avoid rushing
- ask open and relevant questions
- acknowledge their emotions.

Managing written incidents

Unacceptable actions may also appear in written correspondence. Although difficult to respond to, there is more time in these instances to reflect on the best way to respond to the unacceptable behaviour. We will:

- take time to thoughtfully read the email or letter

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- identify the points that need responding to and evidence of any unacceptable action
- consider whether it would be more constructive to call the service user to discuss their email or letter
- if the choice is to write back, be clear and polite, acknowledging their concerns
- highlight where the unacceptable action has potentially breached these unacceptable actions policy
- ask the service user to be respectful in future correspondences and explain that if they choose not to, staff may restrict future communications
- talk to a more senior colleague or manager for further advice on handling the situation.

Communicating a decision

By the council providing a clear, evidence-based, rationalised and personalised response should help someone understand a decision and appropriately signpost them if they remain unhappy. The decision should make clear the evidence staff used and the actions they completed to investigate the complaint. This should allow service users to accept that the process was fair even if they disagree with the decision.

If the decision is negative, being clear and letting service users know sooner rather than later can also help. In circumstances where a written response is used to communicate a negative decision, if appropriate we will call the complainant before they receive the written response. This can help to forewarn the complainant and manage their expectations. It can also help prepare the person to be able to better absorb the information when they receive the decision letter/email, meaning any subsequent questions from them may be better framed. Subsequently, this can help staff provide a better response to the questions and focus on any genuine outstanding issues.

Managing disagreement with a decision

It is not possible to ensure everyone who complains will agree with the decision. If you disagree with our final decision at the end of the complaints process, there is no need for us to continue interacting with you on the issue. Staff may provide additional explanations or answers to service users about the complaint. However, staff will be clear that it is only clarification they are providing to the service user and not an extension or opportunity for the service user to continue to discuss the complaint. If service users seek clarification

more than once, staff will consider whether it is an attempt by the individual to reopen the complaint. Staff will remind the service user that the complaint will not be reopened and signpost them to NIPSO.

Disagreement with the decision is not a problem. It is simply a case of referring service users to the next stage in the process. If the next stage is NIPSO, staff should remind service users of this and that there will be no further response from the organisation to their complaint.

Time spent on Complaints

When a disproportionate amount of time and resources are allocated to a single complainant, staff will consider whether this conduct is unacceptable and, if so, effectively manage the situation.

We recognise that the level of resource staff should use for an individual complaint will vary from one service to another and depends on the needs of the service user. Also, Council will always consider its commitment and responsibilities to equality and relevant equality legislation. Alternatively, a service user may genuinely simply need more time to explain their complaint.

Staff will bear in mind the following points:

- some service users will exceed the average amount of time taken with the complaints process without this being a problem – their complaint may be more complicated, and the extra engagement may be useful
- some complaints are more sensitive and/or complex
- some service users will have specific communication needs that staff need to consider and may take more time
- some service users find the complaints process difficult and may need extra support.

The person handling the complaint may feel the time taken in handling the complaint, though more than usual, is reasonable and necessary. Staff will record this on the complaint file so that any staff member dealing with the complaint thereafter firstly considers the recorded reasons before taking action to limit the level of contact.

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At this initial stage, staff will:

- describe what engagement we would normally expect
- describe the level of engagement the staff member is experiencing
- describe any disparity between what is expected and what has been experienced
- ensure staff have considered whether there are additional needs that may require reasonable additional support to the service user.

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made from a complainant may cause problems. The level of contact usually becomes unacceptable when the amount of time devoted to telephone calls, reviewing files, responding to emails or written correspondence and otherwise managing the contact, impacts on our ability to provide a service to that person or others.

Explain the impact the situation is having

Staff will clearly explain to the service user why their behaviour is a problem and the impact of that conduct on them and the service and council.

Once staff explain the unacceptable behaviour and its impact, service users will be in a better position to understand what amount and types of contact are acceptable and those that may cause problems. As part of this process, staff can more easily identify early signs of the conduct developing. This allows staff to address the situation before it becomes unacceptable. The advantage of raising the issue early is that staff can do so in a more exploratory, neutral fashion. They can ask why the engagement is occurring in that way, and this may well help staff to solve the problem together with the service user. In these circumstances, staff should record that they have raised the issue. If they come to an agreement with the service user, staff may want to record this in writing, to let the service user know that staff will honour this or to record any undertakings they have made.

Suggest how the engagement needs to change

Once staff describe the situation and explain the negative impact, ideally the change/s needed will be obvious. However, if this early contact does not work or is inappropriate because the specific situation has already become unacceptable, it is important to make it clear to the service user why the conduct is a problem, ask them to amend their behaviour and suggest ways forward.

Staff can make suggestions by telephone, in person or writing. If staff choose verbal communication, they will follow this up in writing to make sure service users understand the next steps. It is important to identify the specific behaviour and the impact it is having in the current situation. Again, staff will try to do this neutrally, focusing on the situation and behaviour, rather than the service user. Our goal is to maintain or rebuild a good working relationship and increase the productivity of the engagement, where possible.

It is not recommended that staff advise service users that their standard of behaviour needs to improve **more than once, or at most twice**, before acting on the consequences explained.

Consequences

It is important to give service users an opportunity to manage or modify their behaviour themselves by letting them know the consequences of their unacceptable conduct. In some situations, staff may need to implement measures to manage a difficult interaction by informing the service user of any potential consequences. When staff are deciding on any restrictions to introduce, it can be helpful to link this to the problem. For example, if someone is making excessive contact through multiple personnel, restricting them to one point of contact may be helpful. In some cases, staff may further restrict access by insisting on one point of contact and contact only in writing, or one point of contact and by telephone. It is important to always aim to put in place the least possible restriction to manage the problem engagement.

Restricting contact

In exceptional circumstances, it may be proportionate and appropriate to manage or restrict service users' access to the complaints procedure for a set period of time (to be determined based on the specifics of the case). This should always be a last resort, and the service should be careful to balance the person's right of access to the complaints procedure with the impact on the council. Examples of behaviour which may result in this exceptional action being taken are:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour towards staff
- Actions preventing staff from pursuing a legitimate aim
- Actions preventing staff from implementing a legitimate decision.
- Persistent and repetitive complaints on the same topic

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Again, it is important to give service users a chance to manage or modify their behaviour themselves by letting them know the consequences of continuing with their behaviour. Only if the situation continues should staff consider implementing any restriction. It is important that staff apply any restrictions incrementally and that they ensure there is always at least one avenue for a service user to contact the organisation. Restricted contact with the service/council may be limited to either written communication (including email) or through a third party.

The complaints process is an important safeguard, and therefore the decision to restrict access to it will need the most senior possible sign-off. It will also be necessary to regularly review the decision.

In the most severe cases, the individual should be notified in writing of the following:

- what restriction the council has put in place
- the reason/s why the restriction was put in place
- the time limit on the restriction and when it will be reviewed
- information on how service users can challenge or appeal this decision where appropriate.

Appealing a decision to restrict contact

A service user should be able to appeal a decision to restrict contact. A member of senior management who was not involved in the original decision should consider any such appeal. Having considered the service user's appeal, they should advise the complainant in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements continue to apply and for what period of time or that a different course of action has been agreed.

Recording and reviewing a decision to restrict contact

Where it is decided to restrict service user contact, a recorded entry noting this should be made in the complaint file. The relevant department/service should also maintain a register of all individuals who are subject to contact restrictions. A decision to restrict contact may be reconsidered if the service user demonstrates a more acceptable approach. A relevant member of senior management should regularly review the status of all service users with restricted contact arrangements including any time frames in place.

Section 3: Zero tolerance situations

There are some situations which are not appropriate and should not be tolerated in the workplace. Such situations need to be managed by staff immediately. Whilst this is another form of managing unacceptable conduct, the risks and challenges associated with 'zero-tolerance' situations are extremely significant and therefore have been included in this separate Prohibition of Access and Use of Council Facilities Policy.

Below are some categories of behaviour

Physical violence will always fall under the zero-tolerance category.

Threats can come in different forms, such as:

- *Direct threats*, like physical violence, which is never acceptable.
- *Indirect threats* which can range from statements close to a direct threat, for example, "I know where you live", to much more vague suggestions and hints and may be as much about the tone used as the words themselves. If you feel at risk, you should always take steps to ensure you and others around you are safe.
- *Threatening postures and/or body language*. Sometimes it is not the words but the posture or body language that is threatening.

Staff understand they do not need to maintain contact simply because a service user has not threatened them directly.

- *Threats to others*. These are always unacceptable and will need a response. Staff will need to consider informing the person threatened and/or the police. Individuals should not be able to make threats to others without consequences and staff should not have to listen to detailed or aggressive threats to others.

Abusive or degrading language is also unacceptable behaviour. This includes language, which is personally insulting, for example, allegations of criminal behaviour, or sexist, racist, homophobic, language which is directed to staff or to others. It would include abusive name-calling i.e., the person swearing directly at staff aggressively.

Zero-tolerance situations

This section includes the staff responses they will use when they are confronted with zero-tolerance behaviour, such as physical violence, threats or abusive language.

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Physical violence

Contact will be ended immediately, and staff need to make sure they and their colleagues and anyone in the immediate area are safe.

Threats

Staff's primary responsibility is their own safety and the safety of others. This may mean leaving the area without any further comment.

If staff receive a threat in written correspondence, they will reply with a statement that this is not acceptable. We also let the author of the threat know that this has been recorded and has already/may be sent to the police. As stated in the defining section, the method of delivery does not change whether something is or is not acceptable behaviour.

If a threat has been withdrawn, the following wording may be used:

"I am really glad you said that. I am sure you'll appreciate we have rules, and we usually have to end discussions if someone makes a threat and let the police know. I can see you didn't mean it so we can go on. I must let you know, however, if you make a threat again, I will need to end the discussion and may need to call the police."

Direct threats

It is not acceptable for staff to be threatened, and this behaviour needs to be stopped immediately

If a staff member is on the telephone and receives a direct threat, they should address any threat politely but firmly. It cannot be ignored. We will let the caller know we are ending the call and why. We will also let them know that we will either call the police or discuss with a manager whether to call the police.

If staff are threatened within the same location or space, generally, staff will politely end the contact and leave the area or ask the person to leave. It may also be appropriate to telephone the police. In all cases, a member of senior management will be informed immediately, and any subsequent contact should be dealt with by the senior management staff member accompanied by an officer. The individual will be politely asked to remove themselves from the premises if they persist in demonstrating unacceptable behaviour and restriction will be applied in accordance with the Council's Prohibition of Access and Use of Council Facilities Policy.

Abusive language

If staff receive an abusive correspondence – Staff will not normally deal with correspondence (letter or email) that includes abusive language. When such correspondence is received, the service user will be advised that their language is considered to be offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful.

Where we decide to respond specifically to the abusive correspondence, the service user should be asked to refrain from using such language and advised that they will not receive a response to their correspondence until they do.

If staff receive an abusive telephone call - A member of staff may decide to terminate a telephone call if the caller uses aggressive, abusive or offensive language. However, before terminating a telephone call, the caller will normally be informed that their behavior is unacceptable; that the council has a policy which says staff should end contact if the language continues; and that the call will be terminated if the unacceptable behavior does not stop. If a call is terminated in such circumstances, the member of staff will record a description of the behavior or abusive words used (the actual words used), action taken and the reasons for doing so. The matter should also be brought to the attention of their manager.

If a service user who calls at council offices appears to be abusive - In circumstances, where a service user who appears to be aggressive or abusive calls to our premises and staff feel it is safe to move the service user to a designated room, this should be done so with care and good judgement. However, staff should not do this in cases where it is clear that it may endanger them to be confined to a room. In all cases, a member of senior management should be informed immediately, and any subsequent contact should be dealt with by the senior management staff member accompanied by an officer. The caller should be politely asked to remove themselves from the premises if they persist in demonstrating unacceptable and abusive language.

After the engagement

Whenever staff apply a zero-tolerance approach, they will record it appropriately. As a minimum staff will:

- describe what happened and factually record the actions, behaviour and/or language on the appropriate corporate record-keeping system (TeCare)

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- record the length of time the behaviour was experienced
- record details of any witnesses
- discuss with a manager how the situation was handled and if there are any learning or additional steps required.

Additional steps staff and management may consider are:

- informing relevant parties e.g., the police and/or colleagues of the incident
- issuing a formal written warning to the service user from a senior member of the organisation

If a formal written warning is issued, it will where appropriate, include:

- identification of the behaviour clearly giving the date, time and details (including additional supporting evidence if available)
- an explanation of why the behaviour was unacceptable
- an explanation of the steps the council has taken
- advice to the individual that if they repeat the behaviour there will be restrictions put in place or alternatively that the incident was so serious that restrictions will be in place immediately
- guidance on what the individual can do if they wish to appeal the decision.

Section 4: Governance matters

Recording and monitoring

It is vital that any decisions to manage unacceptable conduct are based on accurate, reliable and appropriate information. Maintaining meticulous record-keeping is essential, in particular, in the event that any decisions are challenged or further information is requested.

Services should ensure staff are aware of council's requirements and best practices regarding the recording of telephone discussions and face-to-face interactions which they consider abusive, offensive, obscene or threatening. Staff should always record these calls and interactions in writing, documenting the discussion as far as it is possible in the exact words used by the person. Staff should be made aware that, without a detailed record, it may not be possible to take effective action to manage the situation. The record of the unacceptable conduct should always be factual and unemotional. Staff should be aware that this information may be released. Policies are in place to ensure that there is clarity about how and where these records are stored.

Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

All members of the community have the right to equal access to the complaints handling procedure. It is important, therefore, to be clear that any Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy does not interfere with the need to ensure that any service provided is accessible to all on an equal basis. In each situation, council will have to consider whether we need to make reasonable adjustments to our service to allow the person to make a complaint. This may mean that we respond differently to individuals who have genuine access needs.

Freedom of information and data protection

This guide looks at engagement and unacceptable conduct in the complaints handling process. It is important staff understand that they may have other legal responsibilities. If staff restrict service users' contact regarding a complaint, service users are still entitled to make Freedom of Information or Subject Access Requests. Staff should therefore be able to understand and identify when they need to consider other organisational legal obligations when responding to a complaint.

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Creating a culture of collective commitment to good complaints handling

There is a very close link between the culture, policies and training council has in place and the way staff respond to difficult situations. Good complaints handling requires all of our staff to be involved in creating a culture where there is a collective commitment to welcoming, valuing and embracing complaints.

Directors, senior management and managers set a positive cultural tone to welcoming and valuing complaints by:

- talking with staff about the benefits of complaints, such as opportunities for organisational learning and improvement
- ensuring all staff who handle complaints receive adequate training and support
- including the complaints policy and procedure in employee induction and delivering regular refresher training
- establishing processes for analysing and reporting complaints data and acting on individual issues as well as more general trends.

Similarly, all staff, including contractors, can contribute to a culture that welcomes complaints by:

- frequently familiarising themselves with the council's complaints policy and processes
- helping service users access the complaints procedure
- helping service users understand the complaints procedure and how to submit a complaint
- treating service users who complain respectfully and professionally.

Unclassified

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ITEM 4a**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	21 February 2025
File Reference	FIN76
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	Finance Service Plan 2025/26
Attachments	Draft Service Plan

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Not Applicable

Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for the Finance Service in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve this Service Plan.

FINANCE SERVICE

Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By Director
Stephen Grieve	Alison Curtis	Michael Steele
Head of Finance	Head of Administration	Director of Corporate Services
19/02/2025	20/02/2025	26/02/2023

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1. Introduction to Service

Name of Service	Finance
Directorate	Corporate Services
Introduction and Reflection	<p>The role of the Finance Service is to support all other Council services by delivering efficient and effective stewardship of Council funds by providing leadership and excellence in strategic and operational financial matters.</p> <p>Fulfilling this role will result in high quality financial services that are compliant with legislation, good practice and that facilitate managers achieving their corporate objectives.</p> <div><pre>graph TD; HOF[Head of Finance] --> CA[Corporate Accounting]; HOF --> PA[Performance Accounting]; HOF --> FO[Financial Operations]; HOF --> CAP[Capital Accounting]; FO --> EP[Employee Payments]; FO --> IC[Income Collection]; FO --> SP[Supplier Payments];</pre></div> <p>Core transactional services perform well, and monthly reporting deadlines have been met all through the 2024/25 year to date. In addition, 100% of statutory deadlines have been met, including the publication of financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion. The implementation of a new financial management system is due to commence in Q4 of this year. This will be a significant step in the modernisation process for the Council.</p> <p>As part of the 2023/24 service planning cycle a medium-term Finance Development Plan was put in place to assist with longer term planning. This is set out below.</p>

**Introduction
and
Reflection**

Yr	Activity	Status
2024/25	<i>Commence FMS implementation</i>	<i>Due to commence January 2025</i>
	<i>Engage with services to improve purchase order compliance for FMS implementation</i>	<i>Due to commence December 2024</i>
	<i>Engage with services to improve income returns process in advance of electronic bank reconciliation in new FMS</i>	<i>Focussed on resolving issues arising from cash collection service</i>
	<i>Engage with services to monitor major expenditure drivers in advance of introduction of formal business partnering</i>	<i>First complete round of engagement meetings held in September</i>
	<i>Engage with Services to improve Core compliance</i>	<i>Monitoring the sign offs and elements of the quality of sign off. Considering more training on a one to one basis</i>
	<i>Complete transfer of network files to SharePoint</i>	<i>More than 80% complete. Due December 2024</i>
2025/26	<i>Complete FMS implementation</i>	<i>Underway</i>
	<i>Be completely paperless</i>	<i>Paperless purchase ordering system being introduced</i>
	<i>Commence phased restructuring with introduction of business partnering</i>	<i>Not started</i>
	<i>Build team skills, resilience and succession planning</i>	<i>Not started</i>
2026/27	<i>Consider additional modules for FMS</i>	<i>Not started</i>
	<i>Start to realise savings from FMS</i>	<i>Not started</i>
	<i>Maximise savings from FMS and restructuring</i>	<i>Not started</i>
	<i>Complete restructuring – roll out business partnering</i>	<i>Not started</i>
	<i>Build team skills, resilience and succession planning</i>	<i>Not started</i>

2. Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

The context in which the Service will have to deliver its service are set out in the PESTLE analysis below.

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District rate expectations • Council desire for transformation of services to improve efficiency & effectiveness • New corporate plan • Draft Programme for Government • New Government policy shifts and constraints
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectation interest rates for deposits will fall over 3 year planning horizon. • Long term decline of non-domestic tax base including residual effects of the pandemic • Interest Rates — adverse for borrowing; favourable for deposits • Restrictions on carrying central government funding between financial years • Pressure on pay spine from National Living wage • No multiyear budget from Executive • Impact of potential revenue raising measures from the Executive • Potential losses for revaluation 2023 • General fund now at target level (7.5%) but will probably need to rise further • Workforce retention and training • Delivering more with less
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of agile working policy. • Negative public reaction to Council related activity. • Demand for impactful public schemes but reluctance to pay more - how lean can finance/public bodies be? • Customer needs - how are these changing? Increased demand; increased complexity; public trust; public perception.
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing operational Issues with payments and human resource software. • Need for new financial software and reporting package. • Need for greater digitisation across Council. • Need for greater skills within Finance and across the organisation. • Asset tagging software to implement the Asset Management Policy • Generative AI • Power BI
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main statutes that the Finance Service delivers its functions under are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 ○ Rates (NI) Order 1977 (as amended) ○ Rates Regulations (NI) 1997 ○ Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (N) 2015 ○ Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011 ○ Local Government (Payment to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019 ○ HMRC PAYE and VAT Regulations

Legal (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of other codes with quasi-legal standing which the Council is obliged to comply with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK ◦ CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance ◦ CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management ◦ CIPFA Financial Management Code • In addition, the Council must comply with requests under the Freedom of Information Act, or from the Department for Communities • Increased requirement for technical legal / VAT / lands advice due to complex projects Council are undertaking or going to undertake.
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the environmental, social and governance agenda (ESG) on treasury management processes • Climate Change Agenda – roadmap to sustainability • Climate Change Act implementation • Climate change – impact on services/assets – flooding/sea level rise

The SWOT analysis below sets out an internal assessment of the Service as it currently stands.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable and committed staff. • Well respected by Members - better engagement on strategic financial issues • 10-year capital plan in place • 3-year medium term financial plan in place • Statutory financial accountability structures • Consistently clean external reports • Satisfactory internal audit reports • Good quality core services - evidenced by good KPIs • New role introduced to finance service to promote succession planning — trainee accountant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated financial system • Skills deficiencies • Lack of capacity to develop use of technology to improve efficiency. • Burden of FOI requests which require more accessible data. • Unsuitable IT equipment for hybrid working. • Poor prioritisation of core finance work due to overly ambitious Council aspirations; increasing complexity of accounting requirements and increasing complexity of partnership arrangements • Lack of payroll and travel policies • Organisational culture change • Governance - risk aversion; streamlined decision making; future accountability.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More efficient processes released resources for closer working with all Services • Performance management agenda • New financial system preparation being a catalyst for wider changes. • New temporary staff introduce new ideas • Generative AI • Power BI • Introduction of new electronic document and records management system • Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume and complexity of work impacting on staff wellbeing. • Change fatigue both within the finance service and across the whole organisation — especially in connection with new financial system • Over reliance on key individuals • Under developed succession planning • Combating silos and short-termism

3. Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

The table below reflects the key projects that will be undertaken by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services that will be collaborated with as part of the process.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Objective 1			
Complete implementation of new financial management system	Assets and Property Waste and Cleansing Parks and Cemeteries Leisure Community and Culture Strategic Transformation and Performance Communications and Marketing All other services	Economic	2, 3, 7
Objective 2			
Maintain high standards of core finance functions (transaction processing, statutory deadlines and reporting)	All services	Economic	2, 3, 7

4. Service Improvement

The “**Service development/ improvement**” element should identify areas of the service that require development/ improvement along with any new, innovative ideas for future improvements. **Please state clearly in the “Rationale” section why the improvement is being undertaken and what evidence there is to support the decision.**

Only Service improvement activities should be included in this section, ‘business as usual’ activities should be detailed in Section 6.

Please ensure KPIs are included in Section 6 to measure Service development/ improvement(s) outlined below.

Service development/ improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
Implementation of new financial management system	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	The current financial system is 20 years old and now end of life.	Head of Finance	Assets and Property Waste and Cleansing Parks and Cemeteries Leisure Community and Culture Strategic Transformation and Performance Communications and Marketing All other services

5. Service Risk Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed.

Yes

6. Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

Please ensure service development/ improvements detailed in Section 4 are included as KPIs.

KPIs should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, detailed below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3	A thriving and sustainable economy
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

In addition to the outcomes the KPI should align with one of the three **Corporate Priorities** of the **Corporate Plan**, detailed below:

Corporate Priority 1	Economic	Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Support • Attracting Investment • Rural Regeneration • Labour Market Partnership • Sustainable Tourism • Town and City Regeneration • Vacant to Vibrant Scheme • Innovation Hub
Corporate Priority 2	Environmental	Reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Management • Digital and Physical Infrastructure • Estate Management • Tree Planting Strategy • Management of Outdoor Spaces • Local Development Plan • Litter Control and Enforcement • Sustainable Waste Resources Strategy • Sustainable Energy Management Strategy
Corporate Priority 3	Social	Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport, leisure and outdoor recreation • Active travel • Environmental Health • Community Development • Neighbourhood Environment • Good Relations • Leisure Strategy • Placemaking

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
EC.07.F N.01	% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	14%	100%	68%	100%	100%	100%	Cumulative
EC.07.F N.02	% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	96.5%	94%	95.2%	95%	94.5%	95%	Cumulative
EC.07.F N.03	% of completed Employee Appraisals	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	50%	100%	n/a	100%	n/a	100%	Fixed
EC.07.F N.04	% Statutory deadlines met	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	71%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Cumulative
EC.07.F N.05	To pay employees on time	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	99.6%	100%	99.7	100%	100%	100%	Cumulative

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
EC.07.FN.06	% Debtors payments received within 30 days of invoice date	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	No	79%	75%	76%	80%	80%	80%	Cumulative
PIP.EC.07.FN.01	% Creditors paid within 10 working days	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	Yes	73%	80%	69%	80%	80%	80%	Cumulative
PIP.EC.07.FN.02	% Creditors paid within 30 calendar days	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	Yes	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	Cumulative
PIP.EC.07.FN.03	% Creditors paid outside 30 calendar days	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	Yes	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	Cumulative
EC.07.FN.08	To issue monthly budgetary control reports in a timely fashion (in working days)	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	No	9	8	8	8	8	8	Cumulative

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
EC.07.F N.09	To complete monthly account reconciliations within a timely fashion (working days)	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	38	8	29	8	8	8	Cumulative
-	Complete financial management system implementation	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	Yes	n/a	n/a	10%	100%	50%	100%	Cumulative

7. What Services/ Activities will be stopped

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2025/26. An example is provided below.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2025/2026	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
None – although a number of business processes will be amended or completely redesigned.	Implementation of new financial management system	-	Improved efficiency and management information	Better management of Council finances	Improved skills

8. Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Team Meeting	Monthly	Head of Finance
HoST	Quarterly	HoST
Standing Committee	6 Monthly	Directors and HoST
Performance Improvement Plan	Annually (30 th June)	Transformation Manager
Self-Assessment Report	Annually (30 th September)	Transformation Manager

Unclassified

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ITEM 4b

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Commuity Planning Manager
Date of Report	20 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (2014) NI
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Service Plan
Subject	Community Planning Service Plan 2025/26
Attachments	Community Planning Service Plan 2025/26

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Not Applicable

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Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Community Planning Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve this Service Plan.

COMMUNITY PLANNING SERVICE




Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

02 SEPTEMBER 2024



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By
		
Community Planning Manager	Head of Parks & Cemeteries	Chief Executive
02/09/2024	13/02/2025	19/02/2025

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1. Introduction to Service

Name of Service	Community Planning
Directorate	<i>Community and Wellbeing</i>
Introduction and Reflection	<p>The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires Ards and North Down Borough Council to initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate in community planning for our district. The Council is the lead partner and is required to put in place a process where we work with bodies (both named statutory and non-statutory) to develop and implement a shared vision for promoting well-being, increasing community cohesion and improving the quality of life of our citizens.</p> <p>The Community Planning Service works across the whole of the borough and on a range of issues that often fall outside the remit of the Council. The Service is responsible for working with Community Planning Partners, support organisations, government departments and all Council directorates to ensure the community plan is embraced, implemented and reported on in accordance with the legislation.</p> <p>The Community Planning Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitates and manages the community planning process including putting in place appropriate governance structures. • ensures that the commitments set out in the Council's equality scheme are applied in the development and implementation, monitoring and review of the community plan. • collates and manages a statistical evidence base to inform the community planning process and to support other council services. • monitors the whole population impact of community planning via an agreed suite of indicators and the production of Performance Update Reports. • facilitates partners being able to collaborate with each other to implement and report on shared priority activities where the community planning process adds value • ensures that community involvement and engagement is an integral part of the full community planning process. <p>The purpose and priority of the Community Planning Service is to work with both internal and external partners to progress the aspirations and commitments made within the Big Plan. During 2024/25 a review of community planning and the Big Plan for Ards and North Down was undertaken. Recommended amendments to outcomes, priorities and workstreams were agreed by the Strategic Community Planning Partnership in November 2024. An updated version of the Big Plan Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams will be published in 2025.</p> <p>The strapline of the Big Plan is 'Better Outcomes for Everyone across Ards and North Down' and this is the vision of the Community Planning Service.</p> <p>Progress on the Big Plan is reported to a Strategic CP Partnership and an annual Progress Update Report is used to help measure the collective impact of the Partnership.</p>

Introduction and Reflection cont...

Community Planning and the Corporate Plan

Economic, social and environmental wellbeing are integrated throughout both the Big Plan and the Corporate Plan. Thinking sustainably means considering the economic, social and environmental impacts of our activities, and ensuring that any decision taken does not have a disproportionately negative impact on the environment, the economy or on groups of people or communities.

The direct alignment of the revised Big Plan outcomes and the Council's Corporate Plan outcomes is shown below.

07 of ANDBC Corporate Plan - ANDBC is a high performing organisation. This enables us to fulfil our statutory duty to facilitate the establishment of a Community Planning Partnership as well as the development, implementation and monitoring of a Community Plan (The Big Plan for Ards and North Down)				
BIG PLAN OUTCOMES:				
ALL PEOPLE IN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BENEFIT FROM				
BP 01 Opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential	BP 02 Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing	BP 03 Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure	BP 04 A prosperous and inclusive economy	BP 05 An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible
ANDBC CORPORATE PLAN OUTCOMES				
CP 01 An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the deliver of services, plans and investment.	CP 06 Opportunities for people to be active and healthy	CP05 Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing	CP 03 A thriving and sustainable economy	CP 02 An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets CP04 A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough, for citizens, businesses and investors

2. Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

Insert a brief narrative on the external issues, including current and anticipated, impacting upon the service – consideration of PESTLE factors may be useful.

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial vulnerability regarding how funding is distributed to statutory community planning partners - Legislative backlog and need for new/updated policies to make regional progress on issues identified in the Big Plan (e.g., poverty, obesity etc)
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial vulnerability regarding how funding is distributed to statutory community planning partners - Aspirations and evidence-based need of the Big Plan potentially exceed the money available to implement actions to enable real change
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of engagement with a broad demographic that represents all public opinion (only loudest voice is heard) - Hidden inequalities are masked by the distribution of where people live and the mixed socio-economic groups within defined boundaries (i.e., Wards, Super Output Areas etc) - Ageing population and increase in people classified as living with a disability or health issue within the 2021 Census
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media and challenges with communication - Increase scams and phishing may make communicating about issues more challenging as additional safeguards regarding QR codes need to be implemented
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation around community planning is not robust - Legislation relating to other issues e.g., new Integrated Care System may pull partner focus from community planning requirements - Governance requirements take resources away from deliver of the Big Plan and facilitation of the Big Plan workstreams
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of climate change and the cost of adaptation and recovery to climate related incidents may impact ability of partners to deliver other Big Plan priorities

Potential Opportunities and Challenges for 2025/26

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Big Plan is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and that the outcomes and priorities are achievable. - Structure of the partnership is reviewed regularly to ensure that membership of the workstreams helps deliver the Big Plans outcomes. - Diverse skills within the Community Planning Service means we can deliver projects and find solutions quicker than many of our statutory partners. - Dedicated data and evidence resource means we can use this to help inform decision making and identify local need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10th anniversary of community planning in 2025 provides s with an opportunity to remind people about what Community Planning has been involved as well as looking to the future. - An updated version of the Big Plan was agreed by the Strategic CP Partnership in November 2024 and will be published in 2025 to coincide with a celebration of Community Planning in Ards and North Down event. - New version of Big Plan and new series of animations will improve who we communicate about community planning
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stability of membership of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership. Membership has changed significantly over the past four years and for each meeting, while most organisations are represented, it is not always by the same person which does impact shared leadership. - Aspirations of the Strategic Partnership and the Third Sector CP Collaboration HUB remain high, but there is a challenge of aspiration outweighing resources available. - Communication on the impact of Community Planning is a challenge. Often the issues we communicate about e.g. dementia, mental health are challenging for the public and including messages about community planning within these 'campaigns' is not always useful for the public. - Availability of the data we need in the relevant geography boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited resources within Community Planning Service (small team) means when changes happen, they are significant - Limited availability of data needed to make decisions. Data not always available for Council area or sub-areas. - The resources and organisational demands of our partner organisations. Delays in moving projects forward can be the result of governance and resources within partnership organisations. This affects our own deadlines and workstreams. - Internally within Council other issues can take priority. - Community planning is about bringing about long-term change. This can be frustrating for participants who only stay interested when there are quick wins.

3. Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

Within our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 we have a vision of *A Sustainable Borough*. One where Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing are linked and in which we, as a Council, make decisions about policies, services, investments and resources that balance the demands of each. By doing so we can positively impact the people and the assets in our Borough and play a part in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems e.g. poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources, climate change, economic growth etc.

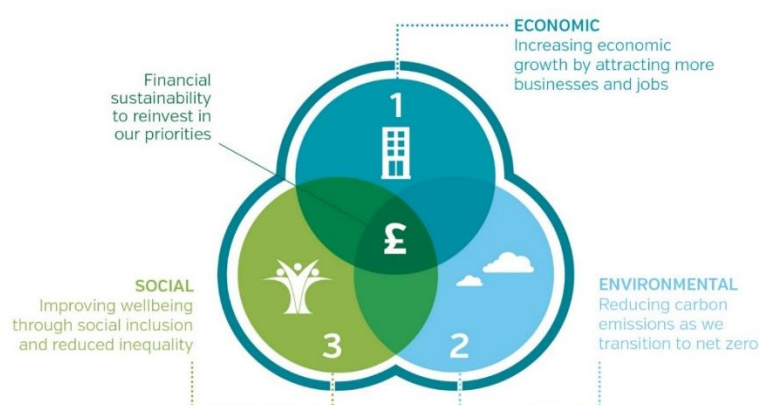
In brief, *A Sustainable Borough* is one where we make sure that we think about economic, social AND environmental impacts when we make decisions.

The three **priorities** we will be delivering against are:

- **ECONOMIC** - increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- **SOCIAL** - improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

These priorities align with the three pillars of sustainable development. They are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership and collaborate to achieve them.

The diagram below summarises our three Corporate Priorities and shows how they all link together. As you will see at the heart of the diagram is our commitment to address the key issue of our financial sustainability – as without that, we will be less able to deliver on all our ambitions.



We have also identified **seven outcomes** that we want to achieve to meet our priorities. They are (not in order of priority):

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. A thriving and sustainable economy
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

The table below reflects the key projects that will be undertaken by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services that will be collaborated with as part of the process. In addition, each objective is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes. There is correlation between the Big Plan for Ards and North Down and ANDBC's Corporate Plan and the other services areas that we collaborate with are outlined in the table below.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Objective 1			
Increase integration of community planning and Big Plan priorities across internal council services	Directorates/ Services on Big Plan Workstreams <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Resuscitation Group – <i>Environmental Health, Safety & Risk</i> 2. Citizen Engagement – <i>Corporate Comms, Community Development, Parks and Environmental Health (Age Friendly)</i> 3. Borough Reading Project – <i>Community & Culture</i> 4. Public Estate and Lands – <i>Capital Projects, Regeneration and Community & Wellbeing</i> 5. Health & Wellbeing – <i>Environmental Health, Community Development</i> 6. Whole Systems Approach to Obesity – <i>Environmental Health, Community Development, Outdoor Recreation, Sports Development</i> 7. Age Friendly – <i>Environmental Health, Community & Culture, Leisure, Parks, Organisational Development, (Compliance (Equality))</i> 8. Dementia Friendly – <i>Environmental Health, Organisation Development, Compliance (Equality)</i> 9. Multi-agency Support Hub – <i>Community & Culture (PCSP)</i> 10. Labour Market Partnership – <i>Economic Development, Community & Culture</i> 11. Anti-poverty – <i>Community Development, Environmental Health</i> 12. Sustainable Tourism – <i>Tourism, Parks, Community Development, Compliance (SD)</i> 13. Climate Resilient Communities (incorporating Sustainable Food) – <i>Parks, Safety & Risk, Compliance (SD), Assets and Property</i> 14. Moved by Nature – <i>Tourism, Events, Parks, Environmental Health</i> 	Social/ Economic and Environmental	Outcome 7

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Objective 2			
Increase use of evidence based decision making	<p>Working across internal council services to improve how data is analysed and visualised</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CP Assessment of Wellbeing Chapters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMP (Economic Development) Poverty (Community & Culture) Absence Dashboard – HR and OD Carbon dashboard – Property and Assets, compliance (SD), Parks, Finance Workforce Planning/ S75 etc. Population Statistics for HR and OD and Compliance 	Social/ Economic and Environmental	Outcome 7
Objective 3			
Improve engagement, communication and participation with all stakeholders	<p>Outcome 1 of the Corporate Plan and outcome 1 of the Big Plan both include the importance of enabling AND citizens to engage with decision makers. Co-design and shared development of interventions/services that provide</p> <p>To improve engagement and integrate community planning principles into a Council Engagement Framework. Working with Corporate Comms and Marketing</p>	Social	Outcome 1
Objective 4			
Promotion of the Big Plan and Community Planning	Publish and promote the updated version of the Big Plan. Work with Corporate Communications and other internal and external partners to co-ordinate tailored messages and the Big Plan and Community Planning assets.	Social	Outcome 1 and 7

4. Service Improvement

The “**Service development/ improvement**” element should identify areas of the service that require development/ improvement along with any new, innovative ideas for future improvements. **Please state clearly in the “Rationale” section why the improvement is being undertaken and what evidence there is to support the decision.**

Only Service improvement activities should be included in this section, ‘business as usual’ activities should be detailed in Section 6.

Please ensure KPIs are included in Section 6 to measure Service development/ improvement(s) outlined below.

Service development/ improvement 2024/25?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
Participation and Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	In 2024/25 we developed new resources to help promote what CP has achieved. These will be ready to roll out in 2025.	CP Manager	Internal – Comms and ANDBC Officers to help promote CP
Partnership Engagement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	Linked to the above. Lots of changes have happened over the 10 years of CP, including the internal and external officers engaged in delivering the Big Plan.	CP Manager	Internal – HoS to help deliver Big Plan priority workstreams External – SCPP and Third Sector HUB commitment
Review Big Plan, outcomes, priorities and workstreams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	The Big Plan should be reviewed every 4 years. It was first reviewed in 2021. 2025 is the 10 th anniversary of community planning in Northern Ireland – lots have been learnt over the past 10 years.	CP Manager	Internal – HoS to consider alignment with Corporate Plan External – SCPP, Third Sector HUB to ensure impact

5. Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Standing Committee	6 Monthly	Head of Service and SUMs
Team Meeting	Monthly	Head of Service and SUMs
<i>Strategic Community Planning Partnership</i>	Every 4 months	Community Planning Manager

6. Service Risks Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed.

Yes (See *appendix*)

7. Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

Please ensure Service development/ improvements detailed above are included as KPIs.

KPI' should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes detailed below:

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 socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming
6	We have active and healthy people
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

In addition to the outcomes the KPI should align with the Corporate Priority:

Corporate Priority 1	Economic
Corporate Priority 2	Social
Corporate Priority 3	Environmental

Please note re selection of Corporate Priority – Community Planning works across all Seven outcomes and all Three Corporate Priorities. The purpose of Community Planning is to Create Better Outcomes for Everyone by taking an evidence-based approach therefore the Social Corporate Priority is most relevant, but the workstreams delivering action are split across all seven outcomes and all three Corporate Priorities.

Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined above and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	2024/25 Reporting						
					2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2	Reporting end of Q4	Cumulative or Fixed
% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 monthly	7	Economic	98%	95%	95.7%	95%	95%	95%	Fixed
% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 monthly	7	Social	100%	95%	100%	95%	95%	95%	Fixed
% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	Mandatory	Annual	7	Social	100%	0	100%	100%	0	100%	Fixed
Internal Collaboration with other Council Services (Number involved in CP Workstreams)	Service Led	6 monthly	7	Social	12	12	12	12	6	6	Fixed
Facilitation/Participation in Community Planning Workstream Meetings/Workshops	Statutory	6 monthly	1	Social	20	20	18	20	10	10	Fixed (20 in total)
Facilitation of Strategic Community Planning Partnership Meetings	Statutory	6 monthly	1	Social	3	4	3	3	1	2	Fixed (3 in total)
Facilitation of Third Sector HUB	Statutory	6 monthly	1	Social	0	2	3	3	1	2	Fixed (3 in total)
Performance Update Report / Biennial Statement of Progress	Statutory	Annual	1	Social	1	1	1	1	0	1	Fixed
Development and maintenance of Evidence Base to inform decision making	Service Led	6 monthly	7	Social	8	8	12	10	5	5	Fixed (10 in total)
Events, activities and campaigns to promote CP priority workstreams and strategic issues	Service Led	6 monthly	1	Social	1	4	4	4	2	2	Fixed (4 in total)

8. What Services/ Activities will be stopped

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2024/25.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2024/2025	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
Participation in external groups that impact on wellbeing	This PM referred to two external groups established to develop the new Integrated Care System. These groups have completed their remit.	0.00	None	None	The CP Manager and CP Officer will continue to sit on other groups aligned with the work of the CP workstreams
2 Events and 2 promotional campaigns	These were two separate PMs but have been combined under the banner of promoting CP priority workstream and strategic issues	0.00	None	None	None – events and promotional campaigns will still be delivered
8 Statistical updates and 1 research report	These were two separate PMs but have been combined to one PM focusing on development and maintenance of evidence base to inform decision making	0.00	None	None	None – Assessment of Wellbeing and evidence base will continue to be updated and developed

Appendix a: Community Planning Service Risk Register

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status	Further Action Required	Action Due by	Risk Owner	Notes to explain rationale for scoring, etc.
		I	L	R		I	L	R					
1	Failure to fully resource a Community Plan	5	4	20	Shared ownership of Big Plan workstreams with other Council departments	4	3	12	Action	Shared leadership for CP required within the SCPP as well as within the workstream groups.	March 2026	Community Planning Manager	
2	Failure to secure buy-in from Statutory Community Planning Partners	5	4	20	Formalised structure of Partnership to ensure the correct people engage at the correct level	5	2	10	Action	3 meetings a year and annual Performance Update Report	March 2026	Community Planning Manager	
3	Failure to secure buy-in from community and voluntary stakeholders	5	4	20	Third Sector CP HUB meets 3 times a year, involvement in workstream groups and represented on the Strategic CP Partnership	5	2	10	Action	Ongoing communication and awareness of the impact they have within CP workstream groups	March 2026	Community Planning Manager	

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status	Further Action Required	Action Due by	Risk Owner	Notes to explain rationale for scoring, etc.
		I	L	R		I	L	R					
4	Failure to secure buy-in from Council department	5	3	15	Shared leadership with some departments for delivering workstreams in partnership with other SCPP members	4	2	8	Tolerate	Relevant officers participating in workstreams and increase ownership by other departments. Align Big Plan priorities and workstreams with delivering ANDBC Corporate Plan priorities and measure of success.	March 2026	Community Planning Manager	
5	Failure to show impact of community planning	5	3	15	Ongoing assessment of wellbeing and review of Big Plan Indicators. Annual Performance Report of Community Planning to highlight activities across priorities and workstreams	5	2	10	Action	Community Planning Event to promote what has been achieved over the past 10 years of community planning. Publication of data on Council website	June 2025	Community Planning Manager CPM	Improved communication will help demonstrate impact
6	Failure to engage communities in the delivery of the community plan	5	4	20	Promotion and accessibility of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down and the Big Conversation – online and hardcopy	4	2	8	Action	Reference community planning in marketing of support initiative (e.g. Here2Help, Dementia Safeguarding etc) to promote benefits.	March 2026	Community Planning Manager	

Unclassified

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ITEM 4c**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Communications and Marketing
Date of Report	18 February 2025
File Reference	CMMSP/SP2526
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Communications and Marketing Service Plan 2025-26
Attachments	Communications and Marketing Service Plan 2025-26

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Not Applicable

Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Communications and Marketing in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017–2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June


RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve this Service Plan.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By Director
Claire Jackson	Alison Curtis	
Head of Communications and Marketing	Head of Administration	Chief Executive
17/02/2025	20/02/2025	24/02/2025

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1. Introduction to Service

Name of Service	Communications and Marketing
Directorate	Chief Executive's Department
Introduction and Reflection	<div><p>The Service sits within the Chief Executive's Office. It aims to:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote Council activities through effective engagement and communication.• Protect and enhance the Council's reputation by challenging negative perceptions.• Promote the Borough as an appealing destination to visit and invest in.</div> <div><pre>graph LR; C[M] --- CC[Corporate Communications and Multi-media]; C --- B[Bangor Regeneration]; C --- BM[Borough Marketing]; CC --- CS[Comms Strategy]; CC --- PMR[PR and Media Relations]; CC --- DM[Digital Marketing]; CC --- IC[Internal Communication]; CC --- AHM[Arts and Heritage Mktg]; CC --- GD[Graphic Design]; CC --- TES[Technical Event Support]; B --- BW[Bangor Waterfront]; B --- SE[Stakeholder Engagement]; B --- SC[Sponsorship Co-ordination]; BM --- TM[Tourism Marketing]; BM --- IM[Investor Marketing];</pre></div> <p><i>Leisure marketing is not centralised and is delivered by staff reporting to the Operations Manager for Leisure.</i></p> <p>The Service comprises 13 staff and sits within the Chief Executive's Office.</p> <p>Under the Local Government Act 1972 councils have a statutory duty to share necessary information with stakeholders and under the 2014 Act, with the addition of community planning, to consult and engage in an effective manner.</p>

1.2 Corporate Communications and Multi-Media

Staff	The Corporate Communications and Multi-Media Manager is supported by 1 Officer and 6 Assistants. The team works across all service areas in Council.
Purpose	To promote Council activities through effective engagement and communication and to protect and enhance the Council's reputation by challenging negative perceptions.
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Corporate Communications and Multimedia team has...</p> <p>Processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 2,500 social media posts across 3 main corporate and culture social media channels Over 200 media enquiries Over 900 Multimedia jobs as well as providing event support to Tourism, Civic and Arts/Heritage events plus Grant Aided and internal <p>Delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New and Updated Council Website in line with the digital strategy. Integrated Campaigns: Implemented integrated corporate communications and marketing campaigns for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Local Labour Market Partnership Aspects Festival Tourism Event (working with marketing colleagues) Media Releases: Issued 230 media releases across Corporate and Arts and Heritage audiences. Promotion of Arts and Heritage: Successfully promoted Arts and Heritage in the Borough through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Arts & Heritage Guides 3 Festival Guides 4 Large-Scale Festivals Developed a comprehensive Marketing and Promotion Plan Social Media Engagement: Achieved a 60% increase in engagement across corporate social media channels. Resident Satisfaction: Conducted a Resident Satisfaction Survey with an 83% overall satisfaction rate. NEW AND INFO - 26 editions, plus 12 Chief Executive/Senior Management updates Emergency Support – provide strategic comms and marketing support for the Council's emergency response at Rivenwood and to Storm Eowyn. <p>Facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Media coordination group Internal Big Breakfast events, staff summer lunch, 2 x SUM forum, Business conference and associated events to introduce new Chief Executive. <p>Introduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borough Spotlight, digital/interactive Borough Magazine

Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<p>Resource Management: Prioritising messages based on available resources is essential. We allocate resources wisely to ensure impactful communication, this however is not always understood across the organisation as each service area vies for spotlight on their particular product.</p> <p>Prioritisation: Sometimes, certain messages take precedence. Our team consider urgency, importance, and audience when prioritising communication efforts, again this is not always accepted across the organisation.</p> <p>Planning Processes: Integrate communication planning into overall organisational planning. Service areas should involve the Communications team early to align strategies/ messaging and to ensure that duplication of effort is not happening across the organisation. It should be a 'One Council' approach, something that needs to change culturally throughout the organisation. Many services areas do not comply with timelines that are put in place by the Communications team.</p>
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1.3 Borough Marketing

Staff	<p>The Borough Marketing Manager is supported by Marketing and Asst. Marketing officers, and works in close collaboration with the Tourism, Economic Development and Regeneration service areas.</p>
Purpose	<p>Convey clear propositions to a) present Ards and North Down as an appealing visitor destination targeting potential visitors and b) as an appealing inward investment proposition for a strong place to do business.</p>
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Borough Marketing team has:...</p> <p>Delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 fully integrated comms and marketing campaigns – targeting visitors, investors and encouraging residents to support local. • >5 million digital impressions in biannual destination awareness campaigns reaching NI, ROI and GB markets. • Promotion of council-run events programme including Merry May Day Hollywood, UK Pipe Band Championships, Sea Bangor Festival, Taste Food Festivals, Comber Earlies and Christmas Switch Ons. New pilot events Shorelife and Taste AND at Clondeboy promotional campaigns were also delivered. • Promotion of Tourism Development activity including Experience AND programme of immersive experiences; walks and tours; Visitor Servicing; Industry Day and Trade events. • Marketing support for grant-aided initiatives. • Taste Ards and North Down local food and drink promotion. • Suite of visitor and investor print/ digital publications created showcasing the Borough as an appealing place to visit and invest. • Development and delivery of Visit Belfast Regional Marketing Partnership annual service plan. • Borough Ambassador pilot – Video testimonials completed with tourism providers. • High growth across all Visit AND digital channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitardsandnorthdown.com annual web traffic 729k (+48% on prior year)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 11k social followers (+28% YTD) ○ 1k email sign ups (+25% increase YTD) with visitor database of @5k recipients, and 70 ezines have been sent. <p>Collaborative Projects working in partnership with Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Olympic Homecoming • PR plan developed by comms and marketing to increase AND profile in ROI to potential visitors has generated 13 new features. • Collaborative approach across all key campaigns ensures maximum exposure across PR and promotional channels. <p>Facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors' attendance at UKReiff investor event
Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<p>'Always on' content requirements - The 'always on' nature of digital comms requires a high level of resource to develop engaging content and manage appropriate online responses.</p> <p>Additional campaign requirements for new pilots in 24/5 - Promotion of additional new pilot events were effectively executed but required a high level of resource.</p> <p>Timebound projects - Marketing requirements are often urgent or timebound and therefore the team must deal with multiple priorities. Templates and timelines have been developed to help manage incoming programming information more efficiently. It is important that partner services adhere to timelines and effectively plan programmes that require communications and marketing support to ensure that priority projects are effectively supported.</p> <p>UK GDPR legislation and implications for permissions, protection, and use of images/ personal data is of critical importance and a key consideration when developing promotional materials.</p>

1.4 Bangor Regeneration

Staff	The Bangor Regeneration Manager works as part of the Communications and Marketing Service Unit.
Purpose	To deliver communications and marketing support for regeneration projects in Bangor.
Key Achievements	<p>Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Continuing to focus on engaging and relationship building with the public and stakeholders in Bangor in relation to the Waterfront Redevelopment, dispelling myths and clarifying the difference between it and the Queen's Parade redevelopment project.</p> <p>Village Plan – New Process A new process has been created to develop new plans for each of the villages in the Borough delivered by officers and not consultants. Following a period of desktop research, public meetings, community groups sessions, primary school visits, on-street and online surveys were delivered.</p> <p>Ward Park Environmental Improvement Scheme</p>

	<p>An ambitious programme to improve and enhance one of Bangor's greatest assets. Key to the scheme is public awareness, reassurance and input.</p> <p>Delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-monthly Bangor Waterfront Ezine to keep subscribers informed as to progress and status of the programme • An extensive programme of public engagement to present the new Village Plan process. Resulted in over 1,500 surveys completed and improved relationships within the community • Successful public information session to present the plans for the Ward Park Environmental Improvement Scheme <p>Facilitated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 30 public information sessions for Village Plans <p>Introduced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Lab – new engagement platform - Ward Park Environmental Improvement Scheme was the first project launched on the platform with a good response. This is regularly updated as the project moves on and has offered learning for future use.
Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<p>Village Plans: Challenging to engage a wide range of residents. No immediate funding for VP improvements can cause frustration.</p> <p>Bangor Waterfront: The focus of Bangor Waterfront redevelopment remains on the procurement of design contractors and as such there is little 'new' information to share. Still some confusion between BWF and the Queen's Parade redevelopment. BWF is a complex project with a wide range of partners – both internal and external to Council. Maintaining good lines of communication with all and ensuring that, on occasion, different priorities and messages are managed effectively is key to the smooth presentation of the project.</p>

2. Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynicism about regional/ national political situations, negatively impacting views of local politics. • More regional/ partnership working providing additional profile opportunities but also additional demands on communications channels.
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure across internal services to plan/ budget effectively for communications and marketing element of their service plans. • Cost of living increases/ rates increase resulting in increased scrutiny of council spend. • Requirement to demonstrate value for money across all services. • Perception (incorrect) that digital/ social media is a 'no cost' service.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing requirement for more openness and transparency across all Council activities. • Growing public interest in more structured consultation and engagement – all services need to respond to this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in audience numbers on all Council social media and web platforms/ challenges of managing levels of negativity and abuse. • Increasing expectation of 24/7 and instant multi-media-based comms. • Increasing need for more flexibility in work patterns to be able to respond. • Increasingly older local population but necessity to engage with youth – extremes of the comms channels.
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to use technology to support new ways of consulting (Citizen Lab). • Opportunities arising from the new digital strategy – single entry point for customers/ better use of analytics and data in decision making/ better collaboration across Council. • Increasing relevance of digital influencers. • Opportunities to use AI to assist content development if appropriate governance in place.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of conduct. • Increasing ethical standards around transparency and openness. • Copyright.
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silo thinking continues across Council limiting shared learning, duplicating effort/mixed messages to customers. • Lack of understanding of the service/ service pressures making difficult to manage work requests.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The Service has knowledgeable, resilient and capable staff who are motivated to deliver at a high standard for Council/ Borough.</p> <p>Unique insight into the full remit of the organisation and areas of synergy by working proactively with all Council directorates.</p> <p>The team has a strong knowledge base, supported by relevant and up-to-date training (e.g. social/ digital media/ crisis comms).</p> <p>Strong partnership working eternally enabling effective amplification of messaging and building Council reputation.</p>	<p>The team delivers work under significant deadline pressures and in a media/ social media environment that essentially operates 24/7. It can be difficult to meet this need, as the Council does not work in this way.</p> <p>Confirmation of information when responding to issues raised in press/ social media is not always readily available/ approved by senior officers – perception that it is ultimately Comms responsibility as opposed to the Service Unit's.</p> <p>Marketing and promotional budgets sit operationally not centrally – not maximising spend in many cases.</p> <p>It is recognised that members of the team need to engage more regularly and be more visible within a range of Council service areas.</p>
Opportunities	Threats

Corporate digital transformation journey. Explore how AI can effectively and ethically contribute to content creation.	Seeing increased programming with limited recognition of marketing and comms implications – lack of collaboration/ dilution quality.
Corporate Plan – opportunity to prioritise/ tier work towards more strategic communications.	Risk of content saturation and follower fatigue – will lead to disengagement.
Sponsorship – income generation and reputation building opportunity.	Constantly changing digital platforms – need stronger strategic plan to maximise use.
Bangor 2026 – opportunity for placemaking around new marine gardens scheme.	Meeting the need for non-digital output in an increasingly digital world.
Partnerships – build on key existing partnerships and develop new.	

3. Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

Within our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 we have a vision of *A Sustainable Borough*. One where Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing are linked and in which we, as a Council, make decisions about policies, services, investments and resources that balance the demands of each.

By doing so we can positively impact the people and the assets in our Borough and play a part in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems e.g. poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources, climate change, economic growth etc.

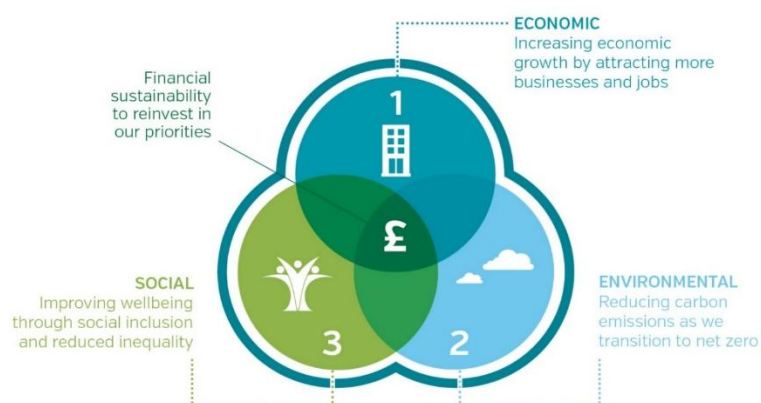
In brief, *A Sustainable Borough* is one where we make sure that we think about economic, social AND environmental impacts when we make decisions.

The three **priorities** we will be delivering against are:

- **ECONOMIC** - increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- **SOCIAL** - improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

These priorities align with the three pillars of sustainable development. They are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership and collaborate to achieve them.

The diagram below summarises our three Corporate Priorities and shows how they all link together. As you will see at the heart of the diagram is our commitment to address the key issue of our financial sustainability – as without that, we will be less able to deliver on all our ambitions.



We have also identified **seven outcomes** that we want to achieve to meet our priorities. They are (not in order of priority):

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. A thriving and sustainable economy
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

By the nature of the role, the Communications and Marketing Service Collaborates with ALL Service areas in Council on an ongoing basis. The table below reflects the key projects/ objectives that will be achieved by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services across the Council that will be collaborated with as part of the process. In addition, each objective is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Corporate Communications and Multi-Media			
Public engagement on waste and recycling/ kerbside review*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Services Customer Services 	Environmental Economic	1, 2, 3, 4
Further development and roll out of digital borough magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Service Areas 	Social	1, 2, 7
Borough Marketing			
Delivery of visitor and investor PR plans (in conjunction with Corp Comms + MM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Economic Development Regeneration + external stakeholders collaboration with Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI.	Economic	3, 4
% increase in followers to Visit AND social media against previous year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Community and Culture Parks and Cemeteries Regeneration 	Social Economic	4, 7
Development of investor focussed communications tools and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Regeneration 	Economic	3, 4
Delivery of support local campaign activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration + Chambers of Commerce	Economic	3, 5
Engagement and Sponsorship			
Engagement framework*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All external facing services 	Social	1, 7
Advertising/sponsorship Pilot roll-out*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Leisure 	Economic	4,7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks• Administration		
Whole Service Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•		
Brand Ambassadors*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism• Community and Culture• Waste Services• Regeneration	Social	1, 7
Ethical AI usage guide*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administration• Transformation and Performance	Social	7
Raise public awareness of emergency response/ resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administration	Social Economic	3, 4, 5
Bangor 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regeneration• Economic Development• Leisure• Parks• Tourism• Community and Culture	Social Economic	3, 4, 5

4. Service Improvement

Service development/improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
Brand Ambassadors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	Proactively extend use of brand ambassadors (advocates) for Council, aligned to corporate priorities. Introduce new and, in some cases, expert voices to engage on issues. Helpful to engage target audiences and challenge misconceptions.	ALL C+M SUMs	HOST/ external partners
Engagement Framework	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	Work to be further progressed to develop an engagement framework for Council that will ensure more consistency in approach across services; and help deliver on Corporate Plan Actions.	BRCM	HOST
Advertising/ sponsorship Pilot	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation	The development of an Advertising and Sponsorship Policy for Council has highlighted inconsistencies in how sponsorship is currently managed, as well as opportunities for how it could be widened and extended. The proposed pilot roll-out will enable opportunities to be tested and lessons to be learnt before more wider application across the organisation.	BRCM	Tourism/ Leisure/ Parks/ Administration/ Business Partners
Ethical AI usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality	AI is in use across Council at present but with no guidance framework in place has	ALL C+M SUMs	Administration

Service development/ improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	the potential to be inadequately or in appropriately used. Council requires a practical framework to ensure it can embrace this technology while adhering to core AI ethics, including transparency, accountability, and fairness.		Transformation and Performance
Public engagement on waste and recycling/ kerbside review	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	Ongoing improvements and enhancements to Council waste services in line with strategy need to be communicated to the public and feedback used to shape how changes are introduced, potential challenges mitigations.	CMMM	Waste and Cleansing

5. Service Risk Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed.

Yes

6. Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

Please ensure service development/ improvements detailed in Section 4 are included as KPIs.

KPIs should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, detailed below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3	A thriving and sustainable economy
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

In addition to the outcomes the KPI should align with one of the three **Corporate Priorities** of the **Corporate Plan**, detailed below:

Corporate Priority 1	Economic	Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Support• Attracting Investment• Rural Regeneration• Labour Market Partnership• Sustainable Tourism• Town and City Regeneration• Vacant to Vibrant Scheme• Innovation Hub
Corporate Priority 2	Environmental	Reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waste Management• Digital and Physical Infrastructure• Estate Management• Tree Planting Strategy• Management of Outdoor Spaces• Local Development Plan• Litter Control and Enforcement• Sustainable Waste Resources Strategy• Sustainable Energy Management Roadmap
Corporate Priority 3	Social	Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport, leisure and outdoor recreation• Active travel• Environmental Health• Community Development• Neighbourhood Environment• Good Relations• Leisure Strategy• Placemaking

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
EC.07. CC.01	% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	96%	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
EC.07. CC.02	% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	97%	94%	98.91%	95%	95%	95%	Fixed
EC.07. CC.03	% of completed Employee Appraisals	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	92%	100%	92%	100%	75%	100%	Fixed
EC.07. CC.04	% client satisfaction	Service Led	Year End	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	93%	95%	N/A	95%	n/a	95%	Fixed
SO.07. CC.01	% resident awareness of Council services	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	70%	75%	72%	75%	n/a	75%	Fixed
SO.07. CC.02	% resident satisfaction with comms	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	75%	75%	78%	80%	n/a	89%	Fixed

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
				<input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7									
SO.07. CC.03	% resident satisfaction with Council website	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	90%	90%	N/A	90%	n/a	90%	Fixed
*	% resident awareness of emergency preparedness	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	75%	n/a	75%	Fixed
SO.07. CC.04	% employee satisfaction with engagement	Service Led	Year End	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	72%	75%	n/a	80%	n/a	80%	Fixed
EC.07. CC.05	Increase sponsorship revenue	Service Led	6 monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	-£10k	n/a	-£30k	-£15K	-£30k	Cumulative
*	Recruit ambassadors re outcomes of corporate plan	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	6	Cumulative
SO.07. CC.05	Launch Engagement Framework	Service Led	6 monthly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic	No	n/a	Complete	Missed deadline	Complete	Complete	n/a	Fixed

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
				<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social								
*	Build engagement levels across social media channels	Service Led	6 monthly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	Fixed
*	Deliver 1 multichannel campaign to encourage residents to support local businesses across a range of sectors	Service Led	Year End	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a	100%	Fixed
*	No of thought leadership PR editorials in relevant business publications to promote investing in AND	Service Led	Year End	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	n/a	3	Fixed
SO.07. CC.07	% households signed up for digital Borough Magazine	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	n/a	5%	3%	5%	n/a	5%	Cumulative
EN.07.C C.01	% households engaged with kerbside collection scheme changes	Service Led	Year End	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	5%	n/a	New collection scheme not progressed	5%	n/a	5%	Cumulative

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
EC.07. CC.07	% increase in signs ups to the Bangor Waterfront ezine	Service Led	6 monthly	<div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	No	n/a	50%	33%	50%	25%	50%	Cumulative
*	Develop, test and roll out guidance on ethical use of AI across council services	Service Led	Year End	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div></div>	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Economic</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div><div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social</div></div>	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	Complete	n/a	Complete	Fixed

NB: Some Comms and Mktg-Led KPIs are recorded in Client Service Area Plans as outline below

Recorded in Tourism Service Plan/ Reported to P+P Committee

- % increase in followers to Visit AND social media against previous year
- Number of targeted destination awareness AND PR/partnership articles – Food and one other theme to NI and ROI markets
- % engagement rate of ezines to tourism trade and consumer database

Recorded in Regeneration Service Plan/ Reported to P+P Committee

- Develop the Bangor 2026 Art and Animation Placemaking Strategy

7. What Services/ Activities will be stopped

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2025/26.
An example is provided below.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2025/2026	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
N/A					

8. Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Team Meeting	Fortnightly	HoS/SUMS
HoST	Quarterly	HoST
Standing Committee	6 Monthly	Directors and HoST
Performance Improvement Plan	Annually (30 th June)	Transformation Manager
Self-Assessment Report	Annually (30 th September)	Transformation Manager

Unclassified

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ITEM 4d**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	21 February 2025
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	Administration Service Plan 2025/26
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Administration Service Plan 2025/26

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Not Applicable

Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Administration in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan (Appendix 1):

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Service Plan is approved.

DRAFT ADMINISTRATION SERVICE PLAN (CORPORATE SERVICES)

Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By Director
Alison Curtis	Claire Jackson	Michael Steele
Head of Administration	Head of Communications and Marketing	Director of Corporate Services
19/02/2025	21/02/2025	26/02/2025

DRAFT

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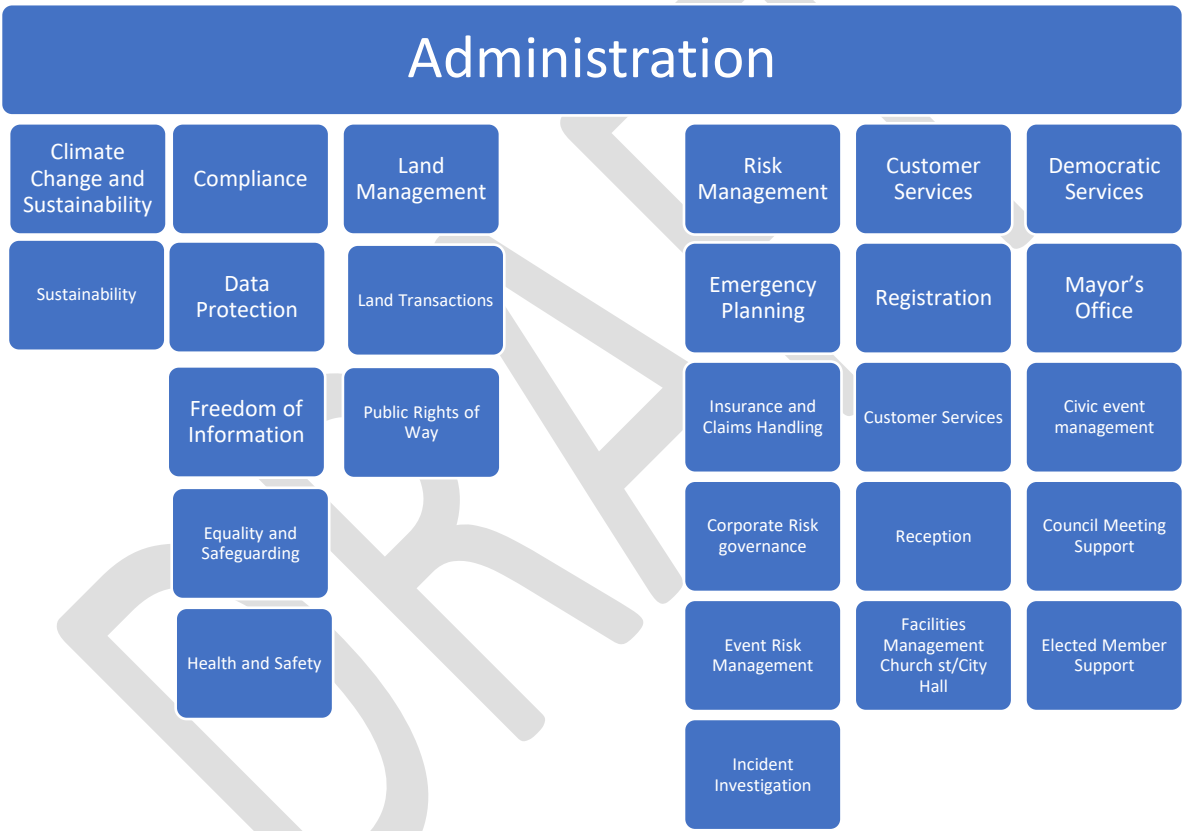
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1. Introduction to Service

Administration

The Administration Service sits within the Corporate Services Directorate and includes:

- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Compliance
- Land Management
- Risk Management
- Customer Service including Registration
- Democratic Services



Administration supports the Council to be a high performing organisation through the provision of knowledge, skills, expertise, good practice and resources. Specifically, provide support to other services to ensure governance with legislation and statutory obligations.

The Corporate Plan is driven by three strategic priorities: economic, environmental and social. The work of our service will have a focus on meeting the environmental priority whilst also supporting services that focus on economic and social priorities.

Our activities will be aligned to Outcomes 1/ 2/ 5/ 7 as below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

a. Climate Change and Sustainability

Staff	The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager will be supported by 1 Officer.
Introduction	
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Sustainability Officer has:</p> <p>Facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Climate Action and Sustainability Champions Group • EMS Team Meetings • The Sustainable Food Places Steering Group • Internal Screening Panel Meetings • Energy Manager Forums • Sustainable Development Forums <p>Retained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silver Accreditation in the BITCNI Benchmarking Survey (<i>a self-disclosure exercise that offers organisations a way to be externally assessed and scored on their environmental efforts and performance</i>). • EMS Accreditation • Fairtrade Accreditation <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screened Council policies for Sustainability • The Sustainability Officer won the George Dawson Award, which celebrates the significant contribution a businessperson has made to improving the environmental performance of their organisation. The award recognises the impact of that contribution on the environment and on the wider community.
Reflection	External and internal expectations around this area of work are high and there has been limited capacity to deliver against this – with no officers in post since September. It is anticipated that the new Service Unit Manager and Officer will have more capacity, however, it should be noted that if the Council is to deliver on its commitments to Climate Action more resource and focus will be required in this team and across all service units in the coming year.

b. Compliance

Staff	There is currently no Compliance Manager in post. The HOS is supported by 5 Officers and 1 Assistant.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Management – Records Management, Data Protection, Freedom of information, Environmental Information Safeguarding
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Compliance team has:</p> <p>Processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 594 FOI Requests (April to Feb 2025), with 96% responded to within the statutory timeframe (<i>average response timeframe 12 days</i>). 1 investigation by the ICO. ICO Decision Notice was that the Council has correctly relied on section 40 (2) of FOIA to without the requested information. 91 DSARs, with 97% responded to within the statutory timeframe. 28 Data Breaches registered (two reportable). <p>Delivered and coordinated training sessions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk Assessment Awareness Fire Safety Management First-Aid at Work Fire Warden Manual Handling Personal Safety Incident and Accident reporting. <p>Facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Services H&S meetings Corporate H&S meeting Internal Screening Panel Disability Forum Consultative Panel Diversity Ambassadors programme SEHSCT Carers event. <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted with screening 49 policies Trained 200 employees on Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Improved disability facilities in 44 toilets Retained Disability Confident Scheme status Developed a new Information Access Policy, that covers all aspects of information management. Data Protection Policy has been reviewed. CCTV Policy has been reviewed and awaiting approval. Publication Scheme has been reviewed Retention and Disposal schedule is being reviewed Record of Processing Activities (ROPA) is being developed.
Reflection	This service unit is driven by many tight regulatory deadlines. Requests are becoming more complex and many require escalation for senior management review, which is very resource intensive. The service has had

	<p>to seek legal advice on numerous occasions over the last year due to complexity of requests and potential challenges. Media/ public interest is higher than before which can impact /complicate the process.</p> <p>A case management system for information requests has been sourced and is expected to go live from April 2025.</p> <p>Safeguarding Children, Young people and Adults at Risk obligations are increasing, therefore a review of Safeguarding roles, responsibilities and the Safeguarding policy is needed. Funding for further training and possible mitigation measures will be required in order to ensure we are meeting statutory obligations.</p>
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c. Land Management

Staff	The Lands Manager is supported by 3 Lands Officers and 1 Public Right Of Way Officer.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating and asserting Public Rights of Way and complying with all statutory requirements relating to Public Rights of Way.
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Land Management team have:</p> <p>Processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 235 requests to use Council Land <p>Supported the Council Capital Projects plans on the following project boards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangor Waterfront Queens Parade Whitespots Greenways Cemeteries Portaferry/ Portavogie 3G pitches. <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued the title reconciliation exercise Reviewed the Land and Property policy Undertaken two major investigations in relation to PROWs.
Reflection	<p>External and internal expectations of the service unit are high. Often the team needs to obtain legal and, where appropriate, valuation advice before action can be taken. This can appear to be a very slow and frustrating process to other services but is necessary to ensure due diligence.</p> <p>The service is very reactive and often must deal with complex conflicting priorities. There are clear timelines outline in the Lands Policy, and it is important that the Council adheres to these to ensure that every transaction is treated fairly and to prevent undue criticism.</p>

d. Risk Management

Staff	The Risk Manager is supported by three officers and two administrators.
Introduction	The Risk Management Service Unit, in the delivery of its various functions, contributes to Corporate Plan Objective 5 - to have safe, welcoming, and inclusive communities that are flourishing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance provision and • Incident and Claims Management
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Risk Management Team have (by subject / discipline):</p> <p>Incidents and Claims Investigated 415 incidents (primarily personal injury and/or property damage)</p> <p>Investigated and processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 Public Liability claims (53 closed) • 47 Motor vehicle claims (29 closed) • Other – 9 Loss Recovery claims (1 closed) and 2 Property (both now closed) <p>Undertook 63 investigation, claim related site visits and engineering inspections.</p> <p>Emergency Planning & Events Management Contributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 - Civil Contingency Incidents • 6 - Emergency Support centre activations. • 5 - Other misc. incidents (non-civil contingencies) (i.e. Policing, protests, Mellifont, etc) • 29 - Multi-agency partner group meetings (inc AND EPIG). • 21 - Multi-agency partner training events. • 5 - AND specific internal training events. • 22 - Internal AND meetings general. • 33 - AND Event planning meetings and associated debriefs. (Tourism, Arts, LMP) • 9 - participated at AND Events. <p>Advised on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 - Weather related events/storms in AND area. • 17- Maintained watching brief on other weather-related events. <p>Corporate Risk Management & Insurance</p> <p><i>Statistics not recorded</i> <i>Managed the:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Insurance renewal process • Governance – Risk Strategy, Corporate Risk Register & Action Plan, Assurance Statements <p><i>Provided support by providing:</i> Risk, liability advice and research across AND services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third party use of lands requests, including site visits, meetings and advice internally and to the 3rd parties as appropriate • Liability and risk reviews – e.g. contracts, agreements, projects, 3rd party events, land use / access permissions, tourism experiences, Capital Projects and Public Realm, Council liability for gritting DfI land, Lynxight (AI based drowning prevention proposed for Aurora)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft responses and guidance – e.g. Parks and Cemeteries response (flooding, complaint at Brompton re handrail, issues with hire company, manufacturing fault with newly purchased equipment) • Insurance – assistance across services on levels, type, cover requirements / procurement <p>And: Attendance at external multi-agency meetings, eg Better Beaches forum and Water Safety forum. (<i>Corporate Plan outcomes, 4, 5 and 6</i>).</p>
Reflection	<p>Services frequently contact Risk for advice and assistance, particularly on issues of liability, agreements and contracts, assessment of risk, guidance on risk-based decision making and problem-solving. However, Risk remains misunderstood, particularly the formal and statutory elements of Risk Management, which continue to be viewed as a bolt-on and barrier, rather than an efficient integrated management approach that can support good business planning, partnership working and decision-making. Officers continue to work with Services to demonstrate the value of Enterprise Risk Management, ensure due diligence and take cognisance of potential wider impacts and liabilities. Insurance is a method of risk transfer; however, as the cost of insurance continues to rise it can no longer be viewed as a cost-effective potential mitigation measure.</p>

e. Customer Services

Staff	<p>The Customer Services Manager is supported by 9 Attendants, 2 Drivers, 8 Registration staff and 16 administrative staff.</p>
Introduction	<p>The Customer Services Service Unit, in the delivery of its various functions, contributes to Objective 5 to have safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing and Objective 7 to be a high performing organisation. The section supports a customer centric culture throughout the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Relations • General administration and reception/switchboard management • Complaint handling • Full Record and Retention • Payments • Registrations of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships • Operation of City Hall, Bangor and Council Offices Newtownards.
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Customer Services team have:</p> <p>Dealt with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,765 switchboard calls • 5,467 admin direct calls • 7,995 HRC bookings • 6,440 Service Requests • 4,277 payments for Building Control, planning and NET. • 6,581 email enquiries • 434 Elected Member enquiries (Oct 24 – Jan 25) • 76 complaints. • 13 NIPSO complaints.

	<p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destroyed over 175,000 files through the record and retention process. Itemised and catalogued over 1,075 boxes of files placing them into permanent retention, or review. <p>Trained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A further 71 staff on the new complaints process and use of Tecare. Members/MLAs on the new email process for service requests, queries and complaints <p>Introduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new Complaints Dashboard. The new Customer Excellence framework A new file allocation procedure where files are digital by default. A new Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy (<i>currently waiting on council approval</i>). <p>Town Hall Attendants facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 600 Mayoral events 75 Council and Committee Meetings 10 Civic Events, including 1 Freedom of the Borough 3 Remembrance Services 653 meetings (set up and catering provided). <p>Registration Services facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,873 Death registrations 1,385 Birth registrations 606 Marriage notices
Reflection	<p>The Complaints Handling Procedure is being used by all services. In the first year of the new process, all stage 1 & 2 complaints addressed within policy timescales.</p> <p>Elected Members mailbox is starting to make a big difference this is giving officers time back and offers a quicker more professional service to the Members and their constituents.</p> <p>Review of paper files has been a time-consuming process with a significant amount of work remaining to ensure a transition to an Electronic Document Records Management System is as easy as possible.</p>

f. Democratic Services

Staff	The Democratic Services Manager is supported by a Mayor's Secretary and 4 Officers.
Introduction	<p>The Democratic Services Service Unit is responsible for the management and recording of Council and Committee meetings and for the dissemination of Council decisions internally and externally. It also manages the Mayor's Office, organises Civic Events and provides Elected Member Support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management and recording of Council and Committee Meetings Mayors Secretariat

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Member support /Elected Member Charter • Civic Events
Key Achievements	<p>In the last year the Democratic Services team have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated 600 Mayoral events • Administered 75 Council and Committee Meetings • Managed 10 Civic Events, including 1 Freedom of the Borough • Supported 14 Remembrance Services
Reflection	<p>Hybrid Committee and Council meetings remains a challenge in terms of administration, particularly in Church Street where the room is very cluttered and there are blocks to site lines for Officers, Councillors and those administering the meeting.</p> <p>The number of Civic Event requests has increased and with a modest budget it is difficult to offer large events to all.</p>

2. Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

The below PESTLE Analysis explains the external issues, including current and anticipated, which impact on this service.

Political	<p>The Council are getting criticised about lack of transparency and accountability. This service relies on information being provided by others as well as compliance with legislation therefore despite best efforts it is not always possible.</p> <p>Different political interests and priorities across Council.</p> <p>This service area responds to many requests from political representatives and ensures that any matters are dealt with in compliance with Council Policies.</p>
Economic	<p>Increasing expectations in terms of climate change and sustainability, risk appetite, civic and compliance issues but there are limited resources (both human and financial) to deliver.</p> <p>The service area ensures that the programme of activity has allocated budget and ensures due diligence in terms of spending of this budget.</p> <p>The service is aware of the pressures on personal finances and endeavours to deliver services in as cost-effective way as possible.</p>
Social	<p>There is an increasing expectation for openness and transparency – This service must adhere to legislation therefore despite best efforts it is not always possible.</p> <p>Increased scrutiny on council decisions and often the media have not provided the public with the full information to make more informed decisions, and this creates a distrust of the Council and officers without justification, it is not always within our gift to provide additional information due to legislation.</p> <p>The Council's ratepayers are the primary audience for what this service area delivers. Rationalisation of Civic events takes cognisance of the cost of living crisis.</p>
Technological	<p>The service area relies on many aspects of technology. It is always looking at ways to improve efficiencies and modernise the service to make it more user friendly and accessible to all.</p> <p>The service is working closely with the Digital Transformation programme and an EDRMS has been identified as a high priority in the Digital Strategy. This is now underway and will assist the Council manage its information in an efficient and compliant way.</p>
Legal	<p>Increasingly legal advice is required due to complexities arising from political opinion and conflicting legislation.</p> <p>Some aspects of this service rely heavily on legal support which often impacts on expected timeframes.</p> <p>The service area works within the legislative context at all times, ensuring that Council are compliant.</p>
Environmental	<p>The Council corporately has made a commitment to sustainability and the new Corporate Plan has a strong focus on sustainability. All functions within the Council will continue to endeavour to be as sustainable as possible, but there must be a realism in relation to potential for increased costs in the short term for some of these actions.</p> <p>One of the initiatives arising from the Digital Strategy will be the reduction in the use of paper which will be implemented across Council which will also empower service users when dealing with the Council.</p> <p>The service area leads the sustainability agenda ensuring that consideration for the environment is made in all aspects of corporate activity.</p>

Below is a SWOT Analysis to highlight the issues this service will face over the period of the plan.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Knowledgeable and experienced staff</p> <p>Service Units work across all directorates and so have a good working knowledge of the Council and its priorities.</p> <p>Service Units work collaboratively to ensure best outcomes for all projects and to ensure shared understanding and expectations.</p>	<p>Lack of understating of the role of the service - whilst the Administration Service has oversight of compliance issues, compliance must be prioritised and understood by all services areas.</p> <p>The Administration service needs to be both proactive and reactive. In some services there is little appetite for change or for contribution to the corporate agenda/responsibilities. There is a skills gap in some areas.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>The opportunities available to this service are endless but require Council to prioritise so that limited resources are correctly targeted.</p> <p>The Digital Strategy offers great opportunities but requires both finance and resources to implement the changes as prioritised.</p> <p>Responding to Climate Change and the Climate Change Act NI will present opportunities for a green economy, skills development, and improvement in our natural environment.</p>	<p>The threats to this service are lack of buy-in from other service areas as they perceive the responsibility as being 'corporate'. A lack of consideration of risk and governance in service planning across Council limits support opportunities which may support risk reduction and the identification of opportunities.</p> <p>Climate Change – how well are we prepared.</p> <p>Statutory obligations in relation to Safeguarding are not being met.</p> <p>Record management throughout the organisation needs to be addressed.</p>

3. Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

Within our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 we have a vision of *A Sustainable Borough*. One where Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing are linked and in which we, as a Council, make decisions about policies, services, investments and resources that balance the demands of each.

By doing so we can positively impact the people and the assets in our Borough and play a part in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems e.g. poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources, climate change, economic growth etc.

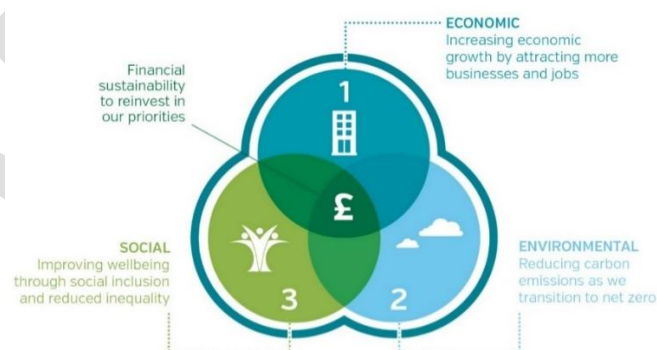
In brief, *A Sustainable Borough* is one where we make sure that we think about economic, social AND environmental impacts when we make decisions.

The three **priorities** we will be delivering against are:

- **ECONOMIC** - increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- **SOCIAL** - improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

These priorities align with the three pillars of sustainable development. They are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership and collaborate to achieve them.

The diagram below summarises our three Corporate Priorities and shows how they all link together. As you will see at the heart of the diagram is our commitment to address the key issue of our financial sustainability – as without that, we will be less able to deliver on all our ambitions.



We have also identified **seven outcomes** that we want to achieve to meet our priorities. They are (not in order of priority):

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. A thriving and sustainable economy
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

The table below reflects the key projects/ objectives that will be achieved by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services across the Council that will be collaborated with as part of the process. In addition, each objective is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Climate Change and Sustainability			
Consistent application of Sustainability & Climate Change Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Directorates 	Social Economic Environmental	1-7
Continued progress and attainment of ISO14001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Directorates 	Environmental	2,4,5,7
Review of Roadmap to Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Directorates 	Social Economic Environmental	1-7
Compliance			
Review of Safeguarding roles, responsibilities, and policy.	Community and Wellbeing	Social	5
Land Management			
Consistent application of the Lands Policy	Place /Environment	Social Economic Environmental	1, 3,4,5,6
Progressing Title Reconciliation Exercise	Place/Environment	Economic	7
Consistent application of the Public Rights of Way Policy	Community and Wellbeing /Environment	Social	4,5,6
Risk Management			
Management of Corporate Risks	All Directorates	Economic Environmental	1-7
Customer Services			
Implementation of an EDRMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation Communications and Marketing External consultants 	Economic Environmental	2,7
Consistent application of the Complaints Handling Procedure	All Directorates	Social	1,4,5,7
Democratic Services			
Implementation of new Civic Events Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Members Corporate Leadership Team 	Social	1,4,5

4. Service Improvement

Service development/ improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
Information Management System	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	Improve efficiency through innovation which also impacts on sustainability goals and data analytics.	Alison Curtis	Head of Transformation and Performance Civica (external consultant)

5. Service Risk Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed.

Yes

6. Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

KPIs should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, detailed below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3	A thriving and sustainable economy
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
	% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 Monthly	☑ 7	X Economic	Yes	94%	100%	108%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
	% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 Monthly	☑ 6	X Economic x Social	Yes	97%	94%	94%	95%	94.5%	95%	Fixed
	% of completed Employee Appraisals	Mandatory	6 Monthly	☑ 7	X Social	Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%	Fixed
	% of complaints dealt within timescale.	Service Led	6 monthly	☑ 5	X Social	Yes	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
	Implement EDRMS to Council	Service Led	Year end	x 2 x 3 x 5 x 7	x Economic x Environment x Social	Yes	N/A	100%	0%	100%	50%	100%	100%
	Policies screened for Equality, Good Relations, Sustainability, Rural Needs and Data Protection	Service Led	Year end	x 2 x 4 x 5 x 6	x Environment x Social	Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	100%	100%
	Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan reviewed and agreed by Sept 2025	Statutory	Year end	X 5	x Social	Yes	n/a	n/a	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Implement Information Management System	Service Led	Year end	X 7	x Economic	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	70%	100%	100%
	Draft and implement a lands inspection policy and explore use of ArcGIS Field Map app	Service Led	Year end	x7	X Economic	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	50%	100%	100%
	Complete Title Reconciliation exercise	Service Led	Year end	X 7	X Economic	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	50%	100%	100%

7. What Services/ Activities will be stopped

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2025/26.
An example is provided below.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2025/2026	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
Paper Postage	Using digital postage where possible (phased roll out)	Unknown at this stage	Increased productivity	None – alternative available	Increased productivity
Printed Minute Books	Can now be digital	£1500	None	None	None

8. Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Team Meeting	Monthly	HoST/ SUMs/ Line Managers
Standing Committee	6 Monthly	Directors and HoST
Performance Improvement Plan	Annually (30 th June)	Transformation Manager
Self-Assessment Report	Annually (30 th September)	Transformation Manager

Unclassified

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ITEM 4e**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of HR
Date of Report	27 February 2025
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	HR Service Plan 2025/26
Attachments	Appendix 1 - HR Service Plan 2025/26

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Not Applicable

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Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Human Resources in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan (Appendix 1):

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Service Plan is approved.



HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By Director
Rosemary McCullough	Steph Denny	Michael Steele
Head of HR and OD	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance	Director of Corporate Services
24/11/2024	28/02/2025	28/02/2025

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- 7. What Services/ Activities will be stopped Error! Bookmark not defined.
- 8. Reporting, Monitoring and Review 18

1. Introduction to Service

Name of Service	Human Resources and Organisational Development
Directorate	Corporate Services
Name of Service	Human Resources and Organisational Development
Directorate	Corporate Services
Introduction and Reflection	<p>This service provides a range of professional support, advice and development opportunities for Council employees, managers and elected members. The HR and OD service vision is to develop the organisation through the Council's most important resource, i.e. 'it's people' so that the organisation achieves its goal of being a high performing organisation. The HR and OD Service Plan will align with the Council's Corporate Vision to be 'A Sustainable Borough' by ensuring its objectives are focused on the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan i.e. increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses, reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero and improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality. There are seven main outcomes that the Council aims to achieve, and the activities of the HR and OD will be aligned to the outcomes set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcome 2 – An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets• Outcome 6 – Opportunities for people to be active and healthy• Outcome 7 – Ards and Noth Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation <p>Key achievements over last year and in this year (to date) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 200 recruitment exercises• 22 Formal Investigations• 3 Whistleblowing cases• Progressing 5 Employment Tribunal cases• 2 Grievances• 124 OH referrals• Launched 9 E-learning courses• Organised 70 training courses• Long Service Awards• Completed a 3-year review with the Trade Unions of the core HR policies i.e. Absence• Management/ Capability/ Disciplinary/ Grievance/ Dignity at Work• Working towards the development of a Leadership Course for all staff with management responsibilities• Involved with NILGA and other Councils to develop effective talent management processes to make the Council an 'employer of choice'

- Considerable progress in developing a formal draft 5-year Workforce Strategy
- Supported various other services in the transformation of their services, i.e. Parks and Cemeteries (ongoing), Leisure and Community Halls services
- Assisted and worked alongside the Local Government Staff Commission in appointing a new Chief Executive into post in April 2024
- Assisting the Chief Executive with the appointment of a number of key temporary senior acting up roles to fill the gaps created as a result of her appointment
- As Chairperson of PPMA, the Head of HR has presented a draft regional formal Job Evaluation Scheme to SOLACE
- Part of a team to develop a new appraisal scheme for Chief Executives
- Head of HR has been a judge at the Rising Stars event which seeks out new talent in the HR field across Councils
- Introduced a policy to assist employees undertaking fertility treatment
- Introduced a policy to provide assistance and time off for employees who required neo-natal care for their new-born babies
- Implemented year 6 of the People Plan involving staff events such as the Big Breakfasts etc to encourage employee engagement
- Continued to work in partnership with Environmental Health in delivering the Mental Health Charter including the introduction of the pilot 'insula' programme
- Ongoing work in an attempt to decrease absence rates including a benchmarking exercise with other Councils
- Produced a report recommending the introduction of the living wage for all Council employees
- Establishment of a working group to develop a formal Apprenticeship policy and programme
- Worked together with Communications to roll out E learning courses e.g. social media
- Organised and delivered an annual 'long service award' event for staff

Facilitated:

- Staff Consultative Committee
- Staff/ Trade Union Forum Meetings – HR and OD work hard at maintaining a good working relationship between the recognised Trade Unions and Senior Management. Regular forum meetings take place where any new policies/ procedures or transformation plans are discussed and negotiated. The HR and OD service strives to have a positive relationship with the Trade Unions, despite at times having conflicting points of view

- Member Training Steering Group
- PPMA meetings

Continue to work towards maintaining Silver Investors in People Accreditation.

Key learning for the service has been that HR and OD need to be reactive at all times to changing circumstances and situations and that the key priority for the service is the wellbeing and development of the Council's employees. It is evident that the more engaged staff are and the more they feel they are appreciated, that they will be high performing and each and every person will do their best to make the Council an organisation to be proud of.

2. Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

Insert a brief narrative on the external issues, including current and anticipated, impacting upon the service – consideration of PESTLE factors may be useful.

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting political interests and priorities across Council • Ensuring requests from political representatives are dealt with in compliance with Council policies
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation and rising cost of living costs will lead to demands from Trade Unions for higher pay for employees • Due to rising external costs, the service must prioritise its objectives and ensure efficiency and value for money to its customers
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a service to schools and colleges e.g. provide Apprenticeship Schemes and Work placements to assist people in the Borough find employment and assist with giving life-long learning opportunities to our communities • Attend Career Days at local schools and colleges
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop digital transformation within HR and OD in line with the Council's Digital Strategy • Develop the CORE II System to ensure it is being utilised to its full potential • Ensure the legal timeframes are complied with for return of e.g. Annual Monitoring Return
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is vital that the HR and OD service are up to date with employment legislation to avoid legal cases being taken against the Council from employees or applicants for employment
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council corporately has made a commitment to sustainability and the new Corporate Plan has a strong focus on sustainability. HR and OD will continue to endeavour to be as sustainable as possible • Continue to look at ways to reduce the use of paper within HR and OD

Insert a brief narrative/ list of the challenges which your services will face over the period of the plan. This should, where relevant, reference external issues highlighted above. A SWOT analysis may be useful for completing this section.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide knowledge of all services in the organisation • Skilled workforce • Good working relationship with the Trade Unions • Good working relationship with line managers and elected members • High attendance levels in HR • Good reputation • Integrity • Adaptability (hybrid working) • Collaborative working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive rather than proactive due to high workload • Lack of succession planning • Struggling with the complexities of the CORE II software system
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Workforce Plan, including Succession Planning • Use technology more effectively • Digital training for HR staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of knowledge workers • Managers in other services not complying with staff policies/ procedures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of buy-in from managers on corporate issues e.g. Absence Management• Lack of support from Trade Unions
--	--

3 Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

Within our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 we have a vision of *A Sustainable Borough*. One where Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing are linked and in which we, as a Council, make decisions about policies, services, investments and resources that balance the demands of each.

By doing so we can positively impact the people and the assets in our Borough and play a part in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems e.g. poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources, climate change, economic growth etc.

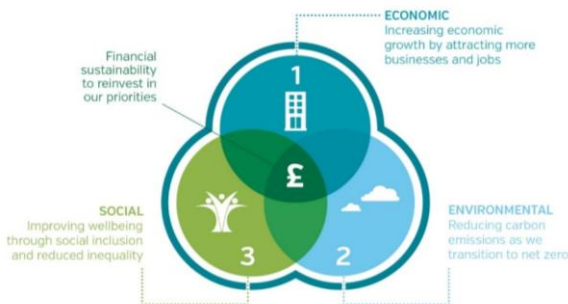
In brief, *A Sustainable Borough* is one where we make sure that we think about economic, social AND environmental impacts when we make decisions.

The three **priorities** we will be delivering against are:

- **ECONOMIC** - increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- **SOCIAL** - improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

These priorities align with the three pillars of sustainable development. They are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership and collaborate to achieve them.

The diagram below summarises our three Corporate Priorities and shows how they all link together. As you will see at the heart of the diagram is our commitment to address the key issue of our financial sustainability – as without that, we will be less able to deliver on all our ambitions.



We have also identified **seven outcomes** that we want to achieve to meet our priorities. They are (not in order of priority):

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. A thriving and sustainable economy
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

The table below reflects the key projects/ objectives that will be achieved by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services across the Council that will be collaborated with as part of the process. In addition, each objective is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Human Resources and Organisational Development			
Implement a formal 5-year Workforce Strategy and appropriate training and development to deliver the plan	Trade unions Staff Elected Members All Directorates Corporate Leadership Team	Economic	7
Assist with any changes as a result of an organisational restructure	Trade unions Staff Elected Members	Economic	7
Carry out a Digital Skills audit of office-based staff	Office based Staff Transformation Team All Directorates	Economic	7
Maintain IIP Silver Accreditation at review in December 2025, including sourcing and delivering a 'leadership development' programme for all leaders	Staff Trade Unions All Managers	Economic	7
Draft a Succession Planning Policy and implement	Staff All Directorates Elected Members Trade Unions	Economic	7
Develop a draft Corporate Induction Scheme to enhance the departmental Induction Scheme	Trade Unions CLT Elected Members All Directorates	Economic	7

Implement year 7 of the People Plan	All Directorates CLT Heads of Service Team	Economic	7
Continue to implement the Absence Management Action Plan	All Directorates CLT Heads of Service Team Trade Unions Elected Members	Economic	7
Continue to work with Environmental Health in delivering the Mental Health Charter	Environmental Health Well Being Officers All staff Trade Unions Elected Members	Economic	7
Develop a formal Apprenticeship Policy and Programme	CLT Elected Members HOST Trade Unions	Economic	7
Commence a process to transfer all personnel paper files to a digital source	HR Staff Transformation Team Staff	Environmental	2 and 3

4 Service Improvement

The “Service development/ improvement” element should identify areas of the service that require development/ improvement along with any new, innovative ideas for future improvements. **Please state clearly in the “Rationale” section why the improvement is being undertaken and what evidence there is to support the decision.**

Only Service improvement activities should be included in this section, ‘business as usual’ activities should be detailed in Section 6.

Please ensure KPIs are included in Section 6 to measure Service development/ improvement(s) outlined below.

Commented [SD1]: These all need to be included as KPIs

Service development/ improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
Implement a formal 5-year Workforce Strategy and provide training	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	To have a whole Council co-ordinated approach to Workforce Planning with regard to recruitment/ retention/ succession planning	Head of HR and OD	All Staff Trade unions Elected Members
Develop a Corporate Induction Policy	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	To make new employees feel valued and part of the organisation more quickly and enable them to be productive and efficient in a timelier manner	Head of HR and OD	CLT Host Trade Unions
Continue to deliver the Absence Management Action Plan	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Fairness</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Innovation</div>	To ensure the Council is taking appropriate action to manage absence	Head of HR and Employee Relations Manager	CLT Host Trade Unions

Service development/improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners) Please specify
To introduce an Apprenticeship Policy and programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	To encourage local talent into the organisation and to tackle the problems of an ageing workforce	Head of HR and OD and Employee Development Manager	Trade Unions CLT HOST Local schools/colleges
To commence an exercise to look at transferring all personnel files from paper to a digital source	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	To be more environmentally friendly	Head of HR	Staff CLT HOST

3. Service Risk Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan, you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed. ☐ Yes

4. Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

Please ensure service development/ improvements detailed in Section 4 are included as KPIs.

KPIs should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, detailed below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3	A thriving and sustainable economy
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

In addition to the outcomes the KPI should align with one of the three Corporate Priorities of the Corporate Plan, detailed below:

Corporate Priority 1	Economic	Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Support• Attracting Investment• Rural Regeneration• Labour Market Partnership• Sustainable Tourism• Town and City Regeneration• Vacant to Vibrant Scheme• Innovation Hub
Corporate Priority 2	Environmental	Reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waste Management• Digital and Physical Infrastructure• Estate Management• Tree Planting Strategy• Management of Outdoor Spaces• Local Development Plan• Litter Control and Enforcement• Sustainable Waste Resources Strategy• Sustainable Energy Management Strategy
Corporate Priority 3	Social	Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport, leisure and outdoor recreation• Active travel• Environmental Health• Community Development• Neighbourhood Environment• Good Relations• Leisure Strategy• Placemaking

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
1	% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	97.87%	100%	101%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
2	% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	97.24%	94%	99.24%	95%	95%	95%	Fixed
3	% of completed Employee Appraisals	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	50%	100%	100%	100%	NA	100%	Fixed
4	To introduce a 5-year Workforce Strategy	Service Led	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	NA	100%	40%	100%	50%	100%	100%
5	To introduce a formal Corporate Induction policy and programme	Service Led	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	NA	100%	0%	100%	50%	100%	100%
6	Days lost per employee across the Council	Mandatory	6 monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	16	12	11.06	11	11.05	11	11

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
				<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7									
7	Ensure 3 Apprenticeships commence	Service Led	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	NA	NA	NA	100%	50%	100%	100%
8	% of candidates at interview to be notified of result within 2 weeks of interview	Service Led	6 monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
9	% of candidates not shortlisted to be informed within 2 weeks from date of shortlisting	Service Led	6 monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
10	Commence exercise to reduce paper files to an electronic source	Service Led	Year end	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	NA	NA	NA	20%	10%	20%	20%

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2025/26.
An example is provided below.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2025/2026	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
NA					

5. Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Team Meeting	Monthly	HoST/ SUMs/ Line Managers
HoST	Quarterly	HoST
Standing Committee	6 Monthly	Directors and HoST
Performance Improvement Plan	Annually (30 th June)	Transformation Manager
Self-Assessment Report	Annually (30 th September)	Transformation Manager

Unclassified

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ITEM 4f**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance
Date of Report	24 February 2025
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	STaP Service Plan 2025/26
Attachments	Appendix 1 - STaP Service Plan 2025/26

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 the 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
- Service Plan – developed annually

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.

Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Strategic Transformation and Performance in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan (Appendix 1):

- Has been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service will try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 and Q2	April – September	December
Q3 and Q4	October – March	June

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves this Service Plan.

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION AND PERFORMANCE (CORPORATE SERVICES)

Service Plan: 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

APPROVALS

Prepared By	Peer Reviewed By	Approved By
Steph Denny	Steve Grieve	Michael Steele
Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance	Head of Finance	Director of Corporate Services
21/02/25	21/02/25	24/02/245

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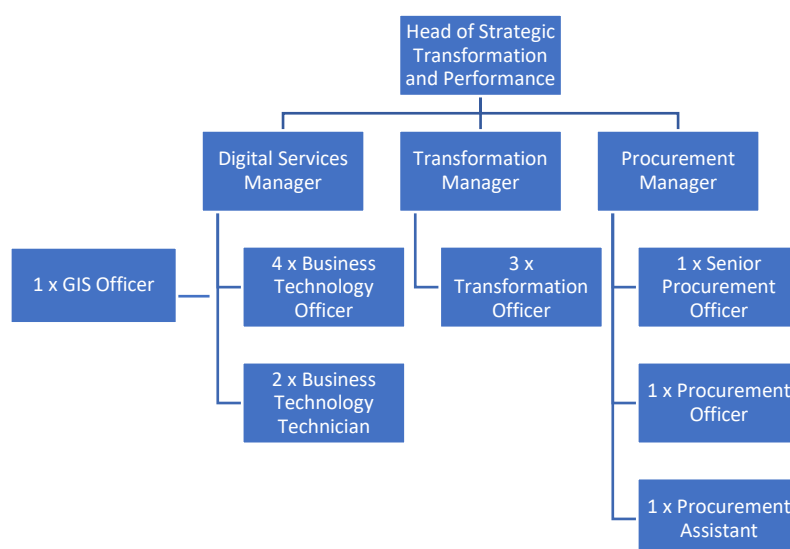
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1. Introduction to Service

1.1 Strategic Transformation and Performance

The Strategic Transformation and Performance Service sits within the Corporate Services Directorate and incorporates:

- Transformation
- Digital Services
- Procurement.



As a service, we aim to support the Council to be a high performing organisation through the provision of knowledge, skills, expertise, good practice and resources. Specifically, we seek to provide support to other Services:

- With their service planning, ensuring alignment with the Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028.
- To ensure Council meets its statutory obligations with regard to the General Duty for Improvement.
- In the delivery of the Council's Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme.
- To develop the digital capabilities of their workforce.
- To support council operationally through good procurement management practices.

Our Service led on the development of the new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, which will serve as the Council's strategic framework for the next three years, setting out our values, priorities and commitments to work towards our vision to be A Sustainable Borough.

The Plan will be driven by three strategic priorities: economic, environmental and social. The work of our Service will have a focus on meeting the economic priority.

Seven outcomes have been identified to drive the three priorities and the activities of our Service will be aligned to Outcome 7 - Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation. Our Service will know we have been successful in meeting this outcome if we have contributed to:

- Developing a digital strategy to facilitate digital connectivity and delivery across all Council services.
- Reviewing our organisational design to ensure our services are delivered in an effective and efficient way.
- Right sizing the Council's estate to have the right number of staff and buildings to work effectively.

1.2 Transformation

Staff	The Transformation Manager is supported by three Transformation Officers.
Purpose	<p>Transformation is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the Council's Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme. • Supporting individual services with service-specific projects aligned to key strategic transformation priorities and continuous improvement. • All aspects of Council's statutory commitments relating to Performance Improvement including the Performance Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment Report.
Key Achievements	<p>Since being established in September 2023 the Service Unit has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a Business Continuity Plan for the Council. • Reviewed Service Planning to better align with the budgetary process and supported services with implementation (and with Ideagen training and assistance). • Complied with statutory legislation through completion of the 2024/25 Performance Improvement Plan and 2023/24 Self-Assessment Report. • Completed a Post Project Evaluation for the Core2 Project with lessons learned being considered and implemented in future projects. • Supported Digital Services in the development of a Digital Strategy which provides a roadmap for implementation which commenced in 2024/25. • Supported Corporate Communications and Digital Services to develop and deliver a new corporate website/ platform. • Supported Community and Wellbeing to move from South Street offices to Signal. • Supported Leisure Services to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a ten-year Leisure Strategy (due for completion in May 2025). - Resume APSE benchmarking with the second benchmarking report now received. - Progress staff restructuring (Phase 3 – Leisure and Fitness Associates). • Supported Procurement to complete a staffing options paper. • Supported Tourism to progress a mid-point review of the Tourism Events Strategy (ongoing). • Undertaken a review of Corporate legal services provision. • Developed a new Corporate Grants Policy (approved by Council). • Supported Digital Services to implement Office RND, implement a new telephone system and transfer the mobile contracts. • Supported Finance to progress the new financial management system project (currently at development stage). • Established good collaborative working relationships across the organisation. • Received excellent feedback from services that have utilised Transformation support. • A strong team in place with a wide range of skills and knowledge; one of the highlights being good communication across the team. • Embedded well into the organisation and have adapted well to hybrid working. • Gained good knowledge of the organisation as a whole.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and implemented project governance arrangements across the project team and Transformation programme.
Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further promotion of the Transformation Programme across Council required (Team, budget etc). Lack of understanding of what the Transformation team can support with or do. Project parameters need to be clear in terms of when the project moves from being a project to business as usual. Project roles and governance need to be clearly defined and agreed from the outset to ensure the correct processes are followed and decisions can be effectively made. Clarity required from the project outset that Transformation team provide project management support, they are not the service experts. Change to Corporate thinking – Transformation does not mean that the service isn't good or wasn't good to start with. Need to have flexibility for services in terms of other competing priorities.

1.3 Digital Services

Staff	The Digital Services Manager is supported by four officers, two technicians and a GIS Officer.
Purpose	<p>Digital Services is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the Council's existing ICT systems and infrastructure Planning and facilitating future investment in technology Supporting the Council in developing and delivering its Digital Strategy.
Key Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiencies gained through updated technology New Wide Area Network connecting sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralised infrastructure New phone installations enabled Hardware refreshes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved stability, productivity and working environments Enabled hybrid working Standardisation of equipment Improved public accessibility to Council spatial data New website launch and support Support services on new software introductions Upskilling staff on SharePoint Improved GIS self-service to free up time to assist on Corporate Projects, i.e. Land and Property and Assets Office RnD – enables staff to locate colleagues and determine if they are in the office or remote High rate of first point of contact call resolution Retired old infrastructure and consolidated our server farm Removal of generic accounts Telephone system – move to softphones further enables hybrid working and provides resilience in the event of a building being inaccessible Introduction of key managed services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber awareness Managed Incident Response

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOC/SIEM • Windows Hello
Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new staff should receive a 'Digital Services' induction. • DS staff need to be less technical when speaking to users. • DS staff are too responsive to ad hoc requests. • A resource to keep projects on track has proved very valuable. • Boundaries are important and should be reinforced – log calls. • Multiple channels of communication required as people do not read emails.

1.4 Procurement

Staff	The Procurement Manager is supported by a Senior Procurement Officer and a Procurement Assistant. Recruitment is ongoing for a Procurement Officer.
Purpose	The Procurement Service Unit (PSU) is responsible for facilitating the Council's contract tendering process to ensure legislative compliance.
Key Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been zero procurement challenges. • Approximately 40 procurements have been completed in the last 12 months with a reduced team capacity (the average, historically, has been 25). • A number of the procurements have been complex and under additional scrutiny. • Achieved contract savings targets. • Supported the Finance Project Team in the appointment of the new financial management system provider. • Training and development of the PSU in preparation for the implementation of the new Procurement Act. • Contract Award of the first batch of Bangor Waterfront projects (Ballyholme Yacht Club and Pickie). • Supported Leisure in the delivery of Comber Leisure Centre refurbishment. • Continued development of good collaborative working relationships across Council. • Approval to restructure the Service Unit.
Challenges/ Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • There are approximately 50 procurement exercises already identified for 2025. • This represents an increase in tenders of circa 100% for the PSU with no associated increase in staffing. • Over the last 12 months the Unit has been operating with only two full-time members of staff. A new Procurement Assistant commenced in January 2025 and it is hoped that an additional Procurement Officer will also be recruited early in 2025. • There is a new Procurement Act due to be implemented in February 2025.

2 Context, Challenges and Key Assumptions

2.1 External

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly is now operational and a Programme for Government will soon be implemented. • Conflicting political interests and priorities across Council.
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased supply costs in terms of ICT equipment (to allow staff to work in a hybrid manner) due to inflation. • Failure to review Council spend is not delivering procurement efficiencies. • Cost of engaging with external consultants and increased cost of procuring services. • Potential budgetary constraints from Central Government to local Government. • Business rates reduction due to vacant retail units, resulting in reduced revenue to the Council.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Value Policy to be implemented and considered in all future procurements.
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects identified within the Digital Strategy are now being implemented, e.g. EDRMS. • Updating and upgrading of infrastructure.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a procurement perspective, Council is undertaking a review of its Legal provision and considering various options on how it will be managed, which could generate cost efficiencies. • Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment Report annually. • There are a number of high-value, complex procurements to be delivered (Marina Operator, Bangor Waterfront Development) which bring a higher risk of potential challenge. • New Procurement Act due to be implemented in February 2025.
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council corporately has made a commitment to sustainability (Roadmap to Sustainability) and the new Corporate Plan has a strong focus on sustainability. All functions within the Council will continue to endeavour to be as sustainable as possible, but there must be a realism in relation to potential for increased costs in the short term for some of these actions. • One of the initiatives arising from the Digital Strategy will be the reduction in the use of paper which will be implemented across Council.

2.2 Internal

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of staff (systems and organisation) • Skilled and diverse workforce • Length of service of staff • High attendance levels • Good reputation • Integrity • Adaptability (hybrid-working) • Collaborative working with other services • Established workflows and policies • Team relationships • Trust within service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of standardised solutions • Reactive rather than proactive • Succession planning • User awareness • Multiple locations • Lack of skilled procurement resources • Length of service of staff • Knowledge of what's happening outside our own service • Limited turnover of staff • Increase expectations to our detriment • Tend to run at over capacity • Staff turnover
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation projects • Transformation fund • Digital Strategy • Develop Standard Operating Procedures • Drive efficiencies within budget set • Cloud-based computing • Continuous performance improvements • Restructuring • Work smarter rather than harder • Shared learning • Internal transfers • Staff turnover • Become Business Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourcing, particularly within procurement • Cyber attacks • User awareness • Restructuring • Buildings not fit for purpose • Shadow IT (the use of IT-related hardware or software by a department or individual without the knowledge/ approval of Digital Services).

3 Strategic Objectives and Collaboration

Within our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 we have a vision of *A Sustainable Borough*. One where Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing are linked and in which we, as a Council, make decisions about policies, services, investments and resources that balance the demands of each.

By doing so we can positively impact the people and the assets in our Borough and play a part in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems e.g. poverty, inequality, depletion of natural resources, climate change, economic growth etc.

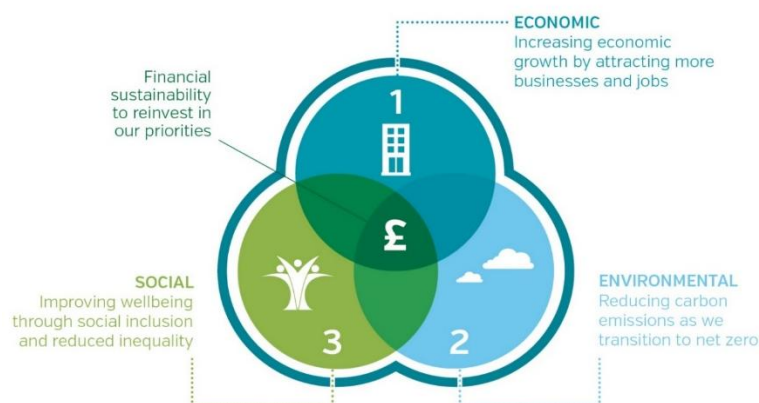
In brief, *A Sustainable Borough* is one where we make sure that we think about economic, social AND environmental impacts when we make decisions.

The three **priorities** we will be delivering against are:

- **ECONOMIC** - increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- **SOCIAL** - improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

These priorities align with the three pillars of sustainable development. They are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership and collaborate to achieve them.

The diagram below summarises our three Corporate Priorities and shows how they all link together. As you will see at the heart of the diagram is our commitment to address the key issue of our financial sustainability – as without that, we will be less able to deliver on all our ambitions.



We have also identified **seven outcomes** that we want to achieve to meet our priorities. They are (not in order of priority):

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. A thriving and sustainable economy
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

The table below reflects the key projects/ objectives that will be achieved by our Service over the next 12 months, and the key Services across the Council that will be collaborated with as part of the process. In addition, each objective is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.

Strategic Objective	Collaboration Required	Corporate Plan Priority	Corporate Plan Outcome
Procurement			
Implement a Social Value in Procurement Policy	N/A	Social	1, 2, 3
Implement the out workings of the new Procurement Act	N/A	Economic	7
Investigate greater use of corporate contracts in procurement	All Services	Economic	7
Transformation			
Online Grants System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Culture • Tourism • Economic Development • Regeneration • Leisure Services • Finance • Administration • Parks and Cemeteries • Digital Services 	Economic	7
Leisure Transformation	Leisure Services	Social Economic	6 7
Community Centre/ Halls Review	Leisure Services	Social Economic	1 7
Events Strategy Review	Tourism	Economic	7
Review of Neighbourhood Environmental Team	NET	Social Economic	5 7
Review of Digital Services and delivery of Digital Projects	Digital Services	Economic	7
Review of administrative staff across all services	All Services	Economic	7

Roll out of Social Value projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Culture • Parks and Cemeteries • Leisure Services • Environmental Health Protection and Development 	Social	1, 2, 3
Belfast Region City Deal – Small Business Research Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services • Administration • Parks and Cemeteries • Assets and Property • Community Planning • Strategic Capital Development 	Economic Environmental Social	2
Digital Services			
Digital Strategy Sub-projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • External consultants • Transformation • Administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EDRMS - Registration Booking System - Customer Service • Waste and Cleansing (HRC Booking System) • All Services (Development of website) 	Economic	7
Implementation of new Financial Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation • Finance 	Economic	7

4 Service Improvement

The “**Service development/ improvement**” element should identify areas of the service that require development/ improvement along with any new, innovative ideas for future improvements. **Please state clearly in the “Rationale” section why the improvement is being undertaken and what evidence there is to support the decision.**

Only Service improvement activities should be included in this section, ‘business as usual’ activities should be detailed in Section 6.

Please ensure KPIs are included in Section 6 to measure Service development/ improvement(s) outlined below.

Service development/ improvement 2025/26?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Responsible Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal and/ or External partners)
Use of Social Value in Procurement Policy for new procurements	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	Scoring of social value in central government contracts was implemented on 1 June 2022. Although this applies to central government contracts only, following an internal review, the Council should implement this policy to all contracts where appropriate.	Procurement Manager	N/A
To continue engagement with services to further promote the Transformation Programme Council-wide	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation	There remains a lack of understanding with regard to the services provided by the Transformation Team and the extent to which various projects can be facilitated. Continued engagement and promotion of the Service should mitigate this.	Transformation Manager	N/A
To ensure PC's and laptops are fully powered down when not in use to reduce energy consumption.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic Effectiveness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Service Availability <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation	The Digital Services Team manages and maintains approximately 650 PCs/laptops across the estate and increasingly find that performance issues are caused by devices not being fully powered down. This solution will ensure devices are powered off at appropriate times improving device performance and achieving energy savings assisting the Council in meeting its Carbon Reduction commitment targets.	Digital Services Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Party Provider • Co-operation of All Staff and Elected Members

5 Service Risk Register

Service Risk Register should align with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

When completing your Service Plan you must review and consider your current Service Risk Register. Please confirm this has been completed. ☐ **Yes**
See Appendix 1.

6 Key Activities (KPIs) for 2025/26

Please ensure service development/ improvements detailed in Section 4 are included as KPIs.

KPIs should be aligned to the 7 Outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, detailed below:

1	An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3	A thriving and sustainable economy
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
7	Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

In addition to the outcomes the KPI should align with one of the three **Corporate Priorities** of the **Corporate Plan**, detailed below:

Corporate Priority 1	Economic	Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Support• Attracting Investment• Rural Regeneration• Labour Market Partnership• Sustainable Tourism• Town and City Regeneration• Vacant to Vibrant Scheme• Innovation Hub
Corporate Priority 2	Environmental	Reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waste Management• Digital and Physical Infrastructure• Estate Management• Tree Planting Strategy• Management of Outdoor Spaces• Local Development Plan• Litter Control and Enforcement• Sustainable Waste Resources Strategy• Sustainable Energy Management Strategy
Corporate Priority 3	Social	Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport, leisure and outdoor recreation• Active travel• Environmental Health• Community Development• Neighbourhood Environment• Good Relations• Leisure Strategy• Placemaking

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
1	% Spend against budget	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	N/A	100%	98.1%	100%	100%	100%	Fixed
2	% Staff attendance	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	N/A	94%	96.93%	95%	95%	95%	Fixed
3	% of completed Employee Appraisals	Mandatory	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	Fixed
4	% Service calls satisfactorily addressed within timescales	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	96%	97%	96.9%	97%	97%	97%	Fixed
5	% Systems and network uptime	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 5</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 6</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	Fixed
6	Implement high priority technical projects identified in Digital Strategy	Service Led	6 Monthly	<div><input type="checkbox"/> 1</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div>	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Environment</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social</div>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	2	4	Cumulative

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
				<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7									
7	No of Disaster Recovery exercises with Services	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	5	9	Cumulative
8	Implement Power Management solution across the Council's PC/laptop estate	Service Led	Annual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	Fixed
9	No. of successful Procurement Challenges	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	Fixed
10	Implement Social Value in Procurement Policy	Service Led	Annual	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	Yes	N/A	31/03/25	0%	31/03/26	N/A	100%	Fixed
11	Procurement Contract Savings	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	N/A	250k	125k	250k	125k	250k	Cumulative
12	Engagement with SMEs – e.g. attend a Meet the Buyer event or	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic	No	N/A	1	0	1	0	1	Fixed

Existing KPI Number	Performance Measures Should include improvement actions outlined in Section 4 and relevant measures both existing and new.	Is the KPI Mandatory/ Statutory/ Service-led	Reporting frequency (6 Monthly/ Year-end)	Outcome	Corporate Priority	KPI to be included in Performance Improvement Plan	2025/26 Reporting						
							2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 YTD End of Q3	2025/26 Target	Reporting end of Q2 Target	Reporting end of Q4 Target	Cumulative/ Fixed
	collaborate with Economic Development.			<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social								
13	Develop annual Performance Improvement Plan by statutory deadline	Statutory	Annual	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	100%	30/06/24	100%	100%	100%	N/A	Fixed
14	Develop annual Self-Assessment Report by statutory deadline	Statutory	Annual	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	100%	30/09/24	100%	100%	100%	N/A	Fixed
15	Support the delivery of 10 Transformational Projects across Council	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	N/A	5	10	10	5	10	Cumulative
16	To continue engagement with services to further promote the Transformation Programme Council-wide	Service Led	6 Monthly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Social	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	Cumulative

7 What Services/ Activities will be stopped

Please add detail of KPI's that have previously been monitored that will no longer be reported on for 2025/26.

What service/ activities will we be stopping/ changing in 2025/2026	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
Implement SOC/SIEM	Implemented	£6k	Higher level of monitoring achieved – security enhanced	Security enhanced	Security team enhanced

8 Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Provide detail below how this plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Monitoring Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer
Team Meeting	Monthly	Head of Service and SUMs

Appendix 1 – Strategic Transformation and Performance Risk Register

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current Controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status Tolerate/ Action	Further Action Required	Risk Owner
		I	L	R		I	L	R			
O1/ CR09	Council suffers a cyber-incident	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed Cyber Incident Response (MIR) in place. Threat landscape continually scanned and intelligence received from MIR provider and internal monitoring on reports from NCSC. Desktop exercise carried out December 2024 with MIR provider (NIHON) Managed Sentinel and Extended Detection and Response (XDR) Service in process of implementation. Cyber security awareness training delivered annually; phishing exercises conducted monthly with remedial training for those who breach. 	5	3	15	Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work towards Zero Trust Security Model. Continue to simulate Cyber-attack in conjunction with Nihon. Report on compliance with Cyber Awareness training and regular simulated breaches 	Digital Services Manager
02/ CR10	Council suffers a data breach and/ or loss of data	5	4	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MIR in place. USB media devices blocked reducing the ability for data to be copied and removed. Zivver email security tool in pilot to be implemented end October. 	5	3	15	Tolerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There remains a continued need for robust data handling procedures in connection with all our outsourced platforms, including the HRC booking system. Develop Data Classification Policy. Digital Services Officers are scheduled to undertake CISMP training in this financial year. 	Digital Services Manager
03/ CR13	Council cannot respond to a business continuity event	5	3	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Continuity Plan in place and can be activated in the event of a business continuity incident. Annual review of Business Impact Analysis by each service. We will continue to review and update where required and following any lessons learned from incidents. 	4	3	12	Action	Test programme to be implemented.	Transformation Manager
04	Lack of permanent staff resource	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working towards being an Employer of Choice Posts at correct pay scales External agency support available whilst further attempts to recruit 	3	3	9	Tolerate	Continue to seek alternative routes to recruitment	STaP SMT
05	Retention of staff	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job satisfaction Flexible working 	3	2	6	Tolerate		STaP SMT

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote employee benefits Recognition and rewards Good communication skills and working environment 							
06	Failure to adhere to legislative requirements to produce Performance Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment Report by required deadline	2	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project plan in place within defined timescales Shared learning and knowledge across team Included within our Performance Improvement Handbook and clearly communicated with Services Included within Service Planning process and reporting 	2	1	2	Tolerate			Transformation Manager
07	Projects poorly managed leading to project deliverables not being met and business partner relationships failing	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good governance processes in place prior to project initiation stage Project roles and responsibilities clearly defined Regular communication and formal project meetings between Project team members Effective corporate communications Monitoring of project timeline, budget and risks Oversight of Transformation Service Unit Manager across projects Lessons learnt log in place and implementing lessons learnt in future projects 	2	1	2	Tolerate			Transformation Manager
08	Procurement legislation uncertainty	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication and formal review meetings within Procurement team Attendance at Local Government Procurement Group Update meetings Procurement manager registered as a Super User with the Cabinet Office, ensuring receipt of notifications and updates. Continuous Learning, Training and Development for Procurement Team 	3	3	9	Tolerate			Procurement Manager
09	Failure to maintain the desired room temperature and potential premature equipment failure due to excess temperature	5	4	20	Air conditioning units are in place in each of the main Server Rooms, however, there are no temperature sensors or automated alert systems in place to warn of temperature fluctuations.	5	2	10	Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers visit Server Rooms on a twice daily basis. Implement a Server Room Temperature Monitoring System that includes alerts. Liaise with APS. 		Digital Services Manager

Unclassified

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	21 February 2025
File Reference	FIN58
Legislation	Section 1 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Periodic review of Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy
Attachments	version 4.0 draft

The Finance Service has a suite of 11 policies in place and a further 2 in development. As part of the periodic review process the anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy has been examined. In order to address a recommendation from the external auditors the latest draft version has been amended to include fraud training for key individuals within the Council. These changes are highlighted in orange on pages 2 and 12 of the attached draft. Other minor changes are also tracked.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve version 4.0 of the Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy.

Document Control

Policy Title	Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy
Document Reference	CS-FIN01-4.0
Policy Summary	The purpose of this document is to set the Council's policy in relation to anti-fraud, bribery and corruption for Members and employees and how to respond to any situations of suspected fraud, bribery or corruption to employees.
Review Requirements	April 2027
Document Owner/Job title	Head of Finance
Council Approval Date	Target March 2025

Version Control Record

Version Number	Version Date	Author(s)	Comments
1.0	March 2015	Principal Finance Officer	Document Initiated & Equality Screened
1.3	March 2017	Head of Finance	Finalised for Committee
2.0	May 2020	Head of Finance	Periodic review
3.0	January 2023	Head of Finance	Periodic review
4.0	March 2025	Head of Finance	Periodic review – addition of training requirement for key staff.

Consultation

	CLT	HOST	SCC	Unions
Date completed		20/02/2025	-	-

Screening

Reference No	284
EQIA Required?	No

Policy Statement

Introduction The Council and its employees have a duty to safeguard public funds and to have systems, controls & procedures that minimise the risk of fraud, bribery and corruption.

This Policy sets out the Council's management arrangements and framework in this regard.

Policy The Council has a zero-tolerance policy and will not accept any level of fraud, bribery or corruption. The Council is committed to creating an environment that:

- Minimises the risk of fraud, bribery or corruption;
- Promotes its early detection;
- Safeguards whistle-blowers; and
- Effectively investigates and recovers, where appropriate, any financial loss suffered.

All Directors, Heads of Service, Service Unit Managers, core line managers, Finance staff, authorised signatories and those staff who handle income or prepare purchase orders must undergo anti-fraud training at least once every two years.

Definitions For the purposes of these procedures:

Fraud is generally used to describe the use of deception to deprive, to disadvantage or cause loss to another person or party. This can include abuse of position, false representation, theft, the misuse of funds or other resources or more complicated crimes such as false accounting and the supply of false information or failing to supply information.¹

Bribery is the offering of a promise of financial or other advantage to another person, to induce a person to perform improperly a function or activity or to reward a person for the improper performance of such a function or activity. The receipt of such a promise or reward also constitutes bribery.²

Corruption is the abuse of power or position to acquire a personal benefit.

Continued on next page

¹ A full definition of Fraud is given in Section 1 of the Fraud Act 2006

² A full definition of Bribery is given in chapter 3 and in Sections 1 & 2 of the Bribery Act 2010.

Policy Statement, Continued

Examples

Examples of fraud include but are not limited to:

- Misappropriation of property, including cash, equipment and stock;
- Misuse of the purchase and payments systems for personal gain;
- False claims for wages, salary or expenses;
- Alteration or falsification of documents or records;
- Suppression of documents;
- Misuse of computers including unauthorised personal use of computer equipment or changes to equipment configuration and unauthorised deletion or alteration of files or data.
- Inflated service charge billing;
- Over statement of expenditure when submitting grant claims.

Examples of bribery include but are not limited to:

- Accepting bribes, gifts or undue hospitality from other parties in return for favourable treatment;
- Deliberate failure to follow Council standing orders regarding quotations and tenders to knowingly benefit a particular supplier.

Examples of corruption include abuse in the following areas:

- Awarding of contracts from which you may obtain personal gain;
- Settlement of contractor or supplier's accounts or claims without a valid business reason or outside your authority;
- Disposal of assets;
- Non-declaration of conflicts of interests by decision makers, such as pecuniary interests, secondary employment, hospitality or gifts.

Although not a fraud itself, money laundering is closely linked with fraud, as it is the mechanism by which the proceeds of crime are distributed.

Policy Statement, Continued

Associated Documents

Documents associated with this policy are:

- Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors including application to planning matters (available on the DfC website [here](#))
- Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees (available on the Council website [here](#))
- Local Government Employees and Councillors Protocol (available on the Council website [here](#))
- Whistle-blowing policy (available on the intranet [here](#))
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
 - for Elected Members (available on the intranet [here](#))
 - for staff (available on the intranet [here](#))
- Declaration of Interest Policy (available on the intranet [here](#))
- Councillors' Declaration of Interests (available on the Council website [here](#))
- Disciplinary Policy (available on the intranet [here](#))
- Risk Management Strategy (available on the intranet [here](#))
- The National Fraud Initiative Northern Ireland 2022 (available on the NIAO website [here](#))

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk

Organisation Culture

The Council is committed to creating an environment that is based on the prevention of fraud, bribery and corruption and the protection of public money by promoting a culture of openness and honesty in all Council activities.

The Councillors and Employees are encouraged to raise concerns regarding suspected fraud, bribery or corruption, regardless of seniority, rank or status, in the knowledge that such concerns will wherever possible be treated in confidence.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources.

Councillors are also bound by the statutory [Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors](#) and the twelve principles contained in it which incorporate the Nolan Principles. These same principles are contained in the [Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees](#). The Nolan Principles are all relevant to this procedure and are as follows:

Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life in Northern Ireland

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act in the public interest at all times and should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations which might reasonably be thought by others to influence them in the performance of their official duties. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Organisation Culture, continued

Accountability

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Honesty

Holders of public office should act honestly. They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising at once in a way that protects the public interest.

Controls and Checks

In order to minimise the risk of fraud, bribery or corruption the Council has in place a wide range of controls and checks. These include:

- Employment of suitably qualified staff who have a record of probity and integrity;
- Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Employees;
- Formally approved Policies & Procedures;
- Clear responsibilities & segregation of duties;
- Registers of interests
- Register of gifts & hospitality;
- Member and Staff Training;
- Internal Audit; and
- Governance arrangements including periodic reporting to Council, Audit Committee & Corporate Leadership Team.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Employment Measures

The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in the fight against fraud, bribery and corruption is to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the previous record of potential employees in terms of their propriety and integrity. Written references are obtained prior to appointing employees, including those employed on a fixed term or temporary basis. Where agency staff are employed, the Council places reliance on checks performed by the employment agency to confirm the suitability of the candidate and these agency checks are randomly audited by the Council.

The roles that staff are expected to play in maintaining the Council's internal control framework feature in managers' induction of new employees. In addition, adequate and relevant training is provided to all employees on an on-going basis.

Codes of Conduct

Councillors

As elected representatives, all members of the Council have a duty to the residents of Ards and North Down to ensure that the Council uses its resources prudently and in accordance with the law. As such, Councillors are required to operate and adhere to:-

- Legislation;
- Standing Orders;
- Financial Regulations;
- Any other policies, codes of conduct and protocols adopted by the Council.

In addition, there is the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors, which sets out best practice that individual Members must follow, in particular, this requires members to complete a register of interests declaration and to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest during Council and Committee meetings.

Employees

Every employee has a role to play in the prevention of fraud, bribery and corruption.

All employees must abide by the [Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees](#), which sets out the Council's requirement on personal conduct. These requirements are emphasised within the induction programme which is run for all new employees.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Policies & Procedures

The Council has in place a range of Policies and Procedures which detail specific measures and processes to be followed in the key areas where there is a potential risk of fraud. These are periodically reviewed in line with best practice and legislative requirements.

Management at all levels shall ensure that their staff are aware of these Policies and Procedures and that the requirements of each are being met.

The Council has a zero tolerance policy and will not tolerate any form of fraud, bribery or corruption. It is committed to protecting public funds by ensuring that Council resources are used for the purpose for which they are intended and by putting safeguards in place to encourage Council employees to perform their duties with honesty and integrity at all times.

In respect of financial statements and transactions, the Council has in place a number of procedures and processes to mitigate the risk of misappropriation of funds and the risk that financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud. These include:

- Manager review and sign off of individual transactions;
- Systems processing controls including multi-level user access and authorisation rights across all financial systems;
- Segregation of duties in all key areas;
- Monthly reconciliation of key control accounts;
- Frequent budget reporting to highlight significant variances or unusual transactions for investigation.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Responsi- bilities & Segregation of Duties

Management is charged with taking all reasonable steps to limit the possibility of bribery, fraudulent or corrupt practices. This is set out in the Local Government (Accounts & Audit) Regulations (NI) 2015 which states that a Council's Chief Financial Officer (Chief Executive) puts in place :

“measures to ensure that the financial transactions of the local government body are recorded as soon as reasonably practicable and as accurately as reasonably possible, measures to enable the prevention and detection of inaccuracies and fraud, and the ability to reconstitute any lost records”

This requirement is a key control in the prevention of impropriety.

Management discharges this responsibility by:

- Developing and maintaining effective controls to prevent fraud, bribery or corruption;
- Developing and communicating policies and procedures at an appropriate level to all staff;
- Identifying the risks to which systems and procedures are exposed; and
- Ensuring that procedures are being complied with.

Employees are expected to abide by and follow all Council policies and procedures. Specific employee responsibilities are clearly defined in the Council's Policies and Procedures and where relevant, in individual job descriptions.

A fundamental control in the prevention of fraud is the segregation of duties, which reduces the risk of errors and inappropriate actions being taken. The Council ensures that segregation of duties exists in all key areas where there is a potential significant risk of fraud.

The primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud, bribery and corruption rests with those charged with governance of the entity. Within the Council, the governance structure is such that those charged with governance at an operational level are Service Unit Managers and Heads of Service.

All staff are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy and all staff must:

- Ensure they read, understand and comply with this policy; and
- Raise concerns as soon as possible if they believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Registers of Interests

Councillors

Section 28(4) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 requires that a register be kept in which Councillors record their pecuniary interests. These interests may be direct or indirect and may be in a contract or other matter.

The register is kept by the Democratic Services Manager and is available for inspection at the City Hall, Bangor during normal working hours or on the Council's website [here](#).

The Act also provides that Councillors must disclose the nature of their pecuniary interest at a meeting of the Council or a Committee where a relevant matter is being discussed, and then withdraw from the meeting and that these facts are recorded in the minutes.

Councillors should also disclose any non-pecuniary interests, such as membership of a charity, voluntary body or other organisation formed for the public purpose. In this case Councillors may usually be permitted to speak and vote on issues concerning such bodies, unless they are a member of the managing committee or other governing body.

Any queries regarding pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests should be addressed to the Chief Executive.

Employees

Section 46(3) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 requires that a register be kept to record the pecuniary interests of Council employees in contracts, proposed contracts or other matters.

The register is kept by Human Resources and employees are required to declare any interest in or association with any Council activity that could cause potential conflict. Staff may be required to complete a statement of assurance as part of the Council's risk management strategy.

Any queries regarding pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests should be addressed to the Director of Corporate Services.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Register of Gifts and Hospitality

Councillors

The *Northern Ireland Code of Local Government Conduct for Councillors* makes it clear that Councillors should “*not accept any offer, gift or favour*” made to them personally. There are, however, no hard and fast rules regarding the acceptance of hospitality or tokens of goodwill. The Code indicates that Councillors are “*personally responsible for all such decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in Local Government.*”

Members should notify any gifts or hospitality received to the Democratic Services Manager who will record such declarations in the Gifts and Hospitality register, which is available to view on the Council’s website [here](#).

Employees

The Gifts and Hospitality policy permits employees to receive gifts up to £30 without any need to register these, although there are exceptions particularly in regard to receiving of cash. The policy with the full details of what is and what is not acceptable and how gifts can be registered is available [here](#).

Internal Audit

Internal Audit plays an important role in the prevention of fraud, bribery and corruption by examining and evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s system of internal control.

In consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team, the Internal Audit team prepares and reviews a plan of work on an annual basis. The plan of work takes account of the Council’s exposure to risk and is designed to ensure that an area or function is reviewed on periodic basis commensurate with the risk involved.

Any weaknesses identified in internal controls are reported to management whose duty it is to ensure that corrective action is taken. In addition, internal control weaknesses that are significant in nature are reported to the Audit Committee on a periodic basis. However, Internal Audit should not be relied upon to identify **all** instances of fraud or irregularity.

Continued on next page

Appendix 1 – Minimising the Risk, Continued

Training

~~The Council provides training to Members and employees both in a routine structured manner and on an ad hoc basis as the requirement becomes apparent. This training is focused on the role that each person fulfils within the organisation.~~

All Directors, Heads of Service, Service Unit Managers, Core line managers, Finance staff, authorised signatories and those staff who handle income or prepare purchase orders must undergo anti-fraud training at least once every two years.

Governance Arrangements

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. In discharging this responsibility, the Council has put in place arrangements for the proper governance of its affairs.

As part of the Council's governance arrangements, members of Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers are required to prepare half yearly Statements of Assurance, which report on any areas of concern or irregularities that they may be aware of. These Statements of Assurance, together with the identification and reporting of risks on the Council's risk register ensure that measures are put in place to address and monitor any potential areas where fraud may occur.

Primary responsibility for overseeing the governance process is delegated to the Audit Committee. The role of this Committee extends to receiving reports from the Council's management, internal and external auditors to ensure that any issues raised are subject to due consideration and are dealt with by Corporate Leadership Team on a timely basis.

Appendix 2 – Detection

Detection Methods

The detection of fraud, bribery or corruption is inextricably linked to prevention and it therefore follows that some of the key preventative measures that the Council has in place will assist in the detection of fraud, bribery and corruption. The key measure in the use of detection is:

- Management Review;

In addition to the above, suspicion of fraud or irregularity may be captured through a number of other means, including:

- Whistle-blowing;
- Chance or Tip-Offs;
- National Fraud Initiative

Management Review

As fraud, bribery and corruption flourishes where there are deficiencies in management control systems, a key responsibility lies with management to not only design systems which ensure that any opportunity is minimised, but to ensure that these systems and processes are reviewed regularly and sufficiently to detect potential fraud.

Management should ensure that irregularities which may provide an indicator of fraud are detected as early as possible through the following processes:

- Review and sign off all significant contractual and financial transactions;
- Supervision and checking of outputs;
- Periodic and Random checks;
- Review of audit trails.

Whistle-blowing

The ethical framework laid out in Appendix 1 requires Councillors and employees to report any concerns they may have regarding suspected fraud, bribery or corruption.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to creating an environment where employees can raise concerns without worrying that they might be victimised. The Council's approach to this is set out in its Whistle-blowing policy and covers, the policy, safeguards, how to raise a concern and how the Council will respond.

Councillors and employees should refer to the Council's [Whistle-blowing policy](#) for further information.

Continued on next page

Appendix 2 – Detection, Continued

Chance or Tip- Offs

Despite the best efforts of managers, many frauds are discovered by chance or a tip-off from outside the Council organisation. It is often the alertness of the public that enables detection to occur. Reports from members of the public will be investigated appropriately in line with the Council's Whistle-blowing policy.

External Audit

Although the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud, bribery and corruption lies with management, other organisations have a role to play also:

- Northern Ireland Audit Office – The statutory audit is designed to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. It may serve as a deterrent.
- Grant awarding bodies – Such organisations frequently vouch grant claims to verify the transactions being claimed to ensure that they are free from error and fraud.

National Fraud Initiative

The Council is committed to working with other government agencies to enable the proactive detection of fraud. One such arrangement is a national data sharing exercise known as the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan

Introduction The Council has prepared this **Fraud Response Plan** to act as a procedural guide and provide a checklist of the required actions, which **must** be followed, in the event of a fraud, attempted fraud or irregular activity being suspected. It covers:

- Notifying suspected fraud;
- The investigation process;
- Liaison with the police;
- Reporting process;
- Recovery of losses; and
- Initiation of resultant actions.

Adherence to the **Fraud Response Plan** will enable the Council to:

- Take timely and effective action to prevent further losses;
- Establish and secure evidence necessary for possible criminal and disciplinary action;
- Highlight areas of weakness in the operating systems to prevent future losses and make recommendations as appropriate; and
- Help to recover losses.

Notifying Suspected Fraud

In the first instance concerns about any irregularity, be it financial or otherwise, shall be notified as a matter of urgency to your Line Manager. If this is not appropriate it should be notified to one of the following people:

- Service Unit Manager;
- Compliance Manager - Information (in respect of information security issues);
- Director or Head of Service; or
- Chief Executive.

All concerns must also be reported to the [Director of Corporate Services](#) and the [Head of Finance](#) prior to any investigations into any alleged incidents taking place, as the nature of a formal investigation and any subsequent proceedings may otherwise be placed in jeopardy.

The form at the end of the document should be used, this is available on the intranet [here](#).

Where the Chief Executive is suspected any concerns should be reported to the [Director of Corporate Services](#) in the first instance. In addition, concerns regarding the Chief Executive should be reported to the [Local Government Staff Commission](#) or its successor.

It is also important that the interests of the person who reports the alleged incident be protected as far as possible.

Continued on next page

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan, Continued

Notifying Suspected Fraud, continued

Prompt action must be taken to deal with employees under suspicion. The decision to suspend or dismiss an employee must be taken in conjunction with the Human Resources & Organisational Development Service. Employees under suspicion, who are allowed to remain at work, may require a change in duties.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office must be notified via the Head of Finance of any attempted, suspected or actual frauds, using the online form.

If an allegation is made frivolously, in bad faith or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the person making the allegation.

Continued on next page

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan, Continued

Investigation Process

This section sets out the process to take in the event of suspected fraud; this starts with preliminary enquiries followed by a formal investigation if required.

Suspected fraud will be investigated in an independent, open-minded and professional manner, with the aim of protecting the interests of the Council, the suspected individual(s) and the whistle-blowing employee if relevant. It is also imperative that enquiries should not prejudice subsequent investigations or corrupt evidence.

Preliminary Enquiry

A discreet preliminary enquiry by Management, with staff or the examination of documents, should be carried out as speedily as possible after the suspicion being raised. The purpose of the initial fact-finding exercise is to determine the factors that gave rise to suspicion and to clarify whether a genuine mistake has been made or if it is likely that a fraud has been attempted or occurred. All original documentation from the preliminary enquiry should be preserved in a safe place for further investigation, if necessary.

If the preliminary enquiry shows that the suspicion is not well founded but internal controls were deficient, management should review their control systems with a view to ensuring they are adequate and effective. Internal Audit is available to offer advice and assistance on matters relating to internal control, if required.

Formal Investigation

If the preliminary enquiry indicates that the suspicion is well founded, management must undertake a formal investigation.

- If the suspicions involve an employee then this investigation should be carried out in line with the disciplinary policy and in conjunction with Employee Relations Service Unit to thoroughly evaluate all material evidence to establish the facts.
- If the suspicions involve anyone else then a member of Corporate Leadership Team will be 'Lead Investigating Officer' will manage each investigation.

In some instances the investigation may require the assistance of Internal Audit or other sources as deemed necessary.

This investigation will try to establish at an early stage whether it appears that a criminal offence has taken place. This will shape the manner in which the investigation is handled and determine whether the matter also requires to be referred to the Police.

Continued on next page

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan, Continued

Investigation Process Continued

Internal action must not be delayed pending the results of any Police investigation. An internal investigation must:

- Identify all individuals involved;
- Gather information to establish the facts from those involved through conducting interviews;
- Ensure the findings of the investigation are supported by the production of all relevant evidence;
- Present the evidence in an appropriate form for any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

The Lead Investigating Officer will ensure that a detailed record of the investigation is maintained. This should include recording details of all telephone conversations, discussions, meetings, interviews, documents reviewed and tests and analyses undertaken. All relevant evidence should be gathered and secured, ensuring from the outset that any evidence is not contaminated, lost or destroyed.

Liaison with Police

If at any point during the investigation it emerges that a criminal act has taken place, the Lead Investigating Officer will advise the Chief Executive that the matter should be referred to the Police, who will normally lead the investigation from this stage onwards.

All members of staff are expected to co-operate fully with any Police enquiries.

Where the Police are unable to progress a criminal prosecution, e.g. because the burden of proof is insufficient to convince the Crown Prosecution Service to proceed, the Council may consider civil action.

Continued on next page

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan, Continued

Reporting Process

The Audit Committee, Internal Audit and External Audit should be informed as early in the process as possible where it is suspected that a significant fraud has occurred. Progress reports should be provided in a timely fashion.

The Audit Committee receives a quarterly update from the Chief Executive of all suspected, attempted or successful frauds.

The reporting arrangements extend to other government bodies where fraud (proven or suspected) occurs in organisations and voluntary bodies which are supported with public funds and where the Council is acting as an intermediary. The Chief Executive will report such cases to the government funding body concerned. Care will be taken in making such reports that potential future legal proceedings are not jeopardised

Findings of the investigation will be reported by the Lead Investigating Officer initially to the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Services to determine what action should be taken, including disciplinary action, civil recovery proceedings and control improvements.

The Investigation Report will include information on the following:

- nature and circumstances of the fraud / corruption;
- date and means of discovery;
- identity of the perpetrator (whether internal or external to the organisation);
- amount involved and any amount recovered thus far;
- potential consequences of the fraud/corruption, financial and otherwise;
- period over which the fraud / corruption was committed;
- management actions taken on discovery of the fraud/corruption;
- action taken against the perpetrator; and,
- identification of control weaknesses and subsequent necessary improvements in control measures to counteract those weaknesses.

All managers are required to declare any frauds sustained in their semi-annual assurance statements completed as part of the Council's Governance arrangements.

The Audit Committee should receive a copy of the investigation report in a timely fashion.

Continued on next page

Appendix 3 – Fraud Response Plan, Continued

Resultant Actions

Findings of the investigation will determine what action(s) should be taken, including recovery of losses and disciplinary action.

The Council will take appropriate steps, including civil recovery proceedings if necessary, to recover any losses. This may include action against third parties involved in the fraud or whose negligent actions contributed to the fraud.

Preventing further loss and recovery of losses incurred are important elements of any fraud response plan. In all fraud investigations an attempt should be made to quantify losses where possible.

The Council will where possible seek repayment of losses. In instances where anyone under investigation offers money in settlement of losses, this should only be accepted:

- (i) without prejudice to any other action the Council may take
- (ii) in respect of losses identified to date, with the Council reserving the right to seek recovery of any other losses that come to light.

Where the loss is substantial, legal advice should be obtained for methods of recovery. Claims for loss due to fraud may be explored under the Councils Insurance arrangements.

Additionally, if an employee is suspected of involvement, the Lead Investigation Officer will consider the appropriate course of disciplinary action, in conjunction with Human Resources & Organisational Development Service.

Management should review relevant internal controls systems to ensure that any weaknesses or deficiencies in these systems are addressed so that the opportunity of fraud or loss is reduced.

REFERRAL FORM FOR SUSPECTED FRAUD

Please **securely** e-mail the completed referral to

Director Of Corporate Services Michael.steele@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Head of Finance Stephen.grieve@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Details of Officer referring case:

Name:		Date	
Job Title			
Location:			
Telephone:			
Email:			

If the suspected fraud is thought to involve a member of Council staff, please provide the following staff information:

Name:	
Employee Number	
Grade:	
Location:	
Job Role:	

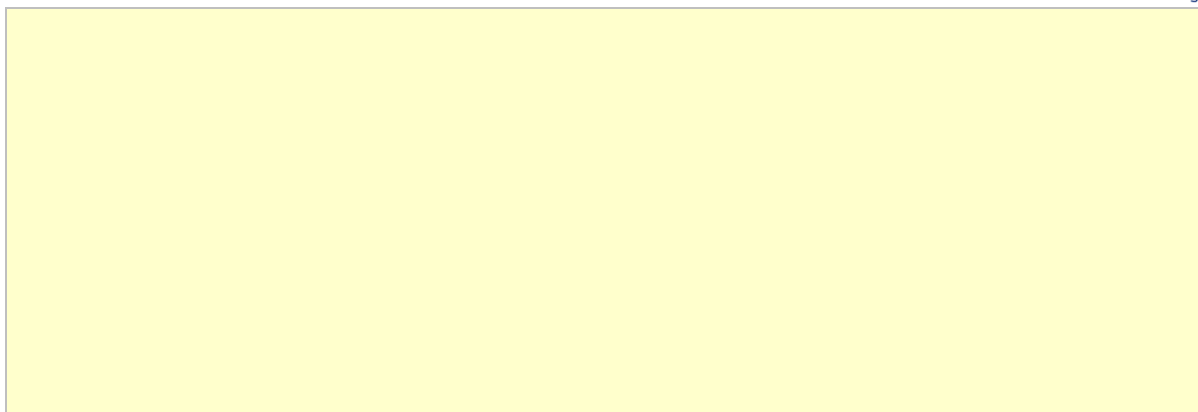
Is the referral as the result of allegations made by a Whistleblower? YES/NO

What is the background to the case? Please provide details of the allegation / irregularity.

--

Detail any hard copy documents / attachments to be forwarded in support of this referral

Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy v3.2



Unclassified

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ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	21 February 2025
File Reference	FIN23
Legislation	Payment to Councillors Regulations (NI) 2019
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Scheme of Allowances 2024-25
Attachments	Circular LG 15/2024 -Consolidated Councillor Allowances Scheme of Allowance v12.1 (tracked) Scheme of Allowances v12.1 (clean)

This report is to consider three issues with respect of the scheme of allowances for Members:

1. Department for Communities circular increasing the maximum basic and special responsibility allowances.
2. The need to claim special responsibility allowance (SRA).
3. Classification of the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Allowances.

Members should note that a broader review of Councillor allowances has been undertaken by the Department for Communities. At the time of writing this paper, no determination in respect of this review had been communicated to the Council.

Not Applicable

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Increase in Maximum allowances

Members will be aware that Council approved an increase in the basic allowance (BA) for the current financial year to the maximum set for the 2023/24 year. This was the first increase in four years.

Following the National Joint Council agreement for staff towards the end of 2024, the Department for Communities has now issued a further determination to increase the maximum BA and SRA that may be paid, in line with usual practice.

Consequently, the basic allowance has been increased from £17,030 to the new maximum of £17,456.

Special Responsibility Allowance

The policy of claiming SRA was introduced a number of years ago to allow for the recognition of members (generally vice chairs) who were not committee chairs, but on occasion chaired meetings and did not receive any recompense for this responsibility.

A number of Members have raised an issue that as a result of needing to claim special responsibility allowance some Councillors were not doing so and therefore not getting what it owed to them. Officers reviewed the payment information which bears this out, with the average number of SRAs paid each month during the current financial year being 11.

This policy would therefore appear to be disadvantaging more Members than it is helping and therefore the revised scheme of allowances proposes reverting to the previous policy of paying Committee chairs an SRA each month automatically. As a result, no other members may claim an SRA for chairing a meeting, in order not to breach the statutory limit of 20 members receiving an SRA.

Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Allowances

Under the current scheme the Mayor and Deputy Mayor receive an SRA, and the Council pays for expenses of the Mayor's office under the Mayors' Allowance heading. By doing so, the Council is technically in breach of the statutory limit for payments of SRA. However, when publishing payments made to Councillors, these SRAs are classified as Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Allowances.

In order to rectify this situation, it is proposed in the new draft Scheme of allowances that the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's allowance are moved to the appropriate section of the scheme, which will therefore be made up of 3 parts:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of Mayor's Office.

Budgets will be moved to the appropriate headings, and this will not result in any additional cost to Council but will ensure that Council meets its obligations in respect of the number of Councillors who receive an SRA.

Not Applicable

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All proposed changes to the scheme have been highlighted in the attached version.

A further report will be presented to Committee to approve the scheme of allowances for the new 2025/26 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. consider the revised maximum allowances from the DfC
2. approve the revised scheme of allowances for 2024/25 (v 12.1) and
3. pay all members for unclaimed SRAs in respect of the current financial year as appropriate.



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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Depairtment fur
Commonities

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Local Government and Housing
Regulation Division
Finance Branch
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG
Phone: 028 9082 9307
email: Gerard.murray@communities-ni.gov.uk

Chief Executive of each District Council
Finance Officer of each District Council
Other Interested Parties

Our ref:CO1-24-496
09 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

**CIRCULAR LG 15/24 - CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR
(Updated December 2024)**

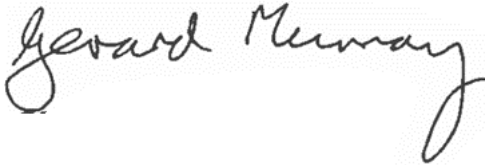
This Local Government Circular provides a consolidated record of all councillor allowances and supersedes Local Government Circular LG 23/23.

This consolidated circular is required to determine and reflect an increase in maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2024 and an increase in Dependants' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2025.

All determinations are made by the Department under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

If you have any queries on the content of this circular please contact Jeff Glass on 028 9082 3375 or Ian Lewis on 028 9082 3506 or by email jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk or ian.lewis@communities-ni.gov.uk .

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerard Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'G' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

GERARD MURRAY
Director
Local Government and Housing Regulation

1. Basic Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2024

Basic Allowance
Maximum £17,456 per annum ≠

≠ (The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity. In 2015/16 this element was £1,000 and each year this amount is uplifted in line with the increase applied to the basic allowance, therefore this element within the basic allowance is £1,229 from 1 April 2024.)

2. Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants’ carers’ allowance.

Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance	Hourly Rate £	Maximum Monthly Amount £
Standard	11.44^	595
Specialist	22.88	1,190

^(Based on national living wage)

- valid from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants’ carers’ allowance.

Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance	Hourly Rate £	Maximum Monthly Amount £
Standard	12.21^	635
Specialist	24.42	1,270

^(Based on national living wage)

– valid from 1 April 2017

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The following table states the maximum rates for travel allowances.

Type of Vehicle	Rate per Mile Pence	Rate per Mile Above 8,500 miles Pence	Rate per Mile Above 10,000 miles Pence
A pedal cycle	20.0p	20.0p	20.0p
A motor cycle (all engine capacities)	24.0p	24.0p	24.0p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p	13.7p	13.7p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p	14.4p	14.4p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p	16.4p	16.4p
An electric car	45.0p	45.0p	25.0p
Passenger rate (per passenger)	5.0p	5.0p	5.0p

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

– valid from 1 April 2024

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The following table states the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance that a council may pay. The maximum rate is based on the size of the council population. Each council's population figures are updated each year by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and it is the duty of each council to operate within the total maximum rate appropriate to its population band. For ease the maximum any councillor can receive, within each band, is also provided.

Population of council	Maximum Special Responsibility Allowance £	Maximum (1/5 th) for individual councillor £
Less than 120,000	61,459	12,292
120,000 to 199,000	86,043	17,209
200,000 +	132,751	26,550

5. Subsistence Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2015

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The following table states the maximum rates for subsistence; however, where councils believe it is necessary there is flexibility for councils to increase these rates by applying a suitable measure of price inflation.

PERIOD/MEAL	British Isles Rates £	London Rates £
Accommodation allowance - An absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	100.70	122.45
Breakfast allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	11.50	11.50
Lunch allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	13.50	13.50
Tea allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	4.70	4.70
Evening meal allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	20.95	20.95



Ards and North Down Borough Council

SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS Version 12.1

This Scheme is made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and takes account of the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities set out in Circular 23/2019 (as amended).

1. Definitions

In this scheme 'approved duty' and committee member are as defined in Regulation 2 of the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019 and Section 36 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.

2. Commencement Date

This scheme of allowances shall be operational from 1 April 2024.

3. Basic Allowance

An annual basic allowance of £17,456 shall be paid to each councillor. Where applicable this will be paid pro-rata.

The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity. This element is £1,229.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

- 4.1 A special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those councillors who hold a position of responsibility as set out in the table below. in accordance with Schedule 1 Table A for those who carry out special responsibilities. An allowance per meeting shall be paid to the Member Chairing the meeting.

Table A

Position of Responsibility	No.	Monthly Payment	Total Per Councillor	Total Payable £
Moved to Section 5 Mayer*		1,240	14,880	14,880
Deputy Mayor*		620	7,440	7,440
Chairperson Corporate Services Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Environment Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Regeneration & Development Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Planning Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Community & Wellbeing Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Audit Committee	1	100	1,200	1,200
Chairperson PCSP*	1	100	1,200	1,200
Audit Committee members	9	21	252	2,268
ARC 21 members	3	63	756	2,268
Partnership Panel Representative*	1	55	660	660
TOTAL	20			32,396
Maximum	20			86,043

4.2 The amount of allowance shall be the amount specified against that position of responsibility will be paid in monthly instalments (pro-rated for part months) special responsibility in the Schedule and will be paid either as a lump sum or on submission of a claim through the electronic portal for those marked with a star.

4.3 At any time, only one special responsibility allowance will be paid to a councillor.

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

5.1 Expenditure paid under Section 32 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 is comprised of three elements:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of the Mayor's Office.

The budgets and tax treatment are set out in the table below:

Position of Responsibility	Monthly Payment	Total Payable £	Notes
Mayor Allowance	1,240	14,880	Taxable
Deputy Mayor Allowance	620	7,440	Taxable
Expenses of Mayor's Office		15,000	Not taxable Rules set out in Appendix B
Total		37,320	

~~on a receipts basis only to cover expenses of the Mayor's office. Council has agreed a limit for this type of expenditure of £15,000.~~

5.2 ~~The rules governing the use of the Mayor's Allowance are set out in Appendix B.~~

6. Dependents' Carers' Allowance

6.1 Councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carers' allowance (DCA) towards reimbursement of actual reasonable costs necessarily incurred in providing care for an eligible dependant, while carrying out an approved duty.

6.2 A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or more, where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with a recognised physical or mental disability where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

- 6.3 For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependent child.
- 6.4 A specialist carer is defined as a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance. In these circumstances a receipt must be attached to the claim.
- 6.5 A dependants' carers' allowance shall be payable based upon actual receipted costs or at the appropriate hourly rate, whichever is the lower; up to the monthly maximum.
- 6.6 The rates are as follows:

	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£11.44	£595
Specialist	£22.88	£1,190

- 6.7 Councillors may claim only one DCA in respect of each occurrence of approved duty. Only one DCA is payable even if there are two or more children or dependants being cared for.

7. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

- 7.1 A councillor or committee member shall be entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances where expenditure on travelling or subsistence has been necessarily incurred in connection with an approved duty as specified in Schedule 2 (Appendix B). The amount claimed should not exceed expense incurred and when by air, boat or public transport should be at economy or 2nd class. Council will not reimburse seat reservation charges. Where a Councillor travels by taxi in preference to public transport the amount reimbursed will be limited to what would have been the cost of the equivalent public transport.
- 7.2 Where the council deems a hired car is necessary a councillor or committee member may be reimbursed the receipted cost of the hired car along with the applicable mileage rate.
- 7.3 The rates paid for travel by car must not exceed the amount that would result from using an alternative mode of transport; e.g. public transport or air fare, unless previously agreed by the council.
- 7.4 The rates of travel allowance for travel by private vehicle shall be as shown in the table below.

TYPE OF VEHICLE	RATE (pence per mile)
A pedal cycle	20.0
A motor cycle of all engine sizes	24.0
Motor car and Electric car	45.0 up to 10,000 miles 25.0 beyond 10,000 miles

- 7.5 The rates of subsistence shall be as show in the table below, which include VAT.
No claims for alcohol are permitted.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES	
	British Isles £	London £
Overnight allowance an absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	129	158
Breakfast allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	16	16
Lunch allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	19	19
Tea allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	7	7
Evening meal allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	26	30
Sub-total for meals	68	72
Total maximum rate (absence of 24 hours)	197	230

- 7.6 For subsistence outside the British Isles, Council will use Overseas Subsistence Rates produced by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) as the maximum payable. These rates which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scale-rate-expenses-payments-employee-travelling-outside-the-uk>. The newest version is effective from 6 April 2020.

8. General

- 8.1 This scheme may be revoked or amended at any time.
- 8.2 The amounts stated in paragraph 6 will be subject to any increase to the national living wage for ages of 25 years and over.
- 8.3 A Councillor may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, mayor, deputy mayor or special responsibility allowances. This should be done by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.
- 8.4 In accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, where a Councillor is suspended from carrying out the duties, the part of basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, chairperson and vice chairperson allowance payable for the period of suspension to the councillor will be withheld.

9. Claims and Payment

- 9.1 Councillors are required to sign their declaration of acceptance of office before any allowances can be paid.
- 9.2 Payments regarding basic allowance and ~~those~~ special responsibility allowances ~~marked with a star in Appendix A~~ shall be made in instalments of one-twelfth of the amount specified in this scheme.
- 9.3 Claims for ~~all other special responsibility allowances~~, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling allowance or subsistence allowance should be made
- a. within three months of the ~~approved~~ duty;
 - b. by 8th day of the month following the period of claim; and
 - c. electronically via the Core Expense system.
- 9.4 Tax and MOT status will be checked electronically on the Gov.uk website and Councillors must have provided a copy of their current driving licence, VC5

(vehicle registration certificate) and motor insurance certificate (covering business use) before any mileage allowances will be paid.

9.5 Councillors are required to make the following declaration on each claim for travelling and subsistence allowances:

- I have necessarily incurred expenditure on travel and subsistence for the purpose of enabling me to perform the approved duties of the Council;
- I have actually paid the fares shown and all other amounts claimed are in accordance with the rates approved by the Council;
- I have attached all necessary receipts in connection with travel and subsistence expenses claimed;
- I have not made, and will not make, any other claim under any enactment for travel and subsistence expenses in connection with duties indicated on this form;
- The amounts claimed are strictly in accordance with the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019;
- I hold a valid licence, V5C (vehicle registration certificate), and MOT certificate (if applicable) and appropriate motor insurance, which covers my vehicle being used for business purposes.

9.6 Payment will be made by BACS directly to Members' bank accounts no later than the 25th day of each month.

10. Publication of Allowances Paid to Councillors

10.1 The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 provide for the publication of schemes of allowances payable to councillors and the associated payments. This forms part of the Council's constitution. The Council will publish the return made to the Department for Communities and include both amounts paid to and on behalf of each Councillor.

Approved Duties

In accordance with Regulations, only the following are specified as the duties in respect of which basic allowance, dependents' carers' allowances, and travel and subsistence allowances are available:

1. attendance at a meeting of the council;
2. attendance at a meeting of a committee of the council;
3. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of the council;
4. attendance at a meeting of a joint committee;
5. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of a joint committee; or
6. the doing of anything approved by the council or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council, or any of its committees or sub-committees, or as the case may be, of the joint committee or any of its sub-committees.

Examples of Approved Duties included under point 6*	Examples of Duties which are not Approved*
a. Event or photo-shoots for Council or where Council is a main sponsor of, for Chair or Vice-Chair of sponsoring Committee only. (eg. Aspects Festival launch or attendance at Ards Business Awards)	i. Attendance at Committees of which the Councillor is not a member
b. Pre-meeting briefing of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees with Chief Executive or Directors	ii. Events to which Councillors have received either a personal or general invitation to (with no accompanying minute)
c. Group Leaders meeting with Chief Executive	iii. Mayor's Installation Dinner / At Home / Civic Receptions / Remembrance Services / Church Services
d. Official opening of Council facilities	iv. Consultations, workshops and public meetings organised by special interest groups
e. Interview or Grant selection panels	v. Other meetings with officers other than those listed under approved duties
f. Commemoration events of regional or national significance	vi. Constituency Work
g. Training, consultations, workshops, and public meetings organised by Council	
h. Planning site meetings	
i. Any other duties for which there is a specific minute. (eg. Nominated members to NILGA conference)	
* These apply to outside bodies as they apply to Council.	

Mayor's Expenses Allowance

Allowance and Budget

It is the responsibility of the Mayor not to exceed the budget set by Council during the Estimates process. Should it be anticipated that there is a likelihood of an overspend on the Mayoral expenses then Council approval will be needed in advance to approve this.

At the end of a mayoral year, if there are any unspent funds, these do not carry to the new Mayor.

Access to this budget will only be granted on receipt of a signed copy of these conditions.

Permitted Expenditure

1. Expenditure must be in respect of expenses of the office of Mayor. Examples include:

- Reasonable clothing expenses may be purchased during the mayoral year. Expenditure in this regard should not exceed £700. Any clothing expenditure incurred is taxable, in line with HM Revenue and Customs rules. A P11d will be issued at the end of the tax year and appropriate returns made to HMRC.
- Small donations may be made to voluntary bodies which the Mayor may have a connection with during the mayoral year, provided the 'voluntary body provides a public service in Northern Ireland' as required by the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. Donations should be processed through the normal payments procedure, in order to provide an audit trail. Cheques can be provided in advance but require 3 days notice. This type of expenditure should not exceed £500 in total during the mayoral year, including donations made to the Mayor's Charity Appeal.
- A modest donation to the Charity Account to offset some event costs only, up to a maximum of £500 in total during the mayoral year.

Restrictions on Expenditure

The following restrictions apply:

2. No personal expenditure. Examples include:

- any travel or other expenditure relating to the Mayor's partner, family or friends (even if accompanying the Mayor on official duties);
- gifts and hospitality to staff and other Members. Note that the Gifts and Hospitality Policy requires staff to decline all offers of gifts and hospitality in excess of £30 in the first instance and if accepted to register them with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service. The general advice is that the Mayor should

refrain from using his/her allowance to provide gifts and/or hospitality to staff where possible.

3. No party political expenditure.
4. No expenditure in respect of the Mayor's Charity Appeal or running charity events. This is properly payable from the Mayor's Charity Account.

Procedure for Incurring expenditure

Normal Council procedures apply.

- a. Where possible the Mayor should request the Democratic Services staff to place purchase orders for expenditure, which will be approved in line with the normal authorisation procedures in advance of placing the order.
- b. Where this is not possible till receipts for all expenditure must be submitted for reimbursement as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- c. Receipted cash donations can be reimbursed as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- d. In line with Department for Communities guidance no expenditure can be reimbursed without a receipt. Credit and debit card receipts are not acceptable if they do not detail the items purchased.

Mileage

Any mileage incurred in carrying out the duties on behalf of the Mayor or in the Deputy Mayor role can be claimed on the monthly expenses claim form but should be clearly marked as 'Mayor's business' which is distinct from mileage incurred on Council business.

Monitoring Expenditure

The Finance Service will send a budget report to the Mayor and Democratic Services on a monthly basis detailing payments which have been made for the year to date.

The Democratic Services staff will ensure that expenditure which the Mayor incurs is allowable. If they have any concerns, they will check with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services or Head of Finance.

Transparency

As with all Council expenditure, the records of how the Mayoral Hospitality budget is spent may be obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

Mayor's Charity Account

The Mayors Charity Account is a separate bank account and is independent of the Council. All monies received from groups or individuals should be lodged to the account.

All expenses in respect of charitable functions (such as catering or advertising) should be paid out of the funds raised during the Mayoral year and not from the hospitality budget.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS Version 12.1

This Scheme is made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and takes account of the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities set out in Circular 23/2019 (as amended).

1. Definitions

In this scheme 'approved duty' and committee member are as defined in Regulation 2 of the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019 and Section 36 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.

2. Commencement Date

This scheme of allowances shall be operational from 1 April 2024.

3. Basic Allowance

An annual basic allowance of £17,456 shall be paid to each councillor. Where applicable this will be paid pro-rata.

The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity. This element is £1,229.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

- 4.1 A special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those councillors who hold a position of responsibility as set out in the table below.

Position of Responsibility	No.	Monthly Payment	Total Per Councillor	Total Payable £
Chairperson Corporate Services Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Environment Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Regeneration & Development Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Planning Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Community & Wellbeing Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Audit Committee	1	100	1,200	1,200
Chairperson PCSP*	1	100	1,200	1,200
Audit Committee members	9	21	252	2,268
ARC 21 members	3	63	756	2,268
Partnership Panel Representative*	1	55	660	660
TOTAL	20			32,396
Maximum	20			86,043

- 4.2 The amount of allowance shall be the amount specified against that position of responsibility will be paid in monthly instalments (pro-rated for part months).
- 4.3 At any time, only one special responsibility allowance will be paid to a councillor.

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

5.1 Expenditure paid under Section 32 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 is comprised of three elements:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of the Mayor's Office.

The budgets and tax treatment are set out in the table below:

Position of Responsibility	Monthly Payment	Total Payable £	Notes
Mayor Allowance	1,240	14,880	Taxable
Deputy Mayor Allowance	620	7,440	Taxable
Expenses of Mayor's Office		15,000	Not taxable Rules set out in Appendix B
Total		37,320	

6. Dependents' Carers' Allowance

6.1 Councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carers' allowance (DCA) towards reimbursement of actual reasonable costs necessarily incurred in providing care for an eligible dependant, while carrying out an approved duty.

6.2 A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or more, where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with a recognised physical or mental disability where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

6.3 For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependent child.

6.4 A specialist carer is defined as a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance. In these circumstances a receipt must be attached to the claim.

6.5 A dependants' carers' allowance shall be payable based upon actual receipted costs or at the appropriate hourly rate, whichever is the lower; up to the monthly maximum.

6.6 The rates are as follows:

	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£11.44	£595
Specialist	£22.88	£1,190

6.7 Councillors may claim only one DCA in respect of each occurrence of approved duty. Only one DCA is payable even if there are two or more children or dependants being cared for.

7. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

7.1 A councillor or committee member shall be entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances where expenditure on travelling or subsistence has been necessarily incurred in connection with an approved duty as specified in Schedule 2 (Appendix B). The amount claimed should not exceed expense incurred and when by air, boat or public transport should be at economy or 2nd class. Council will not reimburse seat reservation charges. Where a Councillor travels by taxi in preference to public transport the amount reimbursed will be limited to what would have been the cost of the equivalent public transport.

7.2 Where the council deems a hired car is necessary a councillor or committee member may be reimbursed the receipted cost of the hired car along with the applicable mileage rate.

7.3 The rates paid for travel by car must not exceed the amount that would result from using an alternative mode of transport; e.g. public transport or air fare, unless previously agreed by the council.

7.4 The rates of travel allowance for travel by private vehicle shall be as shown in the table below.

TYPE OF VEHICLE	RATE (pence per mile)
A pedal cycle	20.0
A motor cycle of all engine sizes	24.0
Motor car and Electric car	45.0 up to 10,000 miles 25.0 beyond 10,000 miles

- 7.5 The rates of subsistence shall be as show in the table below, which include VAT.
No claims for alcohol are permitted.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES	
	British Isles £	London £
Overnight allowance an absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	129	158
Breakfast allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	16	16
Lunch allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	19	19
Tea allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	7	7
Evening meal allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	26	30
Sub-total for meals	68	72
Total maximum rate (absence of 24 hours)	197	230

- 7.6 For subsistence outside the British Isles, Council will use Overseas Subsistence Rates produced by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) as the maximum payable. These rates which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scale-rate-expenses-payments-employee-travelling-outside-the-uk>. The newest version is effective from 6 April 2020.

8. General

- 8.1 This scheme may be revoked or amended at any time.

- 8.2 The amounts stated in paragraph 6 will be subject to any increase to the national living wage for ages of 25 years and over.
- 8.3 A Councillor may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, mayor, deputy mayor or special responsibility allowances. This should be done by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.
- 8.4 In accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, where a Councillor is suspended from carrying out the duties, the part of basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, chairperson and vice chairperson allowance payable for the period of suspension to the councillor will be withheld.

9. Claims and Payment

- 9.1 Councillors are required to sign their declaration of acceptance of office before any allowances can be paid.
- 9.2 Payments regarding basic allowance and special responsibility allowances shall be made in instalments of one-twelfth of the amount specified in this scheme.
- 9.3 Claims for dependants' carers' allowance, travelling allowance or subsistence allowance should be made
- a. within three months of the approved duty;
 - b. by 8th day of the month following the period of claim; and
 - c. electronically via the Core Expense system.
- 9.4 Tax and MOT status will be checked electronically on the Gov.uk website and Councillors must have provided a copy of their current driving licence, VC5 (vehicle registration certificate) and motor insurance certificate (covering business use) before any mileage allowances will be paid.
- 9.5 Councillors are required to make the following declaration on each claim for travelling and subsistence allowances:
- I have necessarily incurred expenditure on travel and subsistence for the purpose of enabling me to perform the approved duties of the Council;
 - I have actually paid the fares shown and all other amounts claimed are in accordance with the rates approved by the Council;
 - I have attached all necessary receipts in connection with travel and subsistence expenses claimed;

- I have not made, and will not make, any other claim under any enactment for travel and subsistence expenses in connection with duties indicated on this form;
- The amounts claimed are strictly in accordance with the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019;
- I hold a valid licence, V5C (vehicle registration certificate), and MOT certificate (if applicable) and appropriate motor insurance, which covers my vehicle being used for business purposes.

9.6 Payment will be made by BACS directly to Members' bank accounts no later than the 25th day of each month.

10. Publication of Allowances Paid to Councillors

10.1 The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 provide for the publication of schemes of allowances payable to councillors and the associated payments. This forms part of the Council's constitution. The Council will publish the return made to the Department for Communities and include both amounts paid to and on behalf of each Councillor.

Approved Duties

In accordance with Regulations, only the following are specified as the duties in respect of which basic allowance, dependents' carers' allowances, and travel and subsistence allowances are available:

1. attendance at a meeting of the council;
2. attendance at a meeting of a committee of the council;
3. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of the council;
4. attendance at a meeting of a joint committee;
5. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of a joint committee; or
6. the doing of anything approved by the council or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council, or any of its committees or sub-committees, or as the case may be, of the joint committee or any of its sub-committees.

Examples of Approved Duties included under point 6*	Examples of Duties which are not Approved*
a. Event or photo-shoots for Council or where Council is a main sponsor of, for Chair or Vice-Chair of sponsoring Committee only. (eg. Aspects Festival launch or attendance at Ards Business Awards)	i. Attendance at Committees of which the Councillor is not a member
b. Pre-meeting briefing of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees with Chief Executive or Directors	ii. Events to which Councillors have received either a personal or general invitation to (with no accompanying minute)
c. Group Leaders meeting with Chief Executive	iii. Mayor's Installation Dinner / At Home / Civic Receptions / Remembrance Services / Church Services
d. Official opening of Council facilities	iv. Consultations, workshops and public meetings organised by special interest groups
e. Interview or Grant selection panels	v. Other meetings with officers other than those listed under approved duties
f. Commemoration events of regional or national significance	vi. Constituency Work
g. Training, consultations, workshops, and public meetings organised by Council	
h. Planning site meetings	
i. Any other duties for which there is a specific minute. (eg. Nominated members to NILGA conference)	
* These apply to outside bodies as they apply to Council.	

Mayor's Expenses Allowance

Allowance and Budget

It is the responsibility of the Mayor not to exceed the budget set by Council during the Estimates process. Should it be anticipated that there is a likelihood of an overspend on the Mayoral expenses then Council approval will be needed in advance to approve this.

At the end of a mayoral year, if there are any unspent funds, these do not carry to the new Mayor.

Access to this budget will only be granted on receipt of a signed copy of these conditions.

Permitted Expenditure

1. Expenditure must be in respect of expenses of the office of Mayor. Examples include:

- Reasonable clothing expenses may be purchased during the mayoral year. Expenditure in this regard should not exceed £700. Any clothing expenditure incurred is taxable, in line with HM Revenue and Customs rules. A P11d will be issued at the end of the tax year and appropriate returns made to HMRC.
- Small donations may be made to voluntary bodies which the Mayor may have a connection with during the mayoral year, provided the 'voluntary body provides a public service in Northern Ireland' as required by the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. Donations should be processed through the normal payments procedure, in order to provide an audit trail. Cheques can be provided in advance but require 3 days notice. This type of expenditure should not exceed £500 in total during the mayoral year, including donations made to the Mayor's Charity Appeal.
- A modest donation to the Charity Account to offset some event costs only, up to a maximum of £500 in total during the mayoral year.

Restrictions on Expenditure

The following restrictions apply:

2. No personal expenditure. Examples include:

- any travel or other expenditure relating to the Mayor's partner, family or friends (even if accompanying the Mayor on official duties);
- gifts and hospitality to staff and other Members. Note that the Gifts and Hospitality Policy requires staff to decline all offers of gifts and hospitality in excess of £30 in the first instance and if accepted to register them with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service. The general advice is that the Mayor should

refrain from using his/her allowance to provide gifts and/or hospitality to staff where possible.

3. No party political expenditure.
4. No expenditure in respect of the Mayor's Charity Appeal or running charity events. This is properly payable from the Mayor's Charity Account.

Procedure for Incurring expenditure

Normal Council procedures apply.

- a. Where possible the Mayor should request the Democratic Services staff to place purchase orders for expenditure, which will be approved in line with the normal authorisation procedures in advance of placing the order.
- b. Where this is not possible till receipts for all expenditure must be submitted for reimbursement as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- c. Receipted cash donations can be reimbursed as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- d. In line with Department for Communities guidance no expenditure can be reimbursed without a receipt. Credit and debit card receipts are not acceptable if they do not detail the items purchased.

Mileage

Any mileage incurred in carrying out the duties on behalf of the Mayor or in the Deputy Mayor role can be claimed on the monthly expenses claim form but should be clearly marked as 'Mayor's business' which is distinct from mileage incurred on Council business.

Monitoring Expenditure

The Finance Service will send a budget report to the Mayor and Democratic Services on a monthly basis detailing payments which have been made for the year to date.

The Democratic Services staff will ensure that expenditure which the Mayor incurs is allowable. If they have any concerns, they will check with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services or Head of Finance.

Transparency

As with all Council expenditure, the records of how the Mayoral Hospitality budget is spent may be obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

Mayor's Charity Account

The Mayors Charity Account is a separate bank account and is independent of the Council. All monies received from groups or individuals should be lodged to the account.

All expenses in respect of charitable functions (such as catering or advertising) should be paid out of the funds raised during the Mayoral year and not from the hospitality budget.

Unclassified

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ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	21 February 2025
File Reference	FIN23
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Scheme of Allowances 2025-26
Attachments	Scheme of Allowance v13 (tracked) Scheme of Allowances v13 (clean)

Each year the Council must approve a scheme of allowances for Councillors before any payments can be made to Members.

This latest version 13 only has minor changes from version 12.1 considered earlier in the meeting. The revisions are in respect of the maximum rates of dependant carers' allowance and subsistence. These are highlighted in orange on pages 4 and 5.

A further version will be brought to Council should the Department for Committees issue updated maximum rates or any other changes to administrative arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve the scheme of allowances for 2025.26.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS Version 13

This Scheme is made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and takes account of the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities set out in Circular 23/2019 (as amended).

1. Definitions

In this scheme 'approved duty' and committee member are as defined in Regulation 2 of the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019 and Section 36 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.

2. Commencement Date

This scheme of allowances shall be operational from 1 April 2025.

3. Basic Allowance

An annual basic allowance of £17,456 shall be paid to each councillor. Where applicable this will be paid pro-rata.

The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity. This element is £1,229.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

- 4.1 A special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those councillors who hold a position of responsibility as set out in the table below.

Position of Responsibility	No.	Monthly Payment	Total Per Councillor	Total Payable £
Chairperson Corporate Services Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Environment Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
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Chairperson Planning Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Community & Wellbeing Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Audit Committee	1	100	1,200	1,200
Chairperson PCSP*	1	100	1,200	1,200
Audit Committee members	9	21	252	2,268
ARC 21 members	3	63	756	2,268
Partnership Panel Representative*	1	55	660	660
TOTAL	20			32,396
Maximum	20			86,043

- 4.2 The amount of allowance shall be the amount specified against that position of responsibility will be paid in monthly instalments (pro-rated for part months).
- 4.3 At any time, only one special responsibility allowance will be paid to a councillor.

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

5.1 Expenditure paid under Section 32 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 is comprised of three elements:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of the Mayor's Office.

The budgets and tax treatment are set out in the table below:

Position of Responsibility	Monthly Payment	Total Payable £	Notes
Mayor Allowance	1,240	14,880	Taxable
Deputy Mayor Allowance	620	7,440	Taxable
Expenses of Mayor's Office		15,000	Not taxable Rules set out in Appendix B
Total		37,320	

6. Dependents' Carers' Allowance

6.1 Councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carers' allowance (DCA) towards reimbursement of actual reasonable costs necessarily incurred in providing care for an eligible dependant, while carrying out an approved duty.

6.2 A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or more, where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with a recognised physical or mental disability where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

6.3 For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependent child.

6.4 A specialist carer is defined as a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance. In these circumstances a receipt must be attached to the claim.

6.5 A dependants' carers' allowance shall be payable based upon actual receipted costs or at the appropriate hourly rate, whichever is the lower; up to the monthly maximum.

6.6 The rates are as follows:

	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£12.21	£635
Specialist	£24.42	£1,270

6.7 Councillors may claim only one DCA in respect of each occurrence of approved duty. Only one DCA is payable even if there are two or more children or dependants being cared for.

7. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

7.1 A councillor or committee member shall be entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances where expenditure on travelling or subsistence has been necessarily incurred in connection with an approved duty as specified in Schedule 2 (Appendix B). The amount claimed should not exceed expense incurred and when by air, boat or public transport should be at economy or 2nd class. Council will not reimburse seat reservation charges. Where a Councillor travels by taxi in preference to public transport the amount reimbursed will be limited to what would have been the cost of the equivalent public transport.

7.2 Where the council deems a hired car is necessary a councillor or committee member may be reimbursed the receipted cost of the hired car along with the applicable mileage rate.

7.3 The rates paid for travel by car must not exceed the amount that would result from using an alternative mode of transport; e.g. public transport or air fare, unless previously agreed by the council.

7.4 The rates of travel allowance for travel by private vehicle shall be as shown in the table below.

TYPE OF VEHICLE	RATE (pence per mile)
A pedal cycle	20.0
A motor cycle of all engine sizes	24.0
Motor car and Electric car	45.0 up to 10,000 miles 25.0 beyond 10,000 miles

- 7.5 The rates of subsistence shall be as show in the table below, which include VAT.
No claims for alcohol are permitted.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES	
	British Isles £	London £
Overnight allowance an absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	133	163
Breakfast allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	16	16
Lunch allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	20	20
Tea allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	7	7
Evening meal allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	27	31
Sub-total for meals	70	74
Total maximum rate (absence of 24 hours)	203	237

- 7.6 For subsistence outside the British Isles, Council will use Overseas Subsistence Rates produced by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) as the maximum payable. These rates which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scale-rate-expenses-payments-employee-travelling-outside-the-uk>. The newest version is effective from 6 April 2020.

8. General

- 8.1 This scheme may be revoked or amended at any time.

- 8.2 The amounts stated in paragraph 6 will be subject to any increase to the national living wage for ages of 25 years and over.
- 8.3 A Councillor may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, mayor, deputy mayor or special responsibility allowances. This should be done by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.
- 8.4 In accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, where a Councillor is suspended from carrying out the duties, the part of basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, chairperson and vice chairperson allowance payable for the period of suspension to the councillor will be withheld.

9. Claims and Payment

- 9.1 Councillors are required to sign their declaration of acceptance of office before any allowances can be paid.
- 9.2 Payments regarding basic allowance and special responsibility allowances shall be made in instalments of one-twelfth of the amount specified in this scheme.
- 9.3 Claims for dependants' carers' allowance, travelling allowance or subsistence allowance should be made
 - a. within three months of the approved duty;
 - b. by 8th day of the month following the period of claim; and
 - c. electronically via the Core Expense system.
- 9.4 Tax and MOT status will be checked electronically on the Gov.uk website and Councillors must have provided a copy of their current driving licence, VC5 (vehicle registration certificate) and motor insurance certificate (covering business use) before any mileage allowances will be paid.
- 9.5 Councillors are required to make the following declaration on each claim for travelling and subsistence allowances:
 - I have necessarily incurred expenditure on travel and subsistence for the purpose of enabling me to perform the approved duties of the Council;
 - I have actually paid the fares shown and all other amounts claimed are in accordance with the rates approved by the Council;
 - I have attached all necessary receipts in connection with travel and subsistence expenses claimed;

- I have not made, and will not make, any other claim under any enactment for travel and subsistence expenses in connection with duties indicated on this form;
- The amounts claimed are strictly in accordance with the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019;
- I hold a valid licence, V5C (vehicle registration certificate), and MOT certificate (if applicable) and appropriate motor insurance, which covers my vehicle being used for business purposes.

9.6 Payment will be made by BACS directly to Members' bank accounts no later than the 25th day of each month.

10. Publication of Allowances Paid to Councillors

10.1 The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 provide for the publication of schemes of allowances payable to councillors and the associated payments. This forms part of the Council's constitution. The Council will publish the return made to the Department for Communities and include both amounts paid to and on behalf of each Councillor.

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Approved Duties

In accordance with Regulations, only the following are specified as the duties in respect of which basic allowance, dependents' carers' allowances, and travel and subsistence allowances are available:

1. attendance at a meeting of the council;
2. attendance at a meeting of a committee of the council;
3. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of the council;
4. attendance at a meeting of a joint committee;
5. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of a joint committee; or
6. the doing of anything approved by the council or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council, or any of its committees or sub-committees, or as the case may be, of the joint committee or any of its sub-committees.

Examples of Approved Duties included under point 6*	Examples of Duties which are not Approved*
a. Event or photo-shoots for Council or where Council is a main sponsor of, for Chair or Vice-Chair of sponsoring Committee only. (eg. Aspects Festival launch or attendance at Ards Business Awards)	i. Attendance at Committees of which the Councillor is not a member
b. Pre-meeting briefing of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees with Chief Executive or Directors	ii. Events to which Councillors have received either a personal or general invitation to (with no accompanying minute)
c. Group Leaders meeting with Chief Executive	iii. Mayor's Installation Dinner / At Home / Civic Receptions / Remembrance Services / Church Services
d. Official opening of Council facilities	iv. Consultations, workshops and public meetings organised by special interest groups
e. Interview or Grant selection panels	v. Other meetings with officers other than those listed under approved duties
f. Commemoration events of regional or national significance	vi. Constituency Work
g. Training, consultations, workshops, and public meetings organised by Council	
h. Planning site meetings	
i. Any other duties for which there is a specific minute. (eg. Nominated members to NILGA conference)	
* These apply to outside bodies as they apply to Council.	

Mayor's Expenses Allowance

Allowance and Budget

It is the responsibility of the Mayor not to exceed the budget set by Council during the Estimates process. Should it be anticipated that there is a likelihood of an overspend on the Mayoral expenses then Council approval will be needed in advance to approve this.

At the end of a mayoral year, if there are any unspent funds, these do not carry to the new Mayor.

Access to this budget will only be granted on receipt of a signed copy of these conditions.

Permitted Expenditure

1. Expenditure must be in respect of expenses of the office of Mayor. Examples include:

- Reasonable clothing expenses may be purchased during the mayoral year. Expenditure in this regard should not exceed £700. Any clothing expenditure incurred is taxable, in line with HM Revenue and Customs rules. A P11d will be issued at the end of the tax year and appropriate returns made to HMRC.
- Small donations may be made to voluntary bodies which the Mayor may have a connection with during the mayoral year, provided the 'voluntary body provides a public service in Northern Ireland' as required by the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. Donations should be processed through the normal payments procedure, in order to provide an audit trail. Cheques can be provided in advance but require 3 days notice. This type of expenditure should not exceed £500 in total during the mayoral year, including donations made to the Mayor's Charity Appeal.
- A modest donation to the Charity Account to offset some event costs only, up to a maximum of £500 in total during the mayoral year.

Restrictions on Expenditure

The following restrictions apply:

2. No personal expenditure. Examples include:

- any travel or other expenditure relating to the Mayor's partner, family or friends (even if accompanying the Mayor on official duties);
- gifts and hospitality to staff and other Members. Note that the Gifts and Hospitality Policy requires staff to decline all offers of gifts and hospitality in excess of £30 in the first instance and if accepted to register them with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service. The general advice is that the Mayor should

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refrain from using his/her allowance to provide gifts and/or hospitality to staff where possible.

3. No party political expenditure.
4. No expenditure in respect of the Mayor's Charity Appeal or running charity events. This is properly payable from the Mayor's Charity Account.

Procedure for Incurring expenditure

Normal Council procedures apply.

- a. Where possible the Mayor should request the Democratic Services staff to place purchase orders for expenditure, which will be approved in line with the normal authorisation procedures in advance of placing the order.
- b. Where this is not possible till receipts for all expenditure must be submitted for reimbursement as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- c. Receipted cash donations can be reimbursed as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
- d. In line with Department for Communities guidance no expenditure can be reimbursed without a receipt. Credit and debit card receipts are not acceptable if they do not detail the items purchased.

Mileage

Any mileage incurred in carrying out the duties on behalf of the Mayor or in the Deputy Mayor role can be claimed on the monthly expenses claim form but should be clearly marked as 'Mayor's business' which is distinct from mileage incurred on Council business.

Monitoring Expenditure

The Finance Service will send a budget report to the Mayor and Democratic Services on a monthly basis detailing payments which have been made for the year to date.

The Democratic Services staff will ensure that expenditure which the Mayor incurs is allowable. If they have any concerns, they will check with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services or Head of Finance.

Transparency

As with all Council expenditure, the records of how the Mayoral Hospitality budget is spent may be obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

Mayor's Charity Account

The Mayors Charity Account is a separate bank account and is independent of the Council. All monies received from groups or individuals should be lodged to the account.

All expenses in respect of charitable functions (such as catering or advertising) should be paid out of the funds raised during the Mayoral year and not from the hospitality budget.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS Version 13

This Scheme is made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and takes account of the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities set out in Circular 23/2019 (as amended).

1. Definitions

In this scheme 'approved duty' and committee member are as defined in Regulation 2 of the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019 and Section 36 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.

2. Commencement Date

This scheme of allowances shall be operational from 1 April 2025.

3. Basic Allowance

An annual basic allowance of £17,456 shall be paid to each councillor. Where applicable this will be paid pro-rata.

The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity. This element is £1,229.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

- 4.1 A special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those councillors who hold a position of responsibility as set out in the table below.

Position of Responsibility	No.	Monthly Payment	Total Per Councillor	Total Payable £
Chairperson Corporate Services Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Environment Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Regeneration & Development Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Planning Committee	1	425	5,100	5,100
Chairperson Community & Wellbeing Committee	1	305	3,660	3,650
Chairperson Audit Committee	1	100	1,200	1,200
Chairperson PCSP*	1	100	1,200	1,200
Audit Committee members	9	21	252	2,268
ARC 21 members	3	63	756	2,268
Partnership Panel Representative*	1	55	660	660
TOTAL	20			32,396
Maximum	20			86,043

- 4.2 The amount of allowance shall be the amount specified against that position of responsibility will be paid in monthly instalments (pro-rated for part months).
- 4.3 At any time, only one special responsibility allowance will be paid to a councillor.

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

5.1 Expenditure paid under Section 32 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 is comprised of three elements:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of the Mayor's Office.

The budgets and tax treatment are set out in the table below:

Position of Responsibility	Monthly Payment	Total Payable £	Notes
Mayor Allowance	1,240	14,880	Taxable
Deputy Mayor Allowance	620	7,440	Taxable
Expenses of Mayor's Office		15,000	Not taxable Rules set out in Appendix B
Total		37,320	

6. Dependents' Carers' Allowance

6.1 Councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carers' allowance (DCA) towards reimbursement of actual reasonable costs necessarily incurred in providing care for an eligible dependant, while carrying out an approved duty.

6.2 A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or more, where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with a recognised physical or mental disability where there is medical or social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

6.3 For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependent child.

6.4 A specialist carer is defined as a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance. In these circumstances a receipt must be attached to the claim.

6.5 A dependants' carers' allowance shall be payable based upon actual receipted costs or at the appropriate hourly rate, whichever is the lower; up to the monthly maximum.

6.6 The rates are as follows:

	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£12.21	£635
Specialist	£24.42	£1,270

6.7 Councillors may claim only one DCA in respect of each occurrence of approved duty. Only one DCA is payable even if there are two or more children or dependants being cared for.

7. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

7.1 A councillor or committee member shall be entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances where expenditure on travelling or subsistence has been necessarily incurred in connection with an approved duty as specified in Schedule 2 (Appendix B). The amount claimed should not exceed expense incurred and when by air, boat or public transport should be at economy or 2nd class. Council will not reimburse seat reservation charges. Where a Councillor travels by taxi in preference to public transport the amount reimbursed will be limited to what would have been the cost of the equivalent public transport.

7.2 Where the council deems a hired car is necessary a councillor or committee member may be reimbursed the receipted cost of the hired car along with the applicable mileage rate.

7.3 The rates paid for travel by car must not exceed the amount that would result from using an alternative mode of transport; e.g. public transport or air fare, unless previously agreed by the council.

7.4 The rates of travel allowance for travel by private vehicle shall be as shown in the table below.

TYPE OF VEHICLE	RATE (pence per mile)
A pedal cycle	20.0
A motor cycle of all engine sizes	24.0
Motor car and Electric car	45.0 up to 10,000 miles 25.0 beyond 10,000 miles

- 7.5 The rates of subsistence shall be as show in the table below, which include VAT.
No claims for alcohol are permitted.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES	
	British Isles £	London £
Overnight allowance an absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	133	163
Breakfast allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	16	16
Lunch allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	20	20
Tea allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	7	7
Evening meal allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	27	31
Sub-total for meals	70	74
Total maximum rate (absence of 24 hours)	203	237

- 7.6 For subsistence outside the British Isles, Council will use Overseas Subsistence Rates produced by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) as the maximum payable. These rates which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scale-rate-expenses-payments-employee-travelling-outside-the-uk>. The newest version is effective from 6 April 2020.

8. General

- 8.1 This scheme may be revoked or amended at any time.

- 8.2 The amounts stated in paragraph 6 will be subject to any increase to the national living wage for ages of 25 years and over.
- 8.3 A Councillor may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, mayor, deputy mayor or special responsibility allowances. This should be done by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.
- 8.4 In accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, where a Councillor is suspended from carrying out the duties, the part of basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, chairperson and vice chairperson allowance payable for the period of suspension to the councillor will be withheld.

9. Claims and Payment

- 9.1 Councillors are required to sign their declaration of acceptance of office before any allowances can be paid.
- 9.2 Payments regarding basic allowance and special responsibility allowances shall be made in instalments of one-twelfth of the amount specified in this scheme.
- 9.3 Claims for dependants' carers' allowance, travelling allowance or subsistence allowance should be made
- within three months of the approved duty;
 - by 8th day of the month following the period of claim; and
 - electronically via the Core Expense system.
- 9.4 Tax and MOT status will be checked electronically on the Gov.uk website and Councillors must have provided a copy of their current driving licence, VC5 (vehicle registration certificate) and motor insurance certificate (covering business use) before any mileage allowances will be paid.
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- I have necessarily incurred expenditure on travel and subsistence for the purpose of enabling me to perform the approved duties of the Council;
 - I have actually paid the fares shown and all other amounts claimed are in accordance with the rates approved by the Council;
 - I have attached all necessary receipts in connection with travel and subsistence expenses claimed;

- I have not made, and will not make, any other claim under any enactment for travel and subsistence expenses in connection with duties indicated on this form;
- The amounts claimed are strictly in accordance with the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (NI) 2019;
- I hold a valid licence, V5C (vehicle registration certificate), and MOT certificate (if applicable) and appropriate motor insurance, which covers my vehicle being used for business purposes.

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4. attendance at a meeting of a joint committee;
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6. the doing of anything approved by the council or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council, or any of its committees or sub-committees, or as the case may be, of the joint committee or any of its sub-committees.

Examples of Approved Duties included under point 6*	Examples of Duties which are not Approved*
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g. Training, consultations, workshops, and public meetings organised by Council	
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- A modest donation to the Charity Account to offset some event costs only, up to a maximum of £500 in total during the mayoral year.

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The following restrictions apply:

2. No personal expenditure. Examples include:

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- gifts and hospitality to staff and other Members. Note that the Gifts and Hospitality Policy requires staff to decline all offers of gifts and hospitality in excess of £30 in the first instance and if accepted to register them with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service. The general advice is that the Mayor should

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refrain from using his/her allowance to provide gifts and/or hospitality to staff where possible.

3. No party political expenditure.
4. No expenditure in respect of the Mayor's Charity Appeal or running charity events. This is properly payable from the Mayor's Charity Account.

Procedure for Incurring expenditure

Normal Council procedures apply.

- a. Where possible the Mayor should request the Democratic Services staff to place purchase orders for expenditure, which will be approved in line with the normal authorisation procedures in advance of placing the order.
- b. Where this is not possible till receipts for all expenditure must be submitted for reimbursement as part of the normal monthly expenses claim.
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Mileage

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Monitoring Expenditure

The Finance Service will send a budget report to the Mayor and Democratic Services on a monthly basis detailing payments which have been made for the year to date.

The Democratic Services staff will ensure that expenditure which the Mayor incurs is allowable. If they have any concerns, they will check with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services or Head of Finance.

Transparency

As with all Council expenditure, the records of how the Mayoral Hospitality budget is spent may be obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

Mayor's Charity Account

The Mayors Charity Account is a separate bank account and is independent of the Council. All monies received from groups or individuals should be lodged to the account.

All expenses in respect of charitable functions (such as catering or advertising) should be paid out of the funds raised during the Mayoral year and not from the hospitality budget.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Date of Report	17 February 2025
File Reference	HR27
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Reviewed Learning, Training and Development Policy, April 25 to March 28
Attachments	Reviewed Learning, Training and Development Policy, April 25 to March 28

The **reviewed Learning, Training and Development Policy** ensures that relevant learning, training and development is in place so that employees provide a high-quality, cost-effective service to the public. This enables the Council to achieve its strategic aims and objectives and comply with all legal and statutory requirements.

The primary purpose of this policy is to set out the parameters governing *employee led* requests for training.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurs with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade union partners is scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council will be advised of any significant edits requested.

RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable

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It is recommended that Council approve the revised Learning, Training and Development policy.

Policy Title	LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY
Version	V.2.1
Policy Summary	Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises that people are its most valuable asset and continually strives to provide effective learning, training and development opportunities to ensure its employees have the knowledge, skills and insights to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic aims and objectives.
Responsible Service	Human Resources and Organisational Development
Date of Equality Screening	25 February 2025
Date of Council Approval	26 March 2025
Implementation Date	01 April 2025
Last Review Date	April 2022
Next Review Date	01 April 2028
Officer Responsible for Review	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Any Other Information	<p>This policy can be provided in alternative formats if required in relation to language or disability.</p> <p>This Policy has been developed in conjunction with management, employees and trade unions and applies to all employees</p> <p>The Council reserves the right to review, revise and amend the policy from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the organisation and to comply with new legislation.</p>

Revision History:

Date	Changes Made	Version
10 January 2025	Link to new Corporate Plan 24 to 28	2.1
	Updates from Revised Scheme of Delegation ref Approval Levels	2.1
	Updated references to Appraisal Scheme	2.1
	Updated Evaluation Form	2.1

PART 1: LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Purpose of the Policy

Ards and North Down Borough Council (the Council) recognises that people are its most valuable asset and is committed to encouraging employees to enhance their knowledge, skills and qualifications.

Investors in People is the standard adopted and used to define what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results within a culture of life-long learning.

The Council will ensure relevant learning, training and development is in place to ensure the provision of high quality, cost effective services to the public to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic aims and objectives and comply with all legal and statutory requirements.

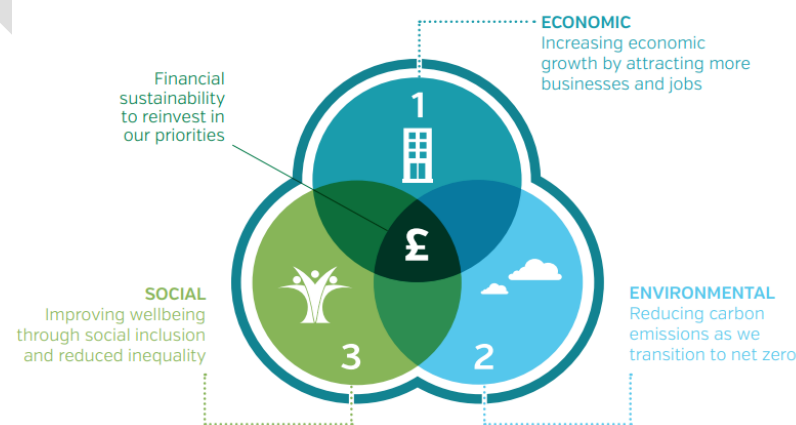
The primary purpose of this policy is to set out the parameters governing *employee led* requests for training.

Strategic Direction

The Corporate Plan, 2024 to 2028 aligns with and supports the Big Plan (Community Plan). Using an outcomes-based approach, the Big Plan seeks to enable all people in Ards and North Down to;

- **Fulfil their lifelong potential**
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
- Benefit from a prosperous economy
- Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment

Our **Vision of a Sustainable Borough** is one where economic, environmental, and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well-balanced and equitable. Three Corporate Priorities from the Corporate Plan align with the three pillars of sustainable development:



Definition	<p>Learning, training and development: The implementation of policies, procedures and practices in order to maintain and enhance knowledge, skills, attitudes and effectiveness by assisting employees to meet development needs and goals.</p>
Who does the policy apply to?	<p>All permanent and temporary Council employees, whether full-time or part-time, who have passed the probationary stage, will be eligible to apply for <u>Short Courses</u>, at a maximum of 3 days, which can be completed during their contract of employment.</p> <p>NB Regulatory training is management led and may occur during probation (refer to Categories of Training, page 6).</p> <p>All permanent employees who have at least 1 years' continuous service with Ards and North Down Borough Council will be eligible to apply for financial assistance for <u>Part-time Study</u> leading to a formal qualification and / or professional accreditation.</p> <p>For part-time study qualifications with no requirement for direct financial assistance eg Greenmount, employees must have passed the probationary stage.</p> <p>Casual and Agency workers are not council employees and therefore do not have appraisal conversations. However, both categories are provided with regulatory job-related training (eg health and safety) affecting the designated role(s) in the workplace.</p>
Corporate Plan for Training	<p>The annual Plan for Training is collated using the information gleaned from the Training Needs Analysis process and individual learning and development requests from Appraisal Conversations. It is devised based on an assessment of prevailing levels of skills, attitudes and knowledge, and on any current or anticipated gaps.</p> <p>All external and internal training will be centrally recorded by the Organisational Development Service Unit. This is to assist with the evaluation of the training provided, to ensure individuals' training records are being updated and to ensure that training identified is being carried out as required.</p>
Appraisal Conversations (Performance Management Process)	<p>The Appraisal Scheme sits within the Council's Performance Management process and is directly linked with the Learning, Training and Development policy. It underpins the identification of individual training needs and how these are progressed.</p>

Out of Scope • Regulatory Training (refer to page 6) arranged by the Council is in accordance with the Procurement Policy.

Other related policies/procedures • Learning and Development Strategy
• Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan
• Performance Improvement Plans
• Service Plans
• Scheme of Delegation
• Mileage/Subsistence Policies

Equality of Opportunity All employees regardless of their religious belief, political opinion, racial group, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation and whether they have a disability or dependents, or not, will be encouraged to avail of learning, training and development opportunities.

Potential Conflict of Interest Depending on the type of training, and to avoid a potential conflict of interest, there are restrictions placed on an employee using any training/qualifications funded by the Council for another party or for personal gain. Contact must be made with the Organisational Development Manager to review the circumstances of each case before any such training occurs.

PART 2: LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

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PART 2: LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

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Categories of Learning, Training and Development

Regulatory Training: This is necessary to ensure employees are aware of their legal responsibilities and adherence to Council policies and procedures. This will include subject specific training for particular posts such as compliance training (health and safety, freedom of information, data protection, equal opportunities, safeguarding and sustainability). The Council will arrange and fund such training in adherence with the procurement policy instead of this policy. This training may take place during the probationary period.

On-boarding: On commencement an employee is given access to online corporate information and personal data which necessitates review and confirmation.

Corporate Induction: It is anticipated that all new employees will be invited to attend a Corporate Induction event as soon as possible after the date of commencement. This event is in addition to specific job-related induction training, which is the responsibility of line management.

Departmental Induction: On commencement a line manager completes an Induction Checklist with a new employee. The list is countersigned by the employee to confirm their understanding of key important information.

E-Learning: The AND E-learning platform is used as a primary tool for mandatory, compliance-based training and complements face to face interventions. It also provides access to non-obligatory modules on various subject matters to assist employees eg health and wellbeing, career advancement and ICT.

Employee Led Training Requests:

Formal: Opportunities may arise to allow employees to undertake relevant Part-time Study courses (academic or professional) that lead to certification and / or qualification.

Short Courses, Conferences or Seminars: Offered from a variety of sources both internally eg ANDBC Open Course Programme, the Lead AND Manage Programme and externally. These courses range in duration from half a day to a maximum of 3 days and are most often used to enhance the performance of staff in a current role or to assist with career development. Opportunities to avail of short courses are circulated via Core personnel system, via email, the intranet and/or on notice boards.

Other Training Interventions: The attainment of skills and knowledge may be achieved through other training interventions such as;

- Online Training Resources generally
- On the Job Training
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Job Shadowing/Rotation/Enrichment
- Secondment
- Acting up / Honorariums
- Project Work
- Guided Reading/Research

Identification of Training Needs

Learning, training and development needs are on three levels:

Regulatory needs are identified by Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers via the annual Training Needs Analysis process, set out within the Learning and Development Strategy.

Service needs are identified from the objectives set out in Service Plans, which are linked directly to the Corporate Plan.

Individual needs are identified primarily through Appraisal Conversations in which the line manager and team member agree a development plan.

Shared learning: Continuous Professional Development or similar job-related training can apply across several directorates. Event information will be communicated to encourage such shared learning.

Financial Allocation

Council budgets include a realistic financial allocation for learning, training and development. In line with good financial governance this has included funding for a number of Train the Trainer courses to increase the number of accredited in-house trainers.

Attendance at training interventions will be approved where it is appropriate to the needs of the Council, relevant to the employee's role or career development, and there are financial resources available to fund it.

Corporate training needs eg line manager skills are funded centrally by the Corporate Training budget, whereas all other job-specific related training is funded by the Service level budget.

Financial Assistance and Criteria

Financial Assistance is considered for:

- Part-time Study qualifications either professional, academic, job-related, normally taken on a day release basis, through open learning or on-the-job.
- Short courses either in-house or external;
- Conferences and Seminars;
- Residentials which constitute part of a course requirement.

Short Courses: Employees can expect 100% funding.

Part-time Study: All applications will be reviewed by the relevant Head of Service and approval will only be made in line with one of the criteria set out below.

Criteria 1: Equips Employee for Progression to the Next Level

The Council will consider 100% funding and time off where a Part-time Study Course adds directly to an employee's ability to perform the duties of the existing role and equips the employee for promotion to the next level in the organisational structure;

- Scale 6 and below
- Officer (SO1 and above)
- Service Unit Manager
- Head of Service
- Director / Chief Executive

OR

Criteria 2: Contributes to Personal Development and Performance in Current Role

The Council will consider 50% funding up to a maximum of £500 annually, and time off where a Part-time Study Course contributes to personal development and has some relevance to performance in the current post.

Approval: Part-time Study Courses

All Part-time Study Course applications must be submitted for consideration to the Head of Service. Approval is subject to adequate budget provision.

Short Courses

Submitted for approval to the relevant Service Unit Manager or senior budget holder approval for those reporting to HOST, Director or Chief Executive in line with agreed budgets.

AND BC Short Course events will be charged to the Service training budget at a standard daily rate.

Employees will not receive any re-imbursement (pay, TOIL or flexi) for Short Course attendance outside normal working hours.

Regardless of cost of course (and even if no charge), if outside Ireland: Approval by Head of Service.

Invoices for Part-time Study

The college/university should forward the Council an invoice for the registration and course fees.

Part-time Study:

Conditions

Payment for subsequent years will be conditional upon the successful completion of the first/current year and to this end employees must submit evidence of successful completion of courses undertaken or examinations at the end of each academic year where appropriate.

Repayment: Full course fees will be recouped by the Council if an employee fails to complete a Part-time Study course within 2 years of the course's end date. Each case will be treated on its own merits. The Council will not fund exam re-sits or any requirement to repeat entire modules of study.

Required driving qualifications: If the Personnel Specification for a post requires the completion of a driving qualification within a prescribed timeframe (usually 12 months), failure to pass the required test and / or driving assessment may result in demotion or a change in role.

Absence from class: This must be reported to line management in line with absence procedures. Term reports and attendance records for part-time students are available from the colleges/universities and will be requested by the Council for inspection as required.

Only one Part-time Study course at a time: Requests for courses that overlap existing studies will not be approved.

Financial Claw-back: Applies to Part-time Study courses expressly requested by the employee, or regulatory courses which the Council deems relevant to the role eg OCS (Operator Competence Scheme) or Category related driving Qualifications.

If an employee resigns or is dismissed from the Council within 2 years of gaining the qualification, the Council must be refunded on the following graduated basis after completing the course:

1. Full cost refunded by employee *within 1 year*
2. 50% refund by employee *between 13 to 18 months*
3. 25% refund by employee *between 19 to 24 months*

Reimbursement arrangements must be made by the date of leaving the Council's employment, otherwise, any final amount due will be deducted from the employee's final wage/salary. NB If the cost of a course increases in line with inflation, then the employee is required to pay the increased amount.

Exemptions to Claw-back: Redundancy
Ill-health Retirement/Ill-Health Dismissal

Paid Time off Work: Only where the course cannot be attended in the employee's own time, paid time off work will be offered on the following basis:

Learning, Training and Development **Maximum 1-day attendance per week (on average over the academic year) for Part-time Study:** Granted during term-time only (pro rata for part-time employees).

Flexi: Credit of actual attendance hours only, up to a maximum balance of the normal working hours for the day (pro rata for part-time employees) even if class time exceeds this.

Shift workers: Granted release only for those hours of duty when attendance is required at the course, working part of shift as required.

TOIL: No allowance.

Mileage and Subsistence: As per Council Travel Policy and Subsistence policy.

Exam Leave: 0.5 days per exam to a maximum of 1.5 days per year (pro rata for part-time employees).

Study Leave: 0.5 days per exam to a maximum of 1.5 days per year (pro-rata for part-time employees).

Assignment Leave: 0.5 days per subject to a maximum of 1.5 days per year (pro-rata for part-time employees).

Residentials: Credited up to a maximum balance of normal working hours for the day (pro rata for part-time employees) *only* if scheduled during working hours.

Departmental circumstances: These will take priority over day release if operational needs require employee to attend work.

Promotion In granting assistance with a course of study it must be understood that the Council makes no guarantee of promotion as a result of obtaining the qualification.

Professional Membership Membership is payable by employees.

Training Records Human Resources and Organisational Development will hold all training records centrally; therefore Line Managers must inform the section of all locally arranged training which takes place.

Evaluation of Training For the Council's learning and development policy to be effective, one of the key processes in the system is the 'evaluation' of the learning or development that has taken place. Effective evaluation is part of an accountable, professional and ethical public service and it is fundamental to good practice and good management. Effective evaluation will allow the Council to measure whether it has achieved its learning outcomes during a given period of time.

The objectives for evaluating learning and development are:

- To assess if intended learning and development objectives (and Council objectives) have been met.
- Continuous improvement of learning and development.
- To assess whether resources are being used wisely and effectively.
- To assess the value for money (from Council perspective) of learning and development.
- To assess whether the Learning and Development Strategy and function is providing any 'Added Value' to the Council.
- Effective evaluation will ensure quality, justify investment in learning and development and ensure appropriateness of training and its alignment with Council needs.

The Council uses a Four Level Model of Evaluation; Reaction, Learning, Behavioural Change and Results.

**Cancellation
of Short
Courses**

Human Resources and Organisational Development must be advised two weeks in advance if an employee is unable to attend a Short Course. This is to provide the opportunity to re-allocate places to other colleagues.

Cancellations made with less than two weeks' notice will normally incur the full cancellation charge and will be deducted from the relevant service level budget.

If there is a failure to attend a Short Course without cancellation, following the relevant charge, it is unlikely an employee will have any further Short Courses authorised during that financial year. Each case will be treated on its own merits.

**Evaluation
and Reporting
Mechanism**

Human Resources and Organisational Development will provide an annual evaluation report to the Heads of Service Team and Corporate Leadership Team.

**Approval
Process**

For Short Courses, email approval from the Service Unit Manager should be forwarded to the Training Co-ordinator.

For Part-time Study Applications, the digital application form is available on the intranet or from the Training Co-ordinator.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed regularly by the Council and, if necessary, revised in consultation with recognised trade unions.

APPENDIX 1

SHORT COURSE BOOKING PROCEDURE

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Line Manager and Employee to discuss and agree training needs primarily as part of the [Appraisal](#) Conversation process.



- AND BC Open Course programme bookings require line manager approval.
- Other Short Courses require email approval via the SUM or senior budget holder approval for those reporting to HOST, Director or CE.



Human Resources will book places on internal programmes on a first come first served basis, however, for courses with limited places available, priority will be given to training identified as part of the appraisal process.

Human Resources will confirm that a place has been reserved or offer an alternative date, if available, if the course is full.



CANCELLATIONS

Cancellations made with less than 2 weeks' notice will normally incur the full cancellation charge which will be deducted from the relevant service level budget.

APPENDIX 2

PART-TIME STUDY APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Line Manager and Employee to discuss and agree training needs primarily as part of the [Appraisal](#) Conversation process.



Complete Part-time Study Application Form, seek Head of Service approval via digital signature / email and forward to the Organisational Development Manager.



If approved, employee is notified, signs off a Financial Claw-back agreement and registers on the course. Reasons will be provided if a Part-time Study course is not approved.

Appendix 3

PART-TIME STUDY APPLICATION FORM

Applications must be submitted at least 1 month before the course commencement date.

1 Employee Details

Name

Job Title

Directorate

Highest qualification held at present

2 Details of proposed course of study (please attach syllabus)

Course Title

Level of Qualification

Is this an online course? Y / N

Name of College / University / Accredited online Provider

Dates course begins and ends

Duration of complete course

Days & hours required each week/month

If applicable, approximate date of examination(s)

3 Costs

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure all relevant costs are identified. All costs must be detailed; additional claims will not be accepted.

Course fees

Registration

Exam fees

Other (please specify)

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4 Financial Claw-Back Agreement Statement

Full course fees will be recouped by the Council if an employee fails to complete the course within 2 years of the course's end date. Each case will be treated on its own merits. The Council will not fund exam re-sits or any requirement to repeat entire modules of study.

If an employee voluntarily leaves or is dismissed from the Council within 2 years of gaining the qualification, the Council must be refunded on the following graduated basis after completing the course:

1. Full cost refunded by employee within 1 year
2. 50% refund by employee between 13 to 18 months
3. 25% refund by employee between 19 to 24 months

Reimbursement arrangements must be made by the date of leaving the Council's employment, otherwise, any final amount due will be deducted from the employee's final pay. NB If the cost of a course increases in line with inflation, then the employee is required to pay the increased amount.

I _____ (print name) hereby agree that any outstanding money due to the Council in respect of recoupment of fees will be reimbursed by my date of leaving the Council's employment. I understand that should I refuse to agree to reimbursement that any outstanding monies will be deducted from my wages and/or my final salary / outstanding expenses.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Course

Duration

5 Details of previous assistance

Have you previously received assistance with a course of study? Yes ☐ No ☐

Title of course(s)

Date course(s) completed

Result(s)

6 **Why do you wish to attend the above course and what benefits do you think the course can provide to you and your Service?**

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7 **Declaration**

☐ I am making this application with the full intention of successfully completing the course of study. If I should fail to successfully complete any part of it or withdraw completely from the course, I authorise the relevant deductions of paid monies from my wages/salary. I also agree to the Council obtaining term reports and attendance records from the college/university.

8 **I have read and understand the terms and conditions of the Learning, Training and Development policy**

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

9 **Required Approvals:**

Head of Service Approval required. If provided, the completed form should be forwarded to the Organisational Development Manager.

☐ Approved ☐ Not approved (tick as appropriate) by HOS/Director/Chief Executive

NB: Director/Chief Executive approval only required for HOS/Director level.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

HOS / Director / Chief Executive

Please Print: _____

Meets Policy Criteria approval from OD Manager? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Organisational Development Manager

Please Print: _____

If not approved, please give reason(s)

Appendix 5 Digital Evaluation Form

1. Before this course, how confident were you in this subject?

(Required)

- ☐ Not at all confident
- ☐ Not very confident
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Very confident

2. What were you hoping to achieve by attending this training?

(Required)

3. Were the course objectives clearly outlined at the beginning of this session?

(Required)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, please comment below

4. Were those course objectives met?

(Required)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, please comment below

5. Did the course meet your training needs?

(Required)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, please comment below

6. What did you enjoy about the training?

7. What, if anything, did you not enjoy about the training?

8. Was there anything that was not covered that you would like to see covered?

9. Please tell us, in your opinion, if the trainer:

(Required)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provided appropriate feedback and answers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acted professionally and was prepared and organised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide any additional comments below

10. If the course was virtual, please provide your feedback in terms of virtual training

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Was the length of the course appropriate for the subject matter?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were you satisfied by the delivery of the course online?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were you comfortable enough to ask questions and interact online?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Let us know if you have any suggestions if you think we could make improvements:

11. How confident are you in the subject having completed the course?

(Required)

- ☐ Not at all confident
- ☐ Not very confident
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Very confident

12. Can you tell us about one aspect from today's training you will be able to implement immediately?

(Required)

13. Thinking more long term, what do you plan to do differently as a result of this training?

(Required)

14. Do you have any other feedback to give in relation to the course?

Almost done...

You are about to submit your response. By clicking 'Submit Response' you give us permission to analyse and include your response in our results. After you click Submit, you will no longer be able to go back and change any of your responses.

If you provide an email address you will be sent a receipt and a link to a PDF copy of your response.

Email address

DRAFT

Appendix 5

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities

Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service

Provide leadership in supporting a learning and development culture throughout the Council and allocate an annual corporate budget, therefore supporting the delivery of the Big Plan, Corporate and Service plans.

Authorising employees to attend part-time study, training and development events, technical visits and courses, including those outside of Ireland (regardless of cost).

Promote equality of access in the provision of learning and development.

Ensure that the departmental/service learning and development process is managed in accordance with Council requirements.

Service Unit Manager (SUM) and Line Managers

Authorising employees to attend training and development events, technical visits and courses, including conferences, exhibitions, workshops and seminars and meetings of appropriate professional associations in line with approved budget and policy guidelines. The SUM must be satisfied and be able to provide evidence that a development need exists and that operational business needs will not be adversely impacted.

Accountable for the ongoing learning, training and development of their team. This involves ensuring employees attend regulatory training, having regular discussions with team members about their role, use of the appraisal conversations to identify individual development needs, and ensuring that any Learning, training and development needs are linked to service plans.

Ensure all employees attend their designated session for **all** learning and development activities (except in exceptional circumstances).

Follow-up on all non-attendance of employees at learning and development events. Be aware that failure to attend the designated session will result in the department being charged a cancellation fee.

Support and encourage a range of methods for employees to develop knowledge and skills; these may include on and off-the-job training, coaching, mentoring, vocational and professional qualifications and continuous professional development necessary for the work they perform.

Ensure that all training not arranged by Organisational Development (OD), is reported to OD to ensure employee training record are accurate and up to date.

Ensure equality of access to learning and development activities for all employees.

Ensure employee learning and development activities are effectively monitored and evaluated to assess their effectiveness.

Organisational Development Responsibilities

Ensure alignment of corporate learning and development activities to the corporate plan, service plan, Learning and Development Strategy, and the Organisational Development Strategy.

Secure and manage resources for corporate learning and development activities.

Provide advice and guidance to departments and services on planned corporate learning and development activities, policies and relevant best practice initiatives.

Review corporate learning and development needs identified by the departments and services.

Respond to individual requests from departments and services.

Monitor equality of access to corporate learning and development activities.

Work in partnership with departments/services to identify and address corporate learning and development needs.

Design, deliver and/or coordinate the ANDBC Open Course Programme and Lead AND Manage Programme (to meet corporate, departmental and service needs).

Effectively monitor and evaluate corporate learning and development activities to assess effectiveness and achievements and make amendments when necessary.

Source external training provision (where appropriate) to deliver corporate learning and development programmes and manage the associated procurement process.

Maintain links with relevant professional agencies (e.g. Local Government Training Group), and other organisations (e.g. local councils) and benchmark as required.

Compile the annual Plan for Training in conjunction with Directorates and Services following the Training Needs Analysis process.

Prepare and submit an annual report on Organisational Development and Learning and Development.

Employee Responsibilities

Engage in the appraisal process, which incorporates a discussion on individual learning and development needs.

Attend all arranged training at service, departmental and corporate level, and complete required e-learning modules.

Apply the knowledge, skills and expertise in the workplace developed through learning and development activities including those leading to a recognised qualification.

Share knowledge and skills gained by providing feedback to team members and colleagues.

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	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Date of Report	17 February 2025
File Reference	HR27
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review) April 25 to March 26
Attachments	Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review) April 25 to March 26

The **Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review)** is a planned approach to becoming a higher performing council by way of improving employee engagement. The aim is to positively influence how employees approach their jobs, their careers and ultimately the communities served. Importantly, the document is based on the Investors in People (IIP) high performance framework.

The document serves as an interim update before preparation for the next IIP assessment in December 2025.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurs with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade union partners is scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council will be advised of any significant edits requested.

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve the Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review) for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Organisational Development Strategy (Interim Update) April 2025 to March 2026



Strategy Title	ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (INTERIM UPDATE)
Strategy Reference	ODS
Version	V 1.1
Strategy Summary	The Organisational Development Strategy is a planned approach to improve organisational performance through aligning strategy, people, and processes and supporting a culture shift to a more engaged workforce.
Source / Author(s)	Organisational Development Manager
Date of Equality Screening	25 February 2025
Date of Council Approval	26 March 2025
Implementation Date	01 April 2025
Last Review Date	March 2023
Next Review Date	March 2026
Officer Responsible for Review	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Any Other Information	This policy can be provided in alternative formats* if required in relation to language or disability.

Introduction

The Council retained the ‘We Invest in People Silver’ award in December 2022. The Silver level of the Investors in People (IIP) accreditation was first achieved in December 2019*. The Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan is the tool used to maintain this accolade by way of a vigorous assessment process every 3 years.

The next IIP assessment, with the aim of retaining Silver accreditation, begins in October 2025 with a survey to all employees. Therefore, this document serves as an interim update before receipt of the next IIP assessment report in December 2025. This Strategy will then be fully revised following in-depth consultation with employees. This includes the Chief Executive and Director led Roadshows, scheduled for January/February 2026. The next Strategy will be launched in April 2026, with the next full review scheduled 3 years later. Leading up to December 2028, Council will decide whether to aim for ‘We Invest in People Gold’, a significantly higher level of accreditation.

*Dec 2016, IIP Accredited; Dec 2019, Silver Accreditation; Dec 2022 Retained Silver Accreditation

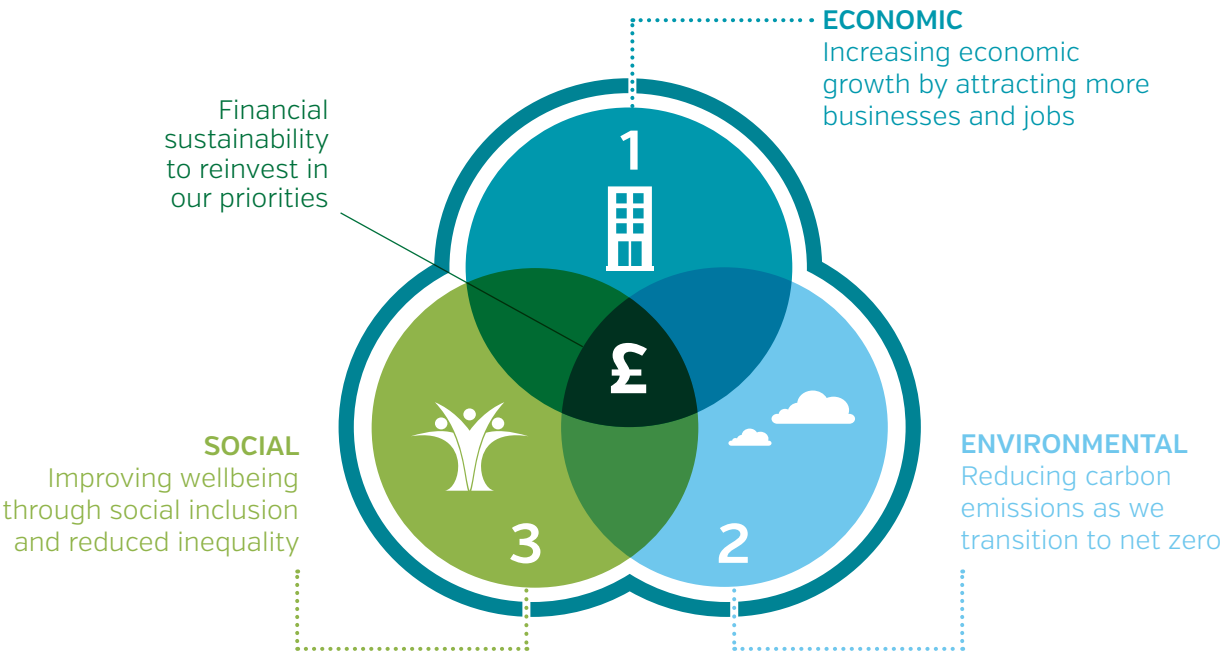
Overview

Strategic Alignment

The **Corporate Plan**, 2024 to 2028 aligns with and supports the **Big Plan (Community Plan)**. Both plans recognise the importance of lifelong learning and **high performance**. Using an outcomes-based approach, the Plans seek to enable all people in Ards and North Down to;

- **Fulfil their lifelong potential**
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
- Benefit from a prosperous economy
- Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment

Our **Vision of a Sustainable Borough** is one where economic, environmental, and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well-balanced and equitable. Three Corporate Priorities from the Corporate Plan align with the three pillars of sustainable development:



The **Organisational Development Strategy** is a planned approach to becoming a **higher performing organisation** through aligning strategy, people, and processes and supporting a culture shift to a more **engaged workforce**. This strategy seeks to shape employee engagement within the Council in alignment with our PRIDE values and Behaviours, and influence the way employees approach their jobs, their careers and ultimately the communities we serve.

Employee engagement is generally defined as the level of enthusiasm and dedication an employee feels towards their job, the extent to which they feel valued and the passion they have for their work. Therefore, the more our employees feel engaged, the more discretionary effort they will apply and the higher their levels of performance will be.

Within the Organisational Development Strategy, the Council has adopted the **Investors in People Generation 6 Framework**, which is based on the following **9 Pillars for achieving high performance**:

1. Leading and Inspiring People
2. Living the Council's Values and Behaviours
3. Empowering and Involving People
4. Managing Performance
5. Recognising and Rewarding High Performance
6. Structuring Work
7. Building Capability
8. Delivering Continuous Improvement
9. Creating Sustainable Success

The **HR and OD Service Plan** for Human Resources and Organisational Development aligns to the following outcomes in the Corporate Plan: **No. 6** – Having active and healthy people and **No. 7 - Being a high performing organisation**.

The **Workforce Planning Strategy (WPS)** links to high performance as it seeks to ensure it has the right number of people with the right skills within the right timeframe and costs to deliver our short and long-term objectives.

The **Performance Improvement Plan** sets out the Council's plans for discharging its duty in more detail linked to each Service Plan.

Who does the Organisational Development Strategy apply to?
The Strategy audience is all employees. The aim is to drive higher levels of performance through supporting change, enhancing employee engagement, creating strong leaders and facilitating life-long learning.

Other related policies / procedures

The Organisational Development Strategy Action Plan and Our People Plan aligns with a number of related Strategies, Policies and Action Plans;

- Learning and Development Strategy
- Learning, Training and Development Policy
- Talent Continuity Policy
- Appraisal Scheme
- Behaviour Charter
- Equality and Disability Action Plans
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Customer Excellence Strategy
- Internal Communications Policy
- Terms of Reference for Local Negotiating Forum
- Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultative Committee

Our People Plan

The 2023 Chief Executive Roadshows took place between February and April in response to the Investors In People report received in December 2022. After the roadshows, two focus groups were held with a random selection of 20 employees to drill down further into some the detail of the feedback received. The promises within the Plan were linked to the key themes which emerged from this consultation.

Our People Plan is a living document that will respond to opportunities that may arise during its lifespan. It is reviewed regularly, using an outcomes-based approach to ensure it remains relevant to our aims and objectives.

The next IIP assessment begins in October 2025 with a survey to all employees. Therefore the People Plan in this document serves as an interim update before receipt of the next IIP assessment report in December 2025. The People Plan will then be fully revised following in-depth consultation with employees. This includes the Chief Executive and Director led Roadshows, scheduled for January/February 2026. The next Organisational Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan will be launched in April 2026.

How success is measured

We judge our success by measuring the impact of our activities tangibly on a range of key performance indicators. We measure:


- The processes that underpin employee engagement delivery - for example the numbers of appraisal conversations undertaken, rates of mandatory training, attendance at leadership development activities etc.
- The outcomes of our Organisational Development Strategy Action Plan and whether we achieved the Promises in our People Plan (refer to pages 10 to 14 below). This will also include, for example, reduced staff absenteeism, reduced disciplinary and grievance cases, improved overall staff engagement scores in the next IIP employee survey, healthy turnover and vacancy rates.
- Reaccreditation of 'We Invest in People Silver' award in December 2025

Action Plan incorporating Our People Plan Promises in blue, using Investors in People 9 Pillar High Performance Framework

LEADING	SUPPORTING	IMPROVING
1. LEADING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE	4. MANAGING PERFORMANCE	7. BUILDING CAPABILITY
<p>Continue ‘Top 5’ flexible team briefing system to encourage monthly team meetings for office based staff.</p> <p>Continue twice yearly / annual engagement sessions for front line services.</p> <p>Commence roll out of procured Leadership Development Programme for line managers.</p>	<p>Re-launch of digital Appraisal Scheme following survey feedback and review.</p>	<p>Implement the Apprenticeship, Traineeship, Placement and Work Experience Scheme</p> <p>Implement the Talent Continuity policy to facilitate succession planning.</p> <p>Create job shadowing opportunities for half-day / full-day periods when operationally possible.</p> <p>Continued delivery of the ILM [Institute of Leadership and Management] endorsed ‘Coaching with Integrity’ programme to increase the bank of internally accredited coaches.</p> <p>Promote the AND BC Coaching Community to increase uptake of coaching by employees internally.</p> <p>Continued roll out of the Institute of Leadership and Management [ILM] Courses to aid career progression.</p> <p>Continued delivery of the ILM ‘Mentoring to Inspire Scheme’ to increase the bank of internally accredited Mentors.</p> <p>Continue delivery of the Lead AND Manage Programme so that line managers feel fully equipped, capable and competent in their roles.</p> <p>Continue delivery of the local AND BC Open Course Programme</p>

LEADING	SUPPORTING	IMPROVING
2.LIVING THE COUNCIL VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS	5. RECOGNISING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMANCE	8. DELIVERING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
<p>Continue using direct engagement sessions, the appraisal scheme, and the Top 5 monthly update, 2 weekly News and Info and Yammer to communicate and highlight our PRIDE Values and Behaviour Charter.</p>	<p>Continue to communicate ‘the benefits of working here’ on a more regular basis.</p> <p>Continue to recognise employees by highlighting examples of successes/ good team working/ ‘going the extra mile.’</p> <p>Research and engage with staff on a ‘Total Reward’ approach to reward and recognition.</p> <p>Engage with employees in relation to how the strategy can be developed and tailored to recognise staff who have gone above and beyond in their roles.</p> <p>Encourage managers to recognise strong performance (particularly in difficult situations), check in with team members, give constructive feedback and provide appropriate individual recognition.</p> <p>Recognise Long Service for employees with 25 years.</p> <p>Hold ‘Celebrating Success’ Christmas events in December.</p>	<p>Create a mechanism to generate suggestions for improvement from service areas.</p>

Action Plan incorporating Our People Plan Promises in blue, using Investors in People 9 Pillar High Performance Framework

LEADING	SUPPORTING	IMPROVING
3. EMPOWERING AND INVOLVING PEOPLE	6. STRUCTURING WORK	9. CREATING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS
<p>Continue cross-functional collaboration via internal Working Groups eg the compilation of the Corporate Plan, to further support a culture of innovation in a perpetually changing environment.</p> <p>Continue Chief Executive / Director monthly updates to all employees, inviting feedback.</p>	<p>Carry out AND BC Organisational Redesign [Phases 1 and 2]</p> <p>Implement a Workforce Planning Strategy with the aim of ensuring the Council has the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost.</p>	<p>Continue to communicate with, and engage employees in our Vision of Sustainability and related priorities, outcomes and strategic actions in the Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028.</p> 

Did We Meet Our People Plan Promises to Date?

The 2023 Chief Executive Roadshows took place between February and April in response to the Investors In People report received in December 2022. Attended by 55% of the workforce, the sessions were well received and generated good discussion. After the roadshows, two focus groups were held with a random selection of 20 employees to drill down further into some the detail of the feedback received. The feedback from the roadshows and focus groups were collated and five strong common themes were apparent. The 15 PROMISES are set out below in pages 14 to 18 in detail, with the progress achieved. A summary table with an explanation for the 6 promises that are incomplete or partially incomplete to date is set out below.

Explanation of People Plan Promises Incomplete / Partially Incomplete

No.	Promise	Complete / Partially Complete	Explanation
3	In line with regional research under the Belfast City Deal, participate in efforts to draw up a regional approach to apprenticeships	Partially complete	Due to the NI Assembly dissolving, regional work under the Belfast City Deal stopped, preventing a regional Scheme being devised. However, a local Apprenticeship Scheme has been drafted for progress, subject to budget considerations.
3	Roll out 'A Day in the Life' as a job shadowing opportunity	Partially complete	Susie McCullough, Chief Executive showed top level commitment by job shadowing Environmental Health Officers in the Autumn of 2024. The intention is that this action will be replicated across services and hierarchies. The main barrier to date for this has been operational considerations in the substantive role if an employee were to job shadow in a different service.
4	To relaunch 'Your Opinion Matters' internally as part of our 'transformation agenda' and with better feedback mechanisms and communicate examples of suggestions taken forward	Incomplete	While a 'Your Opinion Matters' email address [yom@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk] was made available to employees, this did not yield suggestions. A better digital mechanism is required.
4	Trial 'innovation lab' style focus groups to try to generate suggestions and improvement ideas from a range of service areas.	Incomplete	No progress on made on this promise despite initial internal discussions.
5	Research and engage with staff on a 'Total Reward' approach to reward and recognition	Incomplete	While an initial draft was compiled, no further progress was made on this strategy.
5	Engage with employees in relation to how the strategy can be developed and tailored to recognise staff who have gone above and beyond in their roles.	Incomplete	As the strategy was not compiled, no progress was made on engagement.

Detailed Review of 15 People Plan Promises

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1. YOU ASKED for a policy on agile working that will retain existing staff and attract new talent, and which is consistently applied and enforced by Managers.

YOU SAID [during CE Roadshows]

- We should agree set days/patterns and communicate them
- Tailor flexibility to each directorate/ service areas as one rule does not work
- That agile working will not suit everyone and this needs to be communicated to those that it does not apply to.
- There is a feeling that some people are taking advantage of the flexibility offered – to the detriment of their teams and the organisation. We need to provide equipment to allow agile working – IT resources for all.

Focus Group Comments

- Some teams are back in full-time by choice, and some are in 50% however some people you do not see at all. If an agile policy is put in place, we need the technology to support it i.e., systems to show who is in office or out – like civil service.
- A decision to continue with agile working needs to meet business needs and that is the only thing that matters. Business need should be central to the policy.

WE PROMISE to implement an Agile Working Policy by 31 March 2024 - Complete

2. YOU ASKED for better and more consistent line management

YOU SAID [during CE Roadshows]

- There is inconsistency in terms of team meetings and management visibility across directorates.
- We need better communication from Head of Services to their full teams/ not just direct reports.
- We need to find ways to give all staff a voice, not just management.
- There needs to be training for managers, especially on dealing with issues of performance and dignity at work – demoralising when issues just are not dealt with.
- There is not enough impetus to develop our Action Plan[s] following Heads Together session, which just leaves everyone frustrated.
- That so much depends on the professionalism and fairness of the manager.
- We need more ‘training’ or guidance about managing in an agile world and how to tackle problems when teams are in and out all the time.
- Community centre staff do not get info on courses/upcoming vacancies – information not being sent to personal email addresses. oTeam meetings are not held – unless about leisure issues – no information is cascaded about the organisation.
- Would be good to make better use of text service – was useful when used.

Focus Group Comments

- Would the reintroduction of a type of Team Briefing system be of benefit in your service area?
Yes, if Line Managers make it relevant to their staff. It needs to be about engagement not just reading off a sheet. There should also be training for Line Managers on how to deliver.
A 10 minute ‘huddle’ works in some sections and should be used as an example across the organisation – covering off hot topics, getting colleagues together.
- Would you like to hear more frequently from Directors?
Yes, this would be beneficial. Directors need to be consistent across their whole directorate. Directors should occasionally pop by to see their teams, to help build connections.

WE PROMISE to implement the following by 31 March 24:

- To introduce a flexible form of Team Briefing system to encourage monthly team meetings for office-based staff and twice-yearly team meetings for front line services - **Complete**
- HR and OD will pilot and implement a new appraisal scheme with the inclusion of a career development question, using a coaching and ‘felt’ leadership approach to create high performing teams - **Complete**
- HR and OD will look at ways to work with the line manager group to ensure all managers feel equipped to manage their teams (Lead AND Manage + survey) - **Complete**

3. YOU ASKED that employees be given more flexibility to ‘train up and across’ and more opportunities to learn ‘on the job’ in other service areas.

YOU SAID (during CE Roadshows)

- Transferable skills are not recognised and for front line teams all training is job specific, so it just keeps you ‘in your box.’
- I know people in Council who have moved up through the organisation and were supported with lots of training and study opportunities – is there an option for this now with financial pressures?
- Redeployment was a fantastic opportunity to learn what other teams do and many skills in council are transferable – can we find a way to offer more of that through job shadowing, etc?
- Staff need to feel valued in order to be developed to full potential
- Council needs to prioritise pay, over the cost of other things (leisure specific).

Focus Group Comments

- Do you feel you are being developed to your full potential in your current role? Very much depends on the service and the Line Manager. Some JDs are extremely specific so does not give much room for movement. Officer rotation is an idea that has been rolled out in Environmental Health, giving skilled employees within that service the opportunity to move around specialisms on a rotational basis.
The idea of a ‘day in the life’ was very favourably received, there were quite a few people who volunteered to take part in job shadowing someone from another service area for one day.

WE PROMISE to implement the following by 31 March 2025:

- Launch the ANDBC Coaching Community - **Complete**
- In line with regional research under the Belfast City Deal, participate in efforts to draw up a regional approach to apprenticeships - **Partially incomplete: Local Scheme drawn up**
- Roll out ‘A Day in the Life’ as a job shadowing opportunity - **Partially Incomplete**

As well as continuing:

- To promote the ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) endorsed ‘Coaching with Integrity’ programme.
- To promote the ‘Mentoring to Inspire’ Scheme.
- To deliver the Lead AND Manage Programme so that line managers feel fully equipped, capable and competent in their roles.
- To roll out Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Courses and make them available to all colleagues.
- To develop Apprenticeships internally in partnership with external partners South East Regional College and Greenmount Agricultural College.

4. YOU ASKED for a relaunch of the corporate scheme for suggestions/ improvements to working practises and services, we critically need formal mechanisms for feedback.

YOU SAID (during CE Roadshows)

- There is a hierarchical feeling within Council stopping freedom of ideas.
- That PIP is viewed as tick box / can be of limited use – just a KPI.
- Your Opinion matters Is not really used, not great awareness of YOM.
- Feedback needs actioned.
- Communications might go up, but feedback does not come back down. Nobody minds being told an idea is not feasible but usually it is just radio silence!
- No – staff feel they go under the radar, hard for managers to get time to speak to staff due to operational pressure.
- Have ideas for improvement, but so busy the ideas cannot be implemented.

Focus Group Comments

- Do you currently give feedback on operational improvements you would like to see?
Generally, people feel comfortable, however, there is resistance to change in some areas - “it’s how we have always done it.”
Sometimes it depends on the personalities involved.
- Do you feel that if you put forward a suggestion for improvement that it would be taken onboard?
Suggestions made should be acknowledged regardless of whether they are rolled out – this feedback could be given by the individuals directors or during a team meeting.
A feeling that suggestions should go to a person rather than YOM so for example ‘Ask the CEO’ or ‘Ask ANDi’ - example title ‘Ideas AND Action.’

WE PROMISE by 31 March 2025:

- To relaunch ‘Your Opinion Matters’ internally as part of our ‘transformation agenda’ and with better feedback mechanisms and communicate examples of suggestions taken forward - **Incomplete**
Trial ‘innovation lab’ style focus groups to try to generate suggestions and improvement ideas from a range of service areas - **Incomplete**

5. YOU ASKED that we communicate the existing ‘menu’ of recognition that we have currently and ensure it is applied consistently and then introduce a few additional elements; a complete overhaul is not required.

YOU SAID (during CE Roadshows)

- Recognition means very different things to different people and some people need it more than others.
- Direct line manager appreciation is particularly important – it recognises the detail, but mixed practises across the organisation.
- It is all about relationships – a good relationship with your manager, the people in your team etc, and feeling like you are part of something that is making a difference. That (on top of getting paid) is the reward you want for going into work.
- Events like this both recognise and reward, just need to do them more often and maybe at a directorate level too – makes you really think about the difference we make in the Borough.
- Nice to see your name/ team in News and Info, all managers should be contributing the good news stories – many do not!
- Get some people from the private sector to come and tell the staff what it is like working in a role where you have limited job security or wellbeing benefits – the Council is a great employer!
- Staff events do not work in all sections e.g., breakfasts/ sports days, etc so some teams always miss out.
- Staff events being held 9-5 does not work for leisure staff, closures once or twice a year for leisure staff to attend would be welcomed.
- Public need better educated around the work we do so they would be a little more appreciative.

Focus Group Comments

- What does recognition look like to you?
- A thank you or email from LM is enough to say thank you. However, a personal email from HOS/ Director means a lot. A simple thanks makes such a difference.

WE PROMISE by 31 March 2025:

- To communicate ‘the benefits of working here’ on a more regular basis - **Complete** [ongoing]
- Democratise the delivery of ‘celebration/ thank you’ events so that individual managers can tailor them to their teams - **Complete**
- Regularly email line managers inviting examples of successes/ good team working/ ‘going the extra mile.’ - **Complete**
- Research and engage with staff on a ‘Total Reward’ approach to reward and recognition - **Incomplete** [draft initiated]
- Engage with employees in relation to how the strategy can be developed and tailored to recognise staff who have gone above and beyond in their roles - **Incomplete**
- Encourage managers to recognise strong performance [particularly in difficult situations], check in with team members, give constructive feedback and provide appropriate individual recognition - **Complete** [ongoing]

As well as continuing to:

- Recognise Long Service for employees with 25 years.
- Hold ‘Celebrating Success’ Christmas events in December to include attendance from CLT and HOS.

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	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Date of Report	17 February 2025
File Reference	HR27
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Learning and Development Strategy, April 25 to March 26
Attachments	Learning and Development Strategy, April 25 to March 26

The **Learning and Development Strategy** is developed following a Training Needs Analysis process. It includes the following;

- Corporate priorities for improving employee capabilities, skills and competencies.
- The Plan for Essential Training

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurs with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade union partners is scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council will be advised of any significant edits requested.

RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable

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It is recommended that Council approve the Learning and Development Strategy and Plan for Training.

Learning and Development Strategy

01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026



Strategy Title	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
Strategy Reference	LDS
Version	V.1
Strategy Summary	The Learning and Development Strategy reflects and reinforces the approach to learning within the Corporate Plan, the Organisational Development Strategy and the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Plan.
Source / Author(s)	HR and OD Manager (Organisational Development)
Date of Equality Screening	28 January 2025
Date of Council Approval	March 2025
Implementation Date	01 April 2025
Last Review Date	N/A
Next Review Date	01 April 2026
Officer Responsible for Review	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Any Other Information	This policy can be provided in alternative formats if required in relation to language or disability.

The Workforce Planning Strategy (WPS) incorporates learning and development as a critical element, as the Council seeks to ensure it has the right number of people with the right skills within the right timeframe and costs to deliver our short and long-term objectives.

The Organisational Development Strategy is an overarching Strategy that encompasses a wide range of policies, procedures and plans which will shape employee engagement and influence the way employees approach their work with respect to the Council’s PRIDE values and Behaviour Charter, their careers and ultimately the communities served. The Investors in People Generation 6 Framework which is based on high performance has been adopted for the Strategy. This aligns with the Council’s overall approach of outcomes-based accountability.

The Performance Improvement Plan sets out the Council’s plans for discharging its duty in more detail linked to each Service Plan.

The HR and OD Service Plan for Human Resources and Organisational Development aligns to the following outcomes in the Corporate Plan: **No. 6** – Having active and healthy people and **No. 7** – Being a high performing organisation

Who does the Learning and Development Strategy apply to?
The Strategy audience is all employees and the aim is to meet identified Learning and Development needs that will support change, enhance employee engagement, facilitate life-long learning and help drive high performance levels.

Other related policies / procedures
There is a direct link with the Appraisal Scheme, the Learning, Training and Development Policy and the Talent Continuity Policy.

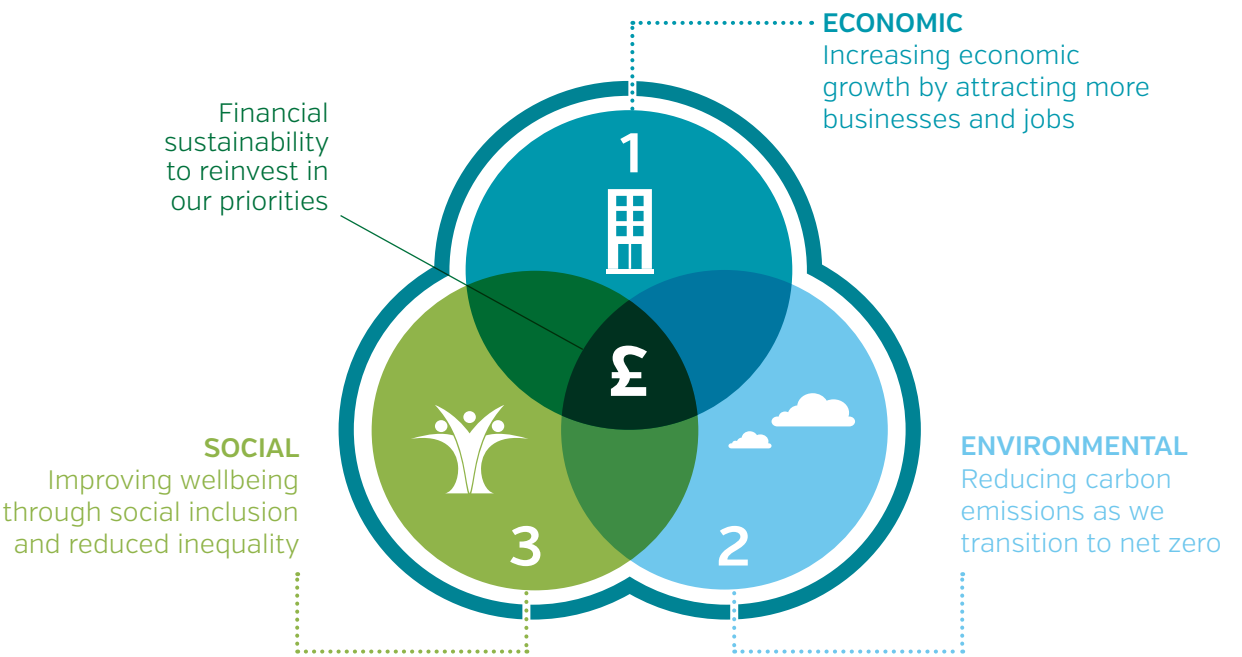
Introduction

Purpose
The Learning and Development Strategy reflects and reinforces the approach to learning within the Corporate Plan, the Organisational Development Strategy and the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service Plan. The goal is to maximise investment in people potential to deliver outcomes, thereby ensuring a skilled, adaptable and inspired workforce.

Strategic Alignment
The **Corporate Plan**, 2024 to 2028 aligns with and supports the **Big Plan (Community Plan)**. Both plans recognise the importance of lifelong learning and high performance. Using an outcomes-based approach, the Plans seek to enable all people in Ards and North Down to;

- Fulfil their lifelong potential
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
- Benefit from a prosperous economy
- Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment

Our **Vision of a Sustainable Borough** is one where economic, environmental, and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well-balanced and equitable. Three Corporate Priorities from the Corporate Plan align with the three pillars of sustainable development:



Context - What progress has been made?

Progressive steps were taken under the last strategy to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of employees. There was a recognition that effective talent management was critical in order to manage the context and its challenges.

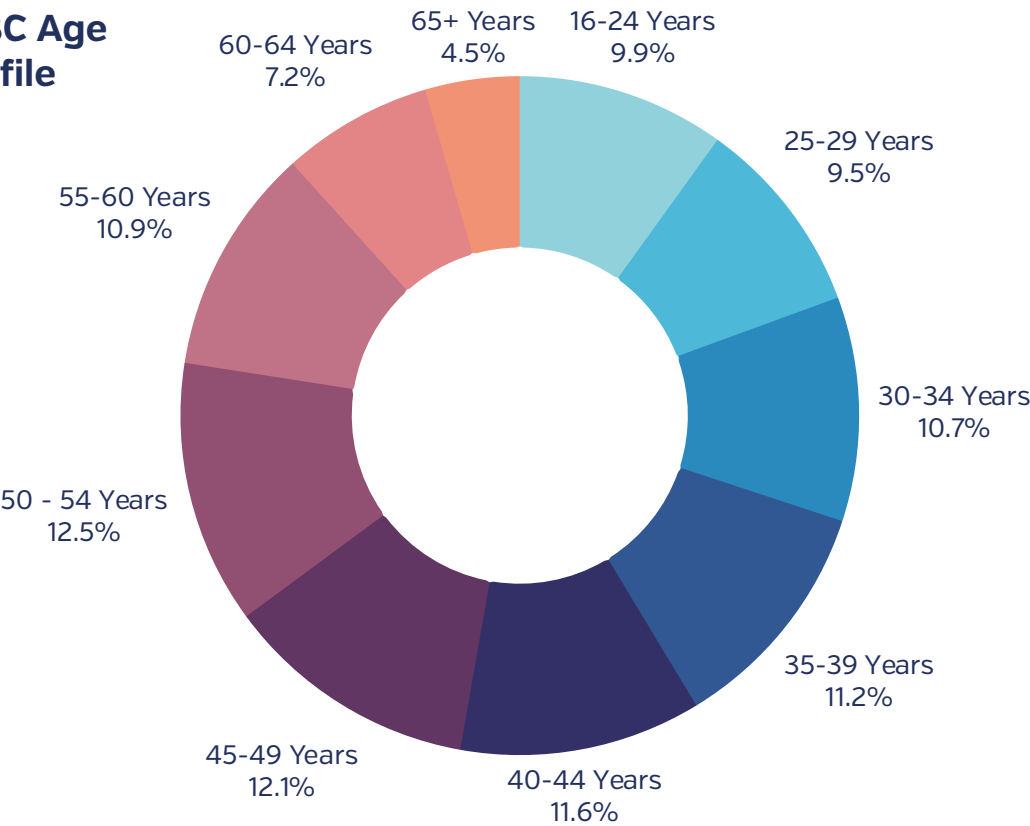
Efforts were taken to address 2 key recommendations from the last Investors in People (IIP) report in December 2022:

- 1. Provide a Leadership Development Programme which ensures leaders are clear about their responsibilities and work hard to engage with their team members as often as possible and understand the manager's role in clarifying individual and team priorities and recognising people's role in success.
- 2. Build structured career pathways for employees who wish to personally develop and progress.

Cultivating leaders of the future and ensuring employees have the correct mix of skills and abilities is critical. Under this strategy, there will be a continued focus on leadership development and personal development planning activity to support career pathways and progression to help build and retain talent. We will only succeed with the right people on board.

From a demographic perspective, over 35% of our workforce is over 50 years old. Actions within this strategy will seek to facilitate succession planning and create development opportunities across all ages to help future-proof talent

AND BC Age Profile



Context Continued - What Progress has been made?

Progress to date has included the following:

- Achievement of The Charter Plus accreditation for Councillor Development.
- Building employee capability by way of 2,600 employee development records in the period September 2023 to January 2025.
- Introduction of a Digital Appraisal Scheme with a career development focus with an 80% compliance rate within the first 6 months.
- Introduction of the AND BC Coaching Community of internally accredited coaches to assist employee skills development.
- Launch of new AND ELearning platform with the opportunity for self-driven learning opportunities. Five mandatory modules were launched along with an automated reminder system for employees and line managers.
- A Digital Skills Gap Analysis to ascertain the digital learning needs of desk-based employees.
- Compilation of a Procurement Specification for a Leadership Development Programme.
- Compilation of a Draft Workforce Planning Strategy.
- Compilation of a Draft Talent Continuity Policy to address succession planning.
- Adoption of the Age Friendly Pledge, demonstrating our commitment to employees across the age spectrum.
- Increased collaborative working both internally across services, and cross-boundary, providing a rich opportunity to grow knowledge and develop skills, therefore internal working groups will continue to be created as required.

The Challenges

In terms of talent management, the Council’s challenges are to attract, identify, develop, engage, retain, and deploy high-performing employees. The challenge for this strategy is to develop, manage, and retain them using a planned approach in order to achieve our Vision of Sustainability and our corporate priorities.

These internal challenges therefore involve continuing to build strong capability in our workforce as well as cultivating leaders of the future. Facilitating succession planning and creating identifiable career pathways across the whole age spectrum must also be addressed. In line with the Digital Strategy, improving the digital skills of employees must also be a priority.

The challenge is also to achieve a consistent approach regionally via the Talent Management Group of Organisational Development Managers. This involves developing a talent management approach for the sector to provide a robust approach to succession planning, talent acquisition, identification, and development across local government in Northern Ireland.

Planned Actions

1. Continuing to Build Capability
Enhancing employee skills, knowledge, and competencies will continue using the following initiatives:

AND BC Open Course Programme
This annual programme is available to all employees. It provides events in response to appraisal conversation development plans/requests, as well as helpful events like Interviewee Skills and Managing Conflict.

Lead AND Manage Development Programme
This annual programme has 17 development opportunities available to current managers and those seeking to progress through to a management position in the future. An example event is Essential Skills for a First Time Manager.

ILM Levels 3 and 5 in Leadership and Management
These qualifications are delivered on an annual basis. Positive feedback shows these ILM courses to be an effective route back to academia for many employees, as well as providing job-related skills and knowledge for leadership positions, whether current or aspirational.

Mentoring to Inspire Scheme
The scheme has a career development emphasis. Internal officers at Heads of Service and Service Unit Manager level are accredited as internal Mentors. The Scheme acts as a succession planning tool by providing a sheltered relationship that encourages Mentee learning and experimentation to take place in a way that allows personal potential and new skills to flourish.

Coaching with Integrity Programme
This programme is available annually with the aim of engendering a ‘coaching culture’. Feedback has demonstrated that employees who attend proactively seek to use a coaching approach, for example when managing teams, and this includes coaching for career progression.

AND BC Coaching Community
The Coaching Community enhances the existing Coaching skills of those who have completed the Coaching with Integrity Programme. Coaching made available to the workforce benefits employees seeking help and support regarding a job-specific issue.

Planned Actions continued

2. Driving Succession Planning (Talent Continuity)

To address the challenge of succession planning, the Council has developed a Talent Continuity Policy in 2025 as a tool to actively grow talent in order to fill positions across the hierarchy, leadership, and business-critical positions in the future. There is a need to ensure a continual pipeline of the necessary talent and skills in the workforce. This commitment encompasses encouraging employees to enhance their knowledge, skills, and qualifications, either within the existing role, or in preparation for progression within the organisation. By way of a coaching culture through the appraisal process, employees are encouraged to avail of the opportunities available.

3. Procuring and Implementing an Effective Leadership Development Programme

Implementing the appropriate leadership development solutions to bring about the desired consistent approach to people management is a perpetual challenge, whilst also ensuring Pride Values and our Behaviour Charter underpin each element. An overarching approach is also necessary so that every leader has the capacity to consult with, and involve their team in service planning, ideas for improvement, and decision making. The Investors In People report (December 2022) recommended conducting an audit of the key areas line managers are struggling with following the Coronavirus pandemic, and researching possible development solutions to support and help address these areas. Therefore, a survey of managers was undertaken in 2024 to ascertain the critical elements of a Leadership Development Programme. The procured programme will commence roll out in 2025/2026.

4. Digital Skills Development Programme for desk-based colleagues

Using the outcomes from the Digital Skills Gap Analysis survey to all desk-based colleagues, a development programme will be compiled to close the identified digital skills gaps.

5. Launch Reviewed Digital Appraisal Scheme

The Scheme was launched in September 2023, with an initial longer period of 18 months to allow embedding of Core 2 digital technology. Following a feedback process, including a survey and feedback engagement sessions, the Scheme will be reviewed and relaunched with any recommended changes taken into account.

6. Finalise an Apprenticeship, Traineeship, Placement and Work Experience Scheme

As part of succession planning arrangements (linked to the Talent Continuity Policy), this Scheme will foster the attraction of new talent, support existing employee development, and improve workforce sustainability from an age-related perspective.

7. Continue our commitments under the Age Friendly Pledge

Within the Action Framework, we will encourage training and development at all ages. This will include direct engagement with operational services with a high proportion of older employees. The aim is to identify and address perceived barriers to development.

Planned Actions continued

8. Unlocking Employee Potential with AND BC ELearning Platform

The platform offers a wide range of courses to help employees skill up, whether they are completing mandatory modules or exploring optional modules for personal development. From essential compliance courses to topics like leadership, IT skills, and well-being, there is the flexibility to learn at the employee's own pace, empowering them to take control of their learning journey. The focus under this Strategy is as follows:

- Continued promotion of the platform via the News and Info newsletter and Yammer on ANDi to maximise uptake.
- Ensuring compliance with mandatory modules, following the launch of the traffic light automated reminder tool.
- The creation of more concise modules with more video and interactive content.

9. Regional Consistency of Approach in Local Government

The Council will continue to engage with the Regional Talent Management working group to ensure a consistent approach across the Local Government sector. Current initiatives include workforce planning and building resilience, the regional eLearning platform, and career mentoring (Boost Mentoring Programme).

10. Living the Council's Values and Behaviours

The Council's PRIDE Values and Behaviours Charter underpin the approach to Learning and Development, therefore direct engagement with operational teams and face-to-face training will continue under the term of this strategy.

Identifying Learning and Development Needs

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

A TNA was conducted in January 2025. Data was collected in communication with Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers on essential training needs, defined as those necessary to facilitate the meeting of objectives in Service Plans.

Individual Development Needs

The appraisal scheme asks individuals to identify learning and development needs in respect of knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attributes required for the current post or to assist in career progression to the next hierarchical level. Approval is sought for these individual training requests from Service Unit Managers.

Plan for Training

The Plan for Training [refer to Appendix 1] for the period April 2025 to March 2026 has been collated using the information gleaned from the TNA process and individual learning and development requests.

Addressing Learning and Development Needs

Methodologies

Recognising that Learning and Development is multi-faceted, the approach will be through a combination of some or all of the methodologies set out at Appendix 2.

Value for Money

- In order to achieve maximum value for money from investment in Learning and Development, the following practices will be followed:
- The Plan for Training will be used to inform budgetary management, and compliance with Procurement policy.
 - On-the-job training and self-managed learning will be fully utilised.
 - Learning and Development products and resources, e.g., training courses, training facilities, training materials, will be shared across the Council.
 - Training will be provided internally where subject matter experts are available and delivered by high-performing internal facilitators.
 - Use of e-learning means no requirement to book rooms, pay mileage, provide refreshments, etc.

Evaluation of Learning and Development

The Council continues to use a Four Level Model of Evaluation: Reaction, Learning, Behavioural Change, and Results [see Appendix 3 for further detail]. Evaluation will continue using the Reaction and Learning levels of evaluation to include Behavioural Change. The intention is to use all four levels in future years.

Evaluation is a valuable tool for strengthening quality control and measuring outcomes. The information generated from the evaluation is used to make adjustments to programmes or to decide if current formats should continue. Selected programmes are evaluated to identify when and where the factors contributing to, or inhibiting the achievement of the learning objectives actually occurs.Improvements are then to be made at the appropriate level to deliver better outcomes.

Appendix 1: Plan for training, April 25 to March 26

CHIEF EXECUTIVE					
Corporate Communications and Marketing, and Community Planning					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Statistics and data analysis [skills update]		Data & Evidence Analyst	Once	Y	External
Video for social media		Communications and Marketing staff	Once	N	External

CORPORATE EVENTS					
Arranged by HR & OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Leadership Development Programme		Line managers	As required	Y	External
Appraisal Conversations Scheme		New line managers as part of Induction Programme, and for all managers on launch of new scheme	Once	Y	Council and External
ILM in Leadership and Management Level 3		Nominated officers	Once	N	External
ILM in Leadership and Management Level 5		Nominated officers	Once	N	External
Social Media		Designated officers across the council	Annually	Y	Council, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Whistle Blowing		Council Employees	Every 3 years	Y	Mandatory ELearning Module
Recruitment and Selection Refreshers		All officers in Council sitting on panels	Every 3 years	Y	External
Excel		Designated Council employees	Annually	Y	External
Employment Law Updates		HOS and SUM	Annually	Y	External
Lead AND Manage Programme		New line managers as part of Induction and as required thereafter	At induction and annually	Y	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
CEF Women in Leadership Programme		1 x Female HOST member	Annually	N	External

Arranged by HR & OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Co-operation Ireland Women's High Potential Programme		2 x SUM members	Annually	N	External
ILM Coaching with Integrity		Nominated officers	Once	N	External
ILM Mentoring to Inspire		HOS and SUMs	Once	N	External
Interviewee Skills		Nominated employees	Once	Y	External
Competency Based Interview Skills	N/A	Officers / SUMs	Once	N	External
Train the Trainer		All internal trainers	Once	Y	External
Dealing with Difficult People / Customers		Council Employees	Once	Y	External
Report Writing		Professional officers	Once	Y	External
Minutes and Agendas		Designated officers	Once	Y	External
Managing Conflict		Nominated officers	Once	Y	External
Personal Effectiveness & Assertiveness		HOS and SUMs in Community and Culture	Once	Y	External
Mindful Manager		CLT, HOST and SUMs	Once	Y	External
Personal Resilience & Stress Awareness		As required for designated officers	Once	Y	External
Stress Awareness / Management		Once for designated employees	Once	Y	External

Arranged by HR & OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Emotional Intelligence		Nominated officers	Once	N	External
Communicating with Impact		Professional officers	Once	N	External
Managing in a Political Environment		Designated officers	Once	N	External
Presence and Impact Training		Professional officers	Once	N	External
Chairing & Facilitation Skills		HOS and SUMS in Community and Culture	Once	N	External
Developing Confident Negotiation Skills		As required for designated officers	Once	N	External
Motivating yourself for future success		HOS and SUMS in Community and Culture	Once	Y	External
Time Management		As required for designated officers	Once	Y	External
Presentation Skills		Once for a number of team	Once	Y	External
Project Management		Designated officers	Once	Y	External
Contract Preparation		Designated officers	Once	Y	External
Procurement Procedural training		Required for SUMs and other designated officers across the council	Once	Y	Council
CORE system		During induction for - new employees; - line managers Shared by Employee Payments and Resourcing teams	Induction and run annually	Y	Council

Arranged by HR & OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Financial Management System		HoS, SUMs, authorisers, administrators etc	At go live, induction and run annually	Y	Council - Finance
Finance: budgets, variances, forecasting		SUMs, HoS, Directors and other budget managers	At induction and as required thereafter	Y	Council - Performance and Capital Accountants
Finance: Purchasing and Payments		HoS, SUMs, authorisers, administrators etc	All year ref roll-out of new PO System	Y	Council - Supplier Payments
Tender Design & Assessment Refresher Training		For designated Officers	Every 3 years	Y	External or Council
Business Case Preparation		HoS, SUMs and others	Every 2 years	Y	Council - HoF
Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption		Designated Officers	Every 2 years - in line with Anti-fraud Policy	Y	Council, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Power BI		Designated Officers	Regularly to build up skills	Y	External or Council
Share point Training		Designated officers	Once (consider also link to EDRMS)	Y	Council
Word Training		Designated officers	Once	Y	Council
ELearning Platform		Modular and video content for all employees	Annually	Y	Council by ELearning Student
Microsoft Teams		Designated officers	Once	Y	Council
People Management Policy Training		New line managers as part of Induction Programme	Once	Y	Council

Arranged by HR & OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
British Sign Language		Designated Employees	When required	N	External
Cyber Security		All employees	Roll out in 23 / 24 year, and updates annually	Y	External within an online package
Digital Skills		Designated Employees	Annually	Y	Council
Section 75 Screening of Policies		Designated Employees		Y	Council
Event Management		Designated Employees	Every 3 years	Y	External, complemented by mandatory ELearning Module

Arranged by Administration					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Risk Management Strategy		Once for designated Council CLT, HOST and SUMs	Once	Y	External
Safeguarding		At Induction via eLearning and every 3 years for designated employees (modules 1 and 2)	Every 3 years	Y	Council and External, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Equality and Good Relations		All Council employees	Every 3 to 5 years	Y	Council, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Dementia Awareness		Designated Council Employees	Every 3 years	Y	Council and External, complemented by ELearning module
General Data Protection Regulations		At Induction via eLearning and every 2 to 3 years for all Council employees	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Council and External, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Information Access Policy ELearning Module		Once for all employees and as part of induction thereafter	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Council
Freedom of Information / Environmental Information Regulations		At Induction via ELearning and every 2 to 3 years for all Council employees	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Council
Sustainability & Environmental Mgt		At induction via eLearning and every 3 years for all Council employees	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Council and External, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
My Recycling, My AND		All Council employees	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Mandatory ELearning Module

Arranged by Administration					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Customer Care including Behaviour Charter		At Induction via eLearning and once for all Council employees	At Induction and every 3 years for frontline services	Y	Council
Managing Customer Complaints		At Induction via eLearning and once for designated employees	Once	Y	Council and External, complemented by mandatory ELearning module
Tascomi		Once for all designated Council employees	Once	Y	Council
Risk Assessor		Designated Officers	Every 3 years	Y	Council
Asbestos Awareness		Designated Officers	Once	Y	External
Accident/ Incident Reporting		Designated Officers	Once	Y	Council
Emergency Planning		Once for designated [managers and other employees] Council employees as well as volunteers	Once	Y	External
Records and Retention		Once for designated Council employees who create files following a revised policy.	Once	Y	Council
CCTV & Surveillance training		At induction for those using surveillance equipment with a refresher every 3 years	At Induction and every 3 years	Y	Council complemented by mandatory ELearning module

Arranged by Health & Safety					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
First Aid		Every 3 years for designated Council employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Fire Warden		Every 3 years for designated Council employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Mental Health First Aiders		Designated Employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Personal Safety Training		Designated Council Employees	Once	Y	External
ISO14001/ Environmental Mgt		All leisure employees	Once	Y	External
Manual Handling		Every 3 years for designated Council employees	Every 3 years	Y	Council
DSE Risk Assessment		Via eLearning for designated Council employees	Every 3 years	Y	Council
Drugs and Alcohol Policy		Once for all employees and scheduled as part of Induction thereafter	Once	Y	Council
Defibrillation		Every 3 years for designated Council employees	Every 3 years	Y	Council
Lone Working		Designated Council Employees		Y	Council
Induction - Health & Safety at Work Training		Refreshed on a 3 yearly cycle	Every 3 years	Y	Council
COSHH		Designated employees every 3 years	Every 3 years	Y	Council

CORPORATE SERVICES					
1. Finance					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Professional Accountants	Annually	Y	Service and External
Technical accounting updates		Professional Accountants plus Asst Accountants	Annually	Y	External
Payroll update		Employee Payments Team	Annually	Y	External
2. Strategic Transformation and Performance					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Procurement Regulations		Procurement Officers	Regularly	Y	External
3. HR and OD					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Employment Law Update (listed in Corporate)					

4. Administration					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers	Annually	Y	External
Sustainable Capital Projects		Climate Change and Sustainability Manager	Once	N	External
Sustainable Procurement		Climate Change and Sustainability Manager	Once	N	External
Environmental Sustainability Skills for Managers		Climate Change and Sustainability Manager	Once	N	External
EMS Implementation		Climate Change and Sustainability Manager and Sustainability Officer	Once	N	External
Sustainability Reporting		Sustainability Officer	Once	N	External
Environmental Sustainability Skills for Workforce		Sustainability Officer	Once	N	External
Introduction to Sustainability and Net Zero		Sustainability Officer	Once	N	External
Stakeholder Engagement/ Building Networks		HOST and SUM	Once	Y	External

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING					
Environmental Health, Protection and Development - General					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers (20 hours) and for designated employees in accordance with the work role	Annually	Y	Service and External
Legislative updates and Technical Training		As required for designated employees	As required	Y	Service and External
Investigative skills		As required for designated employees	As required	Y	External
PACE		Every 3 years for EHOs and Tobacco Control Officers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Enforcement Training		As required for designated employees	As required	Y	Service and External
RIAMS Online Training		As required for designated employees	As required	Y	Service
Public Health Nuisance Training		As required for designated employees	As required	Y	Service

1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development - Health and Safety, Noise & Petroleum Licensing					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers	Annually	Y	Service and External
Training in relation to planned H&S Initiatives		Authorised EHO's prior to commencement of initiative	As required	Y	Service and External
IPPC and Vapour Recovery		Authorised EHO's	Every 3 years if available	N	External
Accident Investigation Skills		Authorised EHO's	Every 3 years	N	Service, or External if available
Fireworks and MSER		Authorised EHO's	As required	Y	External
Risk Rating		Authorised EHO's	Every 2 years	Y	Service
Gas Safety		Every 3 years for EHO's	Every 3 years	Y	Service, and External if available
Electricity at Work		Authorised EHO's	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Legionella		Authorised EHO's	As required	Y	Service and External
Petroleum licensing and Dsear		Authorised EHO's	Every 3 years	N	External
Asbestos		Every 3 years for EHO's	Every 3 years	Y	Service
IoA Diploma/ Certificate		As required for Authorised EHO's	As required	Y	External

1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development – Home Safety					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for home safety officers	Annually	Y	Service and External
RoSPA City and Guilds qualifications and Refresher training		Once for new staff and as available for designated employees - best practice	Once	Y	External
Working with vulnerable clients		Annually for designated employees	Annually	Y	Service and External
Emerging hazards		Ad hoc in line with emerging hazards	As required	Y	Service and External
1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development – Health and Wellbeing					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for officers	Annually	Y	Service and External
Take 5 Training		Once for designated employees	Once	Y	Service and External
Healthy Eating		Once for interested employees	Once	Y	Service and External
HeartStart Instructor		Once for designated employees and refresher training in line with best practice	Once	Y	Service and External
CPR Training		Once for designated employees and refresher training in line with best practice	Once	Y	Service and External

1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development – Public Health and Housing					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Profess Dev		Annually for professional officers	Annually	Y	Service
RSPH/BPCA [Level 2] Award in Pest Mgt		Mandatory for Technical Assistants	Once	Y	External
Practical drainage training		Every 3 years for EHO's and Technical Assistants	Every 3 years	N	External
Dampness & Condensation		Every 2 years for EHO's	Every 2years	N	Service
Nuisance investigation		Case Law training for EHO's and/or Managers	Every 3 years	Y	Service and External
Housing H & S Rating System Training		All Public Health and Housing EHO's		Y	External

1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development - Food Control and Consumer Protection					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers	Annually	Y	Service and External
Nutrition Training		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
Mandatory Nutrition Labelling		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
HACCP Auditing skills		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
Labelling & Composition		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
OPSS/CTSI training when avail.		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
Inland enforcement of Imported Food		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
Food Hygiene enforcement sanctions		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Food Information Regulation for enforcement officers		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Food Standards Improvement Notices drafting		Authorised professional officers	Annually	Y	Service
Food Standards and Food Fraud		Authorised professional officers	Annually	Y	Service

1. Environmental Health, Protection and Development - Food Control and Consumer Protection					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Infectious disease outbreak control		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	External
EC Approved premises		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Vacuum and Modified Atmosphere packaging		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Shellfish Hygiene and purification		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Sous Vide and low temperature cooking		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Food Supplements		Authorised professional officers	Once	Y	Service
Office for Public Safety and Standards [OPSS] Certificate of Competence in Product Safety		Authorised professional officers	Annually	Y	Service
Construction Products Safety		Authorised professional officers	Annually	Y	Service
PACE		EHOs every 3 years	Annually	Y	Service
Food Standards Delivery Model		Authorised professional officers	As required	y	Service
Private Water Supplies [Sampling & Risk Assess]		Technical Assistants	Annually	Y	External

2. Community and Culture (Community Development, Arts and Heritage, Externally Funded Programmes)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Governance and Grant Management		Annually for Professional officers	Annually	Y	Council
Government database		All Employees who are engaged in grants	As required	Y	External
Preparing contracts/ mous		SUMs	Once	Y	Council
Personal Protection/ Lone Working		All Lone Workers/ caretakers/ Attendants	As required	Y	External

3. Leisure (incl. Community Halls)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Quest Internal Assessor		Assistant Manager, Operations Officer, Aquatics Officer, Fitness Officer, Marketing Officer, Leisure Services Officer, Monitoring and Support Officer	Every 3 years	Y	External
Quest staff training		All Leisure staff	Every 3 years or as required	Y	Council
Lifesaving NPLQ		Operations Officers and Fitness/ Recreation Associates based at ABMLWC, Swim Team. [Staff from dry centres may wish to complete to develop skills] every 3 years	Every 3 years	Y	External
Pools Safety Operating Procedures [PSOP]		Operations Officers and Fitness/ Recreation Associates based at ABMLWC, Swim Team, FOH. [Staff from dry centres may wish to complete to develop skills] every 3 years	Yearly	Y	Council
Mobile Lifting Platform		Plant Fitter	Every 3 years	Y	External
Fitness Classes include TBK, Spin, Kettlebells, Circuits etc		Fitness Associates	As required	N	Service
Swim Teachers Association		Swim Teachers	Every 2 years	Y	Service

3. Leisure (incl. Community Halls)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Physical Activity Readiness Scheme [PARS]	Scheme – Healthwise	Fitness Associates	All Fitness Associates must hold or attain their PARS qualification	Y	Service
Computer Management System		Manager, Assistant Manager & Operation Officers, Junior Manager, Marketing Officer, Gym staff, Receptionists and Admin Assistant. Sports Development Team. Community Centre [CC] Co-Ordinators and Supervisors	As required	Y	External
Energy Management System		Manager, Assistant Manager & Operation Officer, Junior Manager and Plant Fitter	As required	Y	Service
Emergency Evacuation Procedures		All leisure employees every 3 years	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Fire Detection and Prevention Training		All Leisure Staff	Every 3 years	Y	Council
Building Alarm System		Management Team	Every 3 years	Y	External
Equipment erecting and dismantling		Assistant Manager & Operation Officers, Junior Manager, Fitness/ Recreation Associates	Annually	Y	Service

3. Leisure (incl. Community Halls)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Inductions		All leisure employees	As required	Y	Service
NPLQ Emergency Action Plans [Pools]		All leisure employees including Assistant Manager, Operation Officer and Junior Managers, Fitness/ Recreation Associates, FOH staff	Every 3 years	Y	External
Emergency Action Plans		All Leisure Staff		Y	Service and Council
Marketing		Marketing Team, Gym Staff and FOH, Management team	As required	Y	Service
Operational Procedure Manual		All leisure employees	As required	Y	Service
Locker Maintenance		Assistant Manager, Operations Officer, Plant Staff, Fitness/Recreation Associates, Junior Managers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Environmental Management Systems		All leisure employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
BMS – Building Management System	Building Management System	Plant Staff and centre management, also staff from Council's Estates team	Refreshed on a 3 yearly cycle	Y	Council
Leisure Management System [Legend]		All permanent lesiure staff except Plant Fitters	As required	Y	External

3. Leisure (incl. Community Halls)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Pool Plant Operator Certificate	Operations for pools	Plant staff and centre management, also staff from the Estates team	Every 5 years	Y	External
Spa Pool Plant Operators Course	Operations for Spa and other relaxation pools	Plant staff and centre management, also staff from the Estates team	Every 5 years	Y	External
Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] Training		All FOH, Recreation/ Fitness Associates, Management and other staff as required	Every 2 years	Y	External
Finance - Cash Handling		FOH, Admin, Management, Fitness/Recreation Associates,	Yearly	Y	Council
Finance - Budget Management		Leisure Management Team	Every 2 years	Y	Council
Community Centres and Halls					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Designated Officer Training		Safeguarding Officers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Fitness Classes include TBK, Spin, Kettlebells, Circuits etc		Offer to Caretakers as Personal development	As required	N	Service
Irish football Association - level 1 coaching badge		Offer to Caretakers as Personal development	As required	Y	Service

Community Centres and Halls					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Computer Management System		Offer to Caretakers as Personal development	As required	Y	External
Emergency Evacuation Procedures		Caretakers & Assistant Managers	Twice yearly	Y	Service
Fire Detection and Prevention Training		Caretakers, Facility Officers & Assistant Managers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Equipment erecting and dismantling		Assistant Manager & Operation Officers, Junior Manager, Fitness/ Recreation Associates	Annually	Y	Service
Inductions		All new CCH employees	As required	Y	Service
Emergency Action Plans		All CCH employees	Yearly	Y	Service and Council
Marketing		Caretakers, Facility Officers & Assistant Managers	As required	Y	Service
Operational Procedure Manual		Caretakers, Facility Officers & Assistant Managers	As required	Y	Service
Leisure Management System [Legend]		Caretakers, Facility Officers & Assistant Managers	As required	Y	External
Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] Training		Caretakers, Facility Officers & Assistant Managers	Every 2 years	Y	External
Finance - Cash Handling		Facility Officers	Yearly	Y	Council

4. Parks and Cemeteries					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
360 Excavator < 10 Tonnes / Forward Tip Dumper	Competency in the use of equipment	At least every 3 years for Parks employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Banksman	Competency in the use of equipment	Every 3 years for designated employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Woodchipper	Competency in the use of equipment	Every 3 years for designated employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Brushcutters/ Trimmers - Maintenance and Operation	Competency in the use of equipment	Every 3 years for Parks employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Ride on and Pedestrian Mowers	Competency in the use of equipment	Every 3 years for Parks employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Blowers and Hedgecutters	Competency in the use of equipment	Every 3 years for Parks employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Working at Height	Competency in the use of equipment	Selected staff as required	Once	Y	External
PA1 Spraying	Legislative requirement	Parks employees if required	Once	Y	External
PA6 Spraying	Legislative requirement	Parks employees if required	Once	Y	External
Tractor/Trailer Driving	Competency in the use of equipment	At least every 3 years for Tractor Drivers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Forklift Training	Competency in the use of equipment	At least every 3 years for Tractor Drivers	Every 3 years	Y	External

4. Parks and Cemeteries					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Chain Saw Operator	Competency in the use of equipment	At least every 3 years for designated employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Pesticide Refresher Training	Good Practice	Every 5 years for Parks employees	Every 5 years	N	External
Animal Management	Competency in the management of the bird stock	Once for designated Parks employees	Once	Y	External
C+E Class Licence	Requirement for driving duties	Once for designated Drivers	Once	Y	External
CPC	Requirement for driving duties	Once annually for Drivers	Once	Y	External
Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme	Competency in the use of equipment	Team Leaders / Lead Gravediggers and Gravediggers	Once	N	External
Playground Inspection and Maintenance	Legislative requirement	As required for designated for Parks employees	Once	N	External
Water Safety	Good Practice	Selected staff as required	Once	N	External

ENVIRONMENT					
1. Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Services					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Automatic Binlift Operating Instructor Training		Supervisory officers plus refresher training	Every 3 years	Y	External
Operation and Safe use of rear end skip loader		Rear end skip loading drivers	Once	Y	External
Operation and Safe use of hook loaders		Hook loader vehicle drivers	Every 3 years	Y	External
Operation and Safe use of a tail lift		Tail lift vehicle drivers	Once	Y	External
Operation of 360 degree excavator (digger)		Balloo HRC attendants willing to attend	Once	Y	External
Street Cleansing Power Washing Machine		Designated Cleansing employees	Once	Y	External
Chapter 8 Roadside Working - Supervisor		Supervisory staff and safety reps	Once	Y	External
Chapter 8 Roadside Wking		Cleansing employees	Once	Y	External
Operator Competence Certificate [L4 or equiv.]		Designated employees as required for Waste Management Licences	Every 2 years	Y	External
Operator Competence Certificate or equivalent		HRC Attendants and other designated employees as required for Waste Management Licences	Every 2 years	Y	External

1. Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Services					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Automatic Binlift Operating		New employees plus refresher training	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Operation and Safe use of Johnston 600 and 650 sweepers		Sweeper drivers refreshed every 2 years	Every 2 years	N	External
Operation and Safe use of Johnston 2000		Sweeper drivers refreshed every 2 years	Every 2 years	N	External
Operation and Safe use of Green Machine		Sweeper drivers refreshed every 2 years	Every 2 years	N	External
Operation and Safe use of Scarab sweepers		Sweeper drivers refreshed every 2 years	Every 2 years	N	External
LGV Driver Assessor Course		Refresher training for J Shaw	Annually	Y	External
Operation and Safe use of MACPAC		New Cleansing drivers	Once	Y	Service
Use of Roll Packer for Waste Timber at HRC's		HRC Attendants	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Use of Mobile Roll Packer for Waste at HRC's		HRC Attendants	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Safe Handling of Hazardous Waste		HRC Attendants	Every 2 years	Y	Service
Household Recycling Centre Induction Training		New HRC Attendants	Once	Y	Service

1. Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Services					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Manual Handling Training reference Glass Handling		Cleansing employees refreshed on a 3 yearly cycle	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Banksman training		Collection staff refreshed on a 3 yearly cycle	Every 3 years	Y	Service
Operation and Safe use of Refuse collection vehicles		LGV Drivers	once	Y	Service
2. Assets and Property Services (incl. Transport)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
360 excavator training		Every 5 years Digger Drivers	Every 5 years	Y	External
Rubber tyre digger training		Every 5 years Digger Drivers	Every 5 years	Y	External
Forklift truck training		Store employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Abrasive wheel training		Every 2 years works employees	Every 2 years	Y	External
Portable tools		Every year for works employees	Annually	Y	External
Working at heights		Every year for works employees	Annually	Y	External

2. Assets and Property Services (incl. Transport)					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
CSR card training		Designated employees [Officers & Squad]	Every 4 years	Y	External
Playground equipment testing/ checking		Every 4/5 years works employees	Every 4/5 years	Y	External
VHF radio licence training		Harbour employees	Once	Y	External
COSH Specific training		All designated officers	As required	Y	External
Projectile Range training		All designated officers	As required	Y	Council
Manual Handling		Designated employees	Every 3 years	Y	Council
PAW6A Spraying		Harbour employees	Every 5 years	Y	External
Legionella training		Designated employees [Works]	As required	Y	External
Asbestos awareness		Designated employees [Technical Services]	As required	Y	External
Pool plant training [PWTAG]		Designated employees [Technical Services]	As required	Y	External
MCA 2P Oil Spill		Harbour employees & Squad	Every 3 years	Y	Council
Harness Inspection		Designated employees [Works & Harbours employees]	As required	Y	External

Transport					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Certificate in Professional Competence		7 hours training every year for all employees who drive a vehicle over 3.5 tonnes	Annually	Y	External
Rubber tyre digger		Every 5 years Digger Drivers	Every 5 years	N/A	External
Forklift truck training		All workshop employees	Every 3 years	Y	External
Abrasive wheel training		Every 2 years works employees	Every 2 years	Y	External
Driver Vehicle Policy		Employees driving council vehicles	When required	Y	Council

3. Regulatory Services: Building Control, Licensing and Neighbourhood Environment					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers	Ongoing	Y	Service, Council and External
CSR Card Training		Building Control Renewed Regularly	Every 3 years	Y	External
TE-Care		Neighbourhood Environment Team	Upon appointment to NET updates as necessary	Y	Service
Building Regs. & Legis.		Building Control employees as required	As required	Y	Service, Council and External
Certified Investigator Training	new NET staff will require	Enforcement Officers, for all NE officers and Supervisory officers.	Every 3-5 years, last provided April 2023	Y	External [Aquila in 2023]
Dog Handling and Control	new NET staff will require	Neighbourhood Environment Team patrolling and investigating officers every 2/3 years	2024 proved by www.pdtkcni.com	Y	External
Fire Risk Assessment Training	3/5 day accredited fire risk assessment course	Licensing Officers	Required for new staff on appointment, and then refresher training as required. Refresher training required 25/26	Y	External
PACE training		Licensing Officers	Required for new staff on appointment, and every 3 years. Refresher training required 25/26	Y	External

3. Regulatory Services: Building Control, Licensing and Neighbourhood Environment					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Dog first aid 4 hour course		NET patrolling officers	offered once to patrolling officers	N	External www.pdtkcni.com offer
Preventing Catastrophic Bleeding Course	supplementary trg re dangerous dogs	NET EOs, NEOs, Supervisory officers	refreshed as required by policy	N	External
CCTV policy	focus on body worn video use	all NET patrolling officers	every 3 years	Y	internal DPO and Service
Annual briefing from Barrister	reviews current enforcement issues	all NET staff	annually	N	External
Dangerous Breeds ID and handling training	DAERA already provided for 1/ 2 officers	all patrolling officers	once - 2 week course in London	Y	External MET Police only approved supplier

PLACE					
1. Regeneration					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
PRINCE 2	N/A	Professional officers/Line Managers	Once	N	External
Team Building	N/A	Once for full team	Once	Y	External
GIS	N/A	Identified officers & SUMs	Once	N	Council
2. Strategic Capital Development					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Team Building	N/A	Once for full team	Annual	Y	External
NEC4 Contracts	Managing NEC Contracts (Professional Service Contract & Engineering and Construction Contracts)	Designated officers	As required	Y	External
Leadership Training / PLP	Classroom Based Leadership Training	SUM	Once	Y	External
PRINCE 2	N/A	Professional officers/Line Managers	Once	N	External
GIS	N/A	New officers & SUMs	Once	N	Council

PROSPERITY					
1. Planning					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Continuous Professional Development		Annually for professional officers	Annually	Y	External
PACE Training		Designated officers	Once	Y	External
RTPI and IPI Training		Designated officers	Annually	Y	External
EIA Training		Designated officers	Annually	Y	External
2. Strategic Capital Development					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Word Training in advanced creation of large reports containing indexes, table of figures, table of images/ graphs, appendices.		Once for Development Projects Team	Once	Y	External
Stakeholder Engagement/ Building Networks		HOS and SUM	Once	Y	External
Business advisor Training and qualification		For designated officers	Once	Y	External
Grant Management Training (ESS)		For designated officers	Once	Y	External
Preparing contracts, SLA's, MOUs etc		Once for Development Projects Team	Once	Y	External
Personal safety		VIC team members	Once or refresher for new staff	N	External

3. Tourism					
Training Planned	Short description if Technical	Identified Attendees	Frequency of Training	Mandatory? [Y/N]	Delivery by service, other Council Dept or External
Stakeholder Engagement/ Building Networks		HOS and SUM in Tourism plus case specific TDO[s]	Once	N	External
Fraud awareness training		Every 3 years for designated officers (last course 2022)	Every 3 years	Y	External
Screening		Refresher course required for SUMs and key designated officers	Once	N	Council
Preparing contracts, SLAs, MOUs		Once for HOS, SUMs in Tourism	Once	N	External
Word Training in advanced creation of large reports containing indexes, table of figures, table of images/ graphs, appendices.		For TDO's as necessary	Once	N	Council

Appendix 1: Plan for training, April 25 to March 26, continued

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Individual Training Requests from Appraisal Conversations requiring pre-approval by SUM

Training Requests	Number of requests	Training Requests	Number of requests	Training Requests	Number of requests	Training Requests	Number of requests
Advanced Excel	1	CPC	7	ILM Level 3	14	PRINCE 2	6
AI Training	1	Customer care training	2	ILM Level 5	11	Quest+	1
Banksman Instructor	1	Data Protection Course	3	Interviewee skills	3	Reception duties	3
Banksman Training	14	Digital Deport	1	Investigation training	1	Recruitment and Selection	2
Body Pump	1	Digital marketing	1	Kettle Bells	1	SharePoint Training	3
Boxercise	1	Digitisation	1	Level 3 horticulture	1	Shovel training	10
BSc (Hons) Arboriculture and Urban Forestry FYDE	1	Drone Licence	4	Manual Handling	2	Shunting course	2
Cat C license	27	ECDL	9	Maths	1	Social media marketing	1
Cat C1 driving	6	Excel	2	Membership Adviser Training	1	Supervisor Training	3
Certificate of Competency in Consumer Protection	1	Fire Warden training	1	Mental Health First Aid	4	Suspension Training	3
Circuit	1	First aid	41	Mentoring	4	Sustainability	1
Clait level 1	1	Fitness Instructor	1	MS Office products	1	Sweeper	5
Coaching with Integrity Programme	2	Fork lift	11	NPLQ	11	Terberg instructor Training	1
Computer Skills	4	Greenmount	1	Pilates	1	Terberg Training	15
Consumer Protection	1	Gym Instructors	1	Plotbox	1	The Bereavement Journey	1
Core Strength & Conditioning	2	Hook loader	13	Pool Plant Operators	4	Total	1
				PowerBI Training	5	WAMITAB	1

Total Number of Requests 289

Appendix 2: Learning and Development methodologies for delivery

Methodology	Components	Notes
Digital Platform Events via Zoom, Teams, Web Ex or similar	Online events using digital platforms eg Microsoft Teams and Zoom technology	Events are held online if feasible and practicable
E-Learning Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Compliance based short discrete modules eg Data Protection and Safeguarding · Management - Development modular and video content Personal / Career Development 	
On the Job Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation /demonstration and practice -Delegation -Coaching Mentoring 	Most effective and efficient means of developing capability
Self-managed Learning [including Part-time Study]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reading -E-learning, Webinars and Podcasts -Further Education 	Effective where it supports on the job learning must be relevant
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mobility -Secondment -Temporary Assignments/ Special Projects 	Effective where properly planned and managed
Group/Collaborative Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cross Functional Teams -Communities of Practice -Networking -Action Learning 	Key to success is the management of the group and the attributes of the individual members but can be resources intensive
Tutor-Led Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -AND BC Open Course Programme -Lead AND Manage Development Programme -External /Internal Events 	Promote internal usage of AND BC Open Course Programme due to quality and cost-effectiveness

Appendix 3: Levels of evaluation of learning, training and development programmes

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Level 1 - Reaction This level of evaluation assesses the reaction of participants to the programme – what they thought and felt about the effectiveness and quality of the training, speakers, venue etc. All programmes should be evaluated at this basic level. Participants should be asked to complete an evaluation or reaction sheet at the end of each course. The criteria to be assessed should be determined in advance which may include the quality of the course, learning objectives, course material, trainers, facilities etc. Aspects of the training which fall below par should be reviewed and amended, as appropriate.

Level 2 - Learning The second level measures the learning – the resulting increase in knowledge or capability. A training programme evaluated at this level would measure the extent to which participants have increased their knowledge and enhanced their skills in line with the learning objectives. Assessments can be made through individual pre and post course tests, question and answer sessions and group exercises. For accredited programmes, formal assessments and examinations should be conducted. Where the learning objectives/expectations have not been met, the programme should be reviewed and remedial action taken as necessary.

Level 3 – Behavioural change Level three examines behaviour; the extent to which participants’ behaviour changed on return to the workplace. Prior to attending the learning event, participants and their managers should be required to complete a questionnaire detailing areas for development and their expectations. Some months after the learning event, further data should be obtained regarding transfer of the learning to the workplace and application on the job. This data should be gathered from participants, peers, managers and staff (as appropriate) through questionnaires, interviews or focus group discussion. The results should be reviewed and changes made at the appropriate point.

Level 4 - Results Level 4 examines results; the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee’s performance in the workplace. Factors affecting performance at organisational level are complex and it is difficult to determine, with any degree of accuracy, a cause and effect chain from the training to organisational results. The data should be gathered between six and nine months after the programme. Prior to the programme some baseline should be established with which to compare post-training results. The data for this evaluation should be gathered in a similar manner to that for level 3.

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	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and performance
Date of Report	21 February 2025
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	Living Wage Employer Accreditation
Attachments	Appendix 1: Living Wage Employer Accreditation confirmation

Members will be aware that Council agreed, following a notice of motion and subsequent paper, to progress accreditation to become a Living Wage Employer. Officers can now confirm that the Council were accredited as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage Foundation on 18th February 2025.

The attached letter (**Appendix 1**) confirms that, Ards and North Down Borough Council meets the standards set by Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation by committing to the 'UK Living Wage Employer' Licence agreement and requirements. The accreditation is valid for one year and will be renewed annually.

As a Living Wage Employer, Ards and North Down Borough Council has committed to:

- Pay the real UK Living Wage to all of their directly employed staff over the age of 18.
- Ensure all their third-party contracted and sub-contracted regular staff are paid the real UK Living Wage.

Not Applicable

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- Increase the wages of these employees and contracted staff to the Living Wage, if appropriate, within six months of any rise in the calculated Living Wage rates (Reviewed annually).

A communications plan will be developed to publicise the Accreditation.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the above Report.



Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Feb 18, 2025

Dear Siobhan,
Living Wage Employer Accreditation 2025

We are delighted to confirm that you have been accredited as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage Foundation. This letter confirms that from 18 February 2025, Ards and North Down Borough Council meets the standards set by Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation by signing the 'UK Living Wage Employer' licence agreement. The accreditation is valid for one year. Ards and North Down Borough Council is listed on the Living Wage website as an accredited Living Wage Employer.

The real Living Wage

The real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate that is voluntarily paid by organisations and businesses who believe their staff deserve a fair day's pay for a hard day's work. Our employers pay the real Living Wage which is higher than the government minimum - they also make sure all their employees in London receive the London Living Wage.

The campaign for a Living Wage was started by Citizens UK - the national home of community organising - in 2001. Together with communities and activists across the country we have been campaigning since - to ensure that everyone can earn a real Living Wage that meets the cost of living, not just the government minimum. In 2016 the government introduced the National Living Wage - while we at the Living Wage Foundation welcome this pay rise for low-paid workers, it is not a Living Wage as it is not calculated based on actual living costs.

Over 460,000 employees have received a payrise as a result of the Living Wage campaign and we enjoy cross-party support. More information can be seen at: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk>

Living Wage Employers' Commitments

As a Living Wage Employer, Ards and North Down Borough Council has committed to:

1. Pay the real UK or London Living Wage (as appropriate) to all of their directly employed staff over the age of 18.
2. Ensure all their third-party contracted and sub-contracted regular staff are paid the real UK or London Living Wage (as appropriate).
3. Increase the wages of these employees and contracted staff to the Living Wage, if appropriate, within six months of any rise in the calculated Living Wage rates.

This letter may be submitted to demonstrate Ards and North Down Borough Council's Living Wage accreditation for the time period stated above. Living Wage Employers renew their commitment annually.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Griffiths
Assistant Director, Living Wage Foundation

Unclassified

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ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	11 March 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	27 February 2025
File Reference	EQ15
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"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	EQIA requirement for Request to hold Orange Victims' Day service of commemoration at the Ward Park Cenotaph
Attachments	Appendix 1 Screening Form

Background

The Council has received a request from the Bangor District LOL 18 to hold an Orange Order Victims' Day service of commemoration at the Ward Park Cenotaph on Sunday 7th September 2025.

This will be a religious service at the cenotaph to commemorate the life of all Orangemen/Women lost during the Troubles with 50 – 100 in attendance consisting of members of Bangor District LOL 18 and band.

Section 10.2 in The lands Policy states: Permission granted under this policy to use Council land or property is without prejudice to any planning, building control, environmental or other legislative or regulatory requirements.

Not Applicable

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Screening

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of nine categories outlined in the Act.

This request has been screened (Appendix 1) and it has been determined that this request will require an EQIA before the council can consider this request fully.

Consultation process

Public consultation will include an online questionnaire, which will be available through the Council's Citizen Space portal; alternative paper copies and alternative languages can be requested through EQIA@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk. The ECNI recommends that for an EQIA, public authorities allow a minimum consultation period of 12 weeks. The Council will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them and will ask consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these.

The EQIA will be advertised in The County Down Spectator, The Newtownards Chronicle, and on the Council's Social Media Platforms, as well as being emailed to all consultation groups within Equality and Good Relations Sections.

A special meeting of the Ards and North Down Consultative Panel will be held in line with the Equality Scheme and within the agreed constitution.

Due to the urgency of this request, this EQIA will be commenced following the call-in period of this committee. After the 12-week consultation, an EQIA Final Decision Report will be written and presented to the Council. This is anticipated to be July 2025.

Budget

It is recommended that by using an independent external facilitator the Council can ensure impartiality. This will include each of the seven steps of the EQIA along with the twelve-week public consultation. The cost for this EQIA exercise will be approximately £6000. There is no budget set aside for this work, so it will require cost management within the Head of Administration's budget throughout the year to accommodate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended Council note this report.



Screening Form

Friday, February 21, 2025 **357**

1. Is this a	Public Service
2. Name of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service	Lands request for Ward Park - Orange Victims Day
3. Reference	385
4. Category of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service	New
5. Please provide a description of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service	
A request has been received to use Ward Park (Council Land) to celebrate Orange Victims Day.	
6. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.	
A request was received via the land requests service for the use of Ward Park on 6th September 2025. The purpose is to commemorate the life of all Orangemen/Women lost during the Troubles, commonly known as Orange Victims Day.	
7. Who initiated or wrote the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?	Compliance Department
8. Who is responsible for the implementation of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?	Director of Corporate Services
9. Is this policy affected by timetables established by other relevant Public Authorities?	No

Equality

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1. Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

Yes

1a. If Yes, which Section 75 categories are expected to benefit?

Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Men & Women generally

1b. How are they expected to benefit?

Bangor District LOL No. 18 wish to commemorate the life of all Orangemen/Women lost during the Troubles. *The Orange Institution is a membership organisation comprised of Protestants who are committed to the protection of the principles of the Protestant Reformation.

*Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland: Fraternal organisation: Belfast (1969) Orange Order. Available at: <https://www.goli.org.uk/> (Accessed: 15 August 2024).

2. Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Yes

2a. If yes, are they:

Legislative - is the Policy required to adhere to specific legislation?

3. Who are the internal/external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Service Users, Other Public Sector organisations, Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions, Potential Visitors

4. Is this policy associated with any other Council Policy (or Policies)?

Yes

4a. If yes, please state the related Policy (or Policies)

285 Good Relations Strategy 2022-25
301 ANDBC Land and Property Policy
345 Request to use Council Land - Ward Park

5. Does this policy affect Internal or External users?

Both

Evidence to help inform the Section 75 screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.

6. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy?

Religious belief, Political opinion, Men and women generally

Religious belief evidence

Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 defines the Troubles as: “the Troubles” means the events and conduct that related to Northern Ireland affairs and occurred during the period—
(a)beginning with 1 January 1966, and

(b)ending with 10 April 1998.

Northern Ireland Troubles (legacy and reconciliation) act 2023, Legislation.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/41/contents/enacted> (Accessed: 15 August 2024).

No qualitative or quantitative data exists on the Bangor District LOL 18 however a Facebook post on 3rd February 2023 by Bangor District LOL 18 suggests; We're called the Orange Order because our founders were inspired by the libertarian ideals of the 1688 Glorious Revolution that brought King William III, Prince of Orange, to the throne. The Orange Order has been around for a long time. We were founded in 1795 near the historic cathedral city of Armagh. Today, the core values and actions of Orangeism include:

- * Promotion of the Protestant faith
- * Maintaining the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- * Fraternal relations and mutual support
- * Loyalty to the Crown
- * Charitable support for good causes
- * Historical and Cultural research and preservation

<https://www.facebook.com/bangordistrict18/posts/whatwere-called-the-orange-order-because-our-founders-were-inspired-by-the-liber/1530401254118370/> Accessed: (21st February 2025)

From this information the lands request may benefit some of the protestant community and those who associate with the Orange Institution.

This may negativity impact the catholic community as the request mentions Orangemen/women Victims only.

The ECNI recommend that Public bodies have a responsibility to use their authority and considerable influence to contribute to the creation of a shared society in which everyone feels not only physically safe, but also safe in their beliefs and opinions. The religious breakdown of the Borough can be seen in Appendix one.

Political opinion evidence

The day may highlight the existing divisions between unionists (predominantly Protestant) and nationalists (predominantly Catholic). It can serve to reinforce political identities and deepen divisions between these groups, as it is linked with the commemoration of those within the Orange Institution who died in conflicts related to the Troubles.

The political breakdown of the Borough can be seen in Appendix one.

Men and women generally evidence

No information exists

Sexual Orientation - Internal

Sexual Orientation	Total Employees	Percentage
Bisexual	3	0.34%
Heterosexual	624	70.75%
Homosexual	3	0.34%
I do not want to answer	21	2.38

None	6	0.68%
Blank	225	25.51%
Total	882	100%

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy / decision?

7. Please provide details of different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the categories

*In April 2018, The Orange Institution announced plans for a designated victims’ day which was to be held later that year. It was intended to be an annual event specifically to honour the Orangemen and one Orangewoman murdered by terrorists during the Troubles and also highlight the ongoing plight of the injured and bereaved. The inaugural Orange victims’ day took place on Saturday, 1st of September.

For many unionists and those associated with the Orange Institution , Orange Victims Day is *a day when the Orange family pauses to remember those who were so suddenly and violently taken from them. Celebrating this day can strengthen a sense of belonging and solidarity among those who identify with unionist politics. Conversely, nationalists may view the celebration as exclusionary, leading to further entrenchment of opposing identities.

*Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland: Fraternal organisation: Belfast (1969) Orange Order. Available at: <https://www.goli.org.uk/> (Accessed: 15 August 2024).

* When selling, letting or managing premises, it is unlawful to discriminate against individuals on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, political opinion and religious belief and disability. In certain circumstances you may also be under a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons.
Available at : <https://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers/Selling-letting-or-managing-premises> (Accessed:21 February 2025) - Legal advice maybe required at some part of process.

8. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Religious belief?

Major

8a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Religious belief

The ECNI recommend that the Council must take steps to create safe and shared public spaces in towns and cities that can be accessed and used by all sections of all communities, fostering a sense of community and shared experience. The requestor wishes to use Ward Park, Bangor. This area is Council land and is regarded as 'shared space'. An event that commemorates victims from one section of the community may highlight the existing divisions between unionists (predominantly Protestant) and nationalists (predominantly Catholic). It can serve to reinforce political identities and deepen divisions between these groups.
It is not understood how this event will impact on religious belief as no evidence exists.

9. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Political opinion?

Major

9a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Political opinion

The ECNI recommend that the Council must take steps to create safe and shared public spaces in towns and cities that can be accessed and used by all sections of all communities, fostering a sense of community and shared experience. The requestor wishes to use Ward Park, Bangor. This area is Council land and is regarded as 'shared space'. An event that commemorates

victims from one section of the community may highlight the existing divisions between unionists (predominantly Protestant) and nationalists (predominantly Catholic). It can serve to reinforce political identities and deepen divisions between these groups. It is not understood how this event will impact on political opinion as no evidence exists.

10. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Racial group?

None

11. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Age?

None

12. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Marital status?

None

13. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Sexual orientation?

None

14. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Men and women generally?

None

15. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Disability?

None

16. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Dependants?

None

17. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? If Yes, provide details. If No, provide reasons.

Religious belief

N/A

Political opinion

N/A

Racial group

N/A

Age

N/A

Marital Status

N/A

Sexual orientation

N/A

Men and women generally

N/A

Disability

N/A

Dependants

N/A

18. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Major

18a. Please describe the details of the policy impact on good relations

The observance of Orange Victims Day can raise awareness about the complexities of the conflict and the impact it had on some individuals and families involved however this only relates to one community background.

Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

formalises the shift from managing diversity and difference to promoting diversity and integration. It requires public authorities to take a pro-active initiating approach to contributing to a shared society, rather than responding to the effects of a divided one. In this regard having Orange Victims Day at a shared space in Ward Park, Bangor could have a significant impact on good relations between Protestant and Catholic communities.

The day serves as a platform to acknowledge the suffering experienced by victims from one section of the community during the troubles.

The Equality Commission recommend creating an ethos, a culture, of good relations and recognising the need to promote good relations both within and between communities. Section 75 (2) places a statutory duty on public bodies to pro-actively address good relations. This means a public authority must consider how the policies it makes and implements, affect relationships between people of different religions, political opinions and racial groups.

It involves considering steps to promote good relations amongst, for example, its employees, service users and others affected by its policies.

19. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Yes

19a. Please provide your reasons below

The Equality Commission recommends the use of the equality impact assessment (EQIA) to consider whether and how policies have an impact on good relations, whether that impact is positive or negative, and to consider mitigating measures and alternative policies which might better promote good relations.

Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006

20. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability?

No

21. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life?

No

Additional Considerations

22. Are there any potential impacts of the policy / decision (positive or negative) on people with multiple identities?

No

Monitoring Arrangements

23. Outline what data you could collect in the future to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties

A request was received in August 2024 in relation to celebrating Orange Victims day. Following S75 Screening and internal consultation it was agreed that an EQIA would be required in order to determine the impact on the S75 categories and the impact on Good Relations. The time required for an EQIA published consultation (excluding preparation) is 12 weeks as per the ANDBC Equality Scheme and ECNI good practice guidelines.

Following this decision, there was significant public interest both positive and negative. As well as media attention and comments in the media from local government representatives.

One formal complaint was received as per Council complaint's process from a member of the public which stated - Absolutely disgusting that you prevented Bangor LOL from entering Ward Park to commemorate those murdered by the IRA. If you prevent peaceful commemorations, you encourage illegal gatherings. Typical North Down.

Due to the nature and publicity surrounding this event and subsequent public/media comments it is recommended that a full public consultation in the form of an Equality Impact assessment is required. Once completed the outcomes will be presented to Council to make a decision.

Councillor Officers have consulted the Equality Commission and have agreed to review Councils Land and Property Policy to ensure that it incorporates antidiscrimination legislation and secondly to seek opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and Good Relations. The outcome of this consultation will be incorporated into the reviewed policy.

25. On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy/decision is

Screened In - Necessary to conduct additional Sustainability Assessments or EQIA

25c. On a scale of 1 – 3, with 1 being the lowest and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for Equality Impact Assessment.

	Rating
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	1
Social need	3
Effect on people's daily lives	3
Relevance to a public authority's functions	1

Rural

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1. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. E.g

Request for use of Land - Bangor Ward Park

2. What definition of 'rural' is the Plan using in respect of Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable

2c. Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

Bangor is not classified as a rural area

Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

3. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

No

Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Deprivation levels can be found at [Home Page](#) | [NI Area Statistics](#) | [NISRA](#)

No

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

5. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the Social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

None

Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

6. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service been influenced by the rural needs identified?

No

Documenting and Recording

7. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information complied.

Depending on your answer your answer may be a 'positive' impact or a 'negative' impact. Specific guidance at each question.

There may be 'no impact'.

If you are not sure complete as 'don't know'

Sustainability

366

1. What impact will the proposal have on the local community including the ability of people to meet their essential needs?

	What is the impact of the activity?
Transport - Is the activity accessible to everyone via public transport or active travel, in a safe and sustainable way? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.	Positive
Public Placemaking, Community & Culture - Is the activity impacting on people's sense of place and community by being included and connected to the area? Is the activity impacting on our cultural offering, helping citizens, visitors and young people become acquainted with art and culture? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.	Don't know

2. What impact will the proposals have on local, sustainable food supply chains?

	What is the impact of the activity?
Food - If this activity involves either the direct or indirect purchase of food or catering services will there be a negative impact on a sustainable food system? Note: If the answer is yes, select negative. Additional information: Food systems currently account for 21-37% of total global greenhouse gases and are a primary cause of environmental degradation and significantly contribute to socio-economic and health inequalities. This can be mitigated by specifying sustainable food and catering services, fresh seasonal food of a high nutritional value produced through low environmental impact farming methods and high standards of animal welfare.	No Impact

3. What impact will the proposals have on diversity and equality of opportunity?

	What is the impact of the activity?
Equal opportunity - Does the activity have a positive or negative impact on inclusivity and discrimination?	Don't know

Comments

	Comments
Equal opportunity	Requires an EQIA to determine the impact

4. What impact will the proposals have on prosperity, social value and fair trade?

367

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Decent jobs and income - Are local employment opportunities being created removed 'or removed'? Will there be any volunteering opportunities?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	No Impact
<p>Will the financial benefits help raise local income levels and tackle poverty and derivations of poverty such as food and fuel poverty?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	No Impact
<p>Social Value - Will the activity lead to the creation of works or services? Are there opportunities to support apprenticeships or training opportunities to combat social exclusion? Are there any opportunities to work with organisations with an environmental or social mission (e.g., from the VCSE sector)?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	No Impact
<p>Human and labour rights - Will there be provisions to ensure workers up the supply chain have their human and labour rights respected?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Products at high risk of the use of child labour and contravention of human and labour rights include electronic equipment, textiles, agricultural commodities and construction materials.</p>	No Impact

5. What impact will the proposals have on greenhouse gas emissions, including energy and transport?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Greenhouse Gas Emmissions - Will this activity have a positive or negative impact on greenhouse gases (most commonly caused by fossil fuel burning or deforestation)?</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Greenhouse gases include CO2, CH4, N2O, HFCs, PFCs or SF6. The most common sources include consumption of brown (non-renewable) electricity, burning of coal, oil, petrol, diesel, natural gas, emissions from landfill sites, and the destruction of natural carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands, forests, grasslands, freshwater lakes, and wetlands.</p>	No Impact
<p>Energy - Will the activity reduce energy demand through energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Will energy come from renewable energy sources e.g., solar, wind etc.? Will buildings be designed and constructed to high energy and environmental standards?</p>	Negative

	What is the impact of the activity?
Transport - Will the activity be accessible to everyone via active travel (Bike/walking) or public transport? Does the proposal help to reduce non-essential travel and individual car use? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.	Positive
Embodied carbon - Will the activity use materials from ‘heavy industries’ such as cement, concrete, iron and steel, or require international transportation of materials using aviation or shipping? Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.	No Impact

6. What impact will the proposals have on waste generation or how waste is managed?

369

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Waste generation - Will this activity lead to the production of waste?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Have you considered how to reduce waste through demand management and re-use strategies which support the circular economy?</p>	Positive
<p>Waste Management - Is waste going to be managed in a responsible, sustainable way?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Will waste be monitored? What recycling provisions are there? Will any waste be sent to landfill?</p>	Positive

7. What impact will the proposals have on the direct consumption of natural resources, including materials, minerals and fresh water?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Materials - Will this activity lead to the consumption of raw materials? (Raw materials include steel, oil, corn, grain, gasoline, wood / forest resources, plastic, natural gas, and coal).</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Can materials be swapped or reduced, to minimize pressure on natural resources and reduce environmental impact?</p>	Negative
<p>Will lifecycle costing exercises be used in procurement (e.g., if purchasing vehicles, energy-intensive equipment or major capital projects) in order to minimise the consumption of natural resources and achieve value for money</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive</p>	No Impact
<p>Fresh water - Will this activity increase pressure on freshwater resources through direct water consumption?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Will the activity impact on the public's ability to access a clean and safe water supply?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Unsustainable water consumption includes use of mains water or other freshwater supplied without water efficiency or recycling measures.</p>	No Impact

8. What impact will the proposals have on local resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and severe weather events, including drought, landslips, flooding and sites designated as being at risk of flooding or sea level rise?

370

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Adverse Weather and Climate Impacts - Will buildings, infrastructure, or natural assets be at risk to the adverse effects of climate change and extreme weather?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>For Northern Ireland, climate change is causing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more extreme weather and rising sea levels.</p> <p>A precautionary approach is advised for all planning and construction decisions, taking into account the latest UK Climate Change Projections and making sure that development is not permitted on flood plains and / or land at risk of flooding under future climate scenarios.</p> <p>Avoid activities that may be vulnerable to overheating or flood risk. New assets (e.g. landscaping, buildings etc.) should be future proofed, ensuring all investments are resilient to current and future climate conditions.</p>	No Impact

9. What impact will the proposals have on the local environment (e.g., air/water/soil pollution, land conversion, visual impacts, traffic, noise, vibration, odour, dust, particulates, smoke), heritage (including designated heritage, archaeology sites or listed buildings) and wildlife (including protected sites and species)?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Air pollution - Will the activity produce air pollutants?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Air pollutants include: Particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5); Ozone (O3) Nitrogen dioxide (NO2); Carbon Monoxide (CO); Sulphur Dioxide (SO2).</p> <p>The most common causes of air pollution are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fuel combustion from motor vehicles (e.g. cars and heavy-duty vehicles)• Heat and power generation (e.g. oil and coal power plants and boilers)• Industrial facilities (e.g. manufacturing factories, mines, and oil refineries)• Municipal and agricultural waste sites and waste incineration/burning.	Negative

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Ozone layer depletion - Will this activity produce ozone depleting substances (fluorinated gases)?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Fluorinated greenhouse gases (F gases) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) • perfluorocarbons (PFCs) • sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) <p>For example through the use of refrigeration and air conditioning units.</p>	No Impact
<p>Water/soil pollution - Will this activity involve any construction work, street works or road deliveries of construction materials or other goods?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Soil and water pollution is caused from damaging rainwater run-off arising from road surface treatments, tyre abrasion, fuels and lubricants.</p> <p>Procurement and contractual mechanisms can be used to ensure that building and civil engineering contractors adhere take steps to ensure pollution is prevented from occurring or from dispersing to other areas. Contractors can minimise the use of all substances that could cause pollution and failing that, implement and communicate procedures to ensure the correct disposal (or release) of substances that could cause pollution.</p>	No Impact
<p>Chemical pollution - Will there be any use of toxic chemicals including pesticides, paint or cleaning products?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Will there be any excess fertiliser use that could result in nitrogen or phosphorus runoff?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Noise pollution - Is the activity likely to create a noise nuisance?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Noise pollution can have detrimental effects on human health, amenity, productivity and the natural environment.</p> <p>Eliminating or reducing excessive noise is a legal responsibility and helps to limit the disturbance of residents and businesses, caused by activities and operations.</p>	Don't know

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Land conversion - Will this activity result in the reduction in the area of forested land, directly or indirectly?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Deforestation usually arises from the clearing of land for development, agriculture, or logging for paper, wood, or minerals.</p>	No Impact
<p>Built Heritage - Will this activity impact on designated heritage sites such as a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Archaeology Site, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site or Registered Park and Garden?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Natural Heritage and Biodiversity - Will this activity result in any displacement or loss of biodiversity, overfishing or affect protected or designated sites (e.g. ASSIs, SPAs etc).</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Changes in land use exert the most significant effect on biodiversity. These changes include the conversion of natural ecosystems into agriculture or into urban areas; changes in frequency, duration or magnitude of wildfires and similar disturbances; and the introduction of new species into land and freshwater environments.</p>	No Impact

10 What impact will the proposals have on ensuring peace, justice, public participation and partnership working for sustainable development?

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	What is the impact of the activity?
Peace - Will this activity have a negative or positive impact on community safety, crime or anti-social behaviour?	Don't know
Justice - Are there safeguards in place to prevent against bribery and corruption? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive Decision making should be open and transparent with clear governance and accountability arrangements.	Don't know
Political voice - Are citizens involved and do they have a role in deciding what happens and how it gets implemented? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive	Positive
Partnerships - Will this activity involve working with others either locally or at a national level to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive	Don't know

Comments

	Comments
Peace	
Justice	
Political voice	EQIA to provide political voices
Partnerships	

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is

Screened In - Necessary to conduct additional Sustainability Assessments or EQIA

Data Protection

1. Is Data Protection relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

No

Data Protection Officer Comments

Conclusion

Email screening@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Screening Panel Comments

Appendix - Religious Belief

Religious belief (External)

The Northern Ireland Census 2021 (NISRA) statistics for the Borough area show the religious group the person belongs to or for people with no current religion their religious group of upbringing. People with no current religion and no religion of upbringing are labelled 'None'.

On Census Day 2021 in Northern Ireland just under one person in five (19.0%) either had 'no religion' (17.4%) or 'religion not stated' (1.6%). Nearly one person in three in Ards and North Down (32.1%) had 'no religion' or 'religion not stated' On census day 2021 bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 45.7% of the population were either Catholic or brought up as a Catholic, while 43.5% were recorded as 'Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related)'. Again, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 1.5% of the population are classified as 'other religions' and 9.3% of the population identified that they neither belonged to nor were brought up in a religion. This points to the increasingly secular nature of the population ('None').

	All usual Residents	Catholic	Protestant and other Christian Religions	Other Reglions	None
Ards and North Down	163,659	22,912	111,288	1,636	27,822
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	875,461	818,366	19,031	171,286

	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual residents	163,659	1,903,178
Catholic	18,003	799,334
Presbyterian	47,461	323,540
Church of Ireland	22, 912	228,381
Methodist	6,546	38,063
Other Chrtistian Religions	16,365	133,222
Other Religions	1,636	19,031
No Religion/Not stated	52,370	361,603

Appendix - Political Opinion

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Political opinion (External)

Electoral Office data from recent Local Government elections (2023) and Northern Ireland Assembly Elections (2022) detail the political representation on Ards and North Down. Data also shows the turnout to vote. This tends to be lower than the rest of Northern Ireland, suggesting less strong political opinions, however the results show a preference in Ards and North Down for Unionist Parties.

Constituency	Registered Voters	Turnout
North Down	70,176	60%
Strangford	70,755	68%
Northern Ireland	1,373,731	63%

District Electoral Area	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled
Overall Turnout (2023) Ards and North Down Borough Council Area	123,736	57,677
Overall Turnout (2023) Northern Ireland	1,380,372	745,400

Party	Local Government Seats Held ANDBC	Local Government Seats Held Northern Ireland	NI Assembly Elections seats held North Down and Strangford	NI Assembly Elections seats held Northern Ireland
Alliance	12	67	4	17
Aontù	0	0	0	0
DUP	14	122	3	25
Green	2	5	0	0
Independants	3	19	1	2
People before Profit	0	1	0	1

SDLP	1	39	0	8
Sinn Fèin	0	144	0	27
TUV	0	9	0	1
UUP	8	54	2	9
Other	0	1	0	0

Appendix - Racial Group

377

Racial group (Internal)

Racial Group	Total	Percentage
White	756	85.71%
Black	2	0.23%
Chinese	2	0.23%
Other	5	0.57%
Did not want to answer	4	0.45%
Left Blank	113	12.81%

Religious belief (External)

The Northern Ireland Census 2021 (NISRA) statistics for the Borough area show the religious group the person belongs to or for people with no current religion their religious group of upbringing. People with no current religion and no religion of upbringing are labelled 'None'.

On Census Day 2021 in Northern Ireland just under one person in five (19.0%) either had ‘no religion’ (17.4%) or ‘religion not stated’ (1.6%). Nearly one person in three in Ards and North Down (32.1%) had ‘no religion’ or ‘religion not stated’ On census day 2021 bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 45.7% of the population were either Catholic or brought up as a Catholic, while 43.5% were recorded as ‘Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related)’. Again, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 1.5% of the population are classified as ‘other religions’ and 9.3% of the population identified that they neither belonged to nor were brought up in a religion. This points to the increasingly secular nature of the population (‘None’).

	All usual Residents	Catholic	Protestant and other Christian Religions	Other Reglions	None
Ards and North Down	163,659	22,912	111,288	1,636	27,822
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	875,461	818,366	19,031	171,286

	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland

All Usual residents	163,659	1,903,178
Catholic	18,003	799,334
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Other Religions	1,636	19,031
No Religion/Not stated	52,370	361,603

Appendix - Age

Age (Internal)

Age Profile	Female	Female %	Male	Male %
Under 20	0	0%	1	0.18%
20-25	4	1.18%	15	2.76%
26 - 30	11	3.24%	31	5.71%
31-35	26	7.67%	51	9.40%
36-40	40	11.8%	55	10.13%
41-45	62	18.29%	60	11.05%
46-50	70	20.65%	56	10.31%

					380
51-55	57	16.81%	79	14.55%	
56-60	38	11.21%	110	20.26	
61-65	24	7.08%	74	13.63	
66 - 70	6	0.77%	8	1.47%	
70+	1	0.30%	3	0.55%	

Age (External)

On Census Day 2021 Ards and North down had the largest increase in the number of people aged 65 and over. This rose from 27,692 (17.7%) in 2011 to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021, demonstrating the scale of population change due to ageing.

Age Profile	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
0 to 14	361,602	27,822

			381
15 to 39	589,983	44,187	
40 to 64	609,015	55,644	
65+	323,539	36,226	
Total	1,903,173	163,659	

Appendix - Marital Status

Marital Status (Internal)

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Single	186	21.09%
Married	437	49.55%
Divorced	39	4.42%
Co Habiting	45	5.10%
Separated	22	2.50%
Civil Partnership	6	0.68
Left Blank	134	15.19%
Never Married	12	1.36%
Widowed	1	0.11%

Marital Status (External)

Statistics classifies people aged 16 and over according to their legal marital or civil partnership status on Census Day 21 March 2021. The law in relation to marriage and civil partnership changed in the ten years to 2021. A summary of the changes in Northern Ireland is given below:

- civil partnership for opposite-sex couples became legal in late 2019;
- marriage for same-sex couples became legal in 2020; and
- in late 2020 a couple in a civil partnership could convert their status from civil partnership to marriage.

The rise in the ‘single’ population and the fall in the ‘married’ population here is in line with results from recent censuses in England and Wales. These figures mirror changes in society and specifically in personal relationships that has been witnessed over the last 50 years. Ards & North Down LGD, which has the oldest demographic profile of all 11 LGDs, has the highest percentage of adults who were widowed, at 8%.

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			383
Marital Status	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down	
Single	575,966	41,540	
Married or in Civil Partnership	682,065	68,340	
Separated, Divorced or Formally in a Civil Partnership	151,570	13,400	
Widowed or Surviving partner from a Civil Partnership	97,004	10,720	

Appendix - Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation - External

Statistics show that 2.1% (31,600) of NI population aged 16 and over identified as ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGB+)’ and 90.0% (1,363,900) identified as ‘straight or heterosexual’. More urban LGDs have a higher percentage of people who identified as LGB+. Almost 8% of our population aged 16 and over (119,300) either ticked ‘prefer not to say’ or chose not to answer the question. Taken together, these are labelled ‘No sexual orientation stated’ in these statistics.

8.8% percent of people who identified as LGB+ in Northern Ireland live in the Ards and North Down Borough, Statistics also show that 800 Households in the Borough are living in a same sex couple relationship.

Living in households by relationship	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
Living in a Same Sex Couple	9,600	800
Not Living as a Couple	694,600	53,500

	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
All usual Residents (over 16)	1,515,700	134,000
Straight or Hetrosexual	1,364,130	121,940
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or other Sexual orientation	30,314	2,680
No sexual orientation stated	121,256	9,380

Appendix - Men and Woman Generally

Men and women generally (Internal)

Male	Female	Total
543	339	882
61.56%	38.44%	100%

Men and women generally (External)

The Northern Ireland usually resident population increased by 5.1% (92,300) from 2011 to 2021. The Census 2021 population is recorded at 1,903,175 people up from 1,810,863 people in 2011. Ards & North Down had an increase of population from 2011 of 7,000, which is 4.5%.

The census day population comprised of 967,000 females and 936,100 males. Statistics show that for every 100 females in Ards and North Down Borough there were 94.9 males.

Statistics show that 54% of the Borough are employed 2% are Unemployed and 43% are Economically inactive. Of those employed, 37% were in the Public administration, education and health Industry and 2% were in the Agriculture, energy and water industry.

62% of employed people travelled to work in a car or van and 34% travelled 5km-20km to their place of work.

There were 70,445 households recorded in Ards and North Down 4,400, 5.9% were unoccupied at the time of the survey.

The average household size in sits at 2.30 (2.44 in NI). 31% are single occupancy and 6% had more than 6 people living in the property.

72% of the Borough owns their own property, this has decreased by 2% from 2011 where 13% are Social rented and increase of 2% increase in 2011.

LGD	Male	Female
Northern Ireland	932,554	970,618

			386
Ards and North Down	80,192	83,466	

Appendix - Disability

Disability (External)

A self-assessment of whether a person has a long-term health problem or disability that limits daily activities and which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. It includes problems that are due to old age. The 2021 Census (NIRSA) demonstrates an increase of 15% or more in the percentage of people who reported a long-term health problem or disability which limited day-to-day activities. 41,300 or 25.3% of people in Ards and North Down had a limiting long-term health problem or disability. Ards & North Down experienced an increase of 31.4% from 2011. These changes are in part a reflection of the Boroughs ageing population.

The following statistics show a breakdown in residents in Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down borough with a Disability that is expected to last 12 months or more.

The figures show that 7.2 per cent of the Borough have deafness or partial hearing loss, 68% being over the age of 65. 2% have blindness or partial sight loss, 11% of those people are aged 0-39 years. 1.6 % have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair, in comparison to Northern Ireland statics this means that 9.3% of all those who have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair reside in the Borough.

0.8% have an intellectual or learning disability including dyslexia and Downs Syndrome. 1.6% have Autism or Asperger syndrome, 49% are between 0-14 years whilst 40% are aged 15- 39 year. 8.1 % have an emotional, psychological or mental health condition, includes depression and schizophrenia, this is highest in the age ranges of 40 – 64 years (47%). 2% have frequent periods of confusion or memory loss, including Dementia, this is most prevalent with ages 65+. 10% of residents have another condition, for example Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes, again this is most prevalent in age 65+. Taken together these results show that policy making must consider Ards and north Down aging population and health and disability issues as well as recognition for those that provide unpaid care throughout the Borough.

LGD	All usual residents	Activites Not Limited	Limited a little	Limited a lot
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	1,446,415	247,413	209,349
Ards and North Down	163,659	122,744	22,912	18,002

Long term Health Conditions	None	1	2	3 or More
Northern Ireland	1,237,065	342,572	152,254	171,286
Ards and North Down	101,468	32,731	14,729	14,729
Disability Breakdown Age range (0 - 65+)	Ards and North Down		Northern Ireland	
Deafness or Partial Hearing loss	11,802		109,457	
Blindness or Partial Sightloss	3,214		33,961	

Mobility or dexterity difficulty that required the use of a wheelchair	2,641		28,138	
Intellectual or learning disability include dyslexia and Downs Syndrome	1,469		16,923	
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	2,628		35,367	
Emotional, psychological or mental health condition inc depression and schizophrenia	13,275		165,127	
Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss inc Dementia	3,432		37,789	

Other conditions E.g Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes	167,752		16,636	
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Appendix - Dependants

Screening Form

Dependants (External)

For the Purposes of S75 a dependant can be classed as Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.

In Census 2021 one person in eight of NI population aged 5 or more (or 222,200 people) noted that they provided unpaid care. One important point to note in Policy making is that 2,600 children aged 5 to 14 in Northern Ireland provide unpaid care.

Ards & North Down LGD had the highest percentage of people who provide unpaid care throughout Northern Ireland , 13.7% estimated at 30,414 residents. 'Unpaid care' covers looking after, giving help or support to anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age

A dependent child is a person aged 0 to 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education and living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s). 'No dependent children' includes households with no children and households where all children are non-dependent.

In Ards and North Down there were 27,822 Children (defined as those aged 0 to 14). Children make up 19.2% of the Northern Ireland population. This percentage varies across the Local Government Districts and is lowest in Ards and North Down where the proportion is 17.0%.

According to Birth statistics on NISRA Ards and North Down recorded 2,854 births between 2020 and 2022 , giving an indication of the numbers using buggies or prams in use.

	Dependent children in household:	Dependent children in household:	Dependent children in household:	Dependent children in household: Three
	None	one	Two	
Northern Ireland	71%	11%	11%	6%

					392
Ards and North Down	74%	11%	11%	4%	

Racial group (External)

On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% – 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% – 14,300 people); Taken together the bulletin reports and tables released today show an increasing diversity from 2011 to 2021 in Northern Ireland's population across statistics on ethnic group, main language, country of birth and passports held. This increasing diversity is evident to a greater or lesser degree across all 11 Local Government Districts.

All Usual Residents	163,660
White	159,892
Irish Traveller	24
Roma	19
Indian	388
Chinese	500
Filipino	308
Pakistani	87
Arab	28
Other Asian	468
Black African	309
Black Other	135
Mixed	1,236
Other ethnicities	266

Main Language	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
English	160,385	1,808,019
Other	3,279	95,158

Passports Held	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual Residents	163,659	1,903,178
UK only	109,651	894,493
Ireland Only	13,092	513,858
Uk and Ireland	13,098	95,158
Other Passport(s)	4,909	95,158
No Passport	21,275	304,508

24. Does this policy require an Equality Impact Assessment?

Yes

394

Sustainability is a holistic approach that considers ecological, social and economic dimensions, recognising that all must be considered together to find lasting prosperity.

Sustainable development is all about meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Religious belief (Internal)

395

	Catholic	Protestant & other Christian	Non Determined	Left Blank	Total
Males	52	449	41	1	543
	9.57%	82.68%	7.55%	0.184%	100%
Females	79	236	24	0	339
	23.3%	69.6%	7.07%	0%	100%
Total	131	685	65	1	882
	14%	77.6%	7.36%	0.11%	100%