

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

23 April 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of April 2025 (Copy attached)
6. Deputation - Community Advice Ards and North Down
7. Minutes of Council meeting dated 26 March 2025 (Copy attached)
8. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 8.1 Audit Committee dated 24 March 2025
 - 8.2 Planning Committee dated 1 April 2025
 - 8.3 Environment Committee dated 2 April 2025
 - 8.4. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 3 April dated 2025
 - 8.5. Corporate Services Committee dated 8 April 2025

Items 8.5.1 and 8.5.2 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

8.5.1 Matters Arising - Licence to Cloughey Tennis Club – shelter at Cloughey Tennis Courts (Report attached)

8.5.2. Matters Arising - Request to use Council Land – Donaghadee Horse Relay

Event 2024 (Report attached)

- 8.6. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 9 April 2025
- 9. Deputation requests
 - 9.1 Department of Education – RAISE (Report attached)
 - 9.2 Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club (Report attached)
- 10. Resolutions
 - 10.1 From Mid Ulster District Council – Road Traffic Law (Copy correspondence attached)
 - 10.2. From Fermanagh & Omagh District Council – Diverse Workplace (Copy correspondence attached)
- 11. Courses/Conferences, Invitations etc
 - 11.1 Transport Decarbonisation Event - 4 June 2025 (Report attached)
- 12. Sealing Documents
- 13. Transfer of Rights of Burial
- 14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
- 15. Notices of Motion
 - 15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall

That this Council notes with concern the announcement made by the Work and Pensions Secretary on Tuesday 18th March proposing changes to the social security system, particularly in relation to the potential impact on disabled people. It therefore writes to the Work & Pensions Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the Minister for Communities expressing concern, requesting information on what will apply in Northern Ireland, the Executives plan to mitigate against the negative impacts of such proposals, given the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy and Programme for Government commitments.

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine

That this Council notes with concern the changes to the welfare system being proposed by H.M government and the harm if implemented that they will cause to the most vulnerable members of our society. We resolve to write to the Rachel Reeves MP Chancellor of the Exchequer asking that the current plans be shelved and also write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA to bring forward measures to mitigate against the significant challenges that will be faced as a result of the planned changes.

15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McCollum and Alderman McRandal

That this Council acknowledges with pride the outstanding achievement of Rory McIlroy in winning the US Masters tournament at Augusta 2025, thereby completing an historic grand slam of Major tournament victories, his enormous contribution to golf throughout the world and his continued close association with and support for his hometown of Holywood. And further that this Council writes to congratulate Rory on his victory.

15.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan and Councillor Ashe

We are all aware that dog ownership has increased significantly over the past years. There is fenced off area on "Muckers" in Comber, which is currently being used by NIW which when they have finished their work might lend itself to creating a dog park. This Council should bring back a report that explores the options for creating a dog park in Comber.

Circulated for Information

(a) Housing Council Minutes dated 13 February 2025 (Copy attached)

16. Decision process for future leisure provision (Report attached)

ITEMS 17 – 19 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

17. Funfair at the McKee Clock Arena, Bangor (Report attached)

18. Funfair in Millisle (Report attached)

19. Queen's Parade (Verbal Update)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hennessy
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Brooks	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman Graham	Councillor Irwin
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McRandal	Councillor Kendall
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor McBurney
Alderman Smith	Councillor McClean
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKee
Councillor Cathcart (Mayor)	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Chambers (Deputy Mayor)	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Moore
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Morgan

Councillor Edmund	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Smart
Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Wray

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 26 March 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)	
Aldermen:	Adair	McAlpine
	Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom)	McRandal
	Brooks	McDowell (Zoom)
	Cummings	McIlveen
	Graham	Smith
Councillors:	Ashe (Zoom)	Kerr (Zoom)
	Blaney	McBurney
	Boyle	McClellan
	Chambers	McCollum
	Cochrane	McCracken
	Douglas	McKee
	Gilmour (7.16pm)	McKimm
	Harbinson	McLaren
	Hennessy	Moore
	Hollywood	Morgan
	W Irvine	Thompson
	Irwin	Smart (Zoom,
	Kendall	8.07pm)
		Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) welcomed everyone to the meeting and commenced with the Chief Executive reading the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Councillor Edmund and Councillor S Irvine while apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Gilmour and Councillor Smart.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and the following declarations were made.

Alderman McDowell – Item 10 - National Association of Councillors (NAC) Enterprise Champions, Request for Nominations.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor was delighted to welcome the Minister for Health to Bangor Castle on Tuesday 25 March, to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Ards Peninsula First Responders. It was an opportunity to offer Council's thanks and support to the dedicated volunteers who were vital contributors to our emergency services and who did so much for the Borough.

The Mayor wished to put on record on behalf of the Council, his sincere condolences to the family and friends of Beth Adger, Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, on her passing the previous week. Mayor Adger had a long and devoted career in politics, representing the Borough for many years. She was a loyal public servant who worked extremely hard on behalf of her constituents and would be greatly missed. His thoughts were with her husband, Tommy, and their children during this difficult time.

In a further matter, the Mayor was pleased that Bangor, in particular, and Ards football clubs were competing in the semifinal of the Irish Cup and he wished both teams well, hoping for a Bangor versus Ards final.

The Mayor also highlighted his upcoming Night of Boxing event to raise funds for the Mayor's Charities. This would also be the final event held at the Royal British Legion in Bangor.

Finally, the Mayor extended his best wishes to those Council employees who had been nominated in the NILGA Local Government Awards 2025, taking place the following evening. On behalf of the whole Council, he wished them the very best of luck.

RESOLVED, that the Mayor's business be noted.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2025

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of March 2025.

The Mayor highlighted several of his engagements that had taken place throughout the month. He had launched the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Change Fund, along with the Local Food to Go awards at Bangor Castle which reflected phenomenal success for the Borough with over 100 awards in 2024. The sector was punching above its weight and it was right that the Borough recognised that success which he hoped would continue into 2025.

In a further engagement, Bangor Elim had hosted a Music and Memories event to raise funds for Children's Northern Ireland Hospice. He praised the choir's involved.

On St Patrick's Day the Mayor had been honoured to attend Bangor Royal British Legion to hand out Shamrocks at an annual celebration held by the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Finally, he congratulated nominees and winners of the Ards and North Down Sports Awards which had marked a successful year in sport for the Borough. There had been 10 Olympians with two achieving Gold medals. It was no surprise that Sports Person of the Year was awarded to Rhys McClenaghan.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the information be noted.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 26 FEBRUARY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Planning Committee dated 4 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.2 Environment Committee dated 5 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

In relation to Item 6 - Car Park Capital Resurfacing Works, Alderman Smith proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted as amended at the Committee, and furthermore, understanding that the current car park refurbishment programme is inadequately funded, that officers are asked to develop a costed maintenance plan to improve the state of our car park estate using funds from our accumulated strategic reserves to finance the works over the medium to long-term.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman Smith referred to the Council's responsibility for more than 70 car parks which it had inherited in 2015 following the Review of Public Administration, and the poor state of many of them.

In 2021, the Council had produced a Car Park Strategy with an aim of bringing its estate up to scratch in terms of maintenance including resurfacing, new lines and LED lighting.

The report that had gone to the Environment Committee had included a list of all car parks and capital assets with assessment and scoring against a measure.

Three of the car parks had scored less than 75% and were deemed a priority at £171,000 cost. A further 25 car parks were deemed to have fallen below 85% which was considered to be the threshold for enhancement of the asset. That cost had been reported at £2.1m.

Only £50,000 had been allocated in the budget for this in the upcoming financial year which was a drop in the ocean. The officer had advised on the evening that this work would take 38 years to complete with that level of budget. The proposer also referred to reports of this in the local press.

While he appreciated that there was a long-term improvement plan in place for car parks which included the introduction of a tariff scheme, this was awaiting legislative change from DfI.

It was unclear how long that process would take and the Council's own strategy was unable to progress until that took place.

The purpose of his amendment was to have a plan in the interim to have something that could do more than the £50,000 investment allocated.

He was aware that through good financial management, the Council had been able to build up greater reserves than it had in the past and he felt it could be used to provide short term investment into the Borough's car parks until legislation was in place to implement the strategy.

There was an overall issue with maintenance funding, and he felt that this was a way of tackling the problem head on. He suggested that if Council was in agreement, then officers could prioritise proposed car park improvements in a report with work

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that was required beyond the £50,000 allocation. Officers could recommend where the funding could come from, be it capital savings or an underspend. He suggested that this could be discussed initially at the Capital Working Group which was due to meet in May.

In closing, Alderman Smith urged Members to support his proposed amendment, believing that Council needed to take action in terms of improving its car park estate given the uncertainty over the timeline of the legislation being brought forward from DfI. He also asked the officer for an update on that process.

(Councillor Gilmour entered the Council Chamber – 7.16pm)

In response, the Director of Environment advised that prior to the NI Assembly being resumed, a senior Departmental officer had given assurances that the legislation would be flagged as a priority for the NI Assembly. He understood that this required only a minor legislative fix and Department officers would have everything required in advance of the NI Assembly resuming. However, since then the relevant officials within DfI had changed and Council officers had been pressing for a resolution as a matter of urgency.

The seconder, Councillor Wray stated that the current budget allocation was clearly not good enough and the 38-year timeline that was reported had not looked good for the Council. He continued to stand by views expressed previously that the Council could look to sell some of its lesser used car parks but that along with the tariff scheme issue would take time. He spoke of the importance of car parks which were often the first impression that visitors got of the Borough. They were also important to the local economy for residents too.

Continuing, he added that the Council had been brave with some of the schemes it had introduced, including the HRC booking system which had been extremely successful and had resulted in a dividend. Residents however did not see that benefit and their main concern was having adequate services. He felt therefore that a report outlining how the Council could improve the car park estate in the short term was acceptable.

Unable to support the amendment, Alderman McIlveen was uncomfortable with another last-minute proposal for a change in direction on Council policy and which provided little detail.

In this case he felt that Council was being asked to commit to something without knowing the costs and it was unclear if those could come from its strategic reserves. While he agreed that the car parks were not up to scratch and Council was still in the dark waiting for the legislation process to complete and implementation of the strategy, he queried the Council's strategic reserves policy and if it applied to what was being proposed.

The Director of Corporate Services advised against using reserves for an expense that was not considered to be of a one-off nature and explained the preferred approach for requests such as this would be for officers to look at other options.

This confirmed Alderman McIlveen's understanding and he felt that this amendment could have been better brought as a Notice of Motion to allow for officers to take the approach outlined by the Director.

Councillor Morgan agreed that the state of the car parks which Council had inherited was dreadful and that a timeframe of 38 years, based on the current maintenance budget allocation, was unacceptable. She explained that the reason for Council writing to DfI was to get a timeline and speed up the legislation.

While agreeing with its sentiment, the Alliance party grouping could not support the amendment at this time without knowing the cost of the plan and what the timeline would look like, suggesting that taking the funds from strategic reserves was irresponsible.

Councillor Kendall agreed with the points made by the proposer and if Alderman Smith was able to clarify that it was just a report being sought at this stage then she would have been supportive on that basis.

Alderman Graham had concerns with the potential use of strategic reserves, believing that the costs should have been considered in the correct way as part of the Rate setting process in January.

Summing up as Chair of the Environment Committee, Alderman McAlpine voiced concern that Council would be resorting to reserves for this and suggested that it could be part of prioritisation exercise with regard to funding assistance from the Council's VAT rebate.

The Alderman had found it disappointing however that the Council had been left in this situation by the Department and she agreed that Council should be asking it to move forward with the legislation.

On being put to the meeting, with 8 voting FOR, 24 voting AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal FELL.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 6 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.4. Corporate Committee dated 11 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 17 Renewal of Tender for Occupational Health Services & Item 21 Absence Management Update

A query from Councillor McLaren, in relation to Items 17 and 21 which had been discussed in committee, would be deferred until later in the meeting when the press and public had been excluded.

Item 6 - Scheme of Allowances 2024-25

Councillor Boyle indicated that he wished to be recorded as against the recommendation to note the above item, which he felt was effectively denying and depriving elected Members of what they were entitled to. He expressed deep concerns that the Council was not taking what the Department was offering and suggested that nine or ten of the other local authorities in Northern Ireland had opted to take this.

He felt it was a matter of equality and all elected Members across the eleven Councils in NI, should be treated the same. If Members did not want to keep the money, by all means they could donate it to local clubs, he suggested as an example, but equality had to be front and centre across all eleven Councils.

(Councillor Kerr left the meeting – 7.35pm)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes of the Corporate Services Committee, with the exception of Items 17 and 21, be approved and adopted.

7.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 12 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 19 – Play Refurbishments 2025 – 2026

Raising a matter of accuracy, Alderman McRandal said he had commented that the officer's report was ambiguous and not that the proposal was ambiguous, as had been recorded in the minutes.

Also in relation to Item 19, Alderman McRandal proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the decision be deferred and the matter considered further at April meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee. That a supplementary report to include all information required by councillors to make a fully informed decision be presented by officers. This should include:

- clear statement of the playpark refurbishments that officers are recommending;
- clear statement of the budget agreed during rates setting and the estimate costs of each refurbishment;

- for each playpark listed on the original officer's report, the scoring attributed by the independent examiner.

Speaking to his proposed amendment, Alderman McRandal explained that this related to a decision proposed by the DUP and what in his view was poor financial management. He recalled that, at the Committee meeting, there had been confusion around the officer's report and a proposal had been made and part of the debate carried out before clarification had been forthcoming. The Alliance Party had voted against the decision made at Committee and had not been content with it on two counts.

He stated that the recommendation agreed at Committee represented a significant overspend of budget which had been set at £500,000 at the start of the year, and the decision taken at Committee would lead to an agreed spend of £660,000, an overspend of £160,000.

This had become abundantly clear during the meeting and while play parks were extremely important, that level of overspend in his opinion was reckless.

Alderman McRandal further argued that the decision taken at Committee was inequitable and noted that play parks were assessed independently and those that were lowest scoring were in greatest need of refurbishment.

The report before Committee had not stated the independent examiner's scores for the playparks listed. Three parks had been identified for prioritisation for refurbishment at Shorefront in Groomsport, Northfield in Donaghadee and Island View in Greyabbey. Parsonage Road in Kircubbin had also been identified as low scoring but had been discounted due to recent investment at other play facilities in Kircubbin. He noted that the two Ards Peninsula members of that Committee were both in agreement with that decision.

With regard to a list of other playparks in the officer's report, it had become clear that Ballyhalbert was not the next lowest scoring playpark and Members had been told by officers that Bangor Sportsplex was the next lowest scoring. If a fourth playpark was to be added to the list, he argued that the fairest way was to do so in line with the criteria and in which case that would be Bangor Sportsplex.

Alderman McRandal also noted that Conlig was listed and as a Holywood and Clondeboy Councillor he would not want to see that playpark leapfrogged.

Given the circumstances, he felt that Council needed a reset on the matter to allow the Committee to reconsider the matter with full knowledge and all of the information available.

(Councillor Kerr returned to the meeting – 7.42pm)

The seconder Councillor Morgan felt that everyone could agree on the importance of playparks to young people and their communities. She welcomed that playparks for older children were also being installed and that eight playparks had been completed this year.

Councillor Morgan could see from the minutes that there had been confusion over the report and the information within it had not been fully understood. She had found it clear though that there was funding for three playparks and not four and it was important to recognise sound financial management in the interests of ratepayers. She therefore supported the amendment and felt that a report needed to come back to the Committee with a very clear statement of the playpark refurbishments that the officers were recommending along with the budget that was agreed through the rate setting process and the cost of refurbishment. This would help to make an equitable and well-informed decision.

Alderman McIlveen had no issue with the matter being referred back to Committee and appreciated that was the appropriate process to allow for decisions to be reviewed. He argued that there were four playparks listed on the recommendation and that Kircubbin was one that Council might want to look at because the other nearby playpark had been completed. There was no list available but the report referred to four playparks and he said that the report was wrong and the issue may have come out during the course of the meeting. He personally believed that if officers had felt there was a particular issue, then they would have brought a report to this meeting as a matter arising so he had assumed it was something that they felt could be managed.

As a general concern, Alderman McIlveen added that he had an issue with reports around playparks in terms of what was recommended and the fact that scores were not provided. There seemed to be a mysticism around how the ranking orders were created and he had made the point previously that it did not assist the Committee in making good decisions.

Councillor Kendall recalled the debate at Committee and felt that at one point it had been farcical due to the level of confusion and wording in the report which had made it difficult. Having sought clarity on the night, it had become clear that the budget was for three playparks and not four. However she did believe that the report had led Members to believe it was four. While Members would always naturally advocate for playparks in their own DEA, they needed to be a basis of fairness and evaluation and that should be made clear with no room for doubt or error with regard to the independent scoring. While she had no problem with the amendment, she asked that time be taken to ensure the report was clear.

As a non-Member of the Committee, Councillor Wray had listened to the debate on the night and had found it difficult to follow. Councillors appeared to be in agreement that Ballyhalbert should go in place of Kircubbin which he felt made sense. In terms of whether the funding was for three or four playpark refurbishments, he had no issue with the Committee getting further clarification and he took the proposer's point around the scoring and ranking order which was not provided. While it was implemented before he joined the Council, he felt that the Council's Play strategy had been ripped apart during his time on Council, admittedly partly by himself in relation to Kircubbin's Parsonage Road, but he argued that the strategy had some serious problems and the scoring system was one of them.

Councillor Boyle thanked the officer who, on the night, had been covering in the Director's absence and he felt she had done a good job throughout the debate. He felt the report though had nudged the Committee in going somewhere else due to new facilities in Kircubbin and the Committee had been guided by its interpretation of the report. He noted there had been multiple tweaks to the strategy to date and some playparks had been leapfrogged but it was important for the Committee to be clear on this and despite seconding the proposal on the night in good faith, he felt it was appropriate given the confusion, to refer this back to the Committee.

Alderman Adair recalled that Members had a report before them which clearly stated that four playparks were to be refurbished this year and the proposal to change Kircubbin to Ballyhalbert had been made in good faith. The reasoning was because Ballyhalbert had been the next lowest scoring playpark in the Ards Peninsula. He claimed that it had been established from conversations with officers during the recess that the report officers had was different to that in front of Members, with the officers version of the report recommending three playpark refurbishments while the other was for four refurbishments.

The Chief Executive clarified that both the officer and Members had the same report but she took on board but that its wording had not been clear for Members and she had raised this with officers since the meeting who would ensure that all reports would be clear and detailed in future.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the additional playpark refurbishment could be delivered but that was subject to additional funding becoming available usually from external sources but on occasion as the result of an underspend. He confirmed that any additional funding in the previous year had not applied to Ballyhalbert because the lowest scoring parks had been prioritised as per the policy. He added that the list did change every year as some parks were more used and the rate of deterioration would be faster so reprioritisation took place every year.

Alderman Adair claimed again that he was told during the recess at the meeting that the report issued to Members was different. He also spoke of the importance of Council having a plan to be proactive in terms of sourcing additional funding for playparks, recalling a previous Notice of Motion he had brought for Council to apply for rural development funding for playparks and he further claimed the Council had not done so. Pointing to the reallocation of underspend budgets, he provided a further example of where he had pushed for an underspend on the Portaferry scheme which had resulted in a new Playpark in Portaferry and one in Cloughey had been upgraded.

In a final point, he added that Ballyhalbert had missed out by one point the previous year but when Council had the opportunity to avail of funding, Seapark in Holywood had been upgraded, so if Council was being prescriptive of the list that was the way it should have gone, he argued.

The Director explained that funding was sought regularly for a number of opportunities and projects and that had included many playparks over the last 10

years. He agreed that there was scope for misinterpretation of the report and lessons had been learned.

(Councillor Hollywood left the Council Chamber – 8.02pm)

Councillor Gilmour felt that there needed to be clear direction and clarity in the report and she referred to the relevant section of the report that had been misinterpreted and agreed it was unclear.

Returning to the proposed amendment, she asked why the Committee did not currently get to see the scoring matrix, relevant breakdowns and full prioritisation list. She asked why this information was not made available and the Director advised that there was no reason why that level of breakdown could not be provided and would undertake to bring back the list in its entirety for all playparks.

Councillor Gilmour felt that this would be helpful particularly for informing the community where their playpark was sitting on that list in terms of priority for any particular year.

(Councillor Hollywood returned to the Council Chamber – 8.04pm)

The Mayor agreed that the Director's commitment to providing this breakdown would be useful otherwise there would be endless debate about playparks in Members' own DEAs and it struck him that if one playpark was removed from that process it should go to the next on the list.

Councillor McCollum pointed out that there was independent evidence as to how the playparks should be ranked and it begged belief that Council would jettison at the last minute on something that went contrary to independent evidence. She disagreed with Alderman Adair that it was a slight change to add £160,000 to a budget which had already been agreed and then to say officers should be more proactive in finding alternative funding seemed a little trite in the context of that additional £160,000.

Continuing, Councillor McCollum pointed out that the report on the night was just a mistake and that was not a reason to justify additional spend of £160,000 which was not only considered but accepted by a majority of Members and passed on the night. She argued that the ambiguity referred to by some Members was identified and corrected by officers on the night. So to refuse to withdraw the proposal and proceed knowingly on the basis of a mistake was an improper and unreasonable exercise of Councillors' powers and functions and that applied to anyone who either passed the proposal or abstained from the vote.

In terms of the independent evidence, she noted that Ballyhalbert was not next on the list and ratepayers were entitled to believe that the Council would spend their money equitably and within the rules that Council had agreed to adhere to. She felt that there was a lot of learning to be taken from this which was over and above the clarity of officer's reports but also for Members to act when officers corrected matters on the night in clear and unambiguous terms.

(Councillor Smart joined the meeting remotely – 8.07pm)

Councillor Thompson was happy for this to go back to the Committee due to the confusion and he pointed out that Donaghadee Community Development Association had indicated a desire to engage with the Council in relation to the Donaghadee refurbishment due to an issue with the road. He asked if that could happen before the report was returned to the Committee next month but the Director explained that the timeframe would not allow for that and a new report would have to be completed the following day in order to go through the issuing process. He gave a commitment however to working with the Community Association during delivery over the year. He clarified that the exact location would not yet be determined so there was opportunity for discussion with the organisation.

Summing up as Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Alderman Brooks welcomed the investment in Northfield Playpark and emphasised that he had asked that engagement take place with the Community Development Association. He agreed with regard to the confusion on the night and appreciated the officers had done their best and tried to explain their interpretation of the report. Members on the night had made an interpretation and had made that decision. He was happy that it was returning to Committee with all the figures and information.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the decision be deferred and the matter considered further at April meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee. That a supplementary report to include all information required by councillors to make a fully informed decision be presented by officers. This should include:

- clear statement of the playpark refurbishments that officers are recommending;
- clear statement of the budget agreed during rates setting and the estimate costs of each refurbishment;
- for each playpark listed on the original officer's report, the scoring attributed by the independent examiner.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the minutes of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, be approved and adopted.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Council had received correspondence from the Department of Finance (DoF) on the Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures and which would close to responses on 25 April 2025.

For context, following previous consultations in relation to revenue raising and rating measures, the Finance Minister had put forward two preferred proposals relating to Domestic rating policies:

1. An increase in the maximum capital value cap within the domestic rating system from £400k to £485k; and
2. Reduction in the Early Payment Discount from 4% to 2%.

However, the structure of the consultation did not allow for multiple responses to be submitted. As such, it was probable that individual Councillors/Parties would have different views and as such no Corporate response had been drafted.

The link to the consultation was provided in the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council consider sending individual responses to the consultation.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that that the recommendation be adopted.

9. CONFERENCES AND INVITATIONS

9.1 Consultation National Association of Councillors Conference (Local Government Finance), Scarborough, 11 – 13 April 2025 (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that the Council had received an invitation from the National Association of Councillors inviting Members to its upcoming Conference on Local Government Finance.

The Conference would be held at the Royal Hotel, Scarborough from 11th-13th April 2025.

Information on the event was included in the attached correspondence and the booking form provided the following details regarding delegate and accommodation fees:

Delegate Fees: £350 plus VAT – Metropolitan, County, Unitary, Borough & District Councils.

Accommodation was available for delegates at the Conference Hotel at the special NAC Conference Delegate rate of £85 plus VAT per night.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the Conference.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the invitation be noted.

Having declared an interest in the undernoted item, Alderman McDowell left the meeting.

**10. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS (NAC)
ENTERPRISE CHAMPIONS, REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS
(FILE DIR/ADM4)**
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating Members were asked by the NAC (NI) to consider 3 or 4 nominations (1 of which may at Council's discretion be a senior support officer), to 4 learning and development workshops on the subject of **Planning and Delivering Sustainable Local Enterprise**.

Nominations were asked to participate in all 4 of the workshops, in order to complete the strategic learning and development aim of fostering a council wide network of informed Local Enterprise Champions.

The total cost for each participant for all 4 workshops was **£395** with a closing date of Friday 10 April for nominations. Further details were set out over, with supplementary information in the enclosed invitation.

Workshops	Venue	Date and Time
1. Overview of the Local Economy	Ulster Bank, Donegall Square East, Belfast	Friday 25 April 12.00 to 15.45 pm
2. Strategies, Funding & Key Partners	North West Regional College (tbc), Strand Rd, Derry / Londonderry	Friday 30 May 12.00 to 15.30 pm
3. Roles & Responsibilities of Councillors	Craigavon Civic Centre, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (1200 – 1545),	Friday 20 June 12.00 to 15.45 pm
4. Enterprise Site Visit & Champions Forward Plan	Mallusk Enterprise Park (tbc), Mallusk Park, Newtownabbey	Friday 05 September 12.00 to 15.45 pm

RECOMMENDED that Council approve up to 4 nominations, at a cost of £395 each, to the National Association of Councillors Enterprise Champions workshops, to be funded from the approved Member Development budget.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the request be noted.

Alderman McDowell rejoined the meeting.

11. UPDATE TO REDUNDANCY POLICY

(Appendix IV – VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that Members would be aware that Council previously approved the Redundancy Policy in November 2023. On review a number of small inconsistencies, highlighted in red, had come to officers attention which required clarification.

These updates were relatively minor in nature, with no significant changes to the policy's overall intent. For example, there was a typo on page 9, where the policy referred to a two-year limit, rather than a three-year limit. This had been corrected. Additionally, some changes had been made to the layout of the document to improve its clarity and readability, and a definitions section added to ensure greater understanding of key terms.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the updated Redundancy Policy.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials: D40764 & D40815 – D40845
- (b) Variation of covenant – land at North Road, Newtownards (in triplicate)
- (c) Variation Agreement Between Department For Communities and Ards And North Down Borough Council
- (d) Licence Agreement for works at Marine Gardens between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Bangor Marine Ltd.

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

- (a) Movilla section 51 grave 132 Moira Johnston – Hugh Kennedy

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Council approves the transfer of Rights of Burial.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT**(Appendix VIII)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching Notice of Motion Status Report.

This was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep Members updated on the outcome of Motions. It should be noted that as each Motion was dealt with it would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. NOTICES OF MOTION**15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McClean and Councillor Cathcart**

That Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City Centre, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for Christmas 2025. Further, that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practice and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting over Main Street. The report should look at the feasibility of the future expansion of these concepts to the remainder of the Borough, if proven successful in Bangor.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.

15.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and Alderman Graham

That this council recognises the challenges faced by those who are blind and partially sighted and commits to working to make Ards and North Down a Visually aware Borough. This council recognises the expertise of the RNIB, their vision for a world where blind and partially sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life. Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

15.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options to enhance and improve pedestrian and vehicle access to Kirkistown Cemetery making use of the adjacent derelict Council owned former caretaker's site to improve access and road safety at the cemetery.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

Circulated for Information
(Appendix IX – X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:-

- a) NI Housing Council Minutes dated 12 December 2024
- b) NI Housing Council Minutes dated 09 January 2025

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the items circulated for information be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

8.4 MINUTES OF CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE DATED 11 MARCH 2025 – ITEMS 17 & 21

****IN CONFIDENCE****

ITEM 17

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

ITEM 21

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:4 – CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

16. REQUEST FROM MARKET PLACE EUROPE LIMITED TO HOLD AN INTERNATIONAL MARKET AT CONWAY SQUARE MAY 2025 (Appendix XI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider a request from Market Place International Limited to hold a market at Conway Square, Newtownards in May 2025.

The recommendation was agreed.

17. QUEEN'S PARADE UPDATE (FILE RDP63)
(Appendix XII – XV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to agree the Deed of Variation and note the other legal changes within Bangor Marine Ltd.

18. PURCHASE OF LAND AT COMBER ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendix XVI – XIX)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to agree the purchase of land at Comber Road, Newtownards and presented with a Business Case in support of this.

The recommendation was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.42pm.

ITEM 8.1**23****ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday 24th March 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor Hollywood

Councillors:	Ashe (Zoom, 19:02)	McKee (Zoom)
	Cochrane (Zoom)	McLaren
	McCollum	Thompson (Zoom, 19:16)

Independent Member: Mr P Cummings

In Attendance: Camile McDermott (Deloitte), Niamh Sammon (Deloitte), Brian O'Neill (NI Audit Office)

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillors' Harbinson and Wray.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chair (Councillor Hollywood) welcomed Deloitte representatives Camile McDermott and Niamh Sammon respectively, Northern Ireland Audit Office representative Brian O'Neill as well as Independent Member Paul Cummings.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were notified.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**4 (a) COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM 16 DECEMBER 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes be noted.

4 (b) FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that, in line with good practice, a register of actions was maintained to ensure that requests from previous meetings of the Committee had been followed up on.

Item	Title	Action	Officer	Status
Dec 23 6b	Audit and Assessment Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting of formal consultation strategy 	Head of Comms & Marketing	In draft Sep 2025
Jun 24 11	Draft Financial Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Scheme of Allowances to remove the need for Members to claim SRA 	Head of Finance	CSC March 2025
12	Private Meeting with Auditors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for progress with regard to Governance and Internal Audit issues 	Director of Corporate Services	Item 6a
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members requested earlier draft financial statements 	Head of Finance	Due June 2025
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for additional meeting to be considered during the Annual Meeting 	Director of Corporate Services	Item 7

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT

5 (a) DRAFT AUDIT STRATEGY 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Brian O'Neill (NI Audit Office) summarised the draft audit strategy report to members, explaining that the performance audit would occur after the Council audit and the fee for services could be found at the bottom of page two. Some areas would require specialised skills such as pension as well as Land and Property Services. There were significant material risks as could be found on page 43 but it was noteworthy to mention that one significant risk was identified as applicable to

every audit which could be addressed by the likes of using Journal entries. On this occasion, the former Ards Leisure Centre debt from last year had been identified and certification was hoped for by September 2025.

Councillor McCollum proposed, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCollum queried if further discussions had been entered into regarding the former leisure centre location. The Head of Finance explained that the Lands Officer had been investigating mapping issues that required additional affidavit preparation and was attempting to meet with the DSO, DfI and GIS Officers to try and correct the maps. It had been four years since the land was vested and so no predictions could be made on timeframes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the verbal update be noted.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

The following items, 6a through 6h were agreed to be noted together.

6 (a) INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Camille McDermott (Deloitte) summarised the report to Members advising that there had been fifty recommendations at the start of the internal audit last year with five priority #1. During the year, a further nine recommendations had been added to the tracker. Management had confirmed that twenty had been closed, four of which were priority #1. As of this day, 24th March 2025, thirty-nine remained open. Eleven recommendations were overdue but work had started on these which included one priority #1. Twenty-three recommendations had not been started which were overdue but none were priority #1. There were a number of priority #2 and five of the items were not due. Overall, there was a positive movement on the actioned priority #1s over the year.

Councillor McCollum queried the procurement handbook mentioned on page 25 where it had been mentioned by a Head of Service that no formal review of spending had been taken. This had been the case for some time and she wished to query it in more detail. Camille McDermott advised that a recommendation had been made around spend. Where procurement occurred regularly, the individual spend may not be much but over the course of a year, it could amount significantly and present opportunities for annual tenders for example. Therefore, Deloitte were recommending a review be carried out on spend across the year to identify such recommendation areas. Management had indicated that due to capacity issues, no review had been carried out but at some point, management should be encouraged to revisit if the priority was not to be closed.

Councillor McCollum referred to, 'triggering absence,' and an unsuccessful recruitment campaign, asking for more detail on the technical aspect of the role. The

Head of Finance advised that the HR Department had attempted to recruit a Systems Officer to work on HR applications but had been unable on two to three occasions to recruit. The Head of Finance would discuss with HR if there was any possibility of contingency plans whilst awaiting the recruitment process.

The Director of Corporate Services referred to the technological solution for the automated reminder system regarding absence trigger points but noted it was the obligation of managers to oversee, similar to the training courses that the Council rolls out to staff that must be refreshed throughout the years. In relation to procurement, the team consisted of four people and with recent developments such as the Procurement Act placing additional strains on the team. In answer to Councillor McLaren's questions on capacity issues and their reasons, the Director of Corporate Services explained that the similar queries were raised in the Corporate Services Committee. Some of the areas required specialist skillsets and were within competitive markets. During recruitment exercises, applicants did not possess the correct mix of qualifications and skills whilst in IT and Digital departments, it was a matter of rate of pay.

Paul Cummings suggested the possibility of a shared recruitment resource amongst Councils for procurement. The Director of Corporate Services agreed, advising that the Council had explored some options through the Association of Local Government Finance Officers and SOLACE.

6 (b) PCSP REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon (Deloitte) summarised the report to Members which was part of the annual audit requirement. In reviewing governance of PCSP, Deloitte focused on grants and tendering to ensure Council policies followed. There were no priority #1 or #2 and one priority #3 with an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

Councillor McCollum asked about the compiling of report cards and the sample and review processes. Niamh Sammon explained that the sample of ten tested report cards completed by projects had led to two findings. One issue had been that a number of cards had not been brought to the committee which had been an oversight by PCSP. Though they had not reached the committee, they had still been compiled. Projects were paid on quarterly basis with cards being a tool to report on progress versus outcomes. Councillor McCollum asked for clarification on its relation to performance value of grant achievements. Niamh Sammon explained that the purpose of Community Safety was an oversight function like Audit. There was another level of oversight and team in Council that checks each project against outcomes. In a report card, evidence was required to show a project had met particular requirements.

6 (c) LMP REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon advised that the LMP report was part of the annual audit, and its purpose was to review governance, arrangements and controls in place for the management of LMP. There had been no findings in the review with an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

6 (d) TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon summarised the report to Members, explaining that it looked at controls in place for management. The review looked at underlying frameworks with a sample of two projects. For the purposes of review, Deloitte looked at processes to monitor progress against project plans. One priority #2 had been identified regarding the risk to overall management with no standalone programme risk register. The solution would be to implement a risk register. There were also two priority #3 recommendations with an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

Councillor McCollum asked if the target date of 14th March had been implemented and the risk register put in place. Niamh Sammon advised that this information would be collated over the next quarter to be presented in the next Audit Committee. The Director of Corporate Services was able to advise that a STEP board meeting had taken place on the 14th March at which the risk register was on the agenda which meant it was therefore actioned.

6 (e) BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon explained that the review looked at how the Council set budgets with monitoring and reporting. Deloitte had focussed on the 2024-25 financial year. To look back and sample test that controls worked. There were no priority #1 or #2 findings with four priority #3 finding and an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

6 (f) CASH HANDING REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon advised Members that this report looked at Council key processes around cash handling, focusing on how cash was recorded as well as reconciliation processes and security. Two sample locations had been reviewed in the Leisure Services area. One priority #2 was identified on updates required to leisure centre cash management procedures regarding the limits on safes and it had been flagged so that staff had access to that information. There was also a noted process called the Reception Audit Report which was a weekly function by line managers. A recommendation was made that these weekly reports be documented as, at the time of review, Deloitte was unable to find evidence of such checks being completed weekly. There were also two priority #3 findings and an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

In answer to a line of questioning by Councillor McCollum, Niamh Sammon advised that findings from the review had been rolled out amongst all leisure centres but that the recommendations had been written to meet the specific procedures of the leisure services areas. It would be possible for those findings to be used across other Council Service areas, being updated accordingly to suit each area.

6 (g) DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon explained that this review sought to look toward risk management processes in Council surrounding digital transformation. It focused on the digital strategy that the Council had drafted which aligned with the Corporate Plan. There were processes for tracking progress of digital initiatives in the strategy. Members were asked to note that as the report was advisory there was no level of assurance provided. There were two high priority findings, one being that there was no centralised programme management system for digital initiatives and their defined outcomes. It would be essential for a process to exist to track and capture progress made. The second related to a recommendation to implement a standalone governance structure for digital transformation.

Councillor McCollum was curious if the target date of 30.09.2025 was realistic and the composition of a steering group would be. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the target date had been created by Council. For information, he outlined that it had only been in the last year that Council had signed off on the digital strategy with projects in development that are monitored through the STEP board which ensured senior management had oversight. As Digital Transformation matures, more projects would mean there would be interlinkages which would require a steering group but would be a separate entity to the STEP board.

6 (h) GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Niamh Sammon explained that the review looked at Council arrangements against good practice. There had been updates required to some Council policies and standing orders. The first priority #2 related to no version control on some policies and no defined policy review process. Therefore, a recommendation was made to implement regular review processes and version controls. The second priority #2 related to incidents of non-completion of the Declarations of Interest Policy. Two out of the sample of fifteen staff had not completed the annual declaration of interest and therefore a recommendation was made for management to ensure staff complete as required with a robust follow-up process which could include the involvement of senior management where there was non-compliance. There were three priority #3 and an overall satisfactory level of assurance.

Councillor McCollum proposed, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the items 6a through 6h be noted together.

6 (i) DRAFT ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Camille McDermott explained that the report to Members, advising that Section two set out all reviews completed throughout the year with twelve completions, one advisory, one follow up and the majority being satisfactory and two limited assurances in DPA and Assets. Deloitte would encourage managers to close off any open recommendations.

6 (j) DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

Camille McDermott summarised the Audit Plan to Members, explaining that Section 4 showed the areas to be covered whilst Section 5 showed how it compared to the overall strategy over four years that was established in 2023. Services reviews, climate change strategies and a number of operational areas would be covered including the use of agency, lease management, community planning as well as PCSP and LMP annual reviews.

Councillor McKee entered into a discussion with the Committee on the possibility of making a change to the proposed audit plans over the incoming year with the hopes of expanding its scope to include an audit of recruitment processes and procedures across the Council. This had previously been carried out in 2020.

On the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor McLaren an alternative proposal was put forth, that the committee notes the internal audit plan included in item 6J and expands the scope of the audit plan to include recruitment processes and procedures across the Council.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that one element of the original proposal would need to be swapped out. There was also the possibility of carrying out ten audits in 2025-26 and one less in 2026-27 but this would be dependent on costs and Deloitte's resources as well.

Councillor McKee explained the reasoning behind his proposal, citing a recent whistleblowing incident. The Director of Corporate Services explained that an agency staff audit was scheduled next year which specifically related to the referenced incident.

Councillor McCollum was unable to support the proposal at such a late stage with a draft audit plan already presented, though she understood the reasoning behind Councillor McKee's proposal. She suggested it may be wiser to proceed through an alternate route such as a Notice of Motion; a sentiment that Councillor Ashe agreed with.

The proposal was put the meeting and FELL with 2 voting FOR, 5 AGAINST, 0 ABSTENTIONS and 3 ABSENT.

Councillor McCollum proposed, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the original recommendation be adopted and items 6j be noted.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, that items 6a through 6j be noted.

7. WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that, in order to assist the Committee with its oversight responsibilities a suggested meeting schedule and work plan had been prepared.

The following standing items were on each meeting's agenda, with the exception of the June meeting which was a single item agenda to consider the financial statements:

- Follow-up actions from previous committee meetings
- Internal Audit Update
- Single Tender Action Update
- Fraud, whistleblowing and data breaches update
- Meeting with Auditors in the absence of management

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
26 May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements of Assurance Update • Governance Statement Review • Review of Terms of Reference
24 June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Financial Statements Review
23 September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited Financial Statements Approval • Draft Report to those charged with Governance • Corporate Risk Register Review • Policy Status Review
16 December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report to Those charged with Governance • Final Audit Letter • Improvement Audit and Assessment Reports • Interim Statements of Assurance Update
24 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft External Audit Strategy 2025/26 • Review of Corporate Risk Register • Annual Internal Audit Report • Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 • Meeting Schedule and work plan 2026/27

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

The Head of Finance advised there was a minor correction to the schedule in that the next meeting had been scheduled on a bank holiday. He proposed changing the date to the 27th May 2025.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that recommendation be adopted.

8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no other items of notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business at

9. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6:3. Relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Committee were asked to consider a report detailing an update on single tender actions since the last update was provided in December 2024.

10. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA-PROTECTION MATTERS

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Chief Executive raised any new incidences of fraud, whistleblowing and data protection.

11. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE & INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

A meeting was held in the absence of management.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Councillor McCollum that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 20:52.

ITEM 8.2

33

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 1 April 2025 commencing at 19:05 after technical issues.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell
Smith

Councillors: Cathcart
Harbinson
Kendall
Kerr
Hennessy
McCollum

McClean
McKee (zoom)
Morgan
Smart
Wray

Officers: Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor McBurney.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hennessy declared an interest in Item 4.3: LA06/2022/0265F – 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor: Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking.

Councillor Smart later declared an interest at 19:48 in Item 4.1: LA06/2024/0381/F - 110 metres south-east of No 73 Green Road, Bangor: Retention of extension to building providing separate unit used as a gym, retention of associated car parking, and proposed subdivision and part change of use of existing storage unit to provide extension to gym.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 04 MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Please note, Item 4.3 was heard first, followed by Item 4.1.

4.3 LA06/2022/0265/F – 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor: Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

(Councillor Hennessy vacated the Chamber at 19:07 for the duration of Item 4.3 further to a Declaration of Interest.)

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: Application with 6 or more representations contrary to officer's recommendation.

Proposal: Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking.

Site Location: 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional & Technical Officer (C Rodgers) advised Members that the application sought full planning permission to replace an existing commercial workshop with a 1.5 storey dwelling. The site was located at 31a Sheridan Drive, in the Ballyholme area of Bangor.

The application was before Committee due to the number of objections received contrary to the officer's recommendation.

The recommendation was to GRANT Planning Permission.

According to Draft BMAP, the site was within the proposed Bangor East Area of Townscape Character (ATC) with access to the site being via a private lane that connected Sheridan Drive with Lyle Road. The site contained a commercial workshop, separate W/C building and a small yard area which was open to the lane. The premises were vacant at the time of writing.

The Council had recently issued a Certificate of Lawfulness which established the lawful use of the site as a commercial workshop.

This was an important material consideration in the determination of the current application. In a set of images shown to Members, there were depictions of a dwelling and its parking area immediately west of the applications site, a dwelling fronting onto the lane immediately east of the site and the rear accesses to dwellings south of the site and on the opposite side of the lane. Existing garages and informal parking area along the lane were shown on further slides.

The surrounding area comprised a wide range of densities and house types including terrace dwellings, semi-detached and detached dwellings. As detailed in the Case Officer Report, the plot size was similar to that of other dwellings found within the wider area and two in-curtilage parking spaces could be provided.

The proposal was for a small one-bedroom dwelling finished in vertical cladding with a low overall ridge height of 5.5 metres and was just 3 metres to the eaves.

Objections had been received from eight separate addresses and the main issues related to the potential impact on the character of the area, residential amenity, traffic and parking and impact on existing sewage infrastructure. All material considerations had been considered in detail in the Case Officer Report and its Addendum.

In terms of the potential impact on the character and appearance of the area - The site was located along a lane to the rear of Sheridan Drive and was occupied by a former car repair workshop. Given the surrounding built form and small scale of the proposal, wider public views would be limited. It was considered that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area or the proposed ATC designation. In regard to residential amenity, it was important to highlight that the Applicant had *significantly* amended the design of the proposed dwelling to address concerns raised by the Planning Department and by objectors.

An image was shown to Members to outline the differences between the current proposal and the original design. The overall scale and massing the development had been significantly reduced, a balcony and first floor windows had been removed.

The dwelling had been carefully designed to prevent any harm to neighbouring residential amenity. The small scale of the dwelling, its design and position relative to adjacent dwellings, the intervening boundaries and separation distances would together prevent any unacceptable adverse impacts.

The only windows at first floor would be two small Velux windows. The overall footprint of the proposed dwelling was to be smaller than that of the existing building. The ridge height of the building was only slightly taller than the existing workshop by approximately 1.25 metres.

Moreover, the proposal sought to replace a commercial workshop with a residential use which was considered to be more compatible with the adjacent dwellings.

DfI Roads had been consulted on the application and provided no objections. Taking into account the Certificate of Lawfulness for the commercial workshop use, DfI Roads considered that the proposed dwelling would not result in any intensification of use of the existing access onto the public road.

The proposal did not seek to rely on on-street parking provision, and it was considered that the proposed two in-curtilage car parking spaces were ample to serve this proposed modest one-bedroom dwelling. In terms of the potential impact on existing NI Water infrastructure, this application was originally one of a number of applications within the Borough affected by on-going NI Water network capacity issues; however, NI Water had very recently updated its consultation response and provided no objection to this application.

Objectors also expressed concern that approval of this application could establish a precedent for subdivision of adjacent residential plots. This application did not involve subdivision of a residential plot; rather it was a unique brownfield site

comprising a commercial workshop building and yard; therefore, no such precedent could be established.

To conclude, the proposal was in line with the objectives of strategic planning policy which encouraged the re-use of brownfield sites through the recycling of land and buildings. At the request of the Council, the design was significantly amended to prevent any harm to neighbouring residential amenity and the proposed new use was fully compatible with the surrounding residential use.

It was therefore RECOMMENDED that planning permission is granted.

Councillor McCollum asked for the specific date of the decision on the Certificate of Lawfulness whilst Councillor Morgan queried the ridge height differences between the current and proposed structures. The Officer advised that the Certificate was approved on 18 February 2025 whilst the proposed building would be 1.25 metres taller than the existing building.

Councillor Cathcart was concerned that a precedent could be set if other garages in the area could be demolished and/or converted to dwellings while Councillor McClean shared similar concerns on whether grounds could be subdivided to allow for further construction. The Officer explained that this application concerned a standalone commercial site outside of the curtilage of any residential dwelling on which commercial rates had been paid since the 1980s which established it as a long-use commercial site. It was also vacant and did not involve subdivision of a residential plot meaning that it could not set a precedent in the examples provided. Councillor McClean noted that NI Water had confirmed it had no objections to the application and was curious if its stance had changed due to negative conditions on the property. The Officer explained that NI Water had been reconsulted at its own request at which time it advised of having no concerns. NI Water offered a Water Impact Assessment Service outside of the planning process. It was up to developers applying to NI Water for guidance to see if its proposals could be accommodated and, in this case with no risk of environmental harm as there was a solution to disposal of wastewater, NI Water was content.

The Officer also confirmed to Alderman Graham's queries over current WC facilities on site that it did indeed mean connections for wastewater were already on site.

Alderman Smith asked if it was normal for a condition to remove permitted development rights to be applied to a decision and if an overview could be given on the acceptable parameters for overlook onto neighbouring gardens. The Officer explained the condition often applied if there was risk of extensions or alterations that could potentially cause harm to neighbouring residents. It was an additional safeguard that meant any structural changes or additions to the proposed plan would require the seeking of planning permission. In regard to overlooking, the Officer brought up a view of the overall sight location and indicated the location of the existing garage where Velux windows would face the north-west boundary and would be directed toward existing garages at the end of long rear-gardens. Planning guidance considered the first 3-4m to be the most private amenity space at the rear of any dwelling. The Velux windows in question were of a small design and with the

angle and positioning, would not be considered to cause any adverse major residential impact.

As there were no further questions to the Officer, Mr Asman Khairuddin was invited to join the meeting to speak against the proposal. The Chair (Alderman McIlveen) advised he would have five minutes to speak after which Councillors would have the opportunity to ask any questions. Mr Khairuddin was accompanied by Mrs Ann Hogg, a resident living adjacent to the site in question. Mr Khairuddin explained how the process had been lengthy to this point with numerous changes by the applicant's agents to address concerns. However, upon examining papers prior to this evening's meeting, Mr Khairuddin overlaid proposed plans with the site plan which he believed showed a significant portion of car parking sitting over the red line and queried if an ownership declaration certificate should have been filled in as the overlap concerned was over a right of way that the objector had for her own driveway, leading to constrained space and manoeuvrability issues for access.

In relation to proposed car parking spaces, he cited Creating Places within which it was advised that the car parking space dimensions should be 5.3 metre by 5.3 metres whilst that listed within proposals was 4.8 metres by 4.8 metres which he suggested would be too small. There would also be issues of manoeuvring vehicles due to the aforementioned red line overlap which would be in contravention of the Department for Infrastructure's acceptable parameters regarding access to a parking space without traversing through party lands.

The proposal layout would also likely mean any car accessing car parking would have to partially use land owned by 107 Groomsport Road. As this area was a one-way system that was already congested and with the potential for a future buyer to own a larger than average car, there could be an even bigger impact on traffic flow.

Mr Khairuddin explained that overlook from the proposed dwelling, because of the standard roof height in the area, would not meet requirements, with views extending further than that which had been surmised in the Officer's report.

Members were invited to ask any questions of clarification. Councillor Cathcart asked if the workshop site was still active. Mr Khairuddin suggested the site could be called anything if rates were still paid, however, Mrs Hogg was able to explain that the site had not been used since the beginning of the C-19 pandemic and had since been advertised for use as storage. There had been tenants who had used it for other purposes. Councillor Cathcart, based on the response, suggested that it was indeed betterment for the area if the planning application succeeded and asked if there had been any traffic or noise issues when the workshop was active. Mr Khairuddin did not dispute the proposal providing betterment. If a mechanic used an air compressor or other tools of the trade, there could have been noise complaints.

However, in looking at the change from the current structure to the proposed, he suggested there were issues that could go against the argument of betterment. A mechanic may use the toilets rarely throughout a working day whilst a family would not only use toilets but also showers which would create greater strain on infrastructure. The issue of overlooking with two roof windows would also be a counter argument. From the site plans, a future resident could see into the garden

opposite at the back end of 170 Groomsport Road whilst on the other side, facing Mrs Hogg's neighbour, there would be a view beyond one of the garages into the private area of another garden. Mr Khairuddin referred to planning policy stating a 20m rule from window to window between dwellings but believed in this instance, that would drop to 16m from the back bedroom window.

Councillor Wray asked for clarification on the red line issue as he had not noted its mention in Mr Khairuddin's speaking notes and questioned manoeuvring issues. Mr Khairuddin advised that he had only noticed the red line overlap prior to the meeting. The red line overlap would mean that part of the proposed car parking space would reach beyond the red line into a right of way which would lead to difficulties of Mrs Hogg and potentially others manoeuvring the area because a parked vehicle may impede access.

Alderman McIlveen presumed there was a right of way to allow for access to garages in the area and asked the speaker if this would not exist, to which Mr Khairuddin explained that if any car stopped on the right of way, it would block access to garages. In this instance, a parked car's dimensions could stop another from using the right of way. In the past, the site in question did not have space for parked cars as a shed used to exist at its boundary that precluded parking. Alderman McIlveen was concerned given the application had previously been taken off the schedule due to a late objection and that the same could happen this evening with additional information being provided at such a late hour.

Councillor McCollum asked for clarification on an aerial photograph and the red line superimposed upon it. The Officer advised that this image had been prepared by the Case Officer to assist Members in identifying the site but that the official and correct red line was that which was on another image. Councillor McCollum asked by what distance the speaker believed the red line to intrude upon a right of way. Mr Khairuddin explained that when he had earlier overlaid images, up to one quarter of the parking space was outside of the red line, intruding onto the area which Mrs Hogg parks her own car. As he believed the development extended beyond the red line, it would cause problems for other residents in adjacent lands.

Alderman McIlveen advised Members that the subject of the red line had been raised at a very late stage and would cause difficulty for anyone making a decision until Officers had a chance to review the new information.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the Item be deferred to allow Officers an opportunity to investigate the boundary line.

Alderman Graham queried if it was possible to make a decision this evening that was subject to the outcome of any investigations. Alderman McIlveen advised that it would be inappropriate for the Committee to do so given the suggested impact on neighbouring properties, manoeuvring issues and access.

Councillor Smart said that the Planning Committee did not normally assess and judge boundaries on ownership and asked if they would be judging solely on the adjacent property having vehicle access. The Head Of Planning advised that the

information had been provided at such a late stage and Officers would have to investigate the matter further to see if notice needed to be served on other parties.

At 19:47, Mr Khairuddin returned to the public gallery.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the Item be deferred to allow Officers an opportunity to investigate the boundary line.

(Councillor Hennessy returned to the Chamber at 19:47.)

4.1 LA06/2024/0381/F - 110 metres south-east of No 73 Green Road, Bangor: Retention of extension to building providing separate unit used as a gym, retention of associated car parking, and proposed subdivision and part change of use of existing storage unit to provide extension to gym.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report, addendum report and note of site meeting.

(Councillor Smart declared an interest and vacated the Chamber at 19:48.)

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: A local development application 'called-in' to the Planning Committee by a member of that Committee.

Proposal: Retention of extension to building providing separate unit used as a gym, retention of associated car parking, and proposed subdivision and part change of use of existing storage unit to provide extension to gym.

Site Location: 110 metres south-east of No 73 Green Road, Bangor

Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Head of Planning explained that Planning application LA06/2024/0381/F was for '*Retrospective subdivision and part change of use of storage unit, elevational alterations, and extension, providing unit used as a gym. Retention of associated car parking.*'

Members were asked to note that the description had slightly changed from the description on the planning schedule, as noted above.

The proposal was changed slightly to reflect the fact that the proposed subdivision and part change of use of the existing storage unit to the gym had since taken place. When the application was submitted it was described as proposed works as it hadn't yet taken place. A revised P1 with an amended description had been submitted taking account that works had since taken place. This was considered to be a minor issue and did not alter the determination of the application.

The application would be re-advertised on 10th April to reflect the change in description and also cover the additional supporting information that was submitted by the agent which had been detailed in both Addendums to the Case Officer Report. Neighbour notification letters had also been issued to reflect the updated description.

Any decision could be held and issued once the expiry date had passed for Neighbourhood Notification and advertising.

The application appeared before Members due to a call in by Councillor Wray from the delegated list.

Members were asked to note the application was originally to be presented at the February Planning Committee meeting but following the submission of additional information which required additional consideration, the application was removed from the schedule. During the intervening period, seven additional letters of support were submitted - all from current users and employees of the gym facility known as HQFit.

Those in support stated the convenient location for those living nearby in Ardvanagh and high quality of the facilities. These were not material planning considerations for the assessment of the proposal.

A second statement of supporting information was submitted for consideration following the application appearing on the schedule for April which had been considered and a second addendum prepared.

The recommendation was to refuse planning permission.

The site was located 110 metres south-east of No 73 Green Road, Bangor. The site could be accessed off Green Road, via a laneway which travelled south-west towards a group of agricultural buildings surrounded by concrete hard standing. The wider area consisted of agricultural fields to the east, south and west of the site. The site and surrounding area were of a generally flat topography. The buildings on site were finished in corrugated green metal and the most southern building was used as a gym. With regard to the area plan, the site was located within the Countryside as designated within North Down & Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 and Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015.

There was planning history associated with the site – this application was submitted as a result of an alleged unauthorised erection of building and subsequent use as a gym under planning enforcement reference LA06/2024/0012/CA. On site a new unit had been constructed onto the end of two existing units which had planning permission for use as class B4 (storage/distribution). On the day of the site visit, the unit which had been constructed was being used as a gym, filled with gym equipment and there were approximately four people present. Six cars were parked in the area which had been concreted. At the time of the Case Officer's site visit, the unit to which the gym was attached to was separate and not internally accessible.

The applicant had constructed a new unit without permission and used this unit as a commercial gym. This new unit was to be extended into the existing unit it was physically joined to. The existing unit had permission for use as light industry (Class B2) and storage (Class B4) with ancillary parking as per planning permission W/2011/0469/F.

The SPPS sought to secure a 'town centres first' approach for future retailing and other main town centre uses. It stated that applications for retail and main town centre uses would adopt a sequential approach when decision making.

For clarification and the benefit of Members, despite assertions made by the planning agent, PPS 4 was not a policy consideration in this case it specified that it did not, *'provide for leisure policy, the appeal proposal is not one of the 'other' sui generis employment uses that the PPS 4 policy approach would assist in assessing.'*

This was supported by Appeal reference 2021/A0046 from which the following extract was stated.

"For the purposes of PPS 4, economic development uses comprise industrial, business and storage and distribution uses, as currently defined in Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (UCO). It is stated in PPS 4 that, except for a limited number of specific policy references, mainly relating to acceptable alternative uses, the PPS does not provide policy for other stated uses including leisure, which are dealt with in other policies. A gymnasium is a sui generis leisure use and is not defined in Part B of the UCO. It is therefore not an economic development use for the purposes of PPS 4. It is stated in PPS 4 that the policy approach and associated guidance contained within this document may be useful in assessing proposals for other sui generis employment uses. However, as PPS 4 specifies that it does not provide leisure policy, the appeal proposal is not one of the 'other' sui generis employment uses that the PPS 4 policy approach would assist in assessing. I conclude therefore that the provisions of PPS 4 including Policy PED 3 are not material to consideration of the proposal and provide no support to it."

The applicant had constructed a new unit without permission and used this unit as a commercial gym. This new unit was to be extended into the existing unit it was physically joined to. The existing unit had permission for use as light industry (Class B2) and storage (Class B4) with ancillary parking as per planning permission W/2011/0469/F.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) sought to secure town centres as the first approach for future retailing and other main town centre uses. It stated that applications for retail and main town centre uses would adopt a sequential approach when decision making.

Again, the Head of Planning stated, for the avoidance of any doubt - the definition of a main town centre use as set out in the SPPS included leisure, therefore as the gym was a leisure use, it would fall to be considered under the SPPS's requirement for a 'town centre first' approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses.

As the development was located within the countryside – PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside also had to be considered in the assessment. Policy CTY1 of PPS 21 identified a range of types of development which in principle were considered to be acceptable in the countryside and which would contribute to the aims of sustainable development.

Policy CTY1 makes provision for outdoor sport and recreation uses in accordance with PPS 8 – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. Policy OS3 of PPS8 provided for outdoor recreational use in the countryside subject to several criteria. The development under consideration was not for outdoor use as the development was for the use of a unit to be used as an indoor gym.

As the gym use was not covered by any of the ranges of development acceptable in principle in the countryside, the next step would be to consider if there are any other overriding reasons why the development was essential and could not be located in a settlement.

The SPPS stated that a sequential test should be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses that were not in an existing centre and were not in accordance with an up-to date LDP. Where it was established that an alternative sequentially preferable site or sites existed within a proposal's whole catchment, an application which proposed development on a less sequentially preferred site should be refused.

The application was contrary to this policy as the site was located within the Countryside and fell outside the settlement limit and Primary Retail Core. It had not been demonstrated by the agent that there were no alternative suitable sites within the Bangor's Primary Retail Core to accommodate the business.

The applicant had failed to submit a sequential test or any evidence or supporting information to demonstrate how the proposal had met the requirements of the SPPS. However, it was considered that there were numerous vacant retail units located within Bangor settlement limit, including the Primary Retail Core, which could be used as an alternative to the application site. As such, the application site was considered less sequentially preferred and contrary to policy. As set out in policy, an application which proposed development on a less sequentially preferred site should be refused.

Members were reminded of the two additional addendums prepared in response to additional information submitted by the agent citing the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) decisions and interpretation of policy which was not accepted by the Planning Department.

Members would have been aware that should the recommendation to refuse planning permission be agreed this evening the applicant would still have the option to appeal the decision to gain the PAC's interpretation on policy.

Mr Dermot Monaghan, speaking on behalf of MBA Planning, was invited forward to speak AGAINST the recommendation to refuse and was reminded that he would have five minutes to speak.

Mr Monaghan explained that the storage unit had been subdivided and altered with PPS4 allowing partial redevelopment of sites and extensions. PPS4 did not set a threshold on the number of jobs required to be classed as employment use, with the gym sustaining 24 full and part time staff. Mr Monaghan referred to a gym receiving

planning permission in a Newtownards industrial estate under PPS4 and referenced the SPPS principle of improving health and wellbeing. Furthermore, it was important that local residents had access to local health and fitness facilities of which no traditional gyms in Bangor existed south of the Rathgael and Balloo roads. As the proposal was not a main town-centre use, the sequential test did not apply.

There had been no objections and seven letters of support. He advised that the Planning Department had accepted that in the appeal cases referenced by Mr Monaghan (2018/A0231, 2020/A0161), the PAC had confirmed that a gym and swimming pool were sui generis employment under PPS4. Planning had argued these were considered under PED7 which provided for leisure uses which he maintained was the wrong argument.

HQ Fit served local need and as such, the sequential test should not be applied. The proposal was sustainable, complied with Planning policy, had 24 jobs in place and had no adverse environmental impacts.

The Chair invited questions from Members to the objector. Alderman McDowell suggested that gyms required large spaces and to be directed to town centres where there was little space seemed illogical. There were already many gyms in industrial areas. He asked if there had been a viable town centre location when taking into consideration any costs involved. Mr Monaghan advised that the key issue was to provide a gym in the area and it was not sensible to close the existing business with 24 jobs to move to a town centre where there was potentially no space. Gyms provided an opportunity for health and wellbeing which was encouraging for the local area.

Councillor Kendall would have been more sympathetic to the proposal had the applicant not continued onward with building to make any decision this evening a retrospective one. She asked why the extension and use of new building had not been explored with the Planning Department. Mr Monaghan was unsure as to why but assumed the developer had thought as it was an existing industrial area, there should be no issues as there had been similar areas with gyms across the country. The first Case Officer Report had confirmed there were no objections on visual amenity, road safety or environmental issues and no complaints from local residents.

Councillor Cathcart asked when the gym had opened and if there were any business connections on site. Mr Monaghan advised that it had been open for 18 months with no local business links.

Councillor McCollum referenced the many policies and PAC decisions, asking about the economic development of a leisure facility in an industrial area. Mr Monaghan explained that a key issue on the policy area stated that if there was an established economic use and established use in the countryside, the policy allowed for redevelopment for sites of employment, and in this case, it being of sui generis employment. Members, which numbered circa 700, pay monthly subscriptions as well as an option for ad hoc visits from the general public. Councillor McCollum asked for clarity of the reference to Policy PED2. Mr Monaghan advised that PED2 was a general policy for economic development which referred to other policies in PPS4 including PED 3-4.

Councillor Morgan referenced sustainable development and the duty of minimising the use of vehicles, asking if many walked to the gym's location. Mr Monaghan advised that very few did due to its location but that not many walked to gyms across the country.

Alderman Smith queried the quoted 14% increase on square meterage as the report had stated 50%. With Policy PED4 stating a need for proportionate increases, Alderman Smith wanted clarity on the scale and addition. Mr Monaghan in reference to W/2011/0469 advised the site area measured 3298 metres excluding the access lane. The extension to the site area was 350 square metres, or 13.6% rounded to 14%. The red line was larger than that due to a grass area which was excluded from their calculations.

Mr Monaghan returned to the public gallery at 20:14.

Members were invited to ask any questions of clarification from the Planning Officer.

Councillor McCollum noted the leisure and business use with a commercial gym of 700 members qualifying as business use. With that being the case, she was curious if there was any case knowledge guidance that provided precedent in similar situations. The Head of Planning suggested that misdirection had perhaps occurred as Policy PED4 was for *redevelopment* of existing sites whilst in this instance, a separate unit was constructed on site. It was not re-use of what was already there and there was no internal pathway to reach the unauthorised unit that was built. Since the last site visit, the location had been altered with a unit converted that had planning permission for storage and distribution. It had been presented as if merely the existing unit has been expanded upon. It was clear that the current use was now a gym leisure facility. Approved gym sites had also been presented to the applicant in town-centre areas.

Councillor McCollum asked if the two buildings had since been amalgamated and if that was the case, if it would be an extension of economic development in the countryside. The Head of Planning advised that the buildings had been amalgamated but the latter question was hypothetical. There were exceptional circumstances in this instance with a whole unit built on its own extending into an existing unit which turned the sequence of events around to make the situation fit Policy PED4.

Councillor McCollum appreciated the argument of a town-centre gym but, for the likes of Bangor city, there was a lack of parking on the main streets which would cause difficulty in making the gym accessible. The availability of parking was an attractive quality, especially for commuters with gym users being known generally as economically active. The Head of Planning referenced Figure 2 in the addendum supplied, Item 4.1a. There were seven gyms south of the ring road toward Conlig and the majority did not require vehicular use. Councillor McCollum asked if the sequential test had been applied to the gym appeal. The Head of Planning confirmed, but explained that they had not been refused based on the sequential approach. Reference had been made to approval granted in Newtownards that did not require a sequential approach but this was a different scenario.

Councillor Wray sympathised with the applicant, however, he did cite the need for essential use and queried what the threshold was to meet that requirement. The Head of Planning advised that by virtue of a countryside location, PPS21 was applied and gyms were not listed within acceptable uses under Policy CTY1 . PPS21 referred to houses, dwellings and farms in the countryside. The Department had considered that it was not essential use in a countryside location especially with other facilities nearby.

Councillor Wray asked how other gyms had come to exist in the countryside and if there was a clear threshold on when a sequential test be carried out. The Head of Planning was unaware of other sites he referred to in the countryside but advised that such sites may not have planning permission. The policy was clear and though the applicant may have community support and no letters of objection, the policy existed for particular developments. Irrespective of a retrospective element, Officers looked at an application to see if it was policy compliant or not. This application was to be before Committee in February but late supporting documentation had been provided and again, last week, information was submitted raising more points. She again directed Members' attention to Policy PED4 which showed no relevance of being situated in the countryside or of the speaking notes and how any requirements fulfilled that of PPS21.

Alderman Smith queried the 14% to 50% differences he had asked earlier, asking for clarification from the Officer. The Head of Planning advised that the application site was that which lay within the red line taking account of the second addendum that clarified the proposal incorporated a partial change of one of the two units. The proposal had an entirely new use unit with a 50% increase on floorspace along with the site area increase.

With sui generis employment and 24 jobs and in reports it being identified that this did not apply to leisure facilities or gyms, Alderman Smith asked if Officers could clarify if Mr Monaghan's statements of creating employment were acceptable to related policies. The Head of Planning advised that just because a unit could create employment did not mean it was acceptable in policy terms. The Planning Department did not consider this as sui generis as it was not listed.

Alderman McIlveen asked what that meant in terms of business use for those purposes. The Head of Planning stated that if a unit was existing and looking to build an extension, that would fall under Policy PED4 but in this instance, an unauthorised separate unit was built as a gym then incorporated into a unit did not fulfil the policy requirements.

Councillor Kendall asked how long locals had had to make comment on whether the application was essential or needed. The Head of Planning explained that any planning application had to be advertised with notification to local residents and as such, they had the opportunity to respond since the application's submission.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be refused.

Councillor Morgan stated that the application was in the countryside and that it was in contravention with referenced policies. In addition the SPPS retailing policy existed to protect cities and town centres which the site location did not meet which she worried may set precedent for more businesses moving out of these centre locations. If looking at the application before the site was built, members and staff would not have been factors and as Members would have been aware, when judging an application retrospectively, it should be looked at as if it had not yet been approved or built. Councillor Hennessy shared his colleague's sentiments. Though he appreciated growth in gyms and the appeals given the member number, officers had applied relevant policy which is what mattered in situations such as this.

Alderman McDowell could not support the recommendation as he did not believe the gym could have been sited in any town or city centre as the required space did not exist. That, coupled with higher rates costs would have created more difficulties. With no letters of objection and the site already being located in an industrial location, he saw no harm in its existence. In accepting the recommendation, 24 individuals would find themselves redundant as well as 700 customers having to find alternative facilities.

Councillor Cathcart believed there was no harm in the application, believing Members should not take the decision to remove the business.

Councillor McCollum also could not support the recommendation as she was satisfied it was classed as redevelopment for economic use with sui generis employment. She suspected more than 700 members used the gym.

Alderman Graham could see both points of view and though not a random gym in a greenfield site, he also took the Officer's points on policies.

Alderman Smith also had difficulties, stating that the application should have been approved by Council first. One issue was the idea of proportionate increase and what exists being on scale with the existing development area and as such, he had to reject the proposal.

Councillor Morgan advised Members that this would be classed as unsustainable development and it was the job of Councillors to stop such from happening. There were leisure centres in the towns and cities with parking and although the Council always welcomed jobs, this application took away from industrial use and any decision opposing the recommendation would not be using policies to protect towns and cities.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 5 FOR, 7 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was FELL. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (5)
Aldermen

AGAINST (7)
Alderman
McDowell
McIlveen
Smith

ABSTAINED (2) **ABSENT (1)**
Alderman
Graham

Councillors

Harbinson
Hennessy
McClellan
McKee
Morgan

Councillors

Cathcart
Kerr
McCollum
Wray

Councillors

Kendall

Councillors

McBurney

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman P Smith, that the recommendation be rejected and planning permission be granted.

Alderman McDowell explained that as the business was already in existence and in an industrial location, it was causing no harm whilst Alderman Smith advised he could see no issues and that his only queries had been in relation to the proportionality of development.

Alderman Graham still had reservations with granting planning permission given the countryside location and advised he would have to abstain from the decision.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 7 FOR, 5 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal PASSED. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (7)

Aldermen
McDowell
McIlveen
Smith

AGAINST (5)

Alderman

ABSTAINED (2)

Alderman
Graham

ABSENT (2)

Councillors

Cathcart
Kerr
McCollum
Wray

Councillors

Harbinson
Hennessy
McClellan
McKee
Morgan

Councillors

Kendall

Councillors

McBurney
Smart

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman Smith, and in a VOTE of 7 FOR, 5 AGAINST, 2 ABSTENTIONS and 2 ABSENT that the recommendation be rejected and planning permission be granted.

(Councillor Smart returned to the Chamber at 20:49.)

4.2 **LA06/2023/2406/F - 5 Tarawood, Holywood: Demolition of the existing dwelling, construction of a replacement, part single storey, part storey and a half dwelling linked with a new garage via a single storey car port, a new single storey garden room and associated site works**

ITEM WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE SCHEDULE PRIOR TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING.

(In accordance with Standing Orders, the Planning Committee entered recess at 20:50, recommencing at 21:04.)

4.4 **LA06/2021/1477/F- Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar, Nos. 22-28 Quay Street, Bangor: Demolition of Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar to accommodate a mixed-use development comprising of 35No. apartments, 2No. restaurant units, and 1No. retail unit, car parking and associated site and access works**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: Development subject to legal agreement.

Proposal: Demolition of Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar to accommodate a mixed-use development comprising of 35No. apartments, 2No. restaurant units, and 1No. retail unit, car parking and associated site and access works.

Site Location: Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar, Nos. 22-28 Quay Street, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission.

The Head of Planning advised that the site was located at Nos. 22-28 Quay Street within Bangor City Centre.

There were no objections to the proposed development from statutory consultations or any objections from members of the public with one letter of support submitted. The representation in support stated that the proposed redevelopment was an opportunity to see the rebirth of an iconic seafront building with the proposal consolidating the levels of the former Windsor and Royal buildings. The new build would greatly improve the internal functionality of the space and would help inspire others moving forward, restoring confidence in the seaside city.

The application was before Members as it was an application subject to a legal agreement. The recommendation was to grant planning permission

With regard to the development plan context, the site was within the settlement of Bangor and was located within the proposed Bangor Central Area of Townscape Character (BR 42) and an Area of Archaeological Potential for Bangor in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. The site was shown as whiteland in the plan. The 'Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war buildings in Quay Street including the former Bank, Windsor Bar and Royal Hotel' were noted as key features of the proposed Area of Townscape Character, which must be taken into account when assessing development proposals.

The potential impact of the appeal development on the proposed ATC remained a material consideration and could be objectively assessed and this had been endorsed by the PAC.

With regard to the actual site, the existing buildings on the application site comprised the vacant Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar. This was a 5 storey rendered building along the frontage of Quay Street with 6 bays and 6 storey turrets at the corner and giant pilasters with Art Deco ornamentation between each bay. The building steps down to 3-storeys in height along Crosby Street. The hotel was originally established

in 1841; however, the present building dated from 1931 and continued to operate as a hotel until its closure in 2014. The building was not listed.

The surrounding area was characterised by a variety of town centre uses including the adjoining hotel, nearby bars and restaurants, tourism, retail and residential. The proposed restaurant and retail units would complement the existing retail provision within the City centre and would contribute to the evening economy.

The planning history to the site was a material consideration. In 2008 permission was granted for Demolition of existing Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar and erection of replacement 52 room hotel with bar / restaurant, roof top restaurant, 33 apartments, viewing terrace, car parking, amenity space and ancillary accommodation. Members were shown the design of what was approved on the site.

The Officer advised that Members would have been more familiar with more recent permission granted in 2018 under planning ref LA06/2017/1039/F for a mixed-use development of 21 no. apartment units, comprising 12 no. apartments as part of the partial conversion and retention of the Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar building, partial demolition and 9 no. new build apartments within rear extension to Crosby Street, change of use of ground floor from hotel and public house to 4 no. new restaurant/café units, site access, car parking and all associated site works – Permission granted 12/10/2018.

The reason for the current application being submitted was that, following investigations since the previous approval for the retention of the façade, structural surveys revealed that the condition of the façade included severe corrosion to steel columns supporting the building meaning the building had deteriorated so much that retention would not be possible.

As the design of the current building on the site was so iconic to Bangor and its history, planning officers were concerned that if total demolition were permitted there would be no base line should a change of design be submitted given the permissions previously granted which are a material consideration.

Through discussion with the agent and applicant, the Planning Department put forward its position on the matter and requested that, in order to secure the design in any permission, a legal agreement would be entered into the purpose of which would be to ensure that there could be no variation of condition for the design for a minimum of 5 years from the date of any permission. This was to ensure that any future applications lodged with respect to the site must seek approval or retention of a building which encompassed and mirrored the approved façade. This gave the Council assurance that the design of any future building on this site would replicate the façade currently fronting onto Quay Street.

The applicant was content to enter into this arrangement as at that time they were in negotiations with various consultees including NI Water which was going to take some time to resolve.

The current design replicated the original design with some alterations. It was of high quality and was sympathetic to the original design. Whilst the proposal now

involved the demolition of the existing Royal Hotel and Windsor Bar, the front and side facades were to be rebuilt on a like for like basis to match the existing with a palette of colours and materials that complement the adjacent buildings with the front and side facades rendered in white with white windows. The ground floor would be rendered in black. The apartments fronting onto Quay Street were dual aspect and new windows along Crosby Street would provide views of the Marina.

The side elevation along Crosby Street stepped down in height from Quay Street to the eastern boundary of the application site to respect the neighbouring development and it was notable that no objections had been received from residents in the vicinity. As the site was located within a proposed ATC, a Design and Access Statement was submitted. This document explained the design principles and concepts applied to the development, the steps taken to appraise the context of the site and how the design takes the context into account as well as the access to the site, disabled access and environmental sustainability.

The site layout included a storage area at the ground floor for the apartment bins and a separate area for the storage of the bins associated with the restaurant units. Due to the proximity of the site to the waterfront and town centre parks there would be open space available within walking distance which negated the requirement for private amenity space under this application. An area was also set aside at ground floor level for cycle storage.

The proposed elevation along Crosby Street extended approximately 8 metres closer to the Salvation Army building at 6-10 Crosby Street was considered to be acceptable and there was no unacceptable adverse impact on the existing residential properties on Crosby Street in terms of over-looking.

The main living areas of the proposed apartments along Crosby Street had projecting oriel windows with views directed towards the eastern end of Crosby Street and towards Quay Street.

In regard to car parking requirements, it had been acknowledged that at 25 car parking spaces were being provided within the curtilage of the site for 35 apartments which would present a shortfall of 10 spaces. Members would have been aware that a balance of material planning considerations was a requirement in the assessment of any proposal. With regard to this application, the proposal was located within a city centre in an accessible location close to facilities with the bus and train stations with walking and cycling opportunities.

A Travel Plan had been submitted in support of the application and included measures to promote sustainable travel. In addition, similar to the Queen's Parade permission agreed with Members, the legal agreement alleviated the impact of any loss of car parking through the provision of a free travel card to the first occupant of 10 apartments for a period of three years.

DfI Roads considered the proposal and offered no objections subject to conditions. The proposal was therefore not considered to prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

In terms of Biodiversity Natural Environment Division (NED) had assessed the building from online mapping software and was content on this occasion to accept the present surveys as the building appeared to contain a low Bat Roost Potential . No bats were observed to emerge from the building and, therefore, NED had no concerns regarding the proposed development having a significant impact on bats. NED was content that the proposal was unlikely to have a significant impact on the local swift population from the proposed development.

A Drainage Assessment and Addendum was submitted and the consultation response from NI Water confirmed there was capacity for the development in its foul sewer within 20 metres of the site and the design and construction of a suitable drainage network was feasible.

Following completion of a risk evaluation for potential pollutant linkages, it had been concluded that there was low risk from onsite and offsite sources and no further assessment was required. Both NIEA Regulation Unit and the Council's Environmental Health Department requested conditions to be added to the decision notice for the submission of further site investigations and Quantitative Risk Assessment following demolition and site clearance works which had been conditioned accordingly.

In summary, this application marked one piece of the jigsaw, as it were, in the regeneration of Bangor Seafront with no objections received from either consultees or through the advertising and neighbour notification process. The quality of the design was of a high standard and would be secured through a legal agreement. A mixed use scheme such as this which included residential, retailing and restaurants would assist in bringing life back into the City Centre.

RECOMMENDED to grant planning permission with delegated powers to allow for the completion the legal agreement prior to issuing the decision notice.

Councillor Cathcart acknowledged the quality design and recalled a previous approval in the Royal Hotel site's history in 2018. With guidelines to pass major applications within 30 weeks and this spelling the 169th week, he understood there had been complications with NI Water and the ability to implement negative conditions but queried the delayed timeframe. The Head of Planning noted that the delayed timeframe had been widely reported and explained that each application had to be assessed afresh and as such, the application for complete demolition had required reassessment with additional surveys and independent consultants advice. Officers also had to ensure that once permission was granted for demolition and the site cleared that designs for a future build met a high quality level. There were also issues regarding traffic surveys for which DfI Roads was not content and with such reliance on third parties, there can be delays of a year or more awaiting information to be received and collated and assessed. There were resourcing issues amongst statutory consultees and meetings had occurred with NI Water asking for an estimated time of substantive response. Officers had also put forth a legal agreement to ensure the high quality design replicated the façade of the current building. All these elements had taken time and the agents had worked well with Officers.

Councillor Morgan queried what the legal agreement did for Council. The Head of Planning advised that Officers had delegated powers to work with the legal team to pull the agreement together with the applicants. The agreement secured a standard for the design of the building. If it had been a normal approval, the applicants could demolish the building and submit a standard design of lower quality on a blank site whilst now, conditions were attached that could not be varied. This also included the agreement that, due to the shortfall of car parking spaces for the proposed building, travel cards would be provided to placate those that had no space. Councillor Morgan queried if there was any possibility once knocked down that another application could be placed to overwrite that which was before Members this evening. The Head of Planning advised that the application would have to be assessed from the beginning but the legal agreement did state that any future design had to be of high quality. If the Planning Department had granted permission without backup, there was more risk to lose the quality of design element.

Councillor McCollum spoke of some local residents being alarmed at the façade being demolished and understood the reasoning behind any delays due to a complete investigation being undertaken. She was curious as to how long the applicant was bound to the legal agreement and what would happen upon its expiry. The Head of Planning explained that the agreement was binding for five years and if a new application was submitted, a new agreement would be entered into, but a precedent for a high quality design had been set by the current legal agreement.

Mr Tom Stokes (TSA Planning) was joined by Daniel McConkey (Expedia Capital Ltd) and Chris Lumsden (Design ID) to speak in support of the application. Mr Stokes advised Members that there had been a few false starts since initial approval that had been granted in 2011 under the DoE for different renditions for the site. Expedia Capital acquired the site in 2016 and had engaged in advanced proposals for an alternate 21 apartment, café and restaurant plan that was approved in 2018 which saw retention of the façade. Plans had always been to demolish the rear portion of the building with the applicant appointing designs, but it was not until 2020 that the discovery had been made of the poor condition of steels beams within the building façade which led to the realisation of an inability to retain it. This prompted the applicant to propose its complete destruction and in the interest of public safety, the applicant secured the building with hoarding and netting. Instead of reverting to a modern design, the applicant had continued to see merit in maintaining the building's iconic art deco look in any reinstatement of the façade. The plans before Members were of a high quality design with future hopes to activate the streetscape.

Councillor Cathcart thanked the applicant for working with Officers and being accepting of the legal agreement and asked if there was any estimation on delivery. Mr Stokes advised that works could begin as early as 2026 with a detailed design and consents to be secured. Part of the delay had been due to NI Water's difficult nature with regard to foul and storm drains.

Councillor Hennessy asked how recipients of the free three-year travel cards would be decided upon versus those apartments that would be allocated spaces and if there were yet any ideas as to the occupiers of restaurant and café facilities. Mr Stokes advised that this would be on a first-come, first-served basis but that the

travel card plans would feed into sustainable travel and benefits of city centre living. In relation to café/restaurant space, it was too early to say.

Alderman Graham commented on a good case for using modern day specifications in building a replica of a building that is in jeopardy of collapse. Mr Lumsden explained that from a long-term durability standpoint, there was encouragement to protect and preserve buildings through redevelopment which had been the initial approach of the applicant until discovering the corrosion. In seeking advice from structural experts, McFarland Consulting, the plans of retention had to change given the façade was so far gone at that point.

As there were no further queries from Members the speakers were returned to the public gallery.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

Councillor Cathcart spoke of frustrations on the length of time many had felt in the Royal Hotel plans to reach this stage but was understanding given the many issues as well as those presented by other external parties. Councillor McClean shared similar thoughts to his colleague, adding that he hoped it would increase footfall in the area upon completion. Councillor Harbinson was delighted with the outcome and sympathetic design to the original structure whilst Councillor Kendall advised that it had been a stellar example of how an agent and Council could work together.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity outlining appeal decisions as follows;

1. The following appeal was dismissed on 28 February 2025.

PAC Ref	2024/A0057
Council Ref	LA06/2022/1258/F
Appellant	Mr Peter Kelly
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for Farm shed for the storage of fodder and machinery (retrospective)
Location	2B Ballyblack Road, Portaferry, BT22 1PY

The above application was refused by the Council on 16 May 2024 for the following reasons:

- a) The proposal was contrary to the SPPS (para 6.73), Policy CTY 1 and Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there were no overriding reasons why the development was essential at this location.

- b) The proposal was contrary to SPPS (para 6.73) and Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that:
- It had not been demonstrated that the shed is necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding;
 - It had not been demonstrated that there are no suitable existing buildings on the holding that can be used;
 - The shed would not be sited beside existing farm buildings;
 - It did not merit being considered as an exceptional case as it had not been demonstrated that there were no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding, health and safety reasons existed to justify an alternative site away from existing farm buildings or that the alternative site away from the existing farm buildings was essential for the efficient functioning of the business.
- c) The proposal was contrary to the SPPS and Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the development, if permitted, would result in a detrimental impact on the amenity of existing residential properties outside of the holding by reason of noise, smell and pollution.



There was no dispute between the parties that the appeal site related to an active and established agricultural holding and that No. 2B Ballyblack Road, was the Appellant's farm dwelling.

Policy CTY12 requires that the proposal was sited beside existing farm buildings. However, the Commissioner found that there was only one qualifying building, for the purposes of the Policy, at the appeal site, that being the dwelling at 2B Ballyblack Road, whereas the applicant was relying on his domestic garage to count towards the 'farm buildings', which the Commissioner did not accept.

At the accompanied site visit the Appellant sought to also rely on another building which did not have planning permission or a Certificate of Lawfulness.

The Appellant argued that the proposed farm shed was sited beside existing farm buildings which included the dwelling and an outbuilding at No. 2B Ballyblack Road. During the site visit the appellant pointed to an agricultural building found directly southwest of the proposed farm shed, within the southeastern corner of a separate field to that of the appeal site. The Council advised that this structure was not raised by the Appellant within his evidence as submitted to the appeal. The Council also advised that the structure was not lawful and does not benefit from a lawful development certificate (LDC). The Appellant informed that, following an inspection by the Council, an application for an LDC had been submitted recently but was yet to be decided.

The Commissioner did not accept that the building within the domestic curtilage formed an agricultural building, rather it was a domestic garage. Given that the unauthorised building could not count, alongside the fact that the Commissioner found that the other building was not agricultural, there were no buildings (plural) for the proposed building to be sited beside, as required by policy.

The appellant contended that the retention of the proposed farm shed was essential to allow for efficient use of the agricultural holding. The Commissioner was not provided with evidence of why the assortment of agricultural buildings within the holding could not be utilised, or why a new farm shed could not be accommodated on those lands.

Whilst recognising that the location of the farm shed was convenient to the Appellant's dwelling at No. 2B Ballyblack Road, and that the location of the proposed farm shed may result in a reduction of agricultural traffic movements between the two locations, the Commissioner was not persuaded that agricultural machinery, and fodder could not be transported efficiently across this distance to and from the farmlands associated with the appeal site. As such, it was not considered that the location of the shed was essential for the function of the business.

The appeal was dismissed, and the report is attached to this report.

The above appeal decision was noteworthy in respect of comments raised by Members at March's Planning Committee meeting in respect of LA06/2024/0438/O for Erection of shed for the storage and maintenance of agricultural machinery, yard and re-location of access at Ballymaleddy Road, Comber, which was refused.

2. The following appeal was dismissed on 11 March 2025:

PAC Ref	2024/A0019
Council Ref	LA06/2019/0722/O
Appellant	Mr Michael Cleland
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for erection of 2no. dwellings
Location	Between 31 and 39 Florida Road, Ballymacashen, Killinchy

The above planning application was refused by the Council on X for the following reasons:

- a) The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there were no overriding reasons why this development was essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- b) The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the proposal did not constitute a small gap sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage, and would, if permitted, result in the creation of ribbon development along Florida Road.
- c) The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and policy CTY13 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the dwellings would, if permitted be a prominent feature in the landscape and would rely on additional landscaping to integrate into the surrounding landscape.
- d) The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and policy CTY14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the dwellings would, if permitted result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing and approved buildings and create a ribbon of development which would therefore result in a detrimental change to further erode the rural character of the countryside.

The Commissioner upheld Council's refusal reasons a), b) and d).

It was established that there was a substantial and continuously built up frontage, thus fulfilling the first part of the policy exception. However, paragraph 5.34 of Policy CTY8 indicated that it was the gap between buildings that should be considered. Taking account of the average plot sizes, more than two plots of similar sizes could be accommodated within the 96 metre gap between buildings, and consequently, the proposal would result in a more dispersed layout and settlement pattern than that exhibited within the local area. As such the appeal site did not represent an exception under Policy CTY8.

In rejecting refusal reason c), the Commissioner considered that if the appeal development were restricted to single storey and sited adjacent to the roadside, which could be secured by condition in the event of an approval, the landform rising to the rear of the site and beyond would provide sufficient backdrop to ensure that the appeal development would not appear as prominent in the local landscape.



The appeal was dismissed, and the report attached to this report.

New Appeals Lodged

- The following appeal was lodged on 11 March 2025.

PAC Ref	2024/E0049
Council Ref	LA06/2023/0607/CA
Appellant	Claire Kelly
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised pigeon loft
Location	12 Island View Gardens, Greyabbey

Performance over 2024/2025

As set out in the table below, at the date of this report, the Council had attained 100% success in appeals lodged against:

- Refusal of Planning Permission
- Enforcement Notices
- Refusal of Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use/Development

PAC Ref	Policy Engaged	Appeal Type	PAC Decision	Decsn Date
2022/E0044		Enforcement Notice	EN Upheld	10/04/2024
2022/A0161	CTY 10 - Dwelling on a Farm	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	12/04/2024

2023/A0056	CTY 8 - Ribbon Development & NH 6 - AONB	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	24/04/2024
2023/E0018		Enforcement Notice	EN Upheld	20/05/2024
2023/E0006		Enforcement Notice	EN Upheld	22/05/2024
2022/A0192	CTY 8 - Ribbon Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	25/06/2024
2023/L0012		CLOPUD Refusal	Dismissed	09/08/2024
2024/A0001	CTY 6 - Personal and Domestic Circumstances & CTY 8 - Ribbon Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	17/09/2024
2022/A0073	CTY 8 - Ribbon Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	15/10/2024
2023/L0007		CLOPUD Refusal	Dismissed	22/01/2025
2023/A0109	CTY 8 - Ribbon Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	11/02/2025
2024/A0057	CTY 12 - Agriculture & Forestry Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	27/02/2025
2024/A0019	CTY 8 - Ribbon Development	Refusal of PP	Dismissed	11/03/2025

Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings could be viewed at www.pacni.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachments.

The Head of Planning summarised the report to Members, advising that two appeals had been dismissed whilst an appeal had been lodged. She was pleased to report that performance over the last year had led to a 100% success rate in appeals lodged against refusal or enforcement by the PAC and Refusal of Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use/Development.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT- RESPONSE FROM DFI (Appendices XV, XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity explaining that

1. Members would have recalled the paper presented on 01 October meeting (attached Item 6d) informing members of the annual performance report prepared by the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) which sets out the performance of statutory consultees in the planning process.
2. The report detailed of the volume of statutory consultation that had taken place during 2023/34 with comparative information for earlier years and was the first annual report to be produced for statutory consultation since introduction of both Planning Portals (that was for Mid Ulster, and that was for the remaining 11

planning authorities, which includes DfI). Members were made aware that the figures contained in the report should not be considered as official statistics and therefore should not be quoted as such.

3. Given that the statistics presented for Ards and North Down did not reflect the performance of Divisional Offices which were known to be experiencing resourcing issues members voted for correspondence to be issued to DfI.
4. By way of summary, the response from DfI explained that:
 - the Department was not yet in a position to provide the specific information requested but was keen to enhance the statistical information available and was continuing to work with statisticians in that regard.
 - a 'deep dive' of information was taking place and would be shared when Council officials met with DfI representatives (DfI currently visiting Council offices to gain an insight and to discuss planning matters)
 - the performance and number of on-time consultee responses for major applications had been and remained an area of focus for the Planning Statutory Consultee Forum
 - DfI Roads colleagues had advised that the Southern Division (which includes Craigavon as well as the Downpatrick office) received more consultation requests (local and major) than any other Divisional office.
 - performance had been affected by the level of vacancies.
 - the number and quality of applications and consultations received was impacting their response times.
 - legislation was now in place to enable the introduction of statutory local validation checklists, which should improve the quality of applications entering the development management system.
 - steps to improve performance included, overtime working, a bid to the Interim Public Sector Transformation Board which included proposals to support and enhance the Department's statutory consultees.
5. Members were made aware that recently DfI Roads had taken a positive step and had reorganised their resources to provide a dedicated team to deal solely with Ards and North Down Council applications and meet with planning officials monthly to discuss applications.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report and attachments.

The Head of Planning summarised the report to Members, explaining that following on from the annual performance report from DfI, additional information had been requested by Members in relation to statistics on statutory consultees. A response had been received that explained DfI was not in the position to provide specific information but was keen to enhance statistical information which would be shared with Council officials. DfI Roads had advised the Southern Division received more consultation requests than any other office and that the level of vacancies affected its ability whilst the quality of applications impacted its response times. However, legislation was now in place introducing statutory local validation checklists which it was hoped would improve the quality of applications.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted and the report be noted.

Councillor Kendall was curious if there had been any noted improvement with the addition of a dedicated team. The Head of Planning advised that it had been helpful to have face to face meetings once per month but there was still the issue of backfilling posts for the Department.

Councillor Morgan believed things were moving in the right direction and wanted to know if responses were being returned more accurately or expediently. The Head of Planning had noted improvement recently, but encouragement was still required from the Council as she explained that consultees still had to advise on a response which led to Officers negotiating with DfI to direct it in relation to what was specifically being requested to provide comment on. There were some large applications that would require work with the DfI due to incorrect information being presented to the Council. However, some personnel changes had occurred in the primary tiers of the organisational hierarchy which would hopefully lead to further improvement.

AGREED TO RECOMMENDED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. COURT JUDGEMENTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that whilst Members had been provided with updates on planning appeal decisions on a monthly basis, it was considered appropriate to bring to the Committee's attention relevant Court judgments pertaining to planning.

Background

Members were aware that there was, at the time of writing, no third party right of appeal in Northern Ireland. Should someone be aggrieved by a planning decision, that decision could either be appealed to the Planning Appeals Commission by the applicant (against imposition of a planning condition or against refusal of planning permission), whereas a third party could only apply to the Court for leave to judicially review on a point of law.

A judicial review examined the legality of how a body arrived at its decision or action, not the merits of the actual decision or action itself. The legal process involved two stages, an application for leave to apply for judicial review (stage 1) and, upon being granted leave by the court, an application for judicial review (stage 2; the substantive hearing). They could range from issues specific to one individual to issues on a departmental policy or project that impact on the wider public.



Source: Based on the process map in *Judicial Review in Northern Ireland: A guide for non-governmental organisations*, The Public Interest Litigation Support Project, 2012.

The Council's regulatory planning framework defined its remit and duties as well as the limits of its powers, how it would make decisions and take actions. The Council also had a complaints framework setting out the process for the dissatisfied member of the public. Complainants, dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints process, may wish to take their complaint further through an application to the NI Public Services Ombudsman or through a statutory right of appeal.

Where the complaint was about the legality of the process underpinning the Council's decision or action, the complainant could, as a remedy of last resort, apply to have it examined by the Judicial Review Court, a specialist court within the Northern Ireland High Court.

As a specialist type of litigation, judicial review was the subject of a Practice Direction (No. 3/2018) that set out the practice and procedures of the Judicial Review Court and which complemented the relevant provisions of the Rules of the Court of Judicature (NI) 1980 (the Rules of Judicature). All parties to a judicial review had a responsibility to be aware of, and comply with, these rules and procedures.

A judicial review was not an appeal of the merits of a decision or action, nor a means of appealing the decision of another Court. It was a legal challenge based on the grounds that the Council had acted improperly in coming to its decision or action. Acting improperly mainly refers to the following:

- **Illegality** – e.g. by making a mistake in applying the law or by not doing something required by law.
- **Irrationality** – e.g. the decision is so illogical that no reasonable person could have arrived at such a decision.
- **Procedural unfairness** – e.g. by failing to comply with established or agreed procedures.

The process of Judicial Review had been set out at Item 7a.

Judgments Attached

Item 7b - Neutral Citation No: [2024] NICA 42 re Glassdrumman Road decision

The above Court of Appeal judgment reviewed was in relation to a challenge brought against the grant of planning permission by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for erection of two dwellings, considered under Policy CTY 8 (Ribbon Development) of PPS 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside.

The original judge only issued declaratory relief as opposed to quashing the permission ([2024] NIKB 31- see Item 7c)

The planning application was presented to and decided by the Council on the basis that it came within the infill 'small gap' housing exception within Policy CTY 8.

The appellant had asserted that the Council's decision was:

- contrary to planning policy in Northern Ireland (NI); and
- Policy CTY 8 considered ribbon development in rural areas to be damaging and unacceptable in principle, and that it required planning applications which would cause or add to ribbon development to be rejected *unless* they come within the very limited exceptions described within the policies themselves.

When leave was granted, there were three grounds of challenge to be addressed:

- i. illegality;
- ii. the leaving out of account of material considerations; and
- iii. irrationality

At paragraph 6 therein, in referring to the original judgment (para 96), it was explained that

"the primary focus of Policy CTY8 is on avoiding ribbon development, save where one of the two exceptions is engaged. Since Policy CTY8 is referred to in Policy CTY1 of PPS21 as being one of those policies pursuant to which development may in principle be acceptable in the countryside, there may be a temptation to view it primarily as a permissive policy." Also, "unlike the other policies, CTY8 does not begin by setting out that planning permission "will be granted" for a certain type of development. On the contrary, CTY8 begins by explaining that planning permission "will be refused" where it results in or adds to ribbon development. This is an inherently restrictive policy such that, unless the exception is made out, planning permission must be refused." (emphasis added)

Paragraphs 52 and 53 therein was useful for Members who had previously raised queries about how Policy CTY 8 should be interpreted, in the context of ascertaining 'a small gap site'.

[52] We agree that the guidance in policy documents should not be used as a scientific formula designed to produce a firm result. However, the mathematical indicators provided in the guidance do have value because they seek to focus attention on the relative proportions of the visual elements within a rural landscape and to clarify how these proportions relate to each other to produce the visual

impression that a landscape is continuously developed in a way that suits an urban place or is less developed as is appropriate for rural landscapes.

[53] In short, the foundational planning policies and the supplementary guidance, complete with its numerical guidelines, should be viewed as a toolkit to help planners identify where pre-existing ribbon development is present and where it is absent. The guidance is intended to help them correctly identify the 'small gap' sites within the areas of pre-existing ribbon development which can be developed as infill sites without substantially adding to the visual damage that has already been done in such cases. They are also designed to help planners identify and preserve the undeveloped truly 'rural' landscapes which the policy strives to maintain, so that the acknowledged damaging effects of ribbon development do not spread to new and presently uncontaminated places."

Aerial Overview of site



The Court of Appeal:

- Was critical of the Council's Planning officers not drawing the Committee's attention to particular policy regarding priority habitats (Policy NH5 of PPS 2 in relation to proposed removal of hedgerow);
- did not consider that the Committee had acted unlawfully in not carrying out a site visit;
- Policy CTY 8 was an inherently restrictive policy such that, unless the exception had been made out, planning permission must be refused;
- The concept of "otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage" should be interpreted and applied strictly, rather than generously.

And ordered the decision quashed.

Item 7d - Neutral Citation No: [2025] NICA 8

The above was a Court of Appeal judgment in relation to a case brought by Gordon Duff against Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council whereby it had granted planning permission for a dwelling on site between 51 and 53 East Road, Drumsum, dated 26 August 2021. The previous judgment referred to is attached as Item 7e ([2024] NIKB 31).

The original case was brought against the Council for granting permission under Policy CTY 8 of PPS 21.

The Court of Appeal decision addressed the matter of 'standing' of Gordon Duff in bringing the application, amongst other matters.

Planning permission had previously been applied for twice before this particular case and had been recommended for REFUSAL by the planning officers.

This third application (subject to the judicial review) was also recommended for refusal; however, planning permission was granted contrary to the planning officer's recommendation.

The Court of Appeal focused on the basis of the findings of both the NI Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee in relation to approval of dwellings in the countryside contrary to officer recommendation (see paragraph 18 therein).

The judgment found against the previous Judge's findings in relation to a number of matters – see paragraphs 31 and 32, particularly where it is found that:

(b) The judge failed to properly consider the significant impact on good administration and proper application of the planning policies on rural development which would ensue if a planning decision, which was clearly unlawful, should nonetheless be allowed to proceed as a permissible windfall. This would set a dangerous precedent.

(d) Furthermore, the judge's conclusion is inconsistent with his analysis of systemic issues highlighted by previous judicial review cases and NIAO and PAC as regards rural development and the "cautionary words" he provided at the end of his judgment.

Keegan LCJ and Treacy LJ concluded that this case "exposed many issues in relation to rural development not least the danger if elected representatives proceed against the recommendations of experienced planning officials and planning officer's reports without good reason."



Item 7f - Neutral Citation No: [2017] NIQB 133

The above judgment, whilst older, addressed a case brought against Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, whereby planning permission had been granted for removal of holiday occupancy condition holiday home development comprising 58 apartments (approved as part of a wider scheme for a hotel and golf course) in Hillsborough.

The application, to remove the occupancy condition, was recommended for refusal on the basis that, if allowed, would set an unwelcome precedent for the development of unfettered housing in the countryside and result in development that is contrary to the Local Development Plan. The Case Officer's Report also set out the supporting evidence submitted with the original application as to the fact that those proposed luxury holiday lodges were chosen for their proximity close to the proposed golf course, and furthermore that their compact nature would allow for efficient site management in terms of both maintenance and site management,

This decision was taken contrary to the recommendation of the Planning Department and after a pre-determination heard by the Department for Infrastructure.

In this case the then Chief Executive of the Council sought to judicially review the Council's own decision on the basis of breach of protocol whereby two members of the Planning Committee had not declared an interest, despite having submitted letters of support for the application (however, her application was made out of time).

This judgment was delivered in November 2017, and the application was withdrawn in October 2018.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and attachments.

The Director of Prosperity summarised each of the three cases outlined in the report to Members, advising that further summaries of cases could be brought before Members if they so desired.

As there were many cases that could have been brought to the attention of Members, Councillor Morgan was curious why these specific cases had been chosen and if the Council had any recent Judicial Reviews.

The Director of Prosperity explained that one of the cases was of interest as some queries had been raised by Members around the CTY8 policy in recent times which gave relevancy. There had been one recent Judicial Review instigated by the Director when she was Head of Planning two years ago. There had been one example proffered where the Council had conceded to the quashing of a decision on the basis of the scheme of delegation whereby the Judge had raised it as a particular issue where he considered Council should count objections from statutory consultees as one of the numbers that prompted referral to the Committee. There had been a number of pre-action protocol letters regarding a particular enforcement case, but none of which had ever proceeded to a full JR. These reviews were expensive to defend and time consuming, but the Director could provide links for Members to review in future.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. RESPONSE FROM NI WATER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that Members were presented with a report (Item 7) at its meeting of 04 February 2025

detailing correspondence dated 15 January from NI Water in relation to Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works project deferral.

At that meeting Members agreed an alternative proposal to noting as follows:

"That this Council replies to the letter from Northern Ireland Water dated 15th January 2025, noting with grave concern the decision to "mothball" the Kinnegar Waste Water Treatment Works Upgrade project and the confirmation that this project is now paused indefinitely and further asks Northern Ireland Water for clarification of the following issues:

1. *What is the programme of maintenance which will commence in Spring 2025 and in what way will it differ from that maintenance which is currently in place?*
2. *If the facility at Kinnegar operates as "effectively as possible", will that achieve the key objectives in the Living with Water Plan of:*
 - a) *Increasing the treatment capacity to facilitate economic growth in the Borough*
 - b) *Reduce spills from unsatisfactory storm overflows*
 - c) *Treat waste water to a higher standard and*
 - d) *Reduce the risk of odours"*

Further to the Director sending a letter dated 6 March, the Council had received a response dated 26 March from Sara Venning, Chief Executive of NI Water, attached for Members' information.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the response from NI Water as attached.

The Director of Prosperity explained that Item 8 had been a late addition but one that was felt appropriate given the Chief Executive of NI Water was providing responses to queries raised by Members at February's meetings.

Councillor McCollum expected the nature of the response and was awaiting outcome of Alderman Smith's request at last month's Council meeting. The Director of Prosperity quoted Alderman P Smith,

"Council seeks a meeting with the new Minister for Infrastructure to highlight the ongoing issues in the borough relating to water, infrastructure, roads, funding and greenways. That a delegation be appointed to attend a meeting with the Mayor, Group Leaders of DUP, Alliance and UUP with a nominee or representative from smaller parties/Independents plus appropriate Officers."

The Minister's private secretary had responded, advising the Minister was pleased to accept the invitation with arrangements being made at the time of the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Kendal expressed dismay at NI Water having not received funding from the Executive in order to upgrade infrastructure. The Director of Prosperity advised Members of a consultation on the Department for Infrastructure website under the consultations section regarding its equality impact assessment on the draft budget

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which set out details on what monies were being given and where. It was worth Members' attention and was due to close in June. Though positive regarding revenue, it was not the same case with capital but a draft response would be brought to Council. Another consultation was due from the Minister regarding Developer Contributions to help with the water system and again, a draft response would be brought before Council.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 21:55.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 2 April 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McAlpine

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings (Zoom)

Councillors:	Blaney	McKee (Zoom)
	Douglas	McKimm (Zoom)
	Edmund	McLaren
	Harbinson	Morgan
	Irwin	Wray
	Kerr	

Officers: Director of Environment (D Lindsay) (Zoom), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Interim Head of Regulatory Services (R McCracken), and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Mayor, who was on Council business, and from Councillor Boyle.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair, Alderman McAlpine, declared an interest in Item 10 - Notice of Motion and explained that the Vice Chair, Councillor McLaren would chair the meeting at that point.

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATION BY ORCADES MARINE – PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE

(Appendix I)

The Chair introduced Alexandra Thomson, Managing Director, Orcades Marine and invited her to make her presentation via Zoom to the Committee. The presentation outlined the Presentation of Findings to the Duty Holder. Those included the details of the audit and the purpose of it along with the key findings. It was reported that good practices were observed across operations during the auditor's visit and a

comprehensive Marine Safety Management System was in place, with records up to date in compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code.

Members were invited to ask questions.

Councillor Edmund appreciated the presentation and asked if it was necessary for the Council to repeat the audit work every six months. It was explained that that was not a requirement and it was up to the Duty Holder and Harbour Master to decide, but was normally carried out annually.

Councillor Wray also valued the presentation and thought it would be remiss of the Committee not to congratulate the Harbour Master for the work that had been undertaken. The recommendations that had been made were good sense and it was encouraging that such good practices had been observed.

There were no further questions, and the Chair thanked the Managing Director, Orcades Marine before she left the meeting.

NOTED.

4. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING THE REINTRODUCTION OF PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AT COUNCIL HRCS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council in October 2024.

"That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated.

This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland".

To facilitate pedestrian access at the Council's Household Recycling Centres, three potential options were identified:

1. Address the issue as part of the HRC Estate Improvement Strategy. The primary aims of the Council's agreed Strategy included:

"Pedestrian access will be considered when identifying new sites, though will always be subject to the ability to provide pedestrian access safely and separate from vehicular access."

Officers believed that that option represented by far the most strategic and cost efficient/effective way of addressing the potential for accommodating safe pedestrian access into HRCs, allowing for this issue to be considered in the

context of all the other stated aims of the Council's agreed HRC Estate Improvement Strategy.

2. Engage Consulting Engineers to carry out a feasibility study into the redesign of the existing footprint of each HRC facility to enable pedestrian access, with appropriate safe segregation from vehicles visiting and/or servicing the sites. Based on indicative costs obtained from Belfast City Council for a similar exercise carried out at Alexandra Park Avenue HRC, the cost for consultancy work was likely to be in the region of £20,000 for the feasibility study across the Council's 9 HRCs and in the region of £120,000 for civil works.

The following table set out the footprint of the Council's 9 HRCs in comparison to the Belfast CC Site at Alexandra Park Avenue. When consideration was given to the space required for barriers and separate pedestrian access walkways, it was questionable whether any feasibility study was likely to conclude that the type of pedestrian access arrangements provided at the Alexandra Park Avenue site could in fact be incorporated at any of the Council's HRCs, apart from Balloo.

Site Name	Area (Square metres)
Donaghadee	420
Portaferry	650
Kircubbin	705
Hollywood	825
Ballygowan	925
Millisle	1010
Comber	1680
Newtownards	1870
Balloo (Bangor)	4650
Alexander Park Avenue	4450

3. The online booking system could be adapted to allow specific time slots to be booked for walk-in access only. For example, a 1-hour slot could be set aside two or three times per week specifically for pedestrian access only, and bookings for vehicular access would not be allowed during those periods. Site users would still be required to comply with the booking system conditions. It should however be noted that the Council had limited control over the times that outside contractors arrived on-site to service various containers. Because of the types of vehicles used, the requirements for reversing and lifting manoeuvres, those represented the highest risk activities on site and generally required a temporary closure or site restrictions depending on the site layout – and such events might on occasions clash with designated pedestrian access periods.

Officers considered that this option would be an unnecessary over-provision of access arrangements for pedestrians, and lead to an unpopular curtailment of

access availability for vehicular customers at sites. The Department was unaware of any significant level of actual demand for pedestrian access to HRCs, and complaints were not being received by officers about this issue. Consequently, it was considered likely that dedicated pedestrian access only periods at sites would be poorly utilised (whilst denying vehicular access during those times).

Were Members minded to consider this option, officers believed that it should be for a trial period only – with the longer-term future of such arrangements only being decided upon after a review of the trial. It should also be noted that there would be a cost of £1400 to make the necessary software changes (and the same again if Council decided to revert to the original system following evaluation of the trial).

RECOMMENDED that Council consider the options set out in this report and direct officers accordingly.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Morgan;

That this committee agrees to proceed with Option 3 as spelled out in the report, in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate.

Councillor Irwin thanked the officers who had worked on the report and appreciated the amount of time that would have taken. She suggested that the Council proceed with Option 3 but stressed the need for common sense in the locations of those and was keen to hear where the slots would be allocated. She also referred to Option 1 and the Estate Improvement Strategy and asked if that was work normally undertaken by the Waste Working Group and it was confirmed that it would be.

In response the Director replied that one of the benefits of the new booking system was the transparency it provided in terms of showing peak demand periods. If the Committee was in agreement with the proposal, a more detailed analysis could be considered examining the busiest periods for vehicular traffic and from that look at where it would be most suitable to have pedestrian slots.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing reported that when analysis had been carried out previously it had shown that Thursday was a quiet day, and he thought that early in the working week could also be a suitable time to provide pedestrian access.

Councillor Irwin agreed that it would be helpful to have the detail and if the Council was to proceed, she asked if some sites would be excluded. Comber was given as an example where walk ins would not be expected due to the location of the HRC. The Head of Waste and Cleansing suggested that a trial could take place at all sites over six months which would help to expose where there was a demand. Councillor Irwin hoped that Option 3 would be supported by the Committee.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Morgan thought that it was important to provide an option for pedestrian access. She had been asked by a constituent for access at the Comber site and she considered that it was sensible to understand demand for a pedestrian service. She thought that Option 3 could be used to assess demand in the short term and hoped to see that progress.

Councillor Wray considered that Option 2 was unviable, but he understood the desire to progress Option 3. His own belief had been that Option 1 was sensible, and he questioned why pedestrians could not book to access at the same time as those arriving at HRCs by vehicle who often needed to use multiple skips and inevitably ended up walking through the site. The Director said that by allowing pedestrian and vehicular access bookings during the same time slot, the Council could have both arriving to enter the site at the same time – presenting an unacceptable risk.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing mentioned that the need for safe separation of pedestrians and vehicular traffic had been triggered by the Health and Safety Executive, indeed the coming together of pedestrians and traffic was a 'hot' topic for focus by the Executive in terms of enforcement. Public information campaigns showed that fatalities could result in the failure to heed that advice. Councillor Wray saw the difficulties for the Director and officers. Following on from that point the Director added that site users should not be randomly walking around the site undirected. When vehicular access only was permitted it was still relatively difficult to control pedestrians and vehicles on site, and that challenge would be significantly exacerbated as a risk with pedestrians entering a site along with vehicles, while potentially distracted carrying large items.

Councillor McKee was content to support Option 3 for a trial and referred to the issue being one that had been ongoing for some time, some residents had asked for this and Members had a duty to do something about that. The booking system could help to facilitate better access for people so that the Council could continue to meet its obligations for safety while providing an equitable service to all residents. He looked forward to seeing the results of the trial.

Councillor McLaren felt very torn on the issue, she was aware that it had been ongoing for many years and expressed disappointment that it had not yet been resolved. She admitted that her immediate reaction was that it was common sense to permit pedestrians to enter a site. However, she recognised that from a management perspective if a member of the public was to get hurt jobs could be on the line. It was important to acknowledge that the agenda had been set by the Health and Safety Executive and to go against that was likely to create trouble in the future. Health and Safety dominated every single aspect of every job, and she believed that was right. She referred to a previous job she had had where she was involved in the aftermath of a traumatic death of a man who had been hit on the head by someone driving plant machinery. She urged a bigger perspective and referred to the Alexandra Park Avenue site in Belfast which was large and served hundreds of homes in the immediate area. She asked officers how many pedestrians used that site.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing advised that the Council had contacted Belfast City Council which had estimated that there were two to three walk ins each day at that recycling centre and the busiest ever being ten during situations when there were vehicle queues outside and persons had exited their vehicles to enter the site on foot rather than wait.

Councillor Blaney thought that it was sensible to understand demand since it was something which he admitted he had never received contact about. He thought that the Council should be able to gauge demand before starting a trial that could inconvenience the public. He thought that the trial should be based on sites where pedestrian access had been requested since it would be massively overburdensome to impose it on everyone.

The Director and the Head of Waste and Cleansing confirmed that Council staff were not receiving complaints about lack of pedestrian access at HRCs. The Director acknowledged that a small number of Elected Representatives had raised the matter.

Councillor McKimm suggested that he often found that there was a theory of the practice and then there was the practice of something and that could be quite different. He described a visit to an HRC where he had varied items in his boot which would require movement around a site. He thought that sustainable travel should be encouraged, and that risk should be managed and believed that often the 'status quo' should be an option. He thought he might abstain if a vote was taken.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked for clarification that if Option 3 was agreed would the trial be rolled out across the Borough at all sites or only those where pedestrian access had been requested previously such as Holywood and Donaghadee. Concern was expressed by Councillor Edmund about the smaller depots on the Peninsula which had to be closed when being serviced and believed that the smaller sites could be more prone to accidents and thought that the trial should be limited to the two sites named.

Councillor Douglas explained that before the meeting she had considered Option 1 to be the best way forward but now saw the merits of a trial on the two sites. She added that in her time as a Councillor, and prior to that working for 15 years in the office of an MLA, she had never once received a request for the Council to consider pedestrian access at HRCs.

Councillor Irwin thanked everyone for the constructive debate, it had been discussed for many years, but she felt that the new booking system would provide the opportunities to create a solution. She was not ignorant to the Health and Safety argument, and nobody wanted to see accidents on Council property. However, through the discussion she would be happy to amend the recommendation.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Morgan;

That this committee agrees to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1.

Councillor McKimm voted against.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE – COUNCIL DEPOT RATIONALISATION REVIEW

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members may be aware that the subject of the Council's operations depot estate had been discussed in the context of the estimates process and the Council's capital investment programme.

The Council faced several key strategic challenges going forward, including:

- The need to transition towards a net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050
- The need to maximise the efficiency of Borough maintenance operations
- The need to maximise the efficiency of waste management operations
- The need to maximise waste recycling performance

A number of key strategies/plans had either already been agreed by the Council or in the process of development and finalisation, that were pertinent to those challenges.

Those included:

- Roadmap to Sustainability
- Feasibility Study for Alternate Fuels and Roadmap to Green Fleet
- Sustainable Waste Resource Management Strategy
- Climate Action Plan (under development)
- Climate Adaptation Plan
- Corporate Plan
- Estate Strategy 2020-2025 - Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Ards and North Down Local Development Plan - Preferred Options Paper
- Waste Management Plan (arc21 region)

Various factors meant that the Council's existing operations depots were unlikely to adequately support the achievement of those strategic challenges. Probably most significant amongst those, was the lack of current infrastructure to support the transition to a green fleet. There was also a need to ensure that the Council's operations activities were organised and managed in the most efficient way possible,

with separate legacy facilities remaining largely unchanged since reorganisation in 2015.

A Depot Rationalisation Project Board had been established to take the issue forward, comprising officers from across relevant departments.

Strategic Outline Case (SOC)

It was proposed that the Council invited proposals for the development of a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the development of an Integrated Depot(s) for Ards and North Down Borough Council, that would facilitate the achievement of the strategic goals outlined and, in particular, ensure that the Council was in a position to achieve its 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emissions target. The SOC should include option(s) for collaboration/partnership working with other key statutory departments/agencies that delivered maintenance activities and/or operated fleets in the Borough.

The SOC should explicitly take cognisance, among other appropriate considerations, of the following factors:

- Review of the Council's existing depot estate and identification of constraints and opportunities associated with that
- Review of potential sites (and or key locations within the Borough) for one or more new integrated depots
- Review of potential features of any new depot(s), including incorporation of onsite generation of renewable energy (wind, solar, hydrogen)
- Potential for co-location/facilities sharing with other key statutory departments /agencies
- Establish a facility schedule including areas
- High level costing

£25k had been included in the budget for this year to support the completion of a SOC.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to invite tenders for the completion of a Strategic Outline Case for rationalisation of our depot estate.

Proposed by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. GRANT OF AN ENTERTAINMENTS LICENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that an application had been received for the Grant of an Entertainments Licence as followed:

1. The Barn, Farm Shed at 3 Lisbane Road, Kircubbin, BT22 1AA

Applicant: Brian McCarthy, 46 Rowreagh Road, Kircubbin, BT22 1AR

Days and Hours: 14 specified days within 12 months

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any entertainment of a like kind.

There had been no objections received from PSNI, NIFRS or Environmental Health.

2. The Old Market House, Bangor, 77 Main Street, Bangor, BT20 5AF

Applicant: Alison Blaney, The Old Market House, 77 Main Street, Bangor, BT20 5AF

Days and Hours: Monday – Saturday 9am – 11pm & Sunday 9am – 11pm

Type of entertainment: A Theatrical Performance & Dancing, Singing or Music or any entertainment of a like kind.

There had been no objections received from PSNI or Environmental Health.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants an Entertainments Licence to The Barn subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services and The Old Market House subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services and NIFRS.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

It gave Councillor Kerr great pleasure to propose the recommendation and referring to the Licence granted to the premises in Kircubbin, that was welcomed since it was helping to support charity. Similarly, Councillor Blaney welcomed the licences and looked forward to what would be done at The Old Market House, Bangor.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kerr, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. REVIEW OF NAVIGATION IN STRANGFORD LOUGH
(Appendices II & III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council was the Local Lighthouse Authority responsible for Aids to Navigation (AtoNs) within the Council's area. There were over 100 AtoNs on its coastline and throughout Strangford Lough.

Many AtoNs within Strangford Lough were until relatively recently unknown to the Council and historically some had not been well maintained. As part of its commitment to develop safe navigation through the Borough's waters, in December 2020 Members agreed to undertake a review of those AtoNs.

This report aimed to update Member on the actions taken since then.

Step 1- Carry out a Navigational Risk Assessment & Stakeholder Engagement

With no specific budget set aside, progress was relatively slow to start however in March 2022 an opportunity arose to join with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in availing of NIEA's Challenge Fund, to appoint a consultant who would carry out navigational risk assessments and stakeholder engagement sessions in order to devise a new system of navigation for the Lough.

An extensive trawl of User Groups within Strangford Lough was undertaken to identify those stakeholder organisations / groups with an interest in Strangford Lough Navigation. The list was generated from the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, the Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group, The Strangford Lough Rangers Group, local sailing and coastal rowers and outdoor recreation providers. Invitations were issued to 113 recipients within those organisations.

Further to the email invites, invitations were posted in the Strangford and Lecale ezine, a news article on www.strangfordlough.org and follow up posts on social media via Facebook and Instagram.

The attendees were well engaged throughout the meetings, with valuable feedback provided.

The final report was issued in July 2024 and suggested that a single, lit, arterial route be provided through the centre of the Lough. The full report is attached for Members' information.

Step 2- Implementation of the Findings

With the new safe system of navigation confirmed, the next step was to seek budget to implement the changes.

Fortunately, in August 2024, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was announced and was a good fit for the navigational improvement project due to the project's aims of increasing the connectivity and accessibility of the Lough. The Council subsequently agreed that £80,000 of the UKSPF funding be allocated to that project.

Officers began additional stakeholder engagement, speaking to the Royal Yachting Association and yacht/sailing clubs in the Borough to ensure that the navigational route proposed by the consultants would meet their needs.

Following those conversations, some additional routes were found to be necessary in addition to the main arterial route:

- Kircubbin to Whiterock
- White Rock to Ringhaddy
- Rainey Island
- Comber River

Details of all marked routes were included in a further appendix. A condition of the UKSPF funding was that works would be complete by March 2025 so at the time of writing this report works were well under way and would be completed prior to that deadline.

Conclusion

Officers were pleased to have been able to deliver this valuable project, consisting of approximately £100,000 of works, at minimal cost to the ratepayer. Feedback from sailing clubs had been extremely positive, with many speaking favourably about the new navigational aids that would make the Lough safer for mariners and promote recreational sailing between clubs across the Lough's coastline.

Those new AtoNs were in the process of being recognised by Commissioners of Irish Lights and the old AtoNs removed where practical to do so.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the update on the review of Aids to Navigation project.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Morgan thanked the officers for the work that had been undertaken, and it was greatly welcomed to have a proper navigation aid system in place. It had been incredibly important, and she had received many comments of praise on how the work looked.

Councillor Edmund gave his congratulations to the Head of Assets and Property Services and his team and particularly welcomed that it had not cost the ratepayer a penny. Councillor Douglas reiterated that it had been good to see external groups and organisations involved and additional areas had been included.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. HARBOURS DESIGNATED PERSON AUDIT FINDINGS (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would recall that the six month Harbours Safety Update report brought to Committee in February 2025, advised that a new 'Designated Person' had been

appointed to provide oversight and audit of the Council's compliance with its duties under the Port Marine Safety Code.

Orcades Marine conducted an independent Port Marine Safety Code Audit in February 2025 at Groomsport, Donaghadee, Ballywalter, Ballyhalbert and Cooke Street, Portaferry. The Harbour Master was in attendance to assist the Auditor over a two day period, providing a tour of the facilities and allowing access to relevant documentation. The report attached detailed the findings of the audit.

Summary of Findings

Good practices were observed across operations during the auditor's visit and a comprehensive Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) was in place with records up to date in compliance with the PMSC. The Harbour Master had facilitated the ongoing training of the marine operatives, both in practical training such as powerboat level 2 and in academic qualification such as Harbour Master Diploma (Lloyds Maritime Academy), highlighting the team's commitment to safety. Ards and North Down Borough Council's Harbours Team had demonstrated a strong commitment to the PMSC and its continual improvement of its MSMS. The following recommendations were made:

- The MSMS should be updated to include the new Designated Person contact details.
- Individual names/job roles of Duty Holder should be defined in the MSMS.
- Section 3.1.2 should include a statement that the duty holder cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the ground that they do not have particular skills.
- The transfer of incident and accident reporting to electronic system should be completed.
- The Marine Safety Policy (last signed 2018) should be reviewed to ensure relevance.

The Designated Person, Alexandra Thompson, would present the audit findings directly to the Environment Committee, as the 'Duty Holder' under the Port Marine Safety Code and in compliance with the guidance contained therein.

The recommended changes would soon be implemented and a further update report brought before Members in due course.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the Designated Person Audit findings.

Proposed by Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Edmund had been pleased to hear that the Audit had gone well and praised the team involved for that. The Chair (Alderman McAlpine) agreed and had welcomed the positive findings from the Audit.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

9. Q3 BUILDING CONTROL ACTIVITY REPORT (OCT – DEC 2024)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in this report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of Building Control, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance. The report format had been introduced across Regulatory Services.

Applications

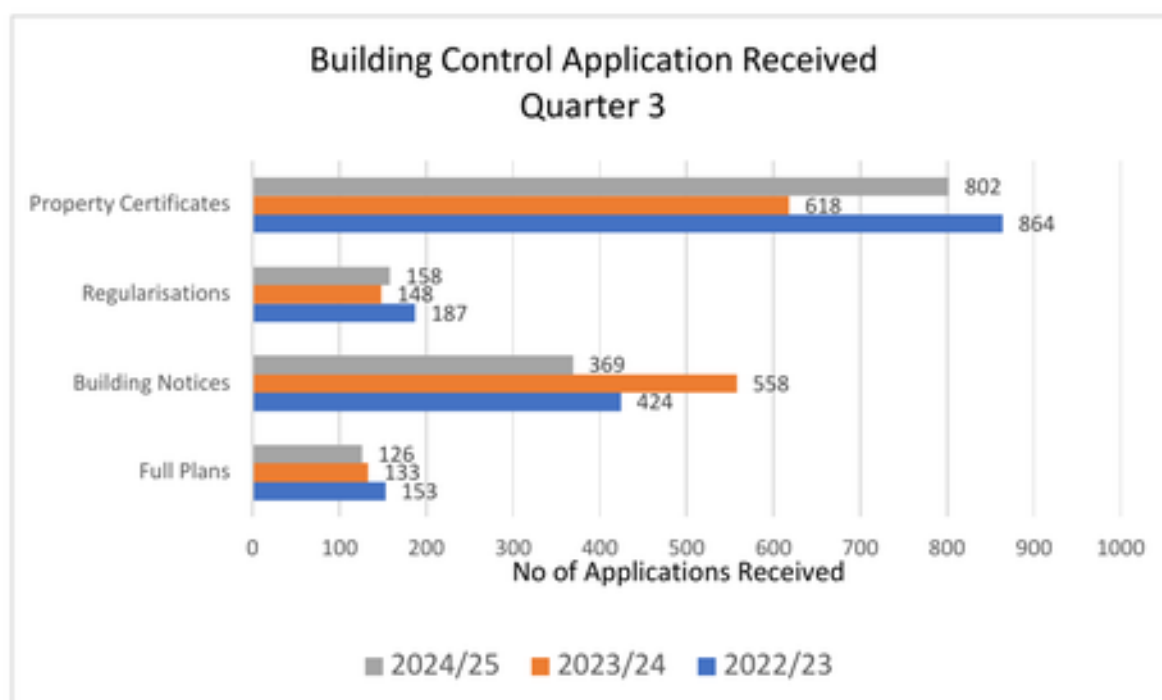
Full Plan applications were made to Building Control for building works to any commercial building, or for larger schemes in relation to residential dwellings.

Building Notice applications were submitted for minor alternations such as internal wall removal, installation of heating boilers or systems, installation of all types of insulation and must be made before work commenced. Those applications were for residential properties only.

Regularisation applications considered all works carried out illegally without a previous Building Control application in both commercial and residential properties. A regularisation application considered all types of work retrospectively and under the Building Regulations in force at the time the works were carried out.

Property Certificate applications were essential to the conveyancing process in the sale of any property, residential or commercial, and provided information on Building Control history and Council held data.

QUARTER 3	Period of Report 01/10/2024 – 31/12/2024	01/10/2023- 31/12/2023	01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022
Full Plan Applications	126	133	153
Building Notice Applications	369	558	424
Regularisation Applications	158	148	187
Property Certificate Applications	802	618	864



The number of Full Plan applications received was very much determined by the economic climate, any changes in bank lending or uncertainty in the marketplace may cause a reduction in Full Plan applications. There were limited internal means to control the number of applications received.

Regulatory Full Plan Turnaround Times

Turnaround times for full plan applications were measured in calendar days from the day of receipt within the Council, to the day of posting (inclusive).

Inspections must be carried out on the day requested due to commercial pressures on the developer/builder/householder, and as such any pressures on that end of the business reflected on the turnaround of plans timescale.

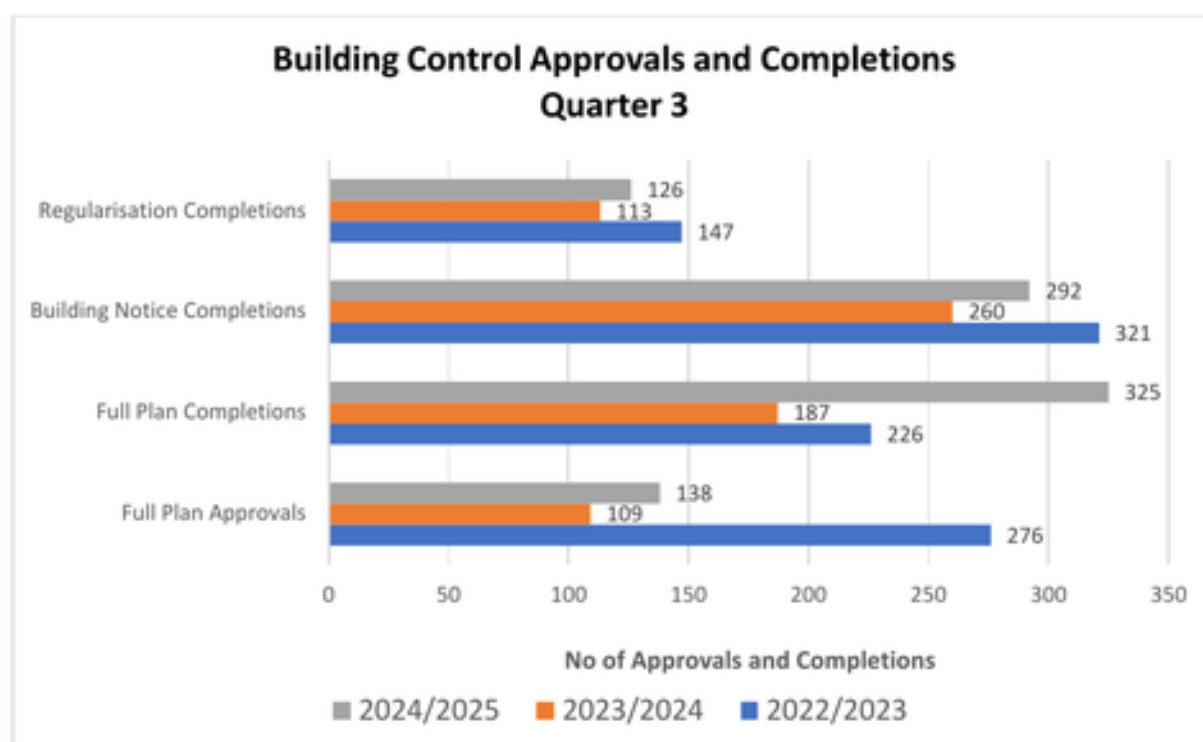
QUARTER 3	Period of Report 01/10/2024 – 31/12/2024	Same quarter last year	Comparison	Average number of days to turnaround plan
Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (21 calendar days)	77%	55%	↑	17
Non-Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (35 calendar days)	85%	75%	↑	24

Regulatory Approvals and Completions

The issuing of Building Control Completion Certificates indicated that works are carried out to a satisfactory level and meet the current Building Regulations.

Building Control Full Plan Approval indicated that the information and drawings submitted as part of an application meet current Building Regulations and works could commence on site.

QUARTER 3	Period of Report 01/10/2024 – 31/12/2024	01/10/2023 – 31/12/2023	01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022
Full Plan Approvals	138	109	276
Full Plan Completions	325	187	226
Building Notice Completions	292	260	321
Regularisation Completions	126	113	147

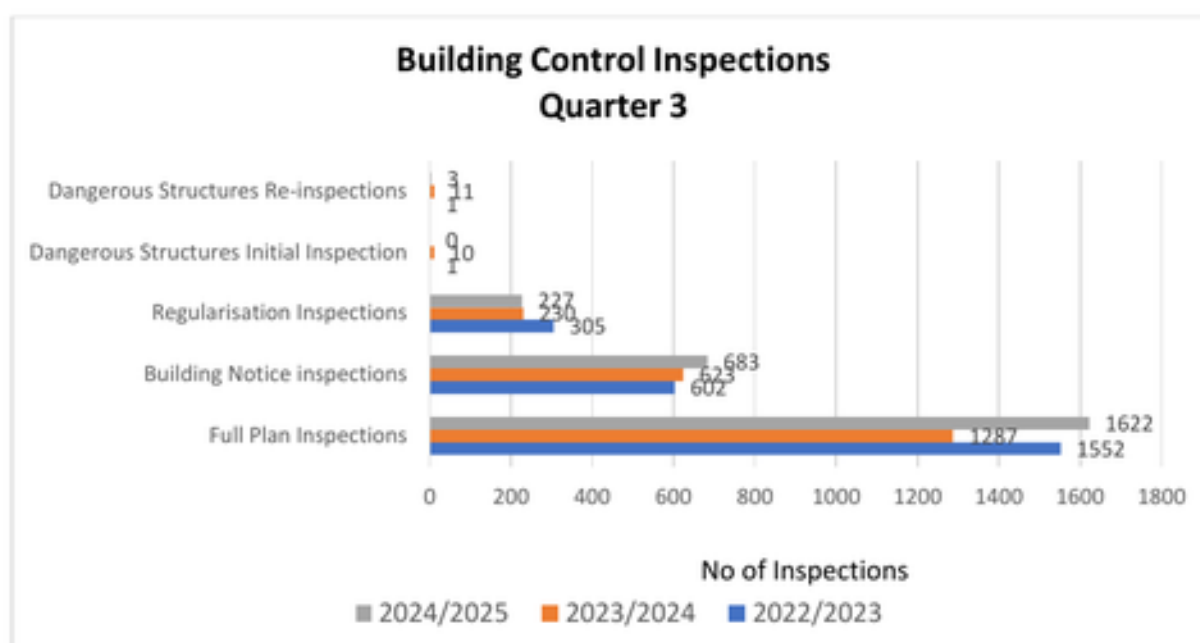


Inspections

Under the Building Regulations applicants were required to give notice at specific points in the building process to allow inspections. The inspections were used to determine compliance and to all for improvement or enforcement.

QUARTER 3	Period of Report 01/10/2024 - 31/12/2024	01/10/2023 – 31/12/2023	01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022
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Full Plan Inspections	1622	1287	1552
Building Notice Inspections	683	623	602
Regularisation Inspections	227	230	305
Dangerous structures initial inspection	0	10	1
Dangerous structure re-inspections	3	11	1
Total inspections	2535	2158	2461

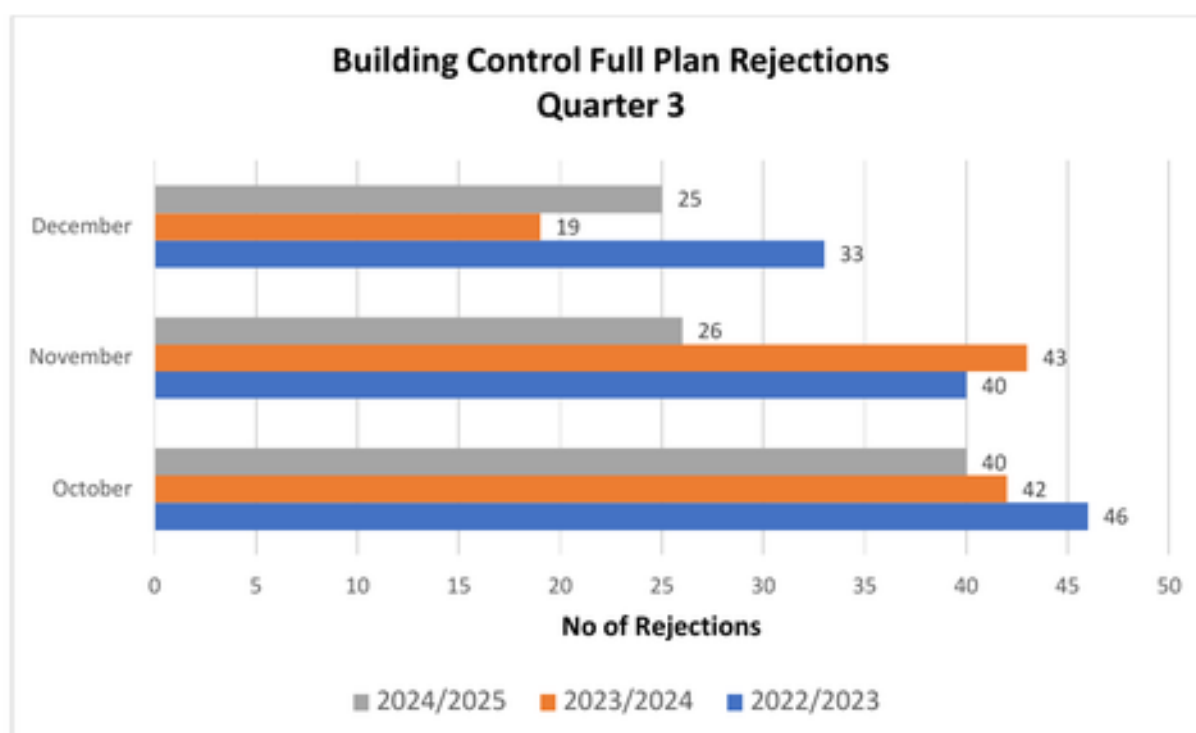


Non-Compliance

Where it was not possible to Approve full plan applications they were required to be rejected. Building Control Full Plan Rejection Notices indicated that after assessment there were aspects of the drawings provided that did not meet current Building Regulations. A Building Control Rejection Notice set out the changes or aspects of the drawings provided that need to be amended. After those amendments were completed, the amended drawings should be submitted to Building Control for further assessment and approval.

QUARTER 3	Period of Report 01/10/2024 – 31/12/2024	01/10/2023 – 31/12/2023	01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022
Full Plan Rejection Notice	91	104	119

Dangerous Structure Recommended for legal action	0	0	0
Court Cases	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Harbinson congratulated officers and welcomed the percentage increases in inspections and turnaround. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter agreed and noted that the planning system often received many complaints in respect of the process and timeline, so it was good to note that the Council's Building Control Department was on top of everything. She hoped the positive trend could be maintained.

In respect of Regulatory Full Plan Turnaround Times Councillor Blaney asked if there would be any way to benchmark that against other Councils. In response the Interim Head of Regulatory Services said that such benchmarking was not available currently but assured the Member that the figures by Council were good particularly considering the expanding regulatory requirements comprised within the building control system for works.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

Having declared an interest in Item 10 the Chair (Alderman McAlpine) asked the Vice Chair (Councillor McLaren) to conduct the meeting for this item.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

10.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McClean and Councillor Cathcart

That Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City Centre, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for Christmas 2025. Further, that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practice and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting over Main Street. The report should look at the feasibility of the future expansion of these concepts to the remainder of the Borough, if proven successful in Bangor.

Proposed by Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor McKee.

Councillor McClean gave the background to his Motion and he hoped that might allay the need for the amendment which he noted had been brought. He said that anyone who lived in the Borough, and certainly the Chamber of Commerce, understood the need for proper external street lighting, particularly when it came to Christmas lights. He thought that was a concern widely across the Borough in towns and villages where many believed the lighting and decoration was tired, garish, multicoloured and underwhelming. He considered that to be ironic considering the investment that had been made to the public realm. To him the lighting seemed like an afterthought, and he thought that the Council should aim higher and take inspiration from Regents Street, London, and other cities across the United Kingdom and Europe where tasteful, classy, festoon lighting was in abundance.

Good quality lighting and Christmas decoration would have the effect of drawing people into the commercial centres and cause them to stay longer to enjoy the festive atmosphere the lighting would provide. The Chamber of Commerce and other volunteer groups in Bangor were doing their best to attract people to Bangor city centre and while the Council was excellent at providing one-off events in the city, he felt a longer-term sustainable investment could be made by giving more consideration to Christmas Lights which were in place for a considerably longer length of time.

He asked that Bangor be part of a pilot for the entire Borough and try to achieve external funding to see what would work and if that could be rolled out across the five main urban centres of the Borough. He stressed the need to get this right and to spend time planning and designing a scheme correctly rather than randomly. He

pointed out that there were only six months left before Christmas lights would be put in place and he reassured those bringing the amendment that he did not want Bangor to take priority over other areas but rather be an area for a trial given the time limitations this year. There had been much upheaval within the city centre over the past year and the area was crying out for support and he thought the city was the ideal location for a pilot trial.

Councillor McKee, seconding the Motion, in the absence of the Mayor (Councillor Cathcart), agreed and thought that Councillor McClean had spoken eloquently and he thought it made sense to put in place a trial and pilot. Indeed, he believed that was in everyone's best interest and he knew it would be a great success.

Councillor McKimm thanked the proposers for bringing the Motion. In the wider context it should be recognised that people now had the opportunity to shop from home so urban centres were required to be creative and offer an experience. In terms of the word equal he believed that equity was more important, and that the Council should start where the need was greater. He did not believe that Bangor and Newtownards could be compared; lower Main Street, Bangor simply was not working, and he called for an opportunity to start something there that could be expanded out across the Borough. He concluded that he would struggle to find the value in the amendment so would support the substantive Motion that had been brought.

Councillor Morgan proposed an amendment which was seconded by Alderman McAlpine.

"That this Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City and Town Centres within our Borough, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for 2025. Further that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practise and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting where appropriate."

Councillor Morgan said that the amendment basically opened the opportunity to Bangor City and all of the other towns across the Borough, who often felt like an afterthought. She referred to what she believed were the tired and predictable Christmas lights and that was not unique to Bangor, indeed, she pointed to the considerable disappointment felt in Comber the previous year with its Christmas tree. She questioned the suggestion that Bangor should be a trial since who was to say that what worked in Bangor would work elsewhere, as all areas had different needs.

She stressed the importance of the Christmas period within urban centres and believed that they should all be included and they should be treated equally. She did not doubt that there was a resource issue, so a phased approach needed to be discussed within the Committee. Funding arrangements could be put in place and lights could be phased in, which to her seemed a fairer approach.

Seconding the amendment Alderman McAlpine agreed and pointed to the fact that Newtownards was an important centre for the Ards Peninsula. The 2021 Census had shown that the population of Bangor represented 40% of the total population of the Borough but she considered that the remaining 60% of the population needed to be catered for. It had been wonderful that Bangor had achieved City status, but other areas might also have the wish of a terrific Christmas too.

Councillor Wray felt conflicted and was aware of the problem that Bangor was facing but felt that in many ways the amendment made more sense since it gave consideration to towns and villages. He was disappointed to note that the Party who had brought the amendment had not had discussions with the proposers of the Motion as a first step. He stated that every Member wanted the best for the entire Borough and it was necessary to work together to achieve that. He also saw the value of having a trial in one area before the success could be extended and he referred to the need to finance that through the Rate setting process.

The Head of Assets and Property Services expressed some concern over timelines particularly if the review was to take place across the Borough and that might not be possible before Christmas due to resources. If the pilot was limited to Bangor Main Street it might be relatively easy to do with the view to potentially extending it in the future.

Councillor Blaney agreed with Councillor Wray on the basis that it would be better to do something and achieve that rather than try to do a lot more and see no tangible benefit. It also offered an opportunity to review the progress, before roll-out to further areas. He stated that he would support the Substantive Motion.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter saw the sense in that approach but stressed that Newtownards' success was in part due to the work and perseverance of the Ards Chamber of Commerce and local traders. It was her view, and that of other Newtownards residents, that the Christmas lights were not the best they could be, but she understood that the Council was constrained by its finances.

Councillor Irwin asked to put on record that the amendment was not in any way trying to be confrontational and as a Bangor East representative she understood the unique challenges facing the City, but she did not think that what would suit the city would necessarily be appropriate for the rest of the Borough. She welcomed reassurance from the proposer that the Motion proposed was not meant to be any acknowledgement that others did not need similar improvements. She did not wish the amendment to result in no improvements for anyone this Christmas, and she welcomed the discussion that had taken place.

Councillor Harbinson associated himself with Councillor Irwin's remarks, agreeing that it would be wonderful if all the work could be done at once but he believed that it was better to put the limited resources into a trial and, giving apologies to his colleagues who had brought the amendment, said he was supportive of the original Motion.

On the amended Motion being put to the meeting with 4 voting For, 9 voting Against and 1 Abstaining it FELL.

FOR (4)	AGAINST (9)	ABSTAINING (1)
Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
McAlpine	Cummings	Armstrong-Cotter
Councillors	Councillors	
Harbinson	Blaney	
Irwin	Douglas	
Morgan	Edmund	
	Kerr	
	McKee	
	McKimm	
	McLaren	
	Wray	

On summing up, Councillor McClean thanked Members for the respectful debate. He hoped that work could be done with lighting to improve lower Main Street but said his Motion went beyond lights and trees and he was genuine in his desire to support the Bangor traders and encourage more people to visit town centres.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McAlpine resumed the role of Chair at this point.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The were no matters of Any Other Notified Business.

*****ITEMS 12-13 IN CONFIDENCE*****

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

12. PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT VEHICLES

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A tender report for the purchase of vehicles was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that the Council agrees to award the contract for the purchase of replacement vehicles to Dennis Eagle, as set out in the report.

13. EXTENSION OF TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF LEGIONELLA SERVICES

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report on the extension of contracts for the provision of Legionella Services was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that the Council agrees to the contracts for the following Legionella Services being extended for one further year, in line with the terms set out in the original tender.

Lot 1: Legionella Monitoring and Risk Management Programme

- Safety Advice Centre Ltd

Lot 2: Legionella Compliance Maintenance and Remedials

- Waterman Compliance Services

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.58 pm.

ITEM 7.4

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 3 April 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Gilmour

Alderman: Adair McDowell
Armstrong-Cotter

Councillors: Ashe McLaren (zoom)
Edmund McKimm (zoom)
Hennessy (zoom) Smart
McCollum Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Economic Development (A Stobie) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillor Hollywood, Councillor McCracken, Councillor Kennedy and the Director of Prosperity.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest notified.

3. ARDS PENINSULA BUSINESS AWARDS 2025 (FILE 160094)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that following a report to Council in February 2025, the Council approved the nomination of four members to attend the Ards Peninsula Business Awards taking place on 11th April 2025.

The members nominated were:

- The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) or his nominee
- Councillor Thompson
- Councillor Smart
- Alderman McDowell

Council Officers had now been informed that the date of the awards ceremony had changed to Thursday 22nd May 2025 at the Clandeboy Lodge Hotel, Bangor.

All four nominated members had been informed of the change of date and three

members were available to attend, leaving one ticket available for a further nomination in lieu of Councillor Smart.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves one replacement nomination for Councillor Smart to attend the Ards Peninsula Business Awards on 22nd May 2025 at the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor.

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Smart nominates another Member from his party to attend.

The Chair advised that a nomination could be confirmed at the Council meeting.

Alderman McDowell sought clarity on the name of the awards which he believed had previously been called Ards Business Awards. The Head of Economic Development confirmed that the name of the awards had changed to encompass the peninsula therefore increasing the number of businesses that could partake in the awards.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Smart nominates another Member from his party to attend.

4. PEACEPLUS DIGI MINI HUBS PROJECT UPDATE (FILE DEV23)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that Members would be aware from the previous reports submitted to November Council 2024 that the Mini Digi Hubs Project, a cross-border project, was submitted to Peace Plus in March 2024. As part of the Mini Digi Hubs Project, the Comber Community Centre would benefit from funding under the project in terms of its refurbishment.

The SEUPB steering committee had confirmed via the lead partner, the East Border Region, that Council would be eligible for the full application budget of €552,858 (Euro). The Letter of Offer (LoO) was received by Council on 12 March 2025 and the partnership agreement was expected imminently.

An element of the application was to fully fund a part time Project Officer at SO2 grade to deliver the project. In total, €83,457 (Euros) was budgeted to cover the officer working 2 days a week over 42 months.

Before any expenses could be claimed back, all the project partners must sign the partnership agreement.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) Council notes receipt of the Letter of Offer, and following the appropriate legal scrutiny, approves the signing of the partnership agreement which is expected imminently.
- (b) Council Officers proceed to begin the recruitment process for a part time Project Officer to deliver the project.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendations be adopted.

Alderman Adair welcomed the recommendations and the investment that would bring. He noted the great return of investment the Council was getting from East Border Region. Alderman McDowell and himself, as members of the East Border Region had visited Wales to view their Digi Hub and he believed it was a wonderful opportunity for the Borough. The future was digital, the Digi Hub would create and bring jobs and he hoped it would build economic prosperity. It was a great opportunity for Comber, and he was also encouraged by the mobile digital hub which had the power to visit the rural communities. He commended the work of the Council Officers and the Officers within Easter Border Region who were always looking for funding opportunities to bring into the area. Alderman Adair paid tribute to the work of Alderman McDowell for bringing economic development issues to the attention of the Committee.

Councillor Ashe added her support for the project and stated that she was delighted that the Digi Hub was coming to Comber. She thanked the Officers for their hard work in bringing the project to fruition and she looked forward to the recruitment of the Project Officer.

Alderman McDowell thanked Alderman Adair for his kind words. A lot of work had been occurring in East Border Region and there were further funding opportunities including the small grant scheme which could provide considerable opportunities for community groups and supporting organisations throughout the Borough. Alderman McDowell thanked Council Officers for working closely with EBR to avail of funding opportunities.

The Chair noted that it was the change maker fund which Alderman McDowell was referring to and there had been an information session held recently in the Old Market House where there had been a number of community groups and organisations in attendance.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the project which had originated from PeacePlus. Referring to the letter of offer, he asked when the funding would be received. The Head of Economic Development advised that it was hoped that the Digi Hub would be in place at the beginning of the new year once confirmation had been received and a Project Officer had been recruited. A further report would be brought to the Committee in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendations be adopted.

5. CITY AND TOWN ADVISORY GROUP MINUTES (Appendices I – IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the City and Town Advisory Groups:

- Bangor City Advisory Meeting dated 13 November 2024
- Comber Town Advisory Meeting dated 18 November 2024

- Donaghadee Town Advisory Meeting dated 5 December 2024
- Holywood Town Advisory Meeting dated 25 November 2024
- Newtownards Town Advisory Meeting dated 28 November 2024

Proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the minutes be noted.

Councillor Smart thanked the Director and regeneration team for all their work in relation to the TAG's. In respect of Newtownards TAG, Councillor Smart noted the discussions that were occurring with DfI in respect of the Square, Newtownards and the report that was to come back surrounding ownership. He asked if there had been any feedback received and if that would be brought to the next meeting.

The Head of Regeneration advised that Officers were continuing to work with Regulatory Services and DfI. Regulatory Services were taking in the lead in respect of the matter. The TAG would be updated and the Head of Service undertook to keep the Committee informed of any progress.

In respect of the Minutes of the Comber Town Advisory Meeting; Councillor Ashe advised that Alderman P Smith's name had been spelt incorrectly.

In respect of Holywood TAG, Councillor McCollum referred to the Go Succeed Programme and advised that she had received a lot of interest in the programme. The Head of Economic Development that Officers had just received the details for the next round of the programme and were working through that detail. As soon as Officers had details on the workshops, programming, mentoring and grants which may be slightly different this time round, this would then be circulated to businesses.

Councillor McCollum noted the positive feedback she received in relation to the Go Succeed Programme. She referred to her hairdressers in Bangor which was a long-established business who could continue to learn and avail of services to enhance their offering.

In respect of Donaghadee TAG, Councillor Hennessy advised that Donaghadee had been confirmed as participant in Britain in Bloom. Donaghadee Community Development Association had written to the Council and DfI for support and Councillor Hennessy welcomed the news for the town.

The Chair agreed that was good news for the town and noted the spitfire that had been built on the shorefront, launching a good campaign.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the minutes be noted.

6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted item of confidential business.

7. PICKIE FUNPARK AGREEMENT – REQUEST TO SUB-CONTRACT (FILE DEVP1)

IN CONFIDENCE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6:3: Relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The report sought Council permission for the Contract to be sub contracted from Crumlin Road Gaol Ltd to Pickie Ltd for operational purposes.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.17 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Tuesday 8 April 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Irwin

Alderman: Brooks (Zoom) McIlveen
McAlpine (Zoom) Smith
McRandal

Councillors: Chambers (7.05 pm) Moore
Cochrane Thompson
Gilmour
Irvine, W

Officers in Attendance: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (R McCullough), Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Graham, Councillor S Irvine and Councillor McCracken. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Chambers.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL CONSULTATION EQUALITY AND DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2029

(Appendices I & II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Equality Scheme served as a comprehensive framework for the Council. It included strategies for assessing compliance with equality duties, evaluating the potential impact of their policies on different groups, and monitoring any negative effects those policies may generate. It also mandated transparency by

requiring the Council to publish the findings from their assessments, provide staff training, and ensure that the public had access to relevant information and services.

The scheme held the Council accountable to the standards set forth in equality legislation. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) played a crucial role in reviewing and approving those schemes, ensuring that public bodies adhered to their commitments. The Equality Scheme was currently being revised in line with organisational change and various updates of roles and would be submitted to the Equality Commission following approval from the Council in September 2025.

Members would be aware that each public authority had a duty to produce and annually monitor their Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.

Draft Equality and Disability Action Plans 2025-2029 had been written to reflect potential inequalities and service improvements identified through current service delivery from customer comments and complaints received across the range of Council services and from service changes that may need to be considered.

Many of the actions in the draft Equality and Disability Action Plans were based on good management, in-house training and revised service delivery. That was important for three reasons:

- the responsibility to comply with the duties and responsibilities were for all officers and Elected Members in their respective roles;
- good practice across the Council in considering the diverse range of needs of users and potential users would mitigate against adverse impact on individuals and groups; and
- the duties and responsibilities to deliver on the Council's commitment should be mainstreamed into the actions of all officers on behalf of the Council.

Consultation

Subject to ratification, the draft Equality and Disability Action Plans would be circulated on 7 May 2025 for consultation to the updated database of consultees as identified in the Council's Equality Scheme, as well as to individuals and representative groups across the Borough and regionally, and to members of the Council's Disability Forum and Consultative Panel on Equality and Good Relations (Section 75).

A hard copy and online questionnaire through Citizen Space would accompany the consultation document to assist respondents and potential respondents in making a meaningful response. Consultees would also be invited to focused consultation events or to contact the relevant officer should they wish.

The consultation period would be from 7 May 2025 until 31 July 2025 at 4.00pm. That 12-week period was a commitment within the Council's Equality Scheme to meaningful consultation. All consultees would be encouraged to comment on the actions of the draft Action Plans, or those that were of relevance to them or those they represented.

The Council's Heads of Service Team would also be consulted to ensure their Service Units responsibilities and experiences were reflected in this Plan.

The draft Action Plans would be made available in alternative formats on request where a need was identified and distributed through local community and voluntary groups. An easy read version had been created for those with learning disabilities.

Feedback on the consultation would be collated and the draft Equality and Disability Action Plan amended as appropriate to reflect consultation that would address the needs of employees and customers. The final Action Plans would be presented to the Corporate Services Committee on 9 September 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree to the circulation of the Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action, for the consultation period stated.

The Director began by explaining that he had informed Members earlier in the day that there was an error in the right hand column of appendix 1 – 6.4. The right hand most column should read "All public access areas and employee workplace areas are free from any artefacts not in keeping with promoting a good and harmonious working environment".

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McRandal raised a question on the Action Plan in respect of point 3.2 - Family Friendly Toilets. He explained that the toilets adjacent to the new playpark at Ward Park were closed and wondered if the Council had plans to open them. The Director said that he would come back to the Member directly in response.

Alderman McIlveen asked what the Council's definition of Family Friendly Toilets was and the Director explained that this report was prepared across the Council and he would come back to the Committee with a definition. The Member continued asking for confirmation that the Council's intention was to continue with single sex toilets and the Director agreed that that could also be clarified before the full meeting of the Council.

Alderman McIlveen then referred to the Economic Development Programmes that were outlined in the Action Plan and was pleased to note that those were accessible for everyone regardless of background. However, he noted that in the outcome impact it talked about supporting businesses from underrepresented groups.

Members were aware that the Equality legislation in Northern Ireland gave powers only in relation to take action in terms of disability. He thought the word 'supporting' used in the Council's Action Plan was a rather active word and he cautioned that the Council might be overstepping its role. In addition he had an issue in relation to why the 'underrepresented' groups were not identified as they had previously been by the Council. He felt that the outcome in this area did not align with the commitment set.

(Councillor Chambers entered the meeting at 7.05 pm).

The Member went on to state that Ards and North Down was a Dementia Friendly Borough and that was not outlined in the Action Plan. It was a matter that he had raised previously and it seemed to him that the issue of Dementia had been demoted and placed generally within the Age Friendly Alliance. Alderman McIlveen stated that he would like to see something about continuing to work towards Dementia Friendly.

Continuing, Alderman McIlveen, expressed slight concern about a Council commitment to developing an EDI Strategy since that had never been discussed by the Council but the Action Plan was stating that would be developed and agreed. In respect of point 6.4 he appreciated the Director's clarification but he felt that there were two sections to that; one ongoing and the other on completion of a new civic building. The Member said that his preference would be that that matter be deferred back to the Committee for further consideration and he could not vote for the recommendation at this time.

The Director said he would take those points back and bring responses to the next full meeting of Council or to the next Corporate Committee meeting. Referring to point 6.4 specifically he understood that that catalogue was in relation to the move and a review would be made of all artefacts along with the need to create a plan for the retention of assets. He did not view that as a controversial decision but rather one motivated by a move to another building. In response Alderman McIlveen, noted that the timescale was noted as 'ongoing' and therefore not on completion of the move. If 'ongoing' was in relation to a cataloguing exercise that was a subjective interpretation and could be examined further in time.

Alderman McAlpine had a further question in relation to Council toilets specifically in relation to the Disability Action Plan and Changing Places. Many of those facilities were not conveniently located and there were simply too few of them to make a day out comfortable for both residents and visitors to the Borough so she called for that issue to be given further consideration.

Councillor Cochrane referred to the Consultation process and asked for more information to be given on that along with the updated list of consultees. He supported a Consultation that was as wide as possible and not narrowed down to particular groups. The Director said that he would clarify that.

Councillor Gilmour asked for clarity on the decision on the table at the moment and was it being agreed or would be it deferred to the full Council. Her personal view was that she would rather wait for more information to be brought to the Committee.

The proposer, Alderman McRandal, thought that it was important to have some level of agreement within the Committee and on that basis he stated that he would be happy to withdraw his proposal if an alternative proposal to defer was preferred. The seconder was also in agreement.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Item be deferred to the full meeting of Council or the next Corporate Committee.

4. RURAL NEEDS ACT (NI) 2016

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that as Members would be aware, section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 placed a duty on public authorities, including Councils, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. In carrying out this duty and in line with guidance issued by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the Council carried out rural screening exercises on its policies. Those screening exercises were carried out simultaneously by officers when completing section 75 screening of policies.

The 2016 Act placed a further obligation on public authorities to compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1 of the Act (i.e., information on completed screening exercises), and to report that annually to DAERA.

DAERA had produced a template for public authorities to complete when compiling the information for their annual return. DAERA then collated all the returns it received and produces an annual Rural Needs Monitoring Report.

The Council's draft return for 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and provided detail on the rural screening exercises completed during this period.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to submit to DAERA the Rural Needs monitoring return for 2024/25 attached to this report at Appendix 1.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

(Appendices IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council was committed to ensuring the safety and protection of all its service users. The Council acknowledged its duty of care and aimed to protect children and adults at risk from harm when they visited its premises or attended Council activities. A number of public bodies, including Councils, were required under the legislation (detailed below) to make arrangements to ensure that:

- Their functions were discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. The duty did not give the specified bodies any new functions, nor did it override their existing functions. It required them to carry out their existing functions in a way that took into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk.

- The services they contracted out to others were provided with regard to that need, that included Grant Aid recipients and external contractors.

ANDBC arrangements

The Council recognised that safeguarding must be owned at all organisational levels. As such, it had a Safeguarding policy that was applicable to all elected Members, employees, casual workers and volunteers.

Under Section 10 of the 2011 Act, members of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) and its statutory committees and subcommittees had a legal obligation to cooperate in fulfilling their statutory functions. To support that duty, a South-Eastern Safeguarding Panel and a Local Adult Safeguarding Partnership (LASP) had been established, with invitations extended to local Councils to participate. Other participants included the Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Trusts, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Probation Board, Youth Justice Areas, the Education Authority, and various other organisations.

According to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, organisations that employed staff or engaged volunteers who required any level of vetting must appoint an Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC). A review of the terms of reference indicated that representatives attending those meetings should hold a level of seniority deemed necessary for making strategic decisions on behalf of the SBNI and ensuring agency commitment.

The revised policy included information and guidance for grant-aided organisations, contracted services, clubs, organisations, or individuals using Council facilities. It outlined the systems and procedures in place to achieve those requirements.

It also ensured compliance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 by establishing an appropriate management structure and designating further Safeguarding Officers throughout Council departments. Those Safeguarding Policies and Procedures would apply to anyone associated with Ards and North Down Borough Council who may have direct or indirect contact with children and adults at risk.

Please note that whilst this was a revised policy it had significant changes from the current one due to the reasoning above and therefore tracking changes would not be of assistance. The revised (Appendix 1) and current policy (Appendix 2) were provided for reference.

Legislation

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Safeguarding Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Sex Offenders Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) order 1998
- The Disability Discrimination (Order 2006) Northern Ireland
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order 2007
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
- Data Protection Act 2018 Inc. GDPR
- Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (July 2015)
- Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (Sept 2016)
- Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (NI Department of Health, Social services and Public Safety and Department of Justice, July 2015) policy

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the Ards and North Down Borough Council Safeguarding policy 2025 as detailed in Appendix 1.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine asked if this was a new policy that the Council was enacting and the Head of Administration replied that it was not new but had been changed to the point that it had been largely rewritten.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION – COMMUNITY ADVICE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN (CAAND)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that a letter had been received from Councillors Moore, McCollum, McKee and Smart requesting that Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND) be considered for a civic reception to acknowledge its 50th anniversary.

The organisation qualified for a Civic Reception on the criteria of exceptional service to the local community and a significant anniversary. 2025 marked CAAND's 50th anniversary, having provided exemplary free, confidential and independent advice to the Borough since 1985.

Across four offices, CAAND employed 28 staff. It also had 18 volunteers supporting and advising local residents five days per week. In 2022/23 CAAND handled over 28,500 enquiries for more than 10,500 clients. That equated to over £3.8m in income generated for those clients and for the local economy.

The impact of the work of CAAND was far-reaching, across the entire Borough, supporting clients of all ages, and in particular those most vulnerable in the

community. Many elected representatives had referred constituents to their services, knowing the advice they would receive would be accurate and of high quality, delivered with sympathy and without judgement.

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

The Council's Policy for Civic Receptions required requests to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive and signed by at least three Elected Members. The request, once received, was assessed against set criteria and an officer's report, with an appropriate recommendation, was prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception

The criterion against which each request would be assessed was as followed: -

1. Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary

The exceptional service should be in the areas of Voluntary or Charitable work AND the anniversary should be a milestone of 25-year increment anniversaries.

OR

2. A Very Significant or Unique Achievement

An achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient had a strong association with the Borough.

The request had been submitted in line with the agreed procedures and met criteria 1 of the policy - Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary. The Organisation would celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025 and had worked tirelessly during that time for its clients throughout the Borough. The cost could be met from the 2025-26 civic budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to offer CAAND a Civic Reception to acknowledge 50 years since the formation of the Organisation and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing Councillor Moore thanked officers for the report and did not have more to add except to reiterate that the organisation should be recognised for its work and Members were aware of that and would have referred residents to the services offered. Incredibly high quality advice was offered and the work impacted on the lives of individuals and the recovered income they brought to local communities. There was no question that this organisation fully deserved a Civic Reception for its outstanding contribution to the Borough.

Councillor W Irvine echoed those comments on how well deserved this would be and in his view the services would become even more crucial in the coming years. Elected Members who worked with the organisation were those who had signed the Motion and included Councillors Moore, McCollum, McKee and Smart.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. TALENT CONTINUITY POLICY

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Talent Continuity Policy focused on identifying and growing talent to fill posts across the Council, including leadership and business-critical positions. The aim was to identify talent gaps between current and future talent capacity to determine which positions were at risk due to retirement, attrition, or other factors, and assess the readiness of potential successors to fill those roles.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation had occurred with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Talent Continuity Policy.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine thought this was a very good initiative and asked how it would work in practice – would each head of service identify people in their department to participate in courses funded by the Council. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that this would link with the staff review and development and was open to anyone who was keen to progress within the organisation and it helped to ensure leadership continuity for the future. It also linked with the policies that the Council already had in place.

Alderman McIlveen thought that it was a good idea but asked how the Council would ensure that it was not raising an expectation with the staff identified that they would be guaranteed further advancement. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stressed that from the beginning of the process line managers made it clear that there was no guarantee of progression, rather employees were being given an opportunity to develop their skills. The Member suggested that should be highlighted in the policy but the Director responded stating it was clear, it had originally been termed succession planning and through discussion had been changed to talent continuity to avoid raising unrealistic expectations or favouritism and normal recruitment practices would be followed ensuring that staff were always appointed on merit alone.

Alderman McAlpine thought the initiative lined up well with Investors in People and it gave staff an opportunity to progress. She asked how the process interfaced with the appraisal system and how was fairness addressed and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that it linked closely with the appraisal system which addressed future career aspirations and training required. She added that it was not an opportunity that every member of staff would wish to take up but many would, being keen to move through the organisation.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. APPRENTICESHIP, TRAINEESHIP, PLACEMENT AND WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Apprenticeship, Traineeship, Placement and Work Experience Scheme aimed to attract future employees, as well as grow talent from among current employees. The workforce was then equipped with individuals who possessed the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for specific job roles, future employment and progression.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation had occurred with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Apprenticeship, Traineeship, Placement and Work Experience Scheme.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

9. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT PLAN 2025
(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Investors in People (IIP) business tool was used by the Council as means of continuous improvement in terms of employee performance, engagement and development. Assessment occurred every 3 years.

The Council was first awarded IIP accreditation in December 2016, and then subsequently achieved the Silver award in 2019 and 2022. The Organisational Development Strategy (including, 'Our People Plan') had been tailored to meet the recommendations from the IIP assessment reports.

The next assessment process commenced in September 2025. The main steps were:

1. A context meeting for Corporate Leadership and Heads of Service Teams in September.
2. Employee engagement survey in October (completed previously in 2017, 2019 and 2022).
3. On-site assessment and focus groups in November/December.
4. Outcome report issued in January 2026.

The cost of the assessment had been factored into the current HR budget and the full detail involved was set out in the attached Stages and Timeline document.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine considered that Investors in People was very important for the operational excellence of the Council and asked if there was a limit to the Council progressing through that. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that the awards were Standard, Silver, Gold and Platinum. She added that the Council currently held the Silver standard which was an achievement for a relatively new Council and it was the Council's aim to maintain that for now and in time progress to Gold.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION

10.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor McLaren

That this Council recognises the impact that recent severe weather events have had on residents and business owners within our borough.

Council will develop an information, advice, and education initiative that will be accessible to all residents across Ards and north Down. The aim of this initiative will be to ensure residents are prepared for severe weather events such as storms and floods. This will include advice around precautions they can take, services they can avail of, and signposting.

Officers will produce a report to Members with suggested methodology such as a dedicated section on the Council website, workshops, and visual media, along with projected associated costs if any.

Proposed by Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the recommendation be adopted.

Bringing forward his Motion Councillor Wray thanked the Chair and Members of the Committee for inviting him and said he stood before them to bring a Notice of Motion regarding provision of preparing communities for adverse weather events, events he said that looked likely to increase in frequency in the future.

Over the past six months the Borough had experienced two particularly challenging weather events. There had been heavy rainfall in October, which resulted in flooding and damage to businesses and homes, and then in January Storm Eowyn had hit most of Ireland severely. The visual impact of that storm could still be seen across the Borough. Residents had experienced a loss of heating, electricity, and WiFi to name a few and he, along with many other elected Members, had worked with vulnerable people during the storm, witnessing first-hand the disruption it had caused to many lives.

He thanked Council officers for the work they had done during both those weather events, and indeed every time such events took place. Council's communication with Members was very good, the links to support networks provided were useful, and in the case of Storm Eowyn the Council was nimble enough to open Support Centres that provided help to those most in need.

Councillor Wray explained that his Notice of Motion was about preparing communities for such events, not the response to them. He pointed to an old saying that went 'replace the roof while the sun is shining'. That was exactly what his Motion intended to do, to educate and advise residents of the precautions they could take that would make them better prepared and able to cope with the disruption that could be caused by extreme weather.

As a Council he encouraged engagement with the community helping to ensure that residents knew how to best protect their property. He gave an example of the use of sandbags. The Council distributed those at various locations across the Borough and he explained that unless they were positioned in a certain way, they would provide little to no defence. In his experience that was information the community did not have.

He also believed that it was important that the Council's residents knew what resources were prudent to keep at home in the event of an electricity break, including lighting, food and water, and access to emergency numbers. Council should develop an information, advice, and education initiative that would be accessible to all residents across Ards and North Down.

In terms of a methodology the Motion had given examples such as a dedicated section on the Council website, workshops, and visual media. He asked for the report to detail how the Council could effectively get its messaging out to the community. That was not something that he believed would be a significant cost to the Council but something that would make a big difference.

He stressed that engagement with the community and voluntary sector would be a key element in delivering this piece of work. Volunteers within the Borough always rallied round to support the most vulnerable in times of crisis, they had the connections in communities, and they were well placed to aid in the progress of education, awareness, and advice. Indeed, Ards Community Network currently had a live survey asking residents for feedback on their experiences of the weather events. The idea behind that was that the community and voluntary sector would be better informed on how to prepare communities and have appropriate contingencies in place. This Motion, he believed, and the survey were coming in a timely fashion, and he asked that that sector be involved in what the Council was trying to achieve.

Seconding the Motion Councillor McLaren thought that it was important to educate and advise residents and therefore this 'one stop shop' giving residents advice on how to deal with the effects of extreme weather was of great importance. The public was increasingly aware of extreme weather patterns and residents often turned to Facebook groups and neighbours for advice. She thought the task of providing information was ideally a role that the Council could undertake, managing

information for all residents to ensure no one was missed. Centralised information would allow quick access for residents, the Council and its partners.

She suggested the information could include how to help neighbours, how to report faults, it could explore visual media campaigns being a one stop reference guide for public sector, community groups, charities and utilities. This would help to ensure the best use of public money and build community resilience.

Alderman McIlveen welcomed the Motion but thought that the discussion had added more to it. He agreed that the community groups did fantastic work and they should be supported and armed. He had concern about the duplication of services and was happy to support the Motion and have it explored more fully. Alderman McRandal was in agreement and he thanked Members for the Motion and was happy to support a lot of what was included. He thought that much of that work was done well but if the Motion helped to pull threads together for efficiency it would not do any harm.

Councillor Gilmour was happy with the Motion before the Committee and while some parts needed further clarification it had been driven by strong weather conditions and prior to them the Covid pandemic. She reminded everyone that the Council worked in partnership with other organisations and that some of the elements were within the control of the Council and others were not so she understood the need to manage expectations.

Alderman Smith gave his support and recognised that the Council had a role in emergency planning and it was trying to be proactive. He viewed this process as building on what the Council already did and officers could bring back an appropriate response to ensure it was fully equipped for future emergencies.

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the Motion and would give his support to it and in terms of information and advice that was crucial in his opinion particularly when there were grants available, some of which would be time bound. Having information in one place that was accessible would help to provide clarity to residents.

Summing up his Motion Councillor Wray thanked Members for their support and comments and in respect of some of Alderman McIlveen's comments he hoped that the report could address those and stressed that the Council's response to emergencies was generally perceived to be fantastic.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the recommendation be adopted.

10.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and Alderman Graham

That this Council recognises the challenges faced by those who are blind and partially sighted and commits to working to make Ards and north Down a Visually Aware Borough. This Council recognises the expertise of the RNIB, their vision for a world where blind and partially sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life.

Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the Council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman McIlveen.

Councillor Gilmour introduced her Motion which had come about following a meeting with Bangor Sight Group. The Chairman of that organisation was Ken Carson assisted by his guide dog Waffle. She explained that SIGHT stood for Sight Impaired Group Helping Transformation. That group worked with local politicians, Council staff, event organisers and Translink, among others, in order to improve accessibility for visual impaired people in the local area. Two of the Elected Members sat on the Council's Disability Forum. The SIGHT members raised a number of the challenges faced by blind and visually impaired people on a daily basis, and highlighted that Derry City and Strabane Council had recently passed a Notice of Motion about becoming a Visually Aware City and they were keen that Ards and North Down follow, not just by having a Visually Aware City but a Visually Aware Borough.

There were many sorts of conditions which could impact vision, and those could vary in severity and visual impairment. It was difficult to get an exact figure on how many residents in the Borough were affected, but it was considered that around 2% of the population was blind or partially sighted.

Following on from the meeting, the SIGHT group invited Elected Members to a guided walk. The Mayor, along with herself and Councillors McKee and Thompson joined them and representatives from RNIB for a guided sight walk around Bangor where each of them had donned a pair of simulator glasses, each pair replicated different visual impairments.

She went on to explain that they were each fortunate to have sighted guides, but on a daily basis people who were blind or visually impaired did not have someone to guide them and the world was a different place with blindness or vision impairment. Broken/uneven footpaths were a trip hazard, and she had never realised how a broken footpath would result in a smack to the ribs when the white stick caught on a pavement. Even with a guide dog life was difficult since they were only trained to know three specific routes and after that there needed to be a reliance on trust for dogs to be aware of unusual surroundings and work together as a team to navigate unfamiliar areas. Technology could be a great assistance since it was possible to have a white stick with in-built GPS which could feed through to an earpiece to let a person know their location. Also text to audio apps and functions could help with accessibility or daily tasks that most people took for granted.

She was aware that the Council already did a lot and as Mayor she had been made aware of that, through the Disability Forum, the walkability audits which the Council carried out before events such as Sea Bangor or around Ward Park and career fairs to name a few and she thanked the Equality and Diversity Compliance Officer for the role she played in coordinating that.

However, she suggested that there were more things that the Council could be aware of and more that could be done. She was aware that the Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) had, over the past number of years, raised the issue of bins on streets, from both an aesthetic and, more importantly, a safety issue as they blocked footpaths and forced pedestrians on to the road. She thought that the public's awareness should be raised that bins left discarded on pavements posed a risk, particularly, to the most vulnerable people in society. Similarly, with pavement parking, a car parked on the pavement could force someone on to the road and into danger and sadly motorists did not always show consideration.

Pavement cafe licenses had been welcomed by the Sight group as there was a clear demarcation of where the edge of the outdoor cafe was although consideration needed to be given to see if there was something which could be done about obstructive placement of A boards or deliveries placed on footpaths. While she recognised that businesses needed to be able to get deliveries it was reasonable to be mindful of keeping a clear passageway for disabled users since it was a major obstacle for blind and visually impaired people who could not anticipate unexpected objects.

For other businesses which placed goods for sale on footpaths, often without a clear boundary, contributed to a trip hazard for visually impaired people so some form of boundary or demarcation of goods and pavement would be helpful and she thought there may be an opportunity to engage with the Chambers of Commerce on that matter.

Although the Council could not be responsible for everything by being a Visually Aware Borough the Council could play a role in raising the need for better infrastructure; such as at crossing points, and she gave the Bangor Ring Road as an example where visually impaired people had the challenge of crossing four lanes of traffic. She said that she had met some blind residents who had to take the bus to get to the other side of the ring road since it was not safe to cross.

Being a Visually Aware Borough would involve collaboration with RNIB about promoting accessibility and include training/information sessions from RNIB. If the Motion was passed there would be an opportunity to look at what the Council currently did and to consider what could be done better to make a positive difference to the lives of many residents and those who visited.

Councillor Gilmour explained that a number of years ago she had brought a similar Notice of Motion to the Council about ensuring it made Council services accessible for the deaf community, and as a result there was a fully signed Council meeting and training for staff and the BSL video sign service was introduced across Council services. She stressed the need to ensure the best was being done for the blind and visually impaired residents and she hoped that the Chamber would be able to get behind the Motion.

Seconding the Motion Alderman McIlveen thought that his Council colleague had thoroughly covered the detail of the Motion and he was more than happy to support it.

Alderman Brooks was very happy to support the Motion and greatly appreciated the proposed crossing at Ballymaconnell Road in Bangor where many people with sight loss struggled. The ongoing work of the Department for Infrastructure was to be welcomed.

Alderman McRandal agreed and thanked the Members for bringing the Motion and thought that the walk they had undertaken must have been very enlightening making the issue real.

Councillor Chambers expressed his gratitude for the worthwhile Motion and referred to a previous Braille sight awareness Motion which could be considered as part of the report and brought back to the Committee.

Councillor Thompson described his experiences from the day of the walkabout and explained how enlightening the issues had become for him. He had almost been knocked over and the glasses he had worn simulated the sensations of the aftermath of Stroke.

The Chair (Councillor Irwin) thanked the Members for bringing the Motion. She had some family members with Macular Degeneration and she understood the difficulties they experienced day to day. She welcomed the report that would be brought and hoped that improvements would be made for the residents who needed this support.

In closing, Councillor Gilmour thanked Members for the very positive feedback and looked forward to a report to a future Committee.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the public/press be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

12. LICENCE TO CLOUGHEY TENNIS CLUB – SHELTER AT CLOUGHEY TENNIS COURTS (Appendices IX - XI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to consider granting a licence to Cloughey Tennis Club to install and maintain a viewing shelter beside Cloughey Tennis Courts. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

AGREED, that the item be deferred to full Council.

13. REQUEST TO USE COUNCIL LAND – DONAGHADEE HORSE RELAY EVENT 2024

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to consider a request from Donaghadee Community Development Association to use Council Land for a Horse Relay event on 6th September 2025.

AGREED, that the item be deferred to full Council.

14. LEASE TO HELEN'S BAY TENNIS CLUB (Appendices XII – XIV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to renew the Lease to Helens Bay Tennis Club to approve a revised map and to provide consent to sub-letting. It was recommended that the Council approve the request.

The recommendation was AGREED.

15. LEASE TO NIE – SUBSTATION AT CHURCH LANE, BANGOR (Appendix XV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was to renew the Lease to NIE of the substation site at Church Lane, Bangor. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was AGREED.

16. ASSERTED PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY FROM BALLYWALTER ROAD TO SHORE, MILLISLE (BALLYHASKIN)

(Appendix XVI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

5. Exemption: a claim to legal professional privilege

The Council was asked to approve the commissioning of a surveyor.

The recommendation was AGREED.

17. EASEMENT OVER PATHWAY AT FORMER CRAWFORDSBURN COUNTRY CLUB SITE

(Appendix XVII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to note the contents of a report with regards to the grant of an Easement to Council over land at Crawfordsburn in accordance with a Planning Agreement.

The recommendation was AGREED.

18. LICENCE TO BANGOR YOUNG MEN FC – LONDONDERRY PARK

(Appendix XVIII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider granting a licence to a football club to play intermediate football at Londonderry Park. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was AGREED.

19. RENEWAL OF LEASE TO NIE – SUBSTATION AT BRYANSBURN ROAD (Appendix IXX)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to renew the Lease to NIE of the substation site at Bryansburn Road Bangor. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was **AGREED**.

20. NI WATER WORKS AT CLANBRASSIL (Appendices XX – XXII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to approve a temporary diversion of the coastal path to facilitate NI Water works at this location. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was **AGREED**.

21. CROWN ESTATE LEASE OF FORESHORE AT KIRCUBBIN (Appendices XXIII & XXIV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to approve the revised lease map of foreshore at Kircubbin. It was recommended that the Council approved the revised map.

The recommendation was **AGREED**.

22. LAND AT 9 HARBOUR ROAD, GROOMSPORT (Appendices XXV – XXVII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council was asked to consider the next steps with regards to an encroachment onto Council land at Groomsport. It was recommended that the Council proceeded in line with legal advice.

The recommendation was **AGREED**.

23. BLAIR MAYNE BURSARY 2025
(Appendix XXVIII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council has been asked to adopt the minutes for the Blair Mayne Awards that will take place on Friday 6th June 2025.

The recommendation was **AGREED**.

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.52 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 9 April 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Brooks

Alderman: Adair
Cummings (Zoom) McRandal

Councillors: Ashe
Boyle
Chambers
Cochrane
Douglas
S Irvine (Zoom) W Irvine
Kendall
McBurney
McClean
Moore

Officers in Attendance: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Alderman Brooks) sought apologies at this stage and an apology for non-attendance was submitted from Councillor Hollywood.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers – Item 21 – NCLT Q3 2024/25

Councillor Boyle – Item 5 - Private Tenancies (NI) Act 2022 Sections 8 & 10 - Fixed Penalty Notices

The Chairman (Alderman Brooks) and Alderman Adair both declared an interest at 7.08pm in relation to Item 5 - Private Tenancies (NI) Act 2022 Sections 8 & 10 - Fixed Penalty Notices

NOTED.

3. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 636 ARDS BLAIR MAYNE WELLBEING AND LEISURE COMPLEX CELEBRATION (FILE LS/LA20)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that it was in response to a recent Notice of Motion as approved by Council following it being tabled at Community and Wellbeing Committee on 16th October 2024 as follows:

"That Officers bring back a detailed report surrounding options to celebrate the huge success of the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. Options would include a Civic Reception to celebrate 6 years of the huge success of the facility in 2025"

Introduction

The Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC) opened in January 2019 to replace the previous centre located at William Street, Newtownards. To date this had been the biggest capital project the new Ards and North Down Borough Council had delivered and continued to provide both residents and visitors access to quality leisure experiences across a broad range of facilities. These facilities included three main pools, two with moveable floors and one specifically designed for young Children to gain water confidence in a fun and safe environment. Two main Sports Halls, one with a synthetic surface for field sports, a state-of-the-art 100+ station Gym, a luxury Health Suite and Conference and Exercise Class function rooms. All of these "indoor" facilities were complimented with the free to use outdoor leisure facilities including the Tier 0 playground with significant inclusive and sensory garden elements; the wheely park for skateboards and scooters and the BMX/MTB track which had proved very successful for the young people to utilise and stay active.

There were currently 1,500 children and young people enrolled in our Waves Swim lesson programme which was almost double that enrolled in the previous programme at the William Street site. The 25m Gala pool had also hosted numerous swimming galas facilitating local delivery for our schools and the highly successful Ards Swimming Club. Additionally, the Fitness and Health suite provision had been a great success with currently almost 5,200 members, a significant increase on numbers than at the previous site, utilising the facilities and justifying the focus on the quality facilities that were incorporated into the overall build. The two main halls both provided for a significant range of sports, activities and major events and the indoor "pitch" area had provided a fantastic venue for sport development initiatives and junior Club coaching as well as recreational use.

The franchisee of the catering service had also been a success, providing a highly successful and profitable partnership with a local business ensuring that visitors could avail of a quality catering service. More recently the original Black Light Zone which was particularly affected by COVID was replaced with the Origin Gymnastics Centre which not only provided an opportunity for thousands of young people to have quality coaching from Luke Carson and his team but it was also "home" to our

very own Olympic Champion Rhys McClenaghan who would continue to inspire future stars from the Borough.

In regard to the internal facilities it was estimated that over three million visitors had utilised the facilities since ABMWLC opened in January 2019 despite the closures/restrictions resulting from Covid in 2020/21. An opening event was originally scheduled by the Council but was cancelled due to the outbreak of the COVID pandemic and to date no event had been held to mark the opening or ongoing success of these directly managed Council leisure facilities.

These highly impressive numbers, delivering significant associated Social Value benefits for the ratepayers. As we approached the end of the 2024/25 financial year the ABMWLC had currently attained a saving of over £520,000 against the dedicated operational leisure budget for the centre (excluding utilities and maintenance) with over £330,000 of additional income being generated by the leisure services team and their colleagues against the set targets.

Potential Celebration Event

The Notice of Motion directed Council Officers to consider options to celebrate the success of the facilities and services at ABMWLC. 2025 marked six years since the facilities welcomed their first visitor but with a significant lead in time required to organise a suitable event it was proposed that the following options were possible:

1. An event in January 2026 to mark seven years since the facilities were open with an invited dignitary who would be booked for the event.
2. An event scheduled to coincide with a visit by Royalty/ Dignitary at some time in 2025 or 2026.
3. An event in January 2029 to mark ten years since the facilities were open.

It was proposed that the event, irrespective of timing would be a celebration of the success of the facilities and the significant role the staff and user groups had played in that success. The event would be held over a few hours with all areas of the site "hosting" activities by the regular users of the service and the main dignitaries being escorted through the complex to witness the vast range of activities and meet some of the main representatives from the Clubs, Groups, Users, Partners and Staff who had created the fantastic success story that was ABMWLC. This would be followed by a reception, speeches and the unveiling of a memorial plaque to commemorate the occasion.

Estimates had been made on the costs of such an event and allowed for a typical fee of an invited guest. Total costs would be expected to be up to £30,000.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the development of Option 1 above and commit a budget of approx. £30,000 from leisure / C&W underspends throughout the 2025/26 year towards the event to be delivered in 2026 to mark seven years of success at the ABMWLC facility.

Councillor Boyle proposed the recommendation but the Chair was unable to find a seconder or an alternative proposal, so the item FELL.

The Chair permitted Councillor Douglas to raise a query to the Head of Leisure Services in relation to why that Option 1 had been favoured. She had noted that £30,000 had been allocated regardless of which option the Council chose to proceed with and the officer advised that Leisure had been tasked to look at alternatives to an official opening which had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

He explained that the three options had resulted from consultation with other relevant sections of the Council along with the original proposer and seconder in order to determine what type of event would have been appropriate. He added that the event programme would have been the same for each option, it was just that they tied in with a different guest or timescale.

In terms of preference, there would have been more control over the recommended option whereas Option 2 was dependent on a Royal visit and whether the Royal visitor was agreeable to celebrate the success of a centre rather than undertake an official opening. The timescale of Option 3 was felt too far away given the potential for an outsourcing exercise, so it was felt that Option 1 had been the most efficient and effective one to deliver in line with the original Notice of Motion.

4. IPB PRIDE OF PLACE AWARDS (FILE PCA137) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing to inform Members of the IPB Pride of Place Awards and a proposed submission of entries for Ards and North Down following a meeting between the Chair of the program and the Chief Executive and the Director of Community and Wellbeing. The chair suggested that if Council was minded to, he recommended that 1 or 2 nominations were made.

IPB Pride of Place in association with Co-Operation Ireland was an all-island competition that acknowledged the work that communities were doing. The competition focus was about people coming together to shape, change and improve daily lives in their communities. Since the competition commenced in 2003, it had impacted on hundreds of thousands of people, all of whom were proud of their place.

The competition was based on communities demonstrating directly to the judges the work they did by oral presentations where they highlighted their community activities and how these contributed to their pride of place. It was also important that the community demonstrated a real partnership with their local authority.

The competition was open to all local community groups, by way of local authority nomination only. Population categories were judged on all aspects of the community and single-issue categories were judged on the specifics of that category, as outlined in the enclosed IPB Brochure.

It was proposed that the following entries within each of the stated categories were considered for submission.

1. Population Over 5000 Category

For several years Donaghadee Community Development Association (DCDA) had excelled at delivering award winning projects that directly benefited the community. The Association committee met monthly to discuss issues affecting Donaghadee. Each member of the committee acted on a voluntary basis, giving freely of their time to improve their town. The group's key focus was on making Donaghadee a better place to live, work or visit. Its projects and activities were achieved by working closely with local businesses, schools, community clubs and with statutory bodies including Ards & North Down Borough Council.

The range of activities delivered DCDA was varied and plentiful, satisfying the interests of a broad range of residents. Activities covered themes such as culture, heritage, arts, creativity, the environment, biodiversity, tourism and business.

Over the past few years some key achievements for the group had been

- Ulster in Bloom awards won in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- Britain In Bloom Gold winner in 2023 (also nominated for 2025)
- Organised a summer festival with a footfall close to 20,000
- Organised the annual Christmas Parade and associated celebrations
- Launched several initiatives to encourage local shopping
- Continued to work on environmental project in Crommelin Wood
- Launched a Marine Litter project costing £18,000 with local schools
- Campaigned for resolution of car parking problems
- Helped support groups with advice on funding opportunities and governance issues
- Worked closely with counterparts in Bangor, Comber, Holywood and Newtownards
- Continued to represent Donaghadee on the Donaghadee Town Advisory Group which was the Council facilitated group overseeing amongst other things the Townscape Heritage Initiative

2. Community Youth Initiative Category

Youth Voice was an initiative delivered by the Youth Service across the Borough. The organisation delivered a range of programmes and campaigns that were designed and chosen by young people, identified from local needs and global issues affecting young people's development.

The young people working together participated in activities and programmes that supported leadership, citizenship and communication as well as enhance their skill base, confidence, and social engagement. Youth Voice aims were to provide young people with a voice; to enable young people to have a say on local issues, be a representative voice for young people within their areas, meet new people and build relationships, engage with key decision makers, and undertake accredited training to grow and develop skills.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the nomination of Donaghadee Community Development Association and Youth Voice in the IPB Pride of Place Awards 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Cochrane paid tribute to both organisations, highlighting the success of festivals delivered by Donaghadee Community Development Association throughout the year including an Ulster Scots festival held in the summer and a Christmas festival. He also welcomed the nomination of Youth Voice, recalling that that it had been extremely active too. He wished both groups all the best.

Councillor W Irvine added his best wishes to both organisations which did great work throughout the community. He recalled receiving an email from a representative of Youth Voice which had provided him with a lot of useful background information in terms of the benefits of their engagement.

Rising to support the proposal, and on behalf of his colleagues, Councillor Hennessy and Councillor Irwin, Alderman McRandal referred to a great CV held by Donaghadee Community Development Association in terms of the quality and longevity of the organisation. He also praised the excellent work of Youth Voice.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Chair (Alderman Brooks) and Alderman Adair declared an interest in Item 5 – 7.08pm)

CHAIRPERSON OF MEETING

The Chair and Vice Chair had both declared an interest in Item 5, so the Chair sought a nomination for an acting chair in his absence.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Councillor Cochrane assume the role of Chair for the duration of Item 5.

(The Chairman (Alderman Brooks), the Vice Chair (Councillor Boyle) and Alderman Adair left the meeting – 7.10pm)

5. PRIVATE TENANCIES (NI) ACT 2022 SECTIONS 8 & 10 - FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (FILE CW145)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware of the role of Environmental Health Officers in the regulation of the private rented sector through statutory duties under the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (as amended by the Private Tenancies Act).

Members were updated at the Community & Wellbeing Committee Meetings in January and February 2023 regarding the implementation of Sections 1-6 of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, which came into effect on 1st April 2023. Then in November 2023, members agreed to submit a response on proposed

technical matters relating to the Department for Communities consultation on Section 8 (Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms) and Section 10 (Electrical Safety Standards). A summary of the new regulations made under Sections 8 and 10 was provided below.

Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

Emanating from Section 8 of The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022, The Smoke Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024 were made on 30th May 2024 with the intention to reduce the risk of fire and consequent loss of life, injury and damage to property within private rental properties.

The Regulations come into effect as follows:

- New tenancies (tenancies granted on or after 1st September 2024) to be compliant from **1st September 2024**.
- Existing tenancies (all those granted prior to 1st September 2024) to be compliant from **1st December 2024**.

The regulations set the standards for the number and type of smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms to be installed in private rented properties and aim to reduce the risk of fire related incidents.

Further information could be found at this link:

[The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024 guidance notes | Department for Communities](#)

It was an offence for a private landlord to fail to comply with the duty to keep in repair and proper working order sufficient appliances for detecting smoke, heat and carbon monoxide. A landlord who committed an offence under this enactment was liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale, which was currently £2500.

Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

Emanating from Section 10 of The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022, The Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 were made on 27th November 2024 with the intention to reduce the risk of injury or death, caused by an electrical fault within private rental properties.

All new tenancies had to be compliant from **1st April 2025** and existing tenancies had to be compliant by **1st December 2025** or the date the first electrical inspection and testing was carried out.

The Regulations introduced the requirement for electrical safety standards to be met during the period the property was let. Electrical installations were to be inspected and tested by a qualified electrician every 5 years or less if the most recent report specified a shorter timeframe. The landlord had to obtain a report and if a repair/further investigation was required it had to be completed within the required timescale. The landlord had to retain a copy of the report until the next inspection

and test was due and provide a copy of the report to the tenant within 28 days of receipt and to the Council within 7 days on request.

Further information could be found at this link:

[The Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024 | Department for Communities](#)

Once compliance dates for new and existing tenancies had been reached, landlords may be prosecuted for failure to comply with the duties imposed. A landlord who committed an offence was liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, which was currently £5000.

Enforcement

The Act created new offences for which the Council had powers to issue fixed penalty notices. The fixed penalty payable in respect of an offence was an amount determined by the Council, being an amount not exceeding one-fifth of the maximum fine payable on summary conviction of that offence.

The maximum level of fixed penalty fine that could be set for the new offence in relation to Smoke Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms was therefore £500. The maximum level of fixed penalty fine that could be set for the new offences in relation to electrical safety was therefore £1000.

At the Community & Wellbeing Committee Meeting in February 2023, members approved that fixed penalty fines for Sections 1 to 4 of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 be set at the maximum permitted level. It was now proposed that Council similarly set the fixed penalty fine level at the maximum permitted by the regulations, for Sections 8 and 10.

A summary of the maximum fines along with the relevant legislation is summarised in the table below;

Legislation	Description of Offence	Legislation section number of offence (Maximum Penalty on Conviction)	Fixed Penalty Amount
The Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006 as amended by The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024	Failure to comply with the duty to keep in repair and proper working order sufficient appliances for detecting smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide in a private tenancy	Offence under Article 11B (4) (Level 4 £2,500)	£500 (Maximum fee)
The Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006 as amended by The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 The Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024	Failure to comply with the duties imposed by Regulation 3 of the Electrical Safety Standards Regulations	Offence created by Regulations under Article 11I (Level 5 £5000)	£1000 (Maximum fee)

RECOMMENDED that Council approve fixed penalty fines being set at the maximum level permitted, for offences committed under Sections 8 and 10 of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Having previously been a private tenant, Councillor Kendall was aware of inadequate and dangerous conditions that some people had to live with despite landlords' duties. She felt that the increases of fixed penalties were too low but she appreciated that was out of the control of the Council, so she was content to support the maximum level permitted. The existing fines enabled landlords to get off quite lightly and she felt that Councils should be able to recoup more given that they incurred costs in sending officer's out to investigate. It was only right that the landlord should bear the costs of any type of enforcement action and on this occasion she was glad to see the maximum fine being proposed.

The seconder, Councillor W Irvine, supported the proposal, adding that safety in relation to electrical, smoke and carbon monoxide was paramount. He hoped that in setting the maximum fines that would send that message to landlords and hopefully avoid any tragedies in the future.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

(The Chairman (Alderman Brooks), Alderman Adair and Councillor Boyle returned to the meeting – 7.12pm)

CHAIRPERSON OF MEETING

Alderman Brooks resumed the role of Chairman of the meeting at 7.12pm.

6. COMMEMORATIVE TREE PLANTING (FILE PCA4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council had facilitated the planting of commemorative trees on Council land in conjunction with local groups and organisations in Line with the Commemorative Tree Planting Policy.

The policy aimed to provide a consistent and fair approach to the decision-making process on whether to approve any request to plant a commemorative tree on Council property. It was critical that all tree planting contributed to the Council's overall Tree and Woodland Strategy. Members were advised that the Commemorative Tree Planting Policy did not apply to or replace the memorial tree planting which took place in Council cemeteries.

Council had received a request for commemorative tree planting as detailed below:

- Bangor Rotary Club – 90th Anniversary Tree. Wishes to have a *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea' (Purple Beech) tree planted in Castle Park, Bangor.



Officers could confirm that this request complied with the criteria in the policy subject to the policy approval.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Commemorative Tree Planting request as outlined in the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Cochrane appreciated the work of Bangor Rotary Club and was delighted to see the tree planted.

Querying the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy, Councillor Kendall noted that a beech tree was not a native species to Northern Ireland and had an understanding that trees planted by the Council should be native.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries clarified that the Tree and Woodland Strategy that the Council had adopted allowed for planting of non-native trees in terms of specimen planting. This type of planting was not included in the strategy's 15,000 planting target. He explained that the area of this planting within Castle Park was designed as an arboretum which therefore included Trees of Interest and he felt that purple beech was particularly appropriate for that area and very attractive.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. **GREENWAY UPDATE (FILE CW30)**

(Appendix II – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that work had commenced by the contractor Charles Brand on the Newtownards (Floodgates Park) to Conlig section of the greenway. The section towards Breezemount / Green Road (Conlig) had been completed and the work in the Floodgates area was well underway, as was the section going through Londonderry Park (Newtownards). Following the discharge of planning conditions relating to the Ark Farm section, work was now progressing in that area. The overall completion date of construction work currently underway was scheduled for November 2025.

The Department for Infrastructure Minister, Liz Kimmons, visited the site on February 19th 2025, and was given a presentation of our progress to date and visited the construction site at Floodgates along with the Mayor and Chief Executive. DfI was the main funder of the project.

Planning permission for the Comber to Newtownards section LA06/2019/0308/F was approved 10th January 2025 and final negotiations were underway with the relevant landowners along the route. Officers hoped to bring back a report on this in the near future. Discussions were also underway with DfI in relation to a design solution for the A21 section from the Enler roundabout (Comber) to the Ballyrickard Wastewater Treatment Works.

Greenway Update and Naming Workshop

On 3rd March 2025, a Members Greenway Update Workshop took place. Part of the discussions that took place included the naming of the new Greenways that was currently under development.

Proposals at the workshop were based on three guidance documents:

1. ANDBC Naming of Council Facilities Policy.
2. Department for Infrastructure Cycle infrastructure design (LTN) Guidance
3. Sustrans Signing Greenway Handbook.

In line with other similar schemes across the UK and Ireland, an approach was adopted to agree an overarching brand name for the entire network through Ards and North Down, with smaller routes or lines named which highlighted connections to the local area.

ANDBC Naming of Council Facilities stated all names should normally comprise two parts:

(1) The first part of the name should be where the facility was and could include other words but *these* could not be considered offensive* to any group or individual within the Borough.

(2) The second part of the name needed to be appropriate to the physical resource i.e. what it was.

Using the aforementioned documents and the Greenways Naming Toolkit (see attached presentation), the following suggestions were made at the workshop:

Route	Proposed Names
Overall Network	Comber Greenway (ie continue with the well established 'brand')
Comber to Newtownards	Strangford Line
	Scrabo Line
Newtownards to Green Road	Whitespots Line
	Kinder Line

Elected Members who were not present at the workshop were then given the opportunity to provide comments or suggestions up until 14th March 2025 by email.

As a result of this engagement exercise, the following was proposed.

Route	Proposed Name
Overall Network	Comber Greenway
Comber to Newtownards Section	Scrabo Line
Newtownards to Conlig Section	Whitespots Line

Names were required to be agreed in order that suitable signage could be designed and delivered in time for the opening of the new greenways.

RECOMMENDED that Council approved the naming of the greenways being delivered as proposed ie as:

Route	Proposed Name
Overall Network	Comber Greenway
Comber to Newtownards Section	Scrabo Line
Newtownards to Conlig Section	Whitespots Line

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McRandal had attended the recent workshop on this item and he welcomed that the work discussed there had progressed quickly. Comber Greenway was a well established name and he felt it made sense for these areas to become an extension of that. Scrabo Tower was visible from every part of the Comber to Newtownards section so Scrabo Line was appropriate and he felt that the proposed Whitespots Line was appropriate in terms of cross-marketing, given that the Council was making a significant investment into Whitespots Country Park.

The seconder, Councillor Douglas added her support. She queried the outstanding negotiations with the relevant landowners along with the design solutions and how long those processes would take.

The Director, conscious of the confidential nature of those matters around landownership, explained that positive conversations with landowners were ongoing. A meeting had been held with DfI in relation to its stretch around one month ago and officers were due to meet with the PSNI to discuss the proposed design that came from that joint workshop.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. PLAY REFURBISHMENTS 2025-2026 (FILE CW4)
(Appendix IV – V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailed as follows:

1. Introduction

This report was originally tabled at the Community and Wellbeing Committee on 12th March 2025 and the committee recommendation at Council on 26th March 2025. Council decided to refer the matter back to Community and Wellbeing Committee for reconsideration.

The decision to refer the matter for reconsideration also included a requirement to provide the following.

1. A clear statement of the playpark refurbishments that officers were recommending;
2. A clear statement of the budget agreed during rates setting and the estimate costs of each refurbishment;
3. For each playpark listed on the original officer's report, the scoring attributed by the independent examiner

As a result of further comments and observations made by members, sections of the report have also been redrafted and simplified in order to make the information in the report clearer.

2. Background

Ards and North Down Borough Council produced a Play Strategy for the period 2021 to 2032 which recommended that the Play Park refurbishment budget be increased to enable more Play Parks to be updated each year. Those Play Parks scoring the lowest within the Annual Independent Inspectors Report would be prioritised for refurbishment. Also, within the Play Strategy it was recommended that budget be made available for the delivery of older children provision [Skate Parks, Pumps Tracks, Parkour, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)] based on a settlement hierarchy approach.

As previously reported, Council has now procured contractors to deliver designs complying with modern standards ensuring minimum levels of equipment for each Tier of play park, appropriate age specific equipment ratios and a minimum of 30%

inclusive equipment etc, this was also consistent with the design guidance as outlined in the Play Strategy. They also comply with the relevant British and European industry Safety Standards.

A new Independent Inspector was appointed in 2023 and was accredited through the Register Play Inspectors International (RPII) and therefore gives Council assurance that the inspections and assessments are not only independent of Council but professionally and objectively carried out.

3. 2024/2025 Financial Year

In 2024/2025 the following play parks were completed or are nearing completion:

- The Green/Shore Kircubbin - Complete
- Multi Use Games Area, Kircubbin - Complete
- New Harbour Road, Portavogie – Complete
- Millisle Outdoor Gym – Complete
- Ward Park, Bangor – Complete

The following facilities are due for completion soon:

- Londonderry Park, Newtownards
- Seapark, Hollywood
- The Commons Outdoor Gym

It should be noted that the refurbishment of Ward Park has benefitted from £76,000 of funding from the UKSPF Levelling Up Fund, Seapark has received £250,000 and The Commons Outdoor Gym has received £45,000.

These sites were chosen as they were next in the list of priorities at that time. The funding was for use across the Borough, both urban and rural areas.

As in all previous years, sourcing of external funding would continue to be explored by Officers for future play park developments.

4. 2025/2026 Financial Year

Older Children's Play Facilities

The additional consultation for the Older Children Provision in Holywood had now been completed and reported to Members in February 2025 with the preferred location being Seapark and facility type a MUGA. This facility would be delivered in 2025/2026 subject to any necessary statutory approvals at a cost of **approximately £150,000**. It should be noted that the budget for the older children provision was separate from that of the play park refurbishments.

There may have also been the opportunity to deliver an older children facility at Moss Road, Ballygowan as part of a wider project that was taking place there. A consultation would be carried out locally to ascertain what type of older children facility was preferred at a cost likely to be **approximately £150,000**.

Play Parks

It should be noted that the budget available for play park refurbishments for the 2025/2026 Financial Year was **£500,000**. A business case was submitted for

additional budget as part of the rate setting process to cover the inflationary costs and also cover the additional costs of refurbishing play parks that may not now be closed, but this bid was unsuccessful. The budget going forward would be reevaluated upon the review of the Play Strategy, which would be completed this year and brought back to Members for consideration.

It was reported to Council in June 2024 that due to inflationary costs (40% increase in costs per play park post Covid/cost of living crisis) more budget was required per play park to deliver the same quality. As a result, and to ensure consistency across the play park portfolio a higher level of budget spend relevant to the Tier category had been applied.

Given the current budget availability, a total of **three** play park refurbishments would be achievable through financial year 2025/2026.

Independent Inspectors Report

Each year play parks were identified for refurbishment through an independent inspection report. The methodology to compile the report followed the Inspection Scope for RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) Annual Inspectors (Appendix 1). Each play facility was given a score, with the lowest recommended for refurbishment.

Members should be aware that the relative prioritisation between sites could change each year, for example the rate of deterioration of facilities could vary due to amount of use and/or location.

Below was a list of the lowest scoring play parks as identified in the most recent Independent Inspectors Report. The lower the score, the higher the priority for refurbishment.

Location	Score
1. Ballyholme, Bangor	37.00
2. Beechfield, Donaghadee	41.56
3. Seafront, Groomsport	43.38
4. Springwell, Groomsport	43.82
5. Parsonage Road, Kircubbin	44.37
6. Banks Lane, Bangor	45.25
7. Tullymally Road, Portaferry	46.80
8. Lawson Park, Portavogie	47.95
9. North Street, Greyabbey	48.55
10. Northfield, Donaghadee	49.40
11 The Commons, Donaghadee	50.34
12 Bangor Sportsplex	50.53
13. Glenford, Newtownards	50.59
14. Islandview, Greyabbey	51.06
15 Abbots Estate (Bowtown), Newtownards	52.35

1. Ballyholme (Bangor)

While Ballyholme, Bangor (Tier 3) featured as the lowest scoring play park, a decision was made not to upgrade this facility at this stage in favour of refurbishing Ward Park. Additionally, Ballyholme would be considered as part of the wider Bangor Waterfront project proposals. It was also a Tier 3 play park so other Tier 1's and Tier 2's were prioritised due to the limited budget available as they served a wider catchment area serving more children nearby and provide greater play value.

2.,10. & 11 Beechfield, Northfield and The Commons (Donaghadee)

In the most recent report both the play parks at Northfield and Beechfield in Donaghadee were identified as being amongst the lower scoring parks. It was also identified in the play strategy that one of these should be redeveloped to serve the users of both and close the other. Given the decision taken in June 2024 not to close any play parks at this time and therefore not to consult on these options until the play strategy was reviewed, neither play park had yet been refurbished. Both were Tier 2 play parks and it was considered that Northfield, given its proximity to the surrounding open space, should be prioritised for refurbishment now. The Commons was a Tier 1 Play Park. As both Beechfield and Northfield were scoring lower as outlined above Northfield was being prioritised. As requested by Council, engagement with the Donaghadee Development and Community Association would take place in relation to this.

3. and 4. Seafront and Springwell (Groomsport)

In the recent inspector report, both play parks at the Seafront and Springwell (Crescent) were identified as being low scoring. Both were classified as Tier 2 play parks. The Play Strategy (and the report in April 2024) proposed closing Springwell (Crescent) and upgrading the one at the Seafront to a Tier 1, which would serve the settlement of Groomsport. It also recommended that potentially a Multi-Use Games Area could be located on one of the existing tennis courts. However, it was now proposed that a separate area of land be used, and the tennis courts retained as they had recently been refurbished. Given the decision taken in June 2024 not to close any play parks at this time until the play strategy was reviewed neither play park was refurbished nor was a consultation carried out to establish which type of older children provision Groomsport preferred. Given the more prominent location it was considered that the play park at the Seafront be prioritised for refurbishment as a Tier 2.

5. Parsonage Road (Kircubbin)

Parsonage Road (Tier 2) was first identified for refurbishment in a report that went to Council in February 2023. The outcome of a public consultation exercise in September 2023 was that The Green/Shore was to be upgraded (from a Tier 2 to a Tier 1) and Parsonage Road Play Park was to be closed. Council agreed to investigate the possibility of converting this into a Sensory Garden, subject to community consultation. However, this decision was then put on hold, following a decision agreed at the March 2024 Council meeting.

Following the Members Workshop and subsequent report it was agreed in June 2024 that the Tier 1 upgrade of The Green/Shore was to continue and the MUGA was to be installed adjacent to it. Further, no play parks were to be closed at this time. It therefore remained that Parsonage Road was still amongst the lowest scoring play parks in the Borough and in need of refurbishment. However, given the level of investment in Kircubbin recently in relation to play and to ensure a spread of the Councils limited investment, it was recommended not to upgrade this facility until the play strategy was reviewed.

6. Banks Lane (Bangor)

Banks Lane (Tier 3) was also referred to in the report in April 2024 and a decision was taken by Council not to upgrade this facility in favour of refurbishing Ward Park. Banks Lane would be considered as part of the wider Bangor Waterfront project proposals. As a Tier 3 play park other Tier 1's and Tier 2's were prioritised due to the limited budget available as they serve a wider catchment area and provide greater play value.

7. Tullymally Road, (Portaferry)

Tullymalley was a Tier 3 play park in a rural location serving a limited catchment area, Portaferry was 2 miles away and had 3 play parks including the recently refurbished Tier 1 at Castle Park. As a Tier 3 play park other Tier 1's and Tier 2's were prioritised due to the limited budget available as they served a wider catchment area and provided greater play value.

8. Lawson Park (Portavogie)

Lawson Park was a Tier 3 play park and was identified in the Ards Borough Council Play Strategy 2007 and the recent Play Strategy 2021-2032 as being surplus and should be removed given the proximity of the play park at Anchor Park (it was proposed not to close it until a pedestrian crossing had been added making it easier to get to Anchor Park). As a Tier 3 play park other Tier 1's and Tier 2's were prioritised given they served a wider catchment area and provided greater play value. In recent years Portavogie had benefited from a Multi-Use Games Area, a Skate Park, Youth Shelter and the play park at New Harbour Road (Tier 2) was recently refurbished.

9. and 14. North Street and Island View, Greyabbey

Both play parks were Tier 2 and were low scoring. Given the more central location of Island View it was proposed to prioritise it for refurbishment.

12. Bangor Sportsplex

Bangor Sportsplex was a Tier 2 Play Park. It was likely that this play park would get refurbished in the next few years depending on its score in a future Inspectors Report and associated funding.

13. Glenford, Newtownards

Glenford was a Tier 2 Play Park. It was adjacent to the old leisure centre site in Newtownards. The site was to be developed into a Park and Ride facility by Translink and the play park would need to be relocated as part of that, so a new play park would be installed when those works occur.

15 Abbots Estate (Bowtown), Newtownards

Abbots Estate (Bowtown) in Newtownards was a Tier 2 Play Park. A separate committee report had been submitted for this facility following a Notice of Motion. It was likely that this play park would get refurbished in the next few years depending on its score in a future Inspectors Report and associated funding.

Play Parks mentioned in the previous report

Skipperstone in Bangor was a Tier 2 play park and scored 55.58 points. It was likely that this play park would get refurbished in the next few years depending on its score in a future Inspectors Report and associated funding.

Ballyhalbert had only this play park, which was a Tier 2 and scored 57.20 points. It was likely that this play park would get refurbished in the next few years depending on its score in a future Inspectors Report and associated funding.

Breezemount in Conlig was a Tier 2 play park and scored 60.10 points. It was likely that this play park would get refurbished in the next few years depending on its score in a future Inspectors Report and associated funding.

RECOMMENDED that Council proceed given the independent inspectors report and the rationale outlined with the refurbishment of play parks at the following three locations.

1. Although Beechfield (Donaghadee) scored lowest in Donaghadee, Officers are recommending that **Northfield (Donaghadee)** is prioritised given the reasons outlined. In addition, Officers will engage with the Donaghadee Community Development Association on specifics of the exact location at Northfield;
2. **Seafront (Groomsport)**; and,
3. Although North Street (Greyabbey) scored lowest in the village, Officers are recommending that **Island View (Greyabbey)** is prioritised given the reasons outlined.

It is further recommended that Council note the planned installation of older children provision in Holywood (already agreed in February 2025) and Moss Road, Ballygowan, subject to a public consultation to determine the facility type.

It is also recommended that Council note that officers will continue to seek additional external funding to allow other play facilities to be upgraded during 2025/2026 in accordance with the prioritisation indicated in the attached summary of the Independent Inspectors report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that Council agree the recommendation but further task officers to pro-actively source external funding for the upgrade of play parks, urban and rural. Furthermore A review of the criteria to ensure the equitable distribution of funding for play park upgrades across the Borough to include the need for modern accessible and inclusive play equipment as a key priority.

Alderman Adair sought clarity when the scoring process for the list provided was undertaken and the Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised this was done around the end of January 2025.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman Adair felt it was regrettable that the Committee was in this position given the confusion that had occurred with the report presented at last month's Committee meeting. It was important however to ensure that the three playparks identified were upgraded and that the older children's facilities in Holywood and Ballygowan could also proceed.

The alternative proposal was to ensure that there was proactive sourcing of external funding and he referred to a previous proposal he had made for Council to seek rural development funding but that had not resulted in any outcome. It had only been since an additional Head of Service had been appointed that the Council had capitalised on external funding. He had been disappointed to see Seapark in Holywood progressed with external funding over Ballyhalbert which had been one of the lowest scoring and that was the reason for emphasising both urban and rural funding opportunities to ensure equality. He also felt that often there was a focus on tourism rather than residents and it was important to get the balance right.

The proposer felt that Council needed to have an urgent review in relation to the current system and it was important to ensure it was fair. He also referred to disability provision and felt that many play parks were failing to meet need in that regard.

Some playparks had also missed out on funding and they were often the only one in the village whereas other areas were seeing two or three playparks upgraded. He felt that a Members' workshop would help and it was important to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people, something he felt the Council could do better at.

The seconder, Councillor Cochrane believed that the alternative proposal would help seek clarity on issues around playparks and avoid referrals back to Committee and therefore delays to improvements. He was particularly pleased the three parks in Donaghadee, Groomsport and Greyabbey would move forward. He felt it was right and proper to put an emphasis on rural and urban to ensure everyone got their fair share.

Councillor W Irvine was supportive and praised officers for the speed and quality of the newly installed Ward Park playpark in Bangor. He noted that it had been extremely popular since it had opened but was aware of older children from Bangor Academy using the park when it was intended to be for young children. The Head of

Parks and Cemeteries would follow up on that matter and report back to the Member.

In a further matter, Councillor W Irvine asked for an update on a request for a fence at Skipperstone play park, pointing to safety concerns in relation to a nearby stream. He added that while the residents were keen for an upgrade of the facility, the fence issue had become an immediate concern. The officer agreed to follow up and report back to the Member.

Councillor Boyle felt that the Committee was going around in circles on the issue and while it was nice to hear the word 'equality', he believed that sometimes those people who complained about delays were the very people causing them. He understood that what Members had called for last month was a detailed report with facts and figures from an independent assessment. That was what Members had been presented with and while it might not have met some Members' personal agendas, it was not right to look at an independent report from an independent body with blinkered eyes. The Council had agreed for that assessment to take place and he felt that the response was a good equal urban and rural mix. He stood by the contents of that report which provided a strategic direction and could not support the constant requests for reports to come back which he believed were to appease some specific areas of Ards and North Down and pointed to the Strategy being for the whole of the Borough.

Councillor McClean added high praise for a brilliant new playpark installation at Ward Park and had noted some of the issues with older children using the facility. He referred to the longer-term prioritisation system for upgrades and felt that the report made some good points in terms of why Council was not following the spreadsheet which he accepted. He felt though that Council was being restricted by the officer's recommendation in terms of seeking external funding in accordance with the prioritisation indicated in the attached summary of the Independent Inspectors report. He would have liked flexibility to consider other parks in the local area and what tier they were and how recently those parks adjacent were refurbished before considering the next park in line.

The officer advised that the independent report was received early in the year and officers met to discuss and rank each park for prioritisation, which also took into account the local circumstances as detailed, and that would continue to be the process. He referred to some very small differences between facilities and he added that urban and rural factors were taken into account pointing out that there was a close to 50/50 split within the report. He wanted to assure Members that officers were aware of the sensitivities around that matter. He highlighted that the original report last month was only for noting and officers not seeking agreement but only advising what they believed to be the case as set out in the Play Strategy as in previous years.

He reminded Members that they had agreed last year that the Play Strategy would be reviewed. This would be discussed and a recommendation would come in the Autumn which would be one year earlier than the previously agreed review which was originally planned for 2026.

Councillor McClean appreciated the clarification and that officer's did have their own interpretation in parallel with the independent review, given that there were such small differences between the parks.

Alderman McRandal sympathised with the view of Councillor Boyle but also agreed with comments made by Councillor McClean. Having read this latest report he felt that the waters were getting muddier given that there were tier 3 playparks that Members had not been aware were lower scoring before.

He asked if officers had selected the three play parks because they represented the best use of the budget whilst protecting the integrity of the independent scoring and the officer confirmed this advising that he had applied for a £1million budget and had been allocated £500,000 which in the scheme of things only related to the three tier 2 play parks at £165,000 each. He pointed to the sum invested in Ward Park and the amount of enjoyment that was gained from that. It was important to ensure that was always the case but the challenge however was that the money available was no longer able to fulfil the Play Strategy.

Alderman McRandal was happy to support the recommendation. He did not want to see the Council tie itself up in knots with rules and guidelines but he felt there was a need to review how Council ultimately made these decisions.

Summing up, Alderman Adair thanked Members for mostly positive contributions. He added he was not welded to any strategy but was here to represent the views of his constituents and at present the strategy was not providing the best outcomes for children and young people. His proposal was to get more external investment to enable more playparks to be upgraded and to have a review which could bring the best possible outcome. He pointed out that his proposal still allowed for upgrades to the three playparks and the facilities for older children but set a more ambitious recommendation to maximise outcomes for children and young people.

The Committee indicated its support for the proposal with the exception of Councillor Boyle who asked to be noted as against.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that Council agree the recommendation but further task officers to pro-actively source external funding for the upgrade of play parks, urban and rural. Furthermore A review of the criteria to ensure the equitable distribution of funding for play park upgrades across the Borough to include the need for modern accessible and inclusive play equipment as a key priority.

9. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (FILE PCSP1) (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in February 2025 Council agreed to write to the Department of Finance in support of a Notice of Motion passed by Newry, Mourne and Down District that the categories of "significant persons" when applying for a non-molestation order should be expanded to include individuals who were in a significant relationship but did not cohabit. In doing so, this would provide alignment

with the relevant statutory provisions in the UK where similar protections are offered, and with the Safety Order provisions in the Republic of Ireland.

A response dated 14th March 2025 was received from Neil Gibson, Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance and is attached for members information.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. SEVENTH REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION (FILE CW168) (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Independent Reporting Commission (the IRC) had published its Seventh Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland.

The Commission was established in 2017 to monitor progress towards ending paramilitary activity, as mandated by an international treaty agreed by the UK and Irish Governments. The establishment of the IRC stemmed from the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement which aimed to address the complexities underlying the continued existence of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland, emphasising the importance of peace and political stability.

Commenting on the findings and recommendations in the Seventh Report, the Commissioners said:

"We describe the situation in 2024 in terms of paramilitarism as mixed. There has been a decrease in shooting incidents and paramilitary style assaults. However, bombing incidents and casualties from paramilitary style shootings has remained consistent with previous years. Intimidation, coercive control, and threats linked to paramilitary groups persist and remain a real concern."

"In 2024, we have seen shifting dynamics within both Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups, including changes in leadership, reported splits, speculation about possible feuds, ongoing questions about whether actions were sanctioned by paramilitary leaders, various interpretations of larger gatherings of people, and increasing interactions with organised crime. We understand that this can be challenging for the PSNI and others in attributing responsibility for, or involvement in, certain actions. However, where there is paramilitary involvement, this must be called out and the harm it causes has to be named."

In their Seventh Report, the Commissioners continued to emphasise the need for a 'Twin Track' approach to tackling paramilitarism, as well as a formal process of Group Transition.

The Commissioners said:

"Tackling paramilitarism requires a 'Twin Track' approach. Track One comprises a robust and targeted set of law enforcement measures addressing paramilitarism, coupled with an effective wider criminal justice response. Track Two involves a comprehensive tackling of the deep-rooted socio-economic conditions which are linked to the continuing existence of paramilitarism today. Both tracks, which are inter-related, are vital in the task of tackling and ending paramilitarism.

"Our Report advocates for a third dimension to complement the Twin Track approach: an agreed formal process of Group Transition, involving direct engagement with the paramilitary groups themselves, in order to bring about their ending."

Recognising that Group Transition was a complex and controversial recommendation, the Commissioners in both their Fifth and Sixth Reports proposed an intermediate step in the form of the appointment by the UK and Irish Governments of an Independent Person who would scope out and prepare the ground with various stakeholders for what a possible formal process of engagement and Group Transition might look like.

In relation to this recommendation, the Commissioners said:

"We welcome the progress being made by the two Governments towards implementing our recommendation to appoint an Independent Person who would scope out what a possible formal process of engagement and Group Transition might look like."

The Commissioners welcomed the focus on paramilitarism in the new draft Programme for Government of the Northern Ireland Executive. The Commissioners also commented on the positive difference the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime is making in the communities where paramilitaries operate. Recognising that the Programme will come to an end in March 2027, they said:

"We strongly recommend that some of the targeted paramilitary-focused work which the Programme has been responsible for should continue beyond 2027, while also ensuring that consideration is given to those elements of the work of tackling paramilitarism that could be integrated into mainstream policies."

The Report contained three new recommendations:

1. The Sponsor Group (which oversees the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime) should review its membership to ensure it is as comprehensive as it needs to be;
2. Because a whole of government approach to paramilitarism is essential, awareness of paramilitarism needs to be raised among public servants and the Executive should explore whether departments could map contributions and opportunities for mainstream policies to play a part in tackling paramilitarism; and
3. Paramilitary-focused work needs to continue beyond March 2027 when the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime was due to end.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council notes the report and writes to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland urging him to abandon the plans for appointing the independent expert and to reinvest the associated funding in law enforcement approaches to paramilitary activity.

Speaking to his alternative proposal, Alderman McRandal stated that the Alliance Party strongly opposed the plans to appoint an independent expert to scope out engagement around paramilitary transition. These were criminal gangs who had nearly 30 years to go away and needed to be dealt with through a law and enforcement approach rather than a polite request to cease their criminality and exploitation of local communities. This idea would legitimise criminals and send a deeply concerning message to communities which suffered at their hand and risked undermining the good work being carried out by the Executive Programme of Paramilitarism and Organised Crime.

The Chair sought agreement but noted disagreement so a vote was taken.

On being put to the meeting, with 6 voting FOR, 8 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 1 ABSENT, the proposal FELL.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that the recommendation be adopted.

On being put to the meeting, with 8 voting FOR, 6 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 599 - GRANTS UPDATE (FILE CD23)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in January 2024 Council agreed to the following notice of motion. (Updates on progress followed each section).

That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council, therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories:

1. Accessibility

- Simplify application forms, review all funding applications to ensure that they are simple, clear and don't unnecessarily over burden applicants with information required.

Update

This was ongoing across all Council departments.

- Digitisation of community grants, tenders and reporting to allow those that wish the option for simple and more efficient submissions.

Update

This was to be considered in phase 2 of the project.

- Building capacity in the community, creating a scheme to help the community to write and deliver more successful applications and bring in more external funding to this Borough.

Update

This was Ongoing – the Community Development team offered support and advice, where possible and each section must provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants to assist them with future applications. Funding was provided to the three community networks for the provision of community support also.

2. Communication Enhancement

- Single grants list or 'open grants' page on council website with uniform advertisement of grants so that everyone receives the same information on available funding with a clear grants timetable, with scoring criteria clearly outlined including ranking and amount available across borough etc.

Update

Website had been updated but would be further enhanced when online grants system was launched.

- A single point of contact to direct community and voluntary groups to support and assistance across different Council departments.

Update

This would be considered in phase 2 of the project.

- Showcase & celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers were delivering on this section of website.

Update

A number of the events were showcased via Council social media sites and via the website. Would be further enhanced when online grants system was launched.

3. Equity

Make funding available proportional to size of communities/activities being delivered and the type of needs being addressed, community groups represent different sizes of population and area (areas of deprivation etc) and are doing different work ('essential needs' and 'non-essential') yet often funding is allocated 'per group' rather than area/numbers targeted or type of work being delivered.

Update

Funding is offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder and where funding is secured externally, Council must abide by and pass on the conditions determined. Some grants, such as festival funding, is offered in tiers dependent upon predicted attendee numbers.

- Funding available to reflect the continued rise in costs., e.g., ensure funding available for community events is adequate to actually host events & activities. Funding is offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder, which may not be Council.

Update

Grants received had not increased, and in most cases had decreased, from central Government despite repeated requests stating the need for increased budgets from local government. A Council funding facilitator and a grants management team would be beneficial to external source funding for the benefit of the borough.

- Up front funding was uniform, that groups got the same up front funding percentage (e.g.,80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.

Update

This had been amended in the updated Grants policy.

- Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups are not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and could apply for all they are eligible for.

Update

Grants were open to all who meet the criteria agreed by the awarding body.

- Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.

Update

Grants were open to all who met the criteria agreed by the awarding body. Council grants were awarded via a competitive process.

4. Efficiency

- Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure Council can allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds were returned to Departments.

Update

This method was undertaken by some departments but again this was determined by where the funding originated and the terms and conditions of any letter of offer to Council.

- 'Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided quicker.
- Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants were delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.

Update

Grants were now being processed more efficiently as a result of the updated Grants Policy.

Following the notice of motion a Grants Management Working Group, an internal working group consisting of relevant heads of service, service unit managers and officers that had responsibility for managing grant schemes, was established to support a detailed internal review and evaluation of grants that were offered and administered across Council.

The project aims and objectives were:

Phase 1

1. Development of an updated ANDBC Grants Management Policy with further consideration given to the Appeals Process.
2. Implementation of a standardised framework, processes and documentation for grants management across Council in accordance with agreed Policy.
3. Monitor the progress of identified work, identify potential challenges and how to mitigate against.
4. Ensure council wide knowledge and understanding of grants management process.

Phase 2

1. Electronic Grants Management Project

The Grants Policy had been updated and agreed by Council in September 2024. The Elected Member Community Development Grants Working Group had considered some community development grant streams in partnership with a number of community representatives and changes suggested had been made, where possible.

All relevant staff, together with members of the Grants Working Group continued to implement the updated Grants Policy.

The next phase of work would include finalisation of a business case for procurement of an online grants management system.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McClean, that Council provides this committee with appropriate timescales for completion, and via further meetings with the Grants Working Group engages with groups, particularly community and voluntary groups, to outline with them the progress so far, discuss their experiences of system and the most recent improvements in respect of the Motion, to ensure that the grants system best meets the needs of those groups.

Speaking to her alternative proposal, Councillor Kendall felt there was significant interest in the progression of this which had arisen from a motion brought previously seeking significant change following feedback that the system was unfair or problematic. She felt that as the system progressed it would be good to keep

checking in with the working group and those groups involved to hear their experiences and feedback to ensure that Council got it right.

The seconder, Councillor McClean reported that the community groups he had spoken to had noted real progress resulting in a change of heart in terms of how Council was dealing with people. He praised the work of Nicola McClurg and was aware of extremely positive feedback which he wanted to recognise. There was still a lot to do and Council could make it easier for voluntary groups to do the good that they were doing in our communities. He added that it was important to continue to involve community groups to ensure that Council was on the right track.

Alderman McRandal was happy to support the proposal. He had wondered what the next steps would be, so he appreciated that this proposal was now requesting that. The Grants workshop had been well attended by community groups and digitisation of the grants process had been welcomed but not by all, so it was essential to ensure that community development officers remained accessible to assist those groups that were not confident with the online process. He noted that equality of opportunity remained a concern for some groups and that Council could try harder to address nuances that could get in the way of groups meeting eligibility criteria. He asked if Council officers felt if that had been adequately addressed before commenting that he felt that reserve lists for funding was a good idea.

The Head of Community and Culture explained that this was a very significant piece of work and there were reports regularly coming forward in relation to the updated grants policy which would keep coming to Committee. The team was moving towards an online system but when that was in place a paper based system would still run in tandem for those who would still require it. Staff would then input their applications into the digital system.

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the progress to date in terms of simplifying the process along with addressing equality issues. He queried the reference to a Council funding facilitator and a grants management team and the officer advised that this was an aspiration, having learned that other Council's had a dedicated grants team in place to deal with all of their Council's grants with specific teams then scoring their own areas, but the idea was to make the process more streamlined. The Notice of Motion had asked for a single point of contact so this approach would provide that with all information held in a single place.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McClean, that Council provides this committee with appropriate timescales for completion, and via further meetings with the Grants Working Group engages with groups, particularly community and voluntary groups, to outline with them the progress so far, discuss their experiences of system and the most recent improvements in respect of the Motion, to ensure that the grants system best meets the needs of those groups.

12. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUMMER SCHEME PROVISION 2024 AND 2025 (FILE CDV34B)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailed as follows:

Summer schemes in 2024

In 2024 the Council led summer schemes were delivered by the Community Development Team in the following 7 Community Centres/locations across a 2 week period:

- Alderman George Green Community Centre
- Ballygowan Village Hall
- Bowtown Estate: Church Buildings
- Donaghadee Community Centre
- Portavogie Community Centre
- Redburn Community Centre
- Westwind's Community Centre

At 6 of these locations, there were 48 places provided per week, with one smaller centre (Westwind's) having 32 places available per week.

Three Community Led Summer Schemes were delivered over 2 weeks by Community Partners in the following areas:

- Bangor, Kilcooley Community Centre – Kilcooley Women's Centre (external funding secured by KWC enabled a further 2-week scheme to take place)
- Millisle, Millisle Community Hub - Millisle Youth Forum
- Portaferry, Steel Dickson Avenue - Ballyphilip Youth Club

Council Run Summer Schemes in 2025

Community Development would be providing one additional scheme in 2025 which would be held in Comber Leisure Centre. This was in partnership with Leisure Services which would fund the schemes whilst Community Development would secure staffing and manage the scheme. Community Development staff would be working in partnership with Leisure Colleagues to offer an element of leisure at all schemes.

The Council led summer schemes would be delivered by the Community Development Team in the following 8 Centres:

	Centre	Weeks 1 & 2	Centre	Weeks 3 & 4
Team 1	Redburn Community Centre	21 July – 1 August	Alderman George Green Community Centre	4 August – 15 August
Team 2	Donaghadee Community Centre	21 July – August	Portavogie Community Centre	4 August – 15 August
Team 3	Winds Community Centre *	21 July – 1 August	Ballygowan Village Hall	4 August – 15 August

Team 4	Bowtown – using Movilla Presbyterian Church	21 July - 1 August	Comber Leisure Centre	4 August – 15 August
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*Discussions are ongoing with West Winds Primary School regarding use of its assembly hall and outdoor MUGA pitch which would enable the number of spaces on offer at the scheme to increase from 32 per day to 48.

The 8 schemes would run over a 4-week period instead of the two weeks as per last year. Summer Schemes will be delivered in two lots. The first will take place between 21st July and 1st August 2025, in 4 locations for two weeks and the second will take place 4th August to 15th August in 4 locations for 2 weeks. This would facilitate more efficient management of the staff recruitment and training. It would also offer agency staff a month's placement instead of two weeks and would also reduce the number of staff required from 56 to approx. 32 staff members, which would further enable a smoother recruitment process.

Registration process:

The registration would be a three-step process:

1. Ticket Source. Online registration of place and payment
2. Verification of documentation by officers
3. Notification of Place secured communicated to the applicant.

Ticket Source would be open on two consecutive days. On the first day 4 sites would be released and the final four released on the second day. This will assist the administration of the schemes and hopefully help prevent the system going offline as it did last year because of a spike in demand. Ticket Source had been informed of the amount of traffic this scheme would drive as soon as it was opened and would put mechanisms in place to try to mitigate any overloading this may have caused.

Verification documentation (proof of residence, DOB and Medical Declarations) would be collected in person at the chosen registration site, later the same day of Ticket Source going live, with two time slots available for parents and guardians, an after-school slot and an evening slot. There was a delay on receiving the verification documents last year, and as staff needed to prepare in advance for any medical situations, running the process in this way would ensure that all relevant documentation was provided well in advance of the scheme starting.

Should any parent or guardian be unable to attend the two slots available at the location of the scheme on day of ticket release there would be opportunities the following week to drop documents into the office, in person. Should after the two-week window the documents not be presented then those places would be offered to the children on the waiting list, who would have the same time frame to present their documentation. This would all be explained and advertised prior to the schemes opening, clearly indicating the key dates and it would also be clearly indicated that once registered on Ticket Source, that this was not confirmation of place. Confirmation would only take place once documentations are presented in person.

2025 Community lead Summer Scheme provision:

The community partners had previously included, Kilcooley, Millisle and Portaferry. Unfortunately Millisle had recently expressed a concern over capacity of volunteers to run the scheme this year and officers were currently working with the group to try to find a solution to this situation.

Partners would be given 80% of their funding in advance of the scheme to allow for preparations to be made for the 2 weeks.

2025 Potential new Community Partner Summer Schemes

There would be two new approaches piloted to build capacity within the community with a potential to them holding community run summer schemes in the future.

- Redburn Loughview Community Forum was interested in becoming a Summer Scheme Partner but needed support to develop capacity to enable delivery of the scheme. This year they hoped to deliver a small-scale summer scheme in their locality, (subject to funding), with developmental support from the Community Development team. They would attend training opportunities with the Community Development team in the interim period to prepare for Summer Scheme 2026.
- West Winds Community Development Association volunteers had agreed to work with the Council delivery staff to increase volunteer skill base and develop relationships further within the community.

For information members may have been aware additional funds were requested as part of the rate setting process for 2025/26 to enable the provision of summer schemes to be enhanced. However the request was unsuccessful. However the approaches outlined in this report intend to make as best use as possible of the existing budget available and where possible increased provision as indicated.

Update on Ongoing Reviews of service provision.

Members were advised that a review was underway to produce a new Community Development Strategy and Action plan and a review of the provision of the community centres and halls to consider operating models had also commenced. This was intended to improve service provision generally, and as a result may have assisted in enhancing summer scheme delivery capacity for the future at some centres.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Ashe welcomed the report and in particular the addition of Comber along with the extension of the length of the schemes. She queried what measures were in place to avoid the staffing issues that were experienced last year including any links with Labour Market Partnerships to try and avoid a repeat. The Head of Community and Culture advised that scoping for staff had commenced earlier than usual this year and feedback from staff who had worked the previous year had also been

considered. Those employees had advised they would have preferred a longer run so the programme was running with a smaller number of staff over four weeks rather than two weeks.

Alderman Adair wanted to thank the officer and her team and recognised how much the summer schemes were enjoyed by children in the Ards Peninsula. He looked forward to another successful year.

Councillor McClean asked for confirmation that Kilcooley would be continuing its scheme and noted that of the eight centres only one was in Bangor. He queried if there were issues in terms of hosting additional schemes in Bangor, feeling that the number available felt light given the percentage of Bangor's population.

The officer advised that historically there was a scheme in Breezemount which had become independent of Council and she also understood that Kilcooley intended to run a scheme this year. Other organisations ran schemes in Bangor for example, while not Council funded, she was also aware of Summer Scheme provision at Bangor Aurora. She added that additional funding had been requested to increase the summer scheme offer throughout the Borough but that request had been unsuccessful.

In a final comment, Councillor McClean felt it important that the provision be equitable, meet the required need and be weighted to the population.

Councillor Douglas referred to the importance of summer schemes and welcomed the addition of Comber, while Councillor W Irvine returned to the Breezemount scheme and the challenges that were faced in terms of finding volunteers to run the scheme. He also agreed that other areas of Bangor should be considered for a scheme such as Hamilton Road Hub.

Councillor Kendall thanked the officer and was pleased to see engagement with Redburn in terms of it becoming a partner as the summer scheme there was hugely oversubscribed. She felt that given hiccups last year in terms of staffing, this approach would save on the cost of recruitment as well as providing continuity.

Councillor Boyle asked if the Council was tied to delivering the summer schemes in the same locations every year with those same three independent groups running their own schemes, or if that arrangement could be reviewed. He appreciated that some youth groups worked hard through the year with this added pressure on them to run their own summer schemes and wondered if those areas could benefit from a Council run scheme.

The officer explained she had been in touch with the group in Portaferry and reported having a good conversation. In terms of locations, she explained there was criteria in relation to social deprivation. The summer schemes would also form part of an upcoming wider community development and community halls review later in the year, ahead of next year's summer scheme programme. Those locations would be reviewed as part of that process.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. PEACEPLUS UPDATE (FILE PEACV-1)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Ards and North Down PEACEPLUS application and Action Plan were submitted to SEUPB on the 15th May 2024.

Clarifications were received from SEUPB on Friday 30th August 2024 and a response was submitted on Friday 13th September 2024.

Strategic Outline Cases (SOC's) were submitted to SEUPB on Friday 6th September 2024 for Theme 1 – Community Regeneration and Transformation (CRT - Capital Projects). Following a Council decision to select 3 capital projects in a response to SEUPBs request to do so, the application was resubmitted in early 2025.

A further set of clarifications were received from SEUPB on Friday 17th January 2025 and a response was submitted on Friday 24th January 2025.

NEXT STEPS

The tenders for Theme 2 – Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) and Theme 3 – Celebrating Cultures and Diversity (CCD) have been advertised and are currently being scored in line with Councils procurement policy. An update on the tender process for revenue projects would be brought to the next PEACEPLUS meeting.

With regards to Theme 1 – Community Regeneration and Transformation (CRT), Outline Business Cases (OBC's) were being prepared by the internal working group with input from an independent QS and an integrated design team alongside stakeholders and partners.

Community information sessions would be undertaken in the coming weeks in each of three areas to share proposed plans for each of the sites.

It was anticipated that the SEUPB Steering Committee may have met in April to consider the ANDBC Action Plan, prior to issuing a Letter of Offer. SEUPB had now stated that the Letter of Offer would be issued in Euro, which would impose an additional cost to Council, dependent on the exchange rate at the time of processing each funding claim.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer noted that this was an update of a situation that had not changed much and asked if there had been any new information since the report was published.

The Head of Community and Culture confirmed that was the case, in that 17 tenders had been invited and scored and a report would follow at the next meeting. SEUPB had advised that the application was in the final stages and a Letter of Offer was imminent.

Councillor W Irvine noted the last paragraph advised that the LoO stated that funding would be processed in Euros which would impose an additional cost to Council dependent on the exchange rate. He asked if that policy had changed mid-way throughout the process and the officer explained that after initial discussions with SEUPB, it was understood that the offer would be in Pound Sterling which was normal procedure. Derry and Strabane had received an offer in Pound Sterling but since then all other Councils had been advised they would receive their funding in Euros. The officer had raised concern regarding this with SEUPB but had been advised again in response that the funding would be in Euros.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

14. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG APRIL 2025) (FILE SD151)
(Appendix VIII – XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ards and North Down Sports Forum administered grants for sporting purposes on behalf of Council under the Council's Grants Policy agreed in 2024.

£45,000 had been allocated within the 2024/2025 revenue budget for this purpose. In October 2024, Officers advised Members that an additional sum of circa £11,000 could be required above the £45,000 budget agreed for 2024/25 to meet the expected level of applications based on current trends of the grants scheme year to date and subsequently, Council approved the allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year with the surplus being sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

During February 2025, the Forum received a total of 17 applications: **11 applications for 2024/25** (1 Coach Education, 3 Goldcard and 7 Individual Travel/Accommodation), and **6 applications for 2025/26** (1 Coach Education, 1 Club Travel/Accommodation, 1 Event and 3 Individual Travel/Accommodation). A summary of the **15 successful** applications were detailed in the attached Successful Coach Education 2024/25, Successful Goldcard 2024/25, Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation 2024/25, Successful Event 2025/26 and Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation 2025/26 Appendices.

2024/25 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded February 2025	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	-£1,999.90
Coach Education	£3,000	£300	*£895.00
Equipment	£14,000	£0	*-£3,272.91

Events	£6,000	£0	£869.46
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	£1,049.98	*-£8,125.05
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£4,570
3 Goldcards Awarded in February (61 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)			

*The proposed remaining budget for Coach Education of **£895.00** was based on an award of **£300.00**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£3,272.91** was based on withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£1,601.89**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£8,125.05** was based on a proposed award this month of **£1,049.98**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 was **-£5,563.40** (112% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

£70,000 had been allocated within the 2025/2026 revenue budget for this purpose

2025/26 Budget £70,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded February 2025	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Coach Education	£3,000	£0	£3,000
Equipment	£22,000	£0	£22,000
Events	£10,000	£1,000	*£8,000
Seeding	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Travel and Accommodation	£28,000	£150	*£27,850
Discretionary	£1,000	£340	£660
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000	£0	£2,000

*The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£8,000** was based on an award of **£1,000**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£27,850** was based on an award of **£150**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Discretionary of **£660** was based on an award of **£340**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2025/26 is **£67,360** (4% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDED that members note the attached report detailing grants that have been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum relating to applications in February 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Boyle referred back to Item 3, noting that the Committee had not given its support to the staff of Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex with agreement of a ceremony of celebration which would have been in lieu of an opening ceremony cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Ards and North Down Sports Forum however was a programme that did recognise success of sports throughout the Borough, and the proposer wished to place on record his thanks to those involved in the organising and delivery of the recent Ards and North Down Sports Awards which had taken place. He thanked in particular the small but dedicated Sports Development team within the Council which had organised what had been a special night.

It had been great to see Rhys McClenaghan, Ciara Mageean and Grace Davison – three of the Borough's 10 Olympians in attendance who were celebrated and

thanked. The guest speaker had been Angela Platt, a former Ireland Field Hockey International Goalkeeper and incoming Irish FA Director for Women's Football.

Councillor Boyle felt that the Sports Awards had gone extremely well but his only gripe was that there had been no officialdom from the Council at what was one of the biggest events in the Council's calendar. This was attended by World Champions and Gold Medallists, so it was therefore important to recognise the sporting achievements.

He added his disappointment, given the outcome of Item 3, that the Council was now unable to recognise the success of Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex and thank all those involved. He was disappointed that Members could not even speak of the success or offer any alternative proposal during that item. With only one solitary question raised, he felt that the Committee should be ashamed of itself. To cast aside and bury the success of this facility to date was extremely sad.

The seconder Councillor Kendall agreed with the proposer and wished she had spoken on Item 3. She praised the Sports Awards ceremony which she had attended alongside other Committee members and was delighted to see the level of sporting success across the Borough. She noted in particular the success of women and girls who were picking up awards and making headway in sports that they previously wouldn't have done so.

She referred to making regular comments at this Committee on the excellent job of the Council's Leisure Service and the facilities it provided, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, to enable children and young people to succeed. She had found the guest speaker at the Sports Awards, Angela Platt, to be inspiring particularly in terms of leadership and she was privileged to be part of this Committee which could continually agree to award the Sports Forum grants and be able to celebrate with the young people at the Sports Awards ceremony.

Alderman Adair felt that the comments of the proposer had been unnecessary, and he argued that the Council and Committee supported every one of its staff and its facilities including Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. It was regrettable that an official opening had been unable to take place but what was before Members earlier in the meeting had been a request for approval for what was effectively a staff party. Rates bills were arriving this week, and ratepayers would not be thanking the Council for spending £30,000 on a staff party that would only last a couple of hours. There were other ways to recognise staff who worked hard but it was also important to recognise hard working ratepayers. He felt there were other more pressing issues worthy of reallocation of underspends, and the Committee had previously heard about the need for playpark improvements which he offered as an example of where such an underspend could go.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 644 - BOWTOWN PLAY PARK (FILE CW4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in February 2025 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council.

That Council notes the poor condition of the Bowtown children's Play Park and its poor provision of accessible play equipment and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.

Ards and North Down Borough Council produced a Play Strategy for the period 2021 to 2032 which recommended that a Play Park refurbishment budget be allocated to enable Play Parks to be updated each year. Those Play Parks scoring the lowest within the Annual Independent Inspectors Report would be prioritised for refurbishment. A report was submitted to the Community & Wellbeing Committee in March 2025 noting the lowest scoring Play Parks for refurbishment within the agreed budget allocated and Officers would be progressing this in accordance with the Council's decision within the 2025/26 period.

The Bowtown Play Park had not yet featured as one of the lowest scoring playparks within the budget allocated, therefore under the policy it was not refurbished until it was identified as one of the lowest scoring play parks.

The Independent Inspector's report considered many elements in the overall play park including its equipment condition, age, surfacing, ancillary items, hazards, operational functionality, stability, foundations, siting, finishes, materials and fixings. These elements were also considered in line with the relevant British and European Standards applicable to play equipment and the guidelines from the Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The Inspector was registered through the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII). In the Abbots Estate, Bowtown play park, the cradle swings, inclusive swing, and roundabout were considered to be inclusive pieces of equipment. This equated to 33% of the equipment provided. Therefore, at this stage the provision complied with Councils target policy of a minimum of 30%. Other parks, which had not been refurbished since this policy was introduced had a percentage of inclusive equipment ranging from 14% to 40%. Once refurbished, the percentage in each would be a minimum of 30%.

As stated in the Play Strategy, requests for additional equipment to be added to existing play parks outside of the play park refurbishment process would not normally be considered. Additions of extra equipment may have altered the Tier in which a play park was classified and also created issues in relation to critical fall areas and equipment spacings, which may for example render their addition prohibitive within the existing footprint.

There were many play parks across the Council's portfolio that would be considered to have limited accessible equipment. As stated in the Play Strategy each play park once refurbished should have a minimum of 30% of physical play equipment that was considered to be accessible and inclusive. Therefore, as these play parks got refurbished, they would be delivered with that minimum standard implemented as part of the design.

It had been hoped that a more accessible roundabout (one that is flush with the surrounding ground level) could have been installed with the aid of the Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Funding. In previous years, the Access and Inclusion fund allowed for accessible roundabouts to be installed at Cloughey and Portavogie, however this funding stream was not released by the Department for Communities in this Financial Year, so this was not able to be applied for. In cases such as this, equipment would normally be swapped out in order to retain the spacing between equipment for safety reasons.

Given the limited existing internal refurbishment budget, no more than three play parks could be refurbished per year, there was no additional budget available for requests such as this proposal, which as described above were considered outside the normal refurbishment processes. The Bowtown play park currently was ranked outside the top three.

It should also be noted that a Business Case was submitted as part of the rates budget setting process to obtain a budget to resurface the Multi Use Games Area adjacent to the Bowtown (Abbots Estate) play park, but that was not agreed as part of that process so the replacement surface could not be progressed at this time.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

(a) notes that when the Bowtown Play Park falls within the lowest scoring play parks as per the Independent Inspector's annual report, it will be prioritised for refurbishment in line with the approach currently being followed as outlined in the Play Strategy.

(b) notes that the current playpark in the Bowtown Estate already meets the Council's minimum 30% target threshold for inclusive equipment.

(c) notes that officers will continue as in previous years to seek additional funding in order to deliver more playparks than its own budget allows, and to enhance and promote inclusivity in playparks throughout the Borough.

(Alderman McIlveen had been granted speaking rights and was admitted to the meeting remotely - 8.11pm)

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, to defer the Bowtown report for the Director and Head of Parks and Cemeteries to meet with the community association to discuss the accessibility and inclusivity of the play park and its facilities at Abbot Gardens and to see for themselves the play facilities at the Bowtown.

The proposer explained that he was bringing the alternative proposal on behalf of Alderman McIlveen and he, along with the seconder, would give way to the Member at this stage and make any further comments when given the opportunity to sum up.

Alderman McIlveen said that he was speaking on behalf of his Newtownards DEA colleagues, describing the response as disappointing in terms of its content and brevity.

It was flawed given that it referred to a third of the play equipment being inclusive. He referred to the swings being dated and that equipment no longer being used anymore throughout the Borough. He also referred to a roundabout which was located on a hillock with no pathway making it inaccessible to anyone using a wheelchair.

Officers in meeting with the local community group he felt would be helpful along with a site visit. He had previously offered to meet with the Head of Parks and Cemeteries at the site and two other officers he had met there had agreed that it was not up to standard. He had also been told that officers would seek funding from the Department for Communities but clearly that was not forthcoming this year which was a huge disappointment.

Given the condition of the facilities though, he was disappointed that the external funding had not been sought previously.

Alderman McIlveen referred to a new playpark installation at Londonderry Park, a location that had undergone a refurbishment previously within the lifetime of Ards and North Down Borough Council. Bowtown however had never been touched throughout the time he had been on both this Council and the previous Ards Borough Council. He raised the question therefore if Council was rewarding areas where facilities got damaged and neglecting those areas where facilities were looked after. He felt that was not the right approach, along with failing to prioritise modern, inclusive and accessible equipment. Bowtown, and the roundabout in particular, was an example of that.

Speaking in support of the proposal, Councillor S Irvine had been taken aback by the report recalling only three lines where Bowtown was mentioned in what was a three page report. He felt that his own key concerns had been overlooked with no mention of when the park was last updated or no maintenance records provided. There had been no consideration for accessibility and inclusivity, in particular wheelchair users. In winter the park was virtually unusable due to the muddy grass which was the only form of access. There was no data or analysis on usage needs or current numbers using the park and no solutions in terms of timelines and funding. While he felt that reports were usually informative, he was extremely disappointed with the quality of this report.

Alderman McRandal noted that the proposer was seeking clarification so on that basis he was happy to agree to the deferral. Given the events of the last month and the debacle of play parks, he could not support any deviation from the Council's Play Strategy and the independent examiner's scoring of play parks and prioritisation.

Summing up, Alderman Adair commended Alderman McIlveen for his hard work on the matter in bringing this to the Council's attention and he asked Members to support what he felt was a very sensible proposal.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, to defer the Bowtown report for the Director and Head of Parks and Cemeteries to meet with the community association to discuss the

accessibility and inclusivity of the play park and its facilities at Abbot Gardens and to see for themselves the play facilities at the Bowtown.

(Alderman McIlveen left the meeting – 8.21pm)

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

16.1 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN ADAIR AND COUNCILLOR EDMUND

That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options to enhance and improve pedestrian and vehicle access to Kirkistown Cemetery making use of the adjacent derelict Council owned former caretaker's site to improve access and road safety at the cemetery.

(Councillor Edmund was admitted to the meeting via Zoom – 8.21pm)

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Speaking to the motion, Alderman Adair commended the Head of Parks and Cemeteries for improvements of general maintenance at cemeteries following a Notice of Motion he had brought last year. He praised cemetery staff for their work welcomed a Council mapping exercise that could now provide information in relation to plots along with the procurement of new equipment which was making a difference.

The Notice of Motion before members had followed a number of concerns raised directly to the Member from residents in relation to access at Kirkistown Cemetery. The access road in and out of the cemetery was narrow due to changes which had provided pedestrian access, and it meant that two vehicles were unable to pass each other. The entrance/exit was also off a busy road and caused congestion issues.

Council owned the old caretaker's site which was adjacent to the entrance and the proposer suggested that some of that site could be used to extend the entrance to the cemetery to make it a safer for both vehicles and pedestrians which he felt would be well received by many residents.

Alderman Adair felt it was important to make the site as a safe as possible and improve traffic flow to and from the site, so this motion was asking for a report which would look at options in making use of the adjacent caretaker's site which had been derelict for considerable time.

The seconder, Councillor Edmund felt that what was being proposed was sensible, recalling cars parking at either side of the entrance during funerals due to the car park not having large capacity. While pedestrian access was now making it safer, he believed that most of those pedestrians would have been parking cars on the busy road which was also a safety concern.

Councillor Boyle asked if Council officers had received any direct reports from the public of the safety concerns raised by Alderman Adair and the Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that he had met with an Elected Member on the site five years ago and that had resulted in the pedestrian access being installed. There had been no public complaints aside from the Elected Member comments.

Councillor Boyle queried if there were any existing plans for the old caretaker's bungalow and the Director confirmed that there was no project identified for the site but it was recorded on a list of capital assets for review.

In summing up, Alderman Adair said he had received concerns from more than 30 constituents, and it was often a case that these matters were directly raised with Members on the ground. He added that he had met the Head of Service on site five years ago and that had resulted in the installation of pedestrian access. The old caretaker's house had been vacant for a long time and was now an eyesore which the Council needed to address. It was only a small part of the site that would be required to make the improvements so that would not disrupt any other capital plans that the Council might want to progress. The state of the building was unacceptable and if it wasn't Council owned, he felt the Council would asking the owner to take action.

In closing, Alderman Adair repeated the aims of the motion and hoped that Members would be in support of it.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillor Edmund left the meeting – 8.29pm)

17. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

In order to facilitate the attendance of Chris Kelly (Serco), Item 21 was heard at this stage of the meeting.

21. NCLT Q3 2024-2025 (Appendix XIV – XV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

Council was asked to consider an update on the performance of NCLT for Q3 of the 2024-2025 financial year.

The recommendation to note the report was agreed.

Reports for Approval Delegated to Committee **Items 18 – 20**

18. EXTENSION OF ICE CREAM & HOT DRINKS VENDORS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN THE BOROUGH 2025-26 (FILE PCA125)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

Council was asked to approve the tender award for the Extension of Ice Cream & Hot Drinks Vendors at Various Locations in the Borough 2025-26.

Under the Councils' scheme of delegation, the Community and Wellbeing Committee can approve the extension of these tenders on behalf of the Council.

The recommendation was that Council approves the ten extensions of Ice Cream & Hot Drinks Vendors at various locations in the Borough for 2025-26.

The recommendation was agreed.

19. APPOINTMENT OF CATERING SERVICES PROVIDER AT BANGOR CASTLE WALLED GARDEN (FILE PCA138)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was submitted to update Elected Members on the appointment of a Catering Services Provider at Bangor Castle Walled Garden and seek approval to move forward following the recent expression of interest period.

Under the Councils' scheme of delegation, the Community and Wellbeing Committee can approve the extension of these tenders on behalf of the Council.

It was recommended that Council approved the appointment of Richard Donnelly & Ann O'Brien t/a Coffee Cure - AMD Catering Takeaway for the provision of Catering Services at Bangor Castle Walled Garden.

The recommendation was agreed.

20. TENDER FOR LEVELLING AND DRAINAGE OF MILLISLE SPORTSFIELD (FILE PCA133)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

In line with an approved business case, Parks and Cemeteries Officers identified the need for a new pitch surface installation at Millisle Sportsfield. A tender procurement exercise was initiated for the Levelling and Drainage of Millisle Sportsfield.

Under the Councils' scheme of delegation, the Community and Wellbeing Committee can approve the extension of these tenders on behalf of the Council.

It was recommended that the Council award the contract to Clive Richardson Limited.

The recommendation was agreed.

Report for Noting

22. LEISURE VAT UPDATE (FILE FIN152)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:4 – CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Council was asked to consider an update regarding Leisure VAT. Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) took action on behalf of all Northern Irish councils against His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in respect overpaid VAT. This case centred on whether VAT should be payable on charges paid by members of the

CWB 09.04.2025 PM

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public for access to sports, recreation and leisure facilities. The final ruling supported the District Councils case.

The recommendation to note the report was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.00pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 9.1.**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	30 April 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	11 April 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	Deputation Request - RAISE Programme
Attachments	Appendix - Deputation Form

A deputation request has been received from representatives from the RAISE Programme, Department of Education.

The RAISE programme is a new initiative which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage. This is a whole community, place-based approach in localities across Northern Ireland to support the Department of Education's vision that "every child is happy, learning and succeeding". It helps to deliver on the mission, set by the report 'A Fair Start', to ensure all children and young people regardless of background are given the best start in life

The request is to update Council as the programme progresses in the Ards and North Down Area. The areas identified for this council area are Millisle and Donaghadee.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers this request.

Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk, providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Applicant Details

We apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

Name of person(s) making the deputation request:	Claire McClelland, Director Raising Aspirations and Support Learning, Department of Education.
Date of request:	28 th March 25
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	RAISE Programme, Department of Education
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	

Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

The deputation request is to update Councillors / Senior Council Officers as the programme of RAISE progresses in the Ards and North Down Area. The areas identified for this council area are Millisle and Donaghadee.

Linsey Farrell, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Senior Responsible Officer for RAISE within Department of Education met with Elected Member from Ards Peninsula DEA and staff from Ards and North Down Borough Council on 5th September via MS Teams.

Since then, Michael McGinley RAISE Programme Manager and Gillian Hamilton RAISE Locality Coordinator, Millisle and Donaghadee, attended and presented at the Strategic Community Planning Partnership on 5 February. Gillian has also met with council staff Nicola Dorrian, Beverly Skillen and Patricia Mackey and continues to seek engagement and alignment with council.

DE has recently published information regarding Strategic Area Plans which are currently being developed for each RAISE locality along with information on the available budgets to support the delivery of these plans. [Developing a Locality Strategic Area Plan | Department of Education](#)

I am happy to meet in person or virtually if you prefer. If you wish to receive an update please provide dates/times and preferred method of engagement by return to RAISE@education-ni.gov.uk.

Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 12, January 2025

12. Deputations

(1) Deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received seven working days notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Council.

(2) In the case of an emergency, deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received one working day's notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Mayor.

(3) The deputation shall be confined to the presentation of a statement, or copy of resolutions, and shall not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address shall not exceed 10 minutes followed by a maximum 15 minutes question and answer session.

(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn (members of the deputation will remain subject to Standing Order 8). Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

Privacy notice – how we will use information about you

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a Data Processor under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers when receiving and administering deputation requests.

You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing it falls within the following three categories:

- a) **Consent** - you consent to the information being processed for the specific purpose of the Council considering your deputation request;
- b) **Public task** - the processing is necessary in order for the Council to consider your request in line with its Standing Orders which were established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and
- c) **Legitimate interests** - the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests (or the legitimate interests of a third party) in order that Council may consider your deputation request.

The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

Your personal data will not be shared or disclosed to any other organisation without your consent, unless the law permits or places an obligation on the Council to do so.

Personal data is held and stored by the Council in a safe and secure manner and in compliance with Data Protection legislation and in line with the Council's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

If you have any queries regarding the processing of your personal data, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Email: dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

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ITEM 9.2

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	30 April 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	17 April 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	Deputation Request - Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club
Attachments	Appendix - Deputation Request Form

A deputation request dated 1st April 2025 has been received from representatives from Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club.

The application states that this is to highlight the need for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for the village of Greyabbey as outlined in the Village Plan along with the need to invest in sport and recreation facilities in in the village of Greyabbey.

The applicant has requested to make the deputation to either the Place and Prosperity Committee or the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers this request.

Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk, providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Applicant Details

We apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

Name of person(s) making the deputation request:	Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club
Date of request:	01.04.2025
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Place and Prosperity Committee or Community and Wellbeing Committee

Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

To highlight the need of a MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) for the Village of Greyabbey as outlined in the Village Plan.

To highlight the need to invest in sporting facilities in the village and highlight the need of sport and recreation facilities in the village of Greyabbey to Council.

The deputation would inform Council of sports development and need to invest in facilities in the village of Greyabbey.

Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 12, January 2025

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The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

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Tel: 0300 013 3333



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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1 April 2025

Our ref: C058/25

By Email: susie.mccullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Ms Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

Dear Ms McCullough

Council at its March meeting carried the following motion:

This Council:

- Notes that under current Northern Ireland road traffic law, there is no legal requirement for other vehicles to stop when a school bus is picking up or dropping off pupils.
- Recognises that child safety is of paramount importance and that measures akin to the U.S. "stop-arm" system—requiring traffic to halt while schoolchildren board or alight—could significantly reduce the risk of accidents and injuries.
- Highlights the growing public concern and the desire of parents, educators, and local communities for stronger safeguarding measures at school bus stops, especially in rural areas where road layouts can pose additional risks.
- Believes that introducing legislation mandating vehicles to stop when a school bus is actively loading or unloading students would enhance road safety and offer additional protection to schoolchildren across Northern Ireland.

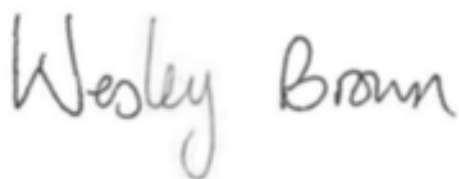
This Council Resolves To:

- (i) Call upon the Northern Ireland Assembly to develop and pass legislation requiring vehicles to stop for school buses that are picking up or dropping off pupils, in line with best practices observed in other jurisdictions.
- (ii) Write to all other local councils in Northern Ireland, urging them to support and pass similar motions, thereby demonstrating widespread local government backing for this measure.

- (iii) Write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Education, highlighting the need for such legislation and requesting that they prioritise this issue within the Executive; and
- (iv) Undertake any additional measures within Mid-Ulster District's remit—such as awareness campaigns or pilot schemes—aimed at strengthening school transport safety until statutory changes are in effect.

I would appreciate your consideration in this important matter and would be grateful for a response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Wesley Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Councillor Wesley Brown
Deputy Chair

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

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Our Ref: Council/March 2025/20.4

Date: 24 March 2025

Email: fiona.dillon@fermanaghmagh.com

Ms Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Townhall
The Castle
BANGOR, BT20 4BT

Dear Ms McCullough,

At the March Council meeting, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council adopted the following motion, and asked that it be forwarded to all Northern Ireland Councils.

As we are now living in a growingly diverse community - and the richness in which that brings to our workplaces, homes and communities - FODC believes that a diverse workplace is important for embedding anti-racism. As such, the Fermanagh and Omagh Council should show leadership by having a diverse and welcoming workforce.

We therefore propose that FODC commits to;

- ***conducting an annual review of its workforce demographics***
- ***developing strategies to increase diversity across all levels of its employment***
- ***comprehensively train all employees on diversity and inclusion, including areas such as unconscious bias and inclusive communication.***
- ***apply outreach positive action to encourage candidates, from diverse backgrounds, for any available posts.***

The Council looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

Unclassified

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ITEM 11.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	30 April 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	17 April 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	Transport Decarbonisation Event - 4 June 2025
Attachments	

The Department for Infrastructure will be hosting a morning focused on transport decarbonisation as part of its series of 'Foundations for a Better Future' events.

The event will be held on Wednesday 4 June 2025, 9:30 - 13:00 followed by lunch in Craigavon Civic Centre.

This session will be an opportunity for you to find out more about the Department's work in this area and how this aligns with NI's wider climate commitments.

The invitation suggests two representatives from the Council be nominated to attend. Members should note that the deadline for nominations is listed as 28 April 2025, however, this was the earliest Council meeting this report could be brought to.

Members should also note that the Council's Annual Meeting is to be held on the same date.

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the Event.

From: DFI Perm Sec <Perm.Sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk>

Sent: 16 April 2025 13:19

Subject: Transport Decarbonisation Event - 4 June 2025

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

**Foundations
for a Better Future**





Save the Date

Good afternoon,

The Department for Infrastructure

will be hosting a morning focused on **transport decarbonisation** as part of its series of '**Foundations for a Better Future**' events.

> **Craigavon Civic Centre**

> **Wednesday 4 June 2025**

> **9:30 - 13:00 followed by lunch**

This session will be an opportunity for you to find out more about the Department's work in this area and how this aligns with NI's wider climate commitments.

To ensure we have the most appropriate attendees from your Council, we would be grateful if you would nominate two representatives and send their names and contact details to Perm.Sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk by 28 April 2025.

Please note this is an invite only event and the invite is non-transferable.

INFRASTRUCTURE
IT ALL STARTS HERE



Department for
Infrastructure

An Agency
Bonneagair

Department for
Infrastructure

Unclassified

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ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	30 April 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	11 April 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	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Notice of Motion tracker

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of Motions. It should be noted that as each Motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NoM Ref:	Responsible Committee	Date Received	Submitted by	Notice (Original and any amendment)	Council & Committee Meetings (Date & Item)	Status (Most recent status update at the top followed by detail of what has been accomplished to date)	Responsible Officer	Final Outcome
11	Community & Wellbeing	31.05.15	Councillor Muir & Alderman Keery	Rory McIlroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McIlroy Organisation. Meeting to be arranged for end of February 2025	Graeme Bannister (Director of Community & Wellbeing)	
330	Environment	21.01.19	Councillor Brooks & Councillor Smith	This Council brings back a report on providing a shelter or sheltered area near the slipway in Donaghadee which would provide cover for the growing numbers of open water swimmers that use the area on a daily basis.	Council January 2019 Environment Committee 06.02.19 Item 16.3	Report to be brought back to Committee	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
370	Environment	13/09/2019	Councillor Cathcart & Alderman Gibson	That this Council acknowledges that Council byelaws are in need of review. Many of our Council byelaws are now outdated and do not cover new housing developments and playparks in the Borough. The Council therefore will carry out a comprehensive review of Council byelaws to create a modern system to assist the Council in meeting the outcomes identified within the Community Plan	Council - September 2019 Referred to Environment Committee - October 2019 Environment Committee 02.09.20 Item 12	Review of the byelaws to commence and be undertaken in three stages. Phase 1 - Scope, Phase 2 - Council Review and Phase 3 - Recommendation and Decision	Richard McCracken (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)	
514	Community & Wellbeing	19.05.22	Councillor Cummings & Councillor Johnson	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Council agreed Comber 3G pitch is ranked 21st in project prioritisation. Stakeholder engagement to commence at the appropriate time. As yet no leasing application submitted from Comber Rec Football Club.	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	
519	Community & Wellbeing	20.06.22	Councillor Kendal, Councillor McRandal & Councillor McClean	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen's Leisure Complex	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Report to November C&W Committee. Community Engagement took place on 24th September 2024; meeting with councillors in January 2025, further engagement has been requested and clarity is being sought on the details of that request. Report to April C&W Committee.	Nikki Dorrian & Ian O'Neill	

522	Corporate Services	05.07.22	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery Amendment received from Councillor Cathcart	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. *** Amendment - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Council July 2022 Environment Committee September 2022 Corporate Services January 2024	April 2023 - Letter requesting permission to use the Royal Name sent to the Cabinet Office and awaiting response January 2024 - Report brought to Corporate Committee Amendment Agreed and advice sought from Cabinet Office December 2024 - Advice still outstanding April 2025 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
525	Community & Wellbeing	24.08.22	Councillor Cooper, Councillor T Smith & Councillor Irvine	Amended 11.10.2022 Corporate Committee: That Council officers bring back a report on relevant Council policies with a view to withdrawing funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums, or competitions and such a report will be appropriately guided by legal advice in relation to this course of action	Council August 2022 Corporate Committee October 2022	Legal advice has been received. Report to June C&WC.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

529	Environment	22.08.22	Councillor Dunlop & Councillor Douglas	<p>That this Council agrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All pedestrians should feel safe on our pavements, yet street clutter can make walking and wheeling unsafe, forcing people onto the road which is dangerous; •Street furniture should be clean, have a purpose and be consistent; and •Street clutter should be removed. <p>Therefore, Council tasks officers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Carry out an audit of street infrastructure including street signage, project information; posts, etc; •Remove historic street clutter which has no current purpose or future benefit; •Ensure relevant signage is cleaned and fit for purpose; •Ensure signs have the appropriately-named Council on it, where this applies; •Identify a nominated officer within the Council to lead on the audit to ensure items are listed and removed; and •Write to the Department for Infrastructure to request they complete a similar de-clutter across the Borough. 	Council September 2022 Environment Committee October 2022	<p>Letter sent to DfI (Mark McPeak) 11/01/23</p> <p>Response received from DfI 12/01/23 advising the improbability of any DfI Roads owned street furniture being superfluous. Furthermore, diverting limited resources to undertake a separate and distinct audit was not a priority for DfI at this time. However, the maintenance team during cyclic road inspections would consider our request (that being: 'no longer relevant/out-of-date/unnecessary street signage, posts, project information etc') who will bring to the attention of the local engineer to consider.</p>	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
545	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.22	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	<p>That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local schools when the stones have been returned.</p>	Council November 2022 Community & Wellbeing December 2022 and March 2023 and June 2023	<p>Officers have asked HED to confirm return arrangements and will report to future C&WC when final arrangements for return of the stones is confirmed.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
549	Community & Wellbeing	09.12.22	Councillor Douglas & Councillor Walker	<p>That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to 'Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.</p>	Council December 2022 Corporate Services Committee January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024	<p>Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&W Committee. Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee ratified at Council. Report going to March Community and Wellbeing Committee. N Dorrian met with White Ribbon in January 2025. Report to May C&W Committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

550	Environment	13.12.22	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor MacArthur	<p>That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try address the issue of bins left on public footways.</p>	<p>Council 21.12.22 Item 16.4</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>January 2023</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>12.12.23 Letter sent to DAERA by Cex - response received to Assembly question</p> <p>08.11.23 Response received from DFI</p> <p>13.10.23 - Acknowledgement received from PSNI</p> <p>12.10.23 - letters sent to DFI & PSNI by CEx</p>	<p>Nigel Martin</p> <p>(Head of Waste and Cleansing Services)</p>	<p>Now complete - to be removed from NOM Tracker following April 2025 Council</p>
564	Community & Wellbeing	08.02.23	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	<p>That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.</p>	<p>Council February 2023</p> <p>Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023</p>	<p>Officers awaiting response from EA in order for report to be brought back to future C&W Committee. EA has responded to say they '...would be in contact when they are ready to progress...' several chasers have been sent. 26.02.25 Email received from Virginia Lowe of the EA confirming there is no further update at this time.</p>	<p>Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)</p>	
567	Corporate Services	14.02.23	Councillor Adair & Councillor Edmund	<p>This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.</p>	<p>Council February 2023</p> <p>Corporate Services Committee March 2023</p>	<p>A response has been received from the Cabinet Office and a report went back to Committee</p> <p>30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update.</p> <p>Letters sent to the Cabinet Office requesting use of the Royal Name</p> <p>July 2024 - Advice now received - Report presented at September CSC.</p> <p>Agreed that combined EQIA more appropriate. A further report to be brought to CSC when EQIA ready to go.</p> <p>April 2025 - Advice now received on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee</p>	<p>Alison Curtis</p> <p>(Head of Administration)</p>	

568	Place & Prosperity	06.02.23	Councillor Smart & Councillor Irvine	<p>Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change.</p> <p>As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.</p>	<p>P&P 8 May 2025</p> <p>P&P 6 February 2025 (Item 11)</p> <p>P&P 13 June 2024 (Item 15)</p> <p>P&P 15 June 2023 (Item 28.1)</p> <p>Council 29 March 2023 (Item 22.1)</p>	<p>Further report to be presented to 08.05.25 P&P Cttee</p> <p>Update report presented to 06.02.25 P&P Cttee</p> <p>Further report to be brought back to Committee</p>	Brian Dorian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	
585	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.23	Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	<p>That Council recognise the value of our Beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DEARA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DEARA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.</p>		<p>Report to C&W Committee in January 2025.</p> <p>Further report requested to future C&W Committee to include site visits to Causeway Coast & Glens and Newry Mourne and Down District Council as per amended recommendation at January C&W Committee. Since January C&W Committee a summer site visit has been organised. Report to be brought back to October C&W Committee. Meanwhile beaches continue to be monitored on a proactive basis.</p>	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

588	Environment	17.10.23	Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith	<p>That this council asks officers to include the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter (owned by Council), located in Main Street, Greyabbey in the 2024/25 maintenance budget.</p> <p>Furthermore Council seeks an officer's report on the feasibility of Council painting the decorative Greyabbey lamp posts (in the ownership of DFI). This is a feature of the historic village, and we understand the current shabby condition impacts not only residents of the village, but the wider tourism and regeneration potential of this scenic conservation area.</p> <p>Amendment: That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023 April 2024 Council August 2024 Item 20</p>	<p>Officers to liaise with Greyabbey Community Association.</p> <p>Amendment Agreed at Environment Committee. That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini public realm or streetscape project in Greyabbey.</p>	<p>Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)</p>	
586	Corporate Services	16.10.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin	<p>That this Council, further to recent positive discussions with landowners, agrees to reexamine the April 2014 decision of North Down Borough Council to accept a gift of open space at Ambleside, Bangor, which was never completed and tasks Council Officers to bring back a report looking at (i) acquiring the land and (ii) options around future uses for the land.</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor.</p> <p>July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor.</p> <p>Report to Corporate Committee in September 2024. April 2025: Proceeding through compliance team/solicitors.</p>	<p>Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)</p>	

595	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	<p>This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience.</p>	Council 29.11.2023	<p>Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee. Second report to May 2025 C&W Committee</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
599	Community & Wellbeing	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	<p>"That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)</p>	<p>Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Next report will be to June 2025 Committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	<p>That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams.</p> <p>Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved.</p>	<p>Council 26.03.24 Environment Committee</p> <p>10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee</p> <p>04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee</p> <p>06.11.24 Item 3</p>	<p>Agreed that the Council proceeds with the 'Phase 1' further investigation work regarding potential Donaghadee sea defence enhancements.</p> <p>Agreed that Council proceeds as proposed in section 4 of the report, with the outcome of engagement outlined being reported back to Environment Committee in 2025.</p> <p>April 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.</p>	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
626	Community & Wellbeing	13.06.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	<p>That the Council, following the 80th anniversary of D-Day, recognises the service of US regiment(s) stationed in Donaghadee and our Borough prior to D-Day and tasks officers to bring a report back looking at ways in which our Borough could provide a lasting memory to them.</p>	Council 26.06.24 Item 15.2	<p>Referred to Corporate Services Committee for hearing at September 2024 committee. Agreed that report brought back to C and W committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
628	Place & Prosperity	18.08.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	<p>That Council Officers be instructed to consider options for appropriate signage to direct the public to the Camera Obscura in Donaghadee. That Council Officers should explore and consider opportunities for securing sponsorship for the signage from local businesses and organisations</p>	<p>Prosperity Ctte - 5 September 2024 (Item 14.1)</p> <p>Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.2) referred to P&P</p>	<p>Donaghadee Signage Working Group established. Audit completed of existing signage to provide rationale for additional signage. Update report to future P&P Committee</p> <p>Agreed at 5 Sept P&P and ratified by 25 Sept Council</p>	Brian Dorrian - (Interim Director of Place) to lead	

629	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clondeboyne road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed."	Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3) September C&W Committee	Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage. Report to June C&W Committee regarding next steps and plans for enhancement of the site.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
631	Corporate Services	7.8.24	Alderman McIlveen, Councillor Boyle, Alderman McDowell, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, Councillor Smart, Councillor Kennedy, Councillor S Irvine	That this Council bestows the Freedom of the Borough upon Rhys McClenaghan - European, Commonwealth, World and Olympic Gold Medalist - in recognition of his outstanding achievements in sport.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.1)	Meeting with Rhys McClenaghan took place in January 2025. April 2025: Further report to follow.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.2) Environment October 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1)	Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1. Further report to follow. Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024	Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

635	Environment	11.10.24	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Douglas	<p>That this Council notes the 70% recycling target set out in the Climate Change Act 2022 and that the current household recycling average is 50.7%.</p> <p>Further notes the aims and intentions around the consultation on "Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI" includes the reduction in grey bin capacity by either volume of bin or three weekly collections;</p> <p>Further notes that nappy collection scheme was not referred to in Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI" despite around 4% of residual waste being made up of disposable nappies and other absorbent hygiene products;</p> <p>Further notes with concern the impact reduced grey bin capacity will have on those households disposing of nappies and/or other absorbent hygiene products as well as the amount of recyclable materials such products contain;</p> <p>This Council writes to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs expressing its view that there is a need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland in order to meet recycling targets and to support households if grey bin capacity is reduced as a</p>	Council October 2024 - Item 23.2 Environment Committee November 2024	<p>Letters sent to DAERA and other NI Councils 11.12.24 Response received from DAERA 10.01.25 advising that there were no current plans to introduce a specific nappy recycling scheme here, but officials would be keen to explore opportunities and requirements further with local Councils via the existing Government Waste Working Group (GWWG) on this matter. To date no responses have been received from any Council. DAERA response to be Circulated for information at February 2025 Environment Committee</p>	Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	Now complete - to be removed from NOM Tracker following April 2025 Council
636	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.24	Councillors Boyle & Wray	<p>That officers bring back a detailed report surrounding options to celebrate the huge success of the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. Options would include a Civic Reception to celebrate 6 years of the huge success of the facility in 2025</p>	Council October 2024 Item 23.3 - Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Report to April C&WC. To be removed following Call In.	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	

638	Place & Prosperity	22.10.2024	Councillors Harbinson & McCracken	<p>That this Council should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade, Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Council's Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments. 2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use. 3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive financial policies. 	Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2) Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)	Agreed at 7 Nov P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council - initial report to be brought back to future P&P Committee	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	
639	Place & Prosperity	30.10.2024	Cllr Patricia Morgan and Alderman Trevor Cummings, Cllr Libby Douglas, Alderman Philip Smith, Cllr Rachel Ashe	<p>The Comber representatives are delighted that Comber has won the Best Kept Medium Town Award this year and want to thank all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this happen.</p> <p>There is, however, a long-standing dilapidated hoarding in Castle Street which badly detracts from this important area of Town.</p> <p>The Comber representatives recognise that Council officers and the Comber Regeneration Community Partnership have tried to address this issue, but this has not been successful.</p> <p>Considering this, Officers should do a report exploring all further options available to resolve this issue with some urgency.</p>	P&P 8.5.25 P&P 6.2.25 (12.3) C.29.1.25 (7.4) P&P 9.1.25 (9.1) C.27.11.24 (16.1)	<p>Report to be presented to P&P 8.5.25</p> <p>Reconsidered at P&P 6.2.25 - Agreed report to be prepared</p> <p>Agreed at Council 29.1.25 (7.4) item to be returned to Cttee for further discussion</p> <p>Agreed at Cttee 09.01.25 - report to be presented</p> <p>Deferred to Jan P&P</p> <p>Agreed at Council 27.11.24 referred to Dec P&P</p>	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	

640		05.11.2024	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair	<p>That this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses.</p> <p>Further to this, Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; further commits to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this budget and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.</p>	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.	Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.		
642	Corporate Services	15.11.24	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	<p>That this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the post office to propose to close it's branches in Main Street, Bangor, and Frances Street, Newtownards, as part of a widened UK overhaul. We would call on the Post office to reverse this decision and meet with Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss the proposal and the impact it will have on staff and customers. This Council notes how important post office services are to our communities and the huge role it plays in serving constituents.</p>	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Item 16.4 - referred to CS Committee December 2024. Item 7b response to NOM to Corporate Services Committee 11 February 2025.	Letter sent to Chief Executive of Post Office on 06.01.25 and response received 13.01.25. Meeting between Council and Post Office arranged for 27.01.25. Response to NOM to Corporate Committee 11 February 2025. Post Office decision on which branches are to close is due mid March 2025 and further report to go to Corporate Committee in May.	CEX Office	
644	Community & Wellbeing	10.12.24	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	<p>That Council notes the poor condition of the Bowtown children's play park and its poor provision of accessible play equipment and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.</p>	Council 18.12.24 and Community and Wellbeing Committee 15.01.2025	Deferred to the February 2025 meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee. Report to April C&W Committee. Director & HoS to go on site visit.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
646	Planning	10.12.24	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	<p>That this Council brings back a report identifying potential sites around Comber to accommodate industrial units suitable for use by SME's, and outline their compatibility with the Department of Economy Sub Regional Economic Plan, and Sectoral Action Plans together with Invest NI.</p>	PC 04.02.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.4)	To be heard at Planning Committee 04.02.25	Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity)	Adopted 4.2.25- further reports to be presented to P&P

649	Place & Prosperity	5.12.24	Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken	That this Council, recognising the opportunities of the Green Economy to bring substantial funding to this Council, make significant savings and create new local jobs, sets up a working group comprised of Councillors and Officers to bring forward detailed proposal to achieve these benefits and in the process, help reduce carbon emissions in the Ards and North Down area"	C.26.2.25 6.1 P&P 09.01.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.7)	Agreed C.26.2.25 (6.1) that the following members be appointed to the Green Economy Working Group: Cllr Kendall Cllr Smart, Cllr Blaney, Aid McDowell Cllr McCracken, Cllr Boyle, Aid Graham & Cllr Kerr Debated and agreed at P&P 09.01.25 that report be presented to include number of Members to participate in Working Group	Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity) to lead	Working Group Established. First meeting held 31.3.25. To be removed from tracker post April Council and call-in expiry
650	Place & Prosperity	16.12.24	Councillor Ashe and Councillor McCollum	That this Council notes the transformative benefits that street art, such as painted utility boxes, can have on communities including the potential to become tourist attractions or foster a sense of civic pride and notes the recent success of the painted utility boxes in Ward Park. That this Council also acknowledges the frustration and concern that graffiti, such as tagging, can cause and the subsequent costs of removal. Council notes it is important to facilitate the creation of local art in a safe, legal, and positive way enabling artistic creation and local regeneration while also reducing the proliferation of antisocial graffiti. That this Council returns a report which: Identifies suitable utility boxes which could be prospective 'canvas sites' for local art; identifies prospective local artists who could participate in the project, with the input of the Council Arts Officer; and identifies any external sources of funding, such as from the Department for Communities or the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.	Place and Prosperity February 2025 (Item 12.1) Council January 2025	Agreed at P&P 6.2.25 - report to be prepared	Director of Prosperity/Head of Tourism	
652	Place & Prosperity	16.01.25	Councillor Chambers and Councillor Hollywood	That this Council brings back a report detailing the associated costs, viability and public desirability to install a low level position lighting scheme along the promenade at Groomsport beach.	Postponed from Place and Prosperity February 2025 to Place and Prosperity March 2025 Council January 2025	Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion		

653	Environment	21.01.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee	<p>This Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression. However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Articles 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessarily cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011. Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA Minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.</p>	<p>Council January 2025, Environment Committee February 2025</p>	<p>Letter sent to DAERA Minister from the Chief Executive 14.04.25 Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 05.02.2025. Report to future EC. Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council January 2025</p>	<p>Richard McCracken (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)</p>	
654	Place & Prosperity	20.01.25	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall	<p>This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards.</p> <p>This Council notes that other areas of the Borough have the space, potential locations, and infrastructure required to host major events, for example 14,000 people attended the Donaghadee Lights Up event, and that a spread of large events across the Borough brings cultural, social and economic benefits, fostering a sense of whole- Borough inclusivity.</p> <p>Therefore, working with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI, this Council will bring back a report considering the potential for the ANDBC Pipe Band Championships to be held across the Borough on a rotational basis in Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee.</p>	<p>P&P 6.3.25 Council 26.02.2025</p>	<p>Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion</p>	<p>Interim Director of Prosperity</p>	

655	Environment	18.02.2025	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	That this Council brings back a report outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber, to accommodate a list of historically researched names, currently being collated as per War Memorial Trust guidelines, of the fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, which were previously not included.	Council 26.02.2025 - Environment Committee 5 March 2025	Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 05.03.2025. Report to future EC. Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council 26.02.25	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
656	Corporate Services	18.02.2025	Councillor Wray & Councillor McLaren	That this Council recognises the impact that recent severe weather events have had on residents and business owners within our Borough. Council will develop an information, advice, and education initiative that will be accessible to all residents across Ards and North Down. The aim of this initiative will be to ensure residents are prepared for severe weather events such as storms and floods. This will include advice around precautions they can take, services they can avail of, and signposting. Officers will produce a report to members with suggested methodology such as a dedicated section on the Council website, workshops, and visual media, along with projected associated costs if any.	Council 26.02.2025 - Corporate Services March 2025	Presented to 8.4.2025 CS Committee. Report to be brought back.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
657	Community & Wellbeing	18.02.2025	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Islandview Road Greyabbey to ensure future intermediate football standards by the local sporting clubs and community of Greyabbey.	Council 26.02.2025 - Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2025	Agreed that Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Islandview Road Greyabbey to ensure future intermediate football standards by the local sporting clubs and community of Greyabbey	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	

658	Environment	03.03.2025	Councillor McClean & Councillor Cathcart	That Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City Centre, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for Christmas 2025. Further, that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practice and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting over Main Street. The report should look at the feasibility of the future expansion of these concepts to the remainder of the Borough, if proven successful in Bangor.	Council 26.03.2025 - Environment Committee 02.04.2025	Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 02.04.2025. Report to future EC.	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
659	Corporate Services	17.03.2025	Councillor Gilmour & Alderman Graham	That this council recognises the challenges faced by those who are blind and partially sighted and commits to working to make Ards and North Down a Visually aware Borough. This council recognises the expertise of the RNIB, their vision for a world where blind and partially sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life. Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.	Council 26.03.2025 - Corporate Services Committee 08.04.2025	Presented to 8.4.2025 CS Committee. Report to be brought back.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
660	Community & Wellbeing	21.03.2025	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options to enhance and improve pedestrian and vehicle access to Kirkistown Cemetery making use of the adjacent derelict Council owned former caretaker's site to improve access and road safety at the cemetery.	Council 26.03.2025 - Community and Wellbeing Committee 09.04.2025		Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	



Minutes of the 514th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 13th February 2025 at 10.30 in the Mid Ulster Council offices, Magherafelt

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Cllr Aaron Skinner
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Cllr Deirdre Varsani
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Mid Ulster Borough Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

Virtual:

Ald Amanda Grehan
Cllr Sean McGlinchey
Ald Stephen McIlveen

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council

In Attendance:

David Polley
Caira Lynch
Sorcha Hassay
Kelly Cameron
Maria McLaughlin

Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Secretary, Housing Council
Executive Assistant, NIHE

Apologies:

Alderman Keith Kerrigan

Derry City & Strabane District Council

1.	Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations.	

3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 9th December 2024</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and seconded by Cllr Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session, the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons cannot attend the March meeting due to other commitments. An invitation has been extended to him to join the May meeting.</p> <p>4.2 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>The Chair congratulated the two Housing Council Members to the Housing Executive Board – Stephen McIlveen & Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>It was noted that, although Aoife Finnegan was also appointed, she has now been elected as an Assembly Member and, therefore, has formally resigned as a member of the Housing Council and Housing Executive Board.</p> <p>Members recorded their congratulations to Cllr Aoife Finnegan and wished her well in her endeavours.</p> <p>4.3 Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>In accordance with Housing Council Standing Orders, several letters have been issued to Belfast City Council in relation to their representative's non-attendance at meetings. The Secretary received a call from Belfast City Council giving assurance that Paul McCusker would be in attendance at today's meeting</p> <p>Unfortunately, Cllr McCusker didn't attend the meeting. Members reiterated their disappointment, and it was agreed to contact Belfast City Council requesting them to take action.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	Secretary
5.	<p>Department for Communities – Housing Top Issues</p> <p>David Polley & Sorchá Hassay gave an update on the Department's Housing Top Issues:-</p> <p>5.1 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) – to provide an additional 400 social homes by March 2025 of which 10% will be wheelchair accessible;</p>	

5.2	Complete preparations and present the Minister with advice on viable options to tackle the significant investment challenge and address the maintenance backlog faced by the Housing Executive;	
5.3	To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy;	
5.4	To review the Decent Homes Standard to ensure that all those living in the social rented sector have access to a fit and decent home suitable for modern living;	
5.5	To review Housing Executive Administered Private Sector Grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Housing Executive;	
5.6	Deliver 2758 affordable warmth measures to 1428 homes by 31 March 2025 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme;	
5.7	To progress all appropriate tenancy fraud provisions within the Financial Provisions Bill;	
5.8	Develop proposals and draft legislation on Injunctions against Anti-Social Behaviour and Grounds for Possession;	
5.9	Deliver 846 new shared ownership homes by March 2025 (<i>via £22 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding</i>);	
5.10	Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent);	
5.11	To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness;	
5.12	To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022;	
5.13	Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy and Action Plan(s) to provide a framework for the delivery of the homes we need over the next 15 years.	
5.14	<p>Members Questions/Comments</p> <p>Members were keen for the Department to give an overview of the Intermediate Rents, at a future meeting, even though they are aware that the scheme will not be implemented for a while.</p> <p>Referring to the Decent Homes Standards, the Department agreed to provide a presentation at a future Housing Council meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Varsani reiterated her concern of newbuild developments and the challenges of water connections stalling people moving into these schemes.</p>	<p>D Polley</p> <p>S Hassay</p>

	<p>It was agreed to invite, to a future meeting, representatives from the Department for Communities, Department of Infrastructure and the Water Service.</p> <p>In response to a query from Councillor Fitzgerald on tenancy fraud, Ciara Lynch explained that the Department for Communities' (DfC) is proposing provisions within DoF's Financial Provisions Bill to enable social landlords to work better together on the investigation of tenancy fraud.</p> <p>The proposals are to provide the Housing Executive with the power to undertake tenancy fraud investigations on behalf of the Registered Housing Association (RHA) sector.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Housing Executive should, if requested by a Registered Housing Association, be empowered to carry out tenancy fraud investigations in respect of that Association's properties. The provision is also required to allow the Housing Executive to charge Housing Associations for investigation and related services (e.g. in the event of a fraud case going to court).</p> <p>A data sharing provision is also proposed to cover the two-way exchange of information between Registered Housing Associations and the Housing Executive for the purpose of investigating tenancy fraud. This provision would facilitate the collection of more evidence to determine if tenancy fraud was being committed. It may also expediate the progression of a case.</p> <p>In relation to Affordable Warmth Scheme, it was requested that a breakdown, by Council area, is provided detailing the number and location of homes in the scheme.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>PRESENTATION ON THE REMOVAL OF INTIMIDATION POINTS</p> <p>Members received in their packs, for their information:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Department for Communities and Housing Executive press releases following the Minister's Statement on Intimidation Points – Noted; (2) Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIHFA) on Intimidation Points – Noted; (3) Impact of Intimidation on the work of Registered Housing Associations (NI) and the allocation of housing – Noted. <p>Ciara Lynch, DfC, gave a presentation on the removal of intimidation points via the Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) - Intimidation points, in the form of Rule 23 of the Selection Scheme, will be removed. The allocation of 200 points will cease.</p>	

	<p>Members welcomed the recent announcement on removal of the intimidation points, and, in particular, the focus on victims of domestic violence and coercive behaviour.</p> <p>In response to the timescale for the removal of the intimidation points, it was noted that it is hoped that the Bill will be introduced by the end of the year.</p> <p>Several Members welcomed the Minister's announcement in relation to the victims of domestic violence and those at risk of violence, are prioritised appropriately.</p> <p>Members requested a breakdown by Council area on how many are currently on the waiting list with intimidation points and also how many allocations were made in the last two years with intimidation points.</p> <p>Ciara Lynch confirmed that, as at November 2024, with a waiting list of 47,000 there were 150 people awarded intimidation points. It was noted that intimidation points have significantly reduced over the past 10 years, in 2014 from 380 to 226 in 2024. Whereas domestic abuse has shown an increase in 2014 from 721 to 1,046 in 2024.</p> <p>Councillor O'Dowd express her concern that there was no shelter for victims of domestic violence in her area. The Secretary undertook to provide a contact within the Housing Executive to discuss further.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ciara Lynch for a very informative presentation.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
7.	Any Other Business	
7.1	<p>Press Release Housing Executive Rent Increase</p> <p>Members noted the Press Release.</p>	
7.2	<p>Reply from DfC on the Commencement of Private Tenancy Act - Rent Increase frequency and 3 month notice</p> <p>Paper noted.</p>	
7.3	<p>Housing Council update queries following the Homeless Presentation in December</p> <p>Responses were noted.</p>	
7.4	<p>Response letter from HM Treasury re Budget</p> <p>Letter was noted.</p>	

7.5	<p>Response letter re FRA and NIHE Fundamental Review of Allocations Update</p> <p>Response letter was noted.</p>	
7.6	<p>All Ireland Awards Ceremony – Friday, 21st February in the Titanic</p> <p>The Housing Council has sponsored an award at the All Ireland Awards. It was noted that the Chair, the Vice Chair and Councillors O'Dowd and Varsani would represent the Housing Council at the ceremony.</p>	
7.7	<p>Rural Housing Awards – Tuesday 25th March 2025</p> <p>Prior to the meeting, Members had received details of the Rural Community Network Awards which were being held in the Seamus Heaney Centre, Bellaghy on 25th March 2025. The Housing Council is sponsoring an award at the event..</p> <p>It was noted that the Chair and Cllr O'Dowd would attend this event. It was agreed that Cllr O'Dowd should present the award on the night on behalf of the Housing Council.</p> <p>Any other Member who wished to attend should contact the Secretary.</p>	M O'Dowd
7.8	<p>Housing Community Summit – 8th 9th September in Liverpool</p> <p>As discussed in the 'In Committee', details of the Housing Community Summit had been circulated to Members and the Chair encouraged Members to attend. He added that the Summit is community led and focused through UK Councils. The Chair advised that he has written to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive regarding their presence at the Summit this year as it is a platform to showcase the work that takes place in Northern Ireland especially in relation to Supporting People and Community Cohesion.</p> <p>If any Member wished to attend, they should contact the Secretary before the end of June 2025.</p>	All
7.9	<p>Clamping Pods being used for temporary accommodation</p> <p>The Chair asked for confirmation if clamping pods are being used for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>He reiterated the Finland model addressing homelessness should be looked at in more detail. Members supported looking at different ways and options to tackle temporary accommodation etc.</p>	Secretary
8.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 13th March 2025 at 10 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast.</p>	

514th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

	It was noted that the Chair, Mark Cooper is on holiday and in his absence the Vice Chair, Aaron Skinner will chair the meeting.	
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Meeting ended 12.30 pm.

Unclassified

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Item 16

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	30 April 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	22 April 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	Decision process for future leisure provision
Attachments	N/A

1.0 Background

Since the merger of councils in 2015, ANDBC has operated a hybrid leisure operating model, as follows:

- Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC) and other leisure services in the former Ards Council area including Portaferry Sports Centre, Comber Leisure Centre, Londonderry Park and a number of outdoor facilities, which are operated directly by staff employed by the Council (inhouse).
- Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex and other North Down legacy leisure services including facilities at Bangor Sportsplex and Queen's Leisure Complex, Seapark Recreation Grounds and other outdoor facilities, which are operated by Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) and their leisure operating partner Serco (outsourced).

Not Applicable

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In December 2022, NCLT were awarded a five-year contract extension to operate from April 2023 until 31 March 2028. In the meantime, the inhouse leisure team have been undertaking a transformation of their provision.

When the current contract with NCLT/ Serco for the management of North Down legacy leisure services ends on 31 March 2028 there is no further option available to extend the contract.

Council must, therefore, decide on the future leisure services operating model for the Borough from April 2028.

2.0 Future Leisure Operating Models

Future operating models available to the Council include:

Option	Description
Hybrid	Hybrid option with Leisure Ards remaining inhouse and North Down leisure services being outsourced via a procurement competition.
Outsourced	Specialist operator awarded contract for the operation of all leisure services following competition (procurement).
Inhouse	All leisure services are operated by Council.
Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)	Establish a LATC that is free to operate as a commercial company but remains wholly owned and controlled by the Council.

3.0 Decision Timeline

The absolute deadline for a decision to be made on the future leisure operating model, to ensure operational readiness on 1 April 2028, is no later than the end of September 2025. This is due to the following reasons:

- If Council's decision is to continue to outsource the management of leisure services, either fully or via a hybrid model, a new procurement exercise must be undertaken to appoint an operator. The following activities would need to be delivered:
 - Prior to the tender exercise, Council would have to appoint an expert leisure consultant and legal provider to advise on/ lead the procurement process.
 - Council would need to undertake a significant amount of information gathering, including, but not limited to the following: financial; operational; HR; utilities; risk; legal; and surveys.
- If Council's decision is to bring all leisure operations inhouse, either fully, or via a LATC, the following must be noted:

Not Applicable

- The process will likely be complicated, resource intensive and time consuming. In relation to a LATC, Council has no experience in this regard and therefore further additional specialist advice and assistance would be required to do so.
- The guidance on the time required to set up a LATC varies depending on the complexity of the business, the readiness of the local authority, and the regulatory requirements (LATC guidance 2023 edition - Local Partnership).

4.0 Member Engagement Decision Process and Timeline

Member Engagement Decision Process	Timeline
Council to agree proposed decision-making process and timeline (outlined in this Report).	30 April 2025
Member consultation (Workshop 1) <u>Agenda</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update of current profile of leisure across whole Borough (number of sites, facilities and staffing) 2. Presentation of the four models – detail, timescale and associated one off implementation/ set-up costs 3. Presentation of information to Members as detailed in Section 5 for all four models 4. Shortlisting of options and confirmation from Members of requirements for Workshop 2 5. Discussion on level and format of any public engagement activity to support decision making. 	21 May 2025
Member consultation (Workshop 2) <u>Agenda</u> To be agreed with Members at Workshop 1	23 June 2025
Update Report to Council	30 July 2025
Based on outworkings of Member Workshops, development of Final Report for decision	July - August
Community and Wellbeing Committee	10 September
Council – final decision on future operating model for leisure from 1 st April 2028 onwards	24 September

Not Applicable

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5.0 Information Required for Council's Decision Process

Members are asked to consider the level of information that will be required to allow an informed decision to be undertaken within the timeframe outlined in Section 4 and no later than September's Council meeting. Officers intend to provide the following information:

Key Area	Information required for Council's Decision Process
Delivery of strategic outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings based on desk research and UK and NI research case studies.
Quality of service and customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings based on desk research and UK and NI Research case studies. Findings based on current Council practices*. <p><i>*For information only as a comparison cannot be made due to the current different operating models and potentially different operators going forward.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current performance of inhouse leisure utilising the APSE NI benchmarking framework (based on National Performance Indicators set by APSE – 2022/23 and 2023/24). Update on current performance of inhouse and NCLT to include financial and non-monetary outcomes delivered.
Revenue Implications	<p>Main areas for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAT treatment (values based on current performance) Pension implications Staffing – pay parity Staffing - change to operations Utility management (detail based on current practice) Maintenance management (detail based on current practice)
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As no financial comparison can be made on this occasion, due to no available comparative bid, findings will be presented based on desk research and UK and NI research case studies. Current budget, income and expenditure profile for Council's leisure service provision (in-house and outsourced)* <p><i>*For information only as a comparison cannot be made due to the current different operating models and potentially different operators going forward.</i></p>

Not Applicable

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Risk/ sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings based on desk research and UK and NI research case studies. Findings based on current Council practices.
Council Influence and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings based on desk research and UK and NI research case studies. Findings based on current Council practices.

6.0 Communication

As this is a complex subject it is important that communication is managed sensitively and appropriately to ensure minimal disruption to both staff and the leisure service across the Borough. Therefore, the following is proposed at this early stage:

NCLT and Serco Partnership engagement

NCLT/ Serco have been advised that Council will be considering a way forward for leisure services from 2028 during the coming months. Officers have offered to brief their staff however It would not be appropriate to engage beyond that as this may present a conflict if the decision is to outsource and they subsequently tender for the future opportunity.

Staff and Union Engagement

Early engagement has taken place with Union representatives to provide them with an update on the current position. Officers will continue to engage with trade union full time officials and local representatives throughout the process.

An initial meeting has taken place with Ards Leisure staff (24 April) to provide an update on the current position. Further meetings with staff will be arranged as the process continues.

Public communication and engagement

A public statement will be issued following the Council meeting on 30 April 2025 providing an update on the current situation and a timeline for Council's consideration of the way forward for leisure services from 2028.

Following discussion at the first workshop, further information on opportunities for public engagement to support the decision-making process will be communicated as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council consider the report and approve:

- To move forward, at this stage, with the four operating models detailed; and
- The proposed decision-making process, timeline and level of information being provided required for Members to make a decision in September 2025.