

May 28th, 2025


Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 28th May 2025 at 7:00 pm** in **Hybrid, Council Chamber, City Hall, Town Hall, Bangor and via zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

Attached

 *C 28.05.25 Agenda.pdf*

Page 1


1. **Prayer**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
- 4 **Mayor's Business**
- 5 **Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of May 2025 (attached)**

 *Mayoral Engagements May 2025.pdf*

Page 5

6. **Deputation from Women's Aid**
7. **Minutes of Council Meeting dated 30 April 2025**

Copy attached


 *C.30.04.25 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *C.30.04.25 Minutes PM.pdf*

Page 9

8. **Minutes of Committees**
- 8.1 **Planning Committee dated 6 May 2025**

 *PC 06.05.25 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *PC 06.05.25 Minutes PM.pdf*

Page 33

- 8.2 **Environment Committee dated 7 May 2025**

Attached

 *EC 07.05.2025 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 May 2025

Attached

PP 08.05.2025 Minutes.pdf

Not included

PP 08.05.2025 MinutesPM.pdf

Page 100

ITEM 8.3.1 IN CONFIDENCE

8.3.1 Arising from Item 11 - Revive High Streets

Attached

Item 8.3.1 Arising from Item 11 Revive High Streets .pdf

Not included

8.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 13 May 2025

Copy attached.

CS 13.05.2025 Minutes.pdf

Not included

CS 13.05.2025 Minutes PM.pdf

Page 131

8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 14 May 2025

Copy attached

CW 14.05.2025 Minutes.pdf

Not included

CW 14.05.2025 Minutes PM.pdf

Page 150

9. Deputation

9.1 Branch Out Community Group

Attached

Item 9.1 - Deputation Request - Branch Out.pdf




Page 188

Item 9.1 - Appendix 1 - Deputation Request Form Branch Out Community Group.pdf

Page 189



10. Response to Resolution - Road Traffic Law

Attached.

 <i>Item 10 - Response to Resolution Road Traffic Law.pdf</i>	<i>Page 194</i>
 <i>Item 10 - Appendix 1 - Letter from the Minister of Education - Road Traffic Law.pdf</i>	<i>Page 196</i>
 <i>Item 10 - Appendix 2 - Letter from the Minister for Infrastructure - Road Traffic Law.pdf</i>	<i>Page 198</i>

11. Resurfacing Work at Holborn Avenue Car Park




Attached

 <i>Item 11 - Holborn Avenue, Bangor, Car Park Improvements.pdf</i>	<i>Page 199</i>
 <i>Item 11 Appendix 1 Holborn CP 2.pdf</i>	<i>Page 202</i>

12. Consultations

12.1 Response to Consultation - Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill



Attached

 <i>Item 12.1 - Consultation on NI Assembly Committee for Finance; Deaths, Still Births and Baby Loss Bill.pdf</i>	<i>Page 203</i>
 <i>Item 12.1 - Appendix 1 - Letter to DRO CEs THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020.pdf</i>	<i>Page 205</i>
 <i>Item 12.1 - Appendix 2 - Draft Consultation response.pdf</i>	<i>Page 206</i>

13. Sealing Documents

14. Transfer of Rights of Burial

15. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

 <i>Item 15 NoM Status Report.pdf</i>	<i>Page 207</i>
 <i>NoM Tracker.pdf</i>	<i>Page 208</i>

16. Notices of Motion

16.1 Notice of Motion submitted from Councillor S Irvine and Alderman McIlveen

That this Council:

Notes with deep respect the tragic loss of four Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) soldiers - John Bradley (25), John Birch (28), Stephen Smart (23), and Michael Adams (23) - who were murdered in a 1,000 lb IRA landmine attack on April 9, 1990, on the Ballydugan Road near Downpatrick.

Recognises the pain and sacrifice felt by their families, comrades, and the wider community, and acknowledges the bravery of these young men who served their country during a difficult period in our history.

Proposes that a permanent memorial be added to the cenotaph in Newtownards in honour of these four UDR soldiers, ensuring their memory is preserved within the heart of their home town for future generations.

Requests that the Council engage with the families of the fallen, veteran organisations, and local stakeholders to develop appropriate wording and design for the memorial addition, and to ensure the tribute is carried out with the dignity and sensitivity it deserves.

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood

Council amends funding eligibility criteria to allow for voluntary dance groups to avail of grants within either the arts or sport funding streams.

Council acknowledges the opportunities performance arts bring in terms of community wellbeing, education, tourism, and our local economy.

Officers will provide a report on how Council can further grow performance art across Ards and North Down.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCollum

Given the market failure and severe shortage of Business Accommodation in the Borough, as highlighted by the reduction of the non-domestic Rates base, that this Council urgently prepares a report detailing potential plans to develop different types of Business Accommodation in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber, Donaghadee and Portaferry. This Business Accommodation would be to encourage start-up businesses, to help business to grow and to attract new business to the Borough.

16.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan and Councillor Irwin

This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste and have been achieved in the Borough, however there are currently limited facilities to recycle litter. This sends out a poor message to our residents and visitors. This Council asks that officers bring back a report that explores how, and when recycling litter bins could be introduced to the Borough. Indication of costs should be included.

Circulated for Information

a) Housing Council Minutes 13th March 2025 and 10th April 2025 (Minutes attached)

📎 *CFI - Housing Council Minutes - 13th March 2025.pdf*

Page 226

📎 *CFI - Housing Council Minutes - 10th April 2025.pdf*

Page 231

*****ITEMS 17-20 IN CONFIDENCE*****

17. Queen's Parade Update

Verbal Update

18. Swim Ulster and Swim Ireland Request to Host 2026

Attached

📎 *Item 18 - Swim Ulster & Swim Ireland Request to Host 2026 Irish Open Championships at Bangor Aurora.pdf*

Not included

19. Request to Return Blair Mayne Medals

Attached

📎 *Item 19 - Request to Return the Blair Mayne Medals.pdf*

Not included

20. Organisational Redesign

Attached

📎 *Item 20 ANDBC Organisational Redesign - May 2025 Council report.pdf*

Not included

📎 *Item 20 Appendix 1 - Current Structure.pdf*

Not included

📎 *Item 20 Appendix 2 - Proposed Structure.pdf*

Not included

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Wednesday 21 May 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, 28 May 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 May (List attached)
 6. Deputation from Women's Aid
 7. Minutes of Council meeting dated 30 April 2025 (Copy attached)
 8. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 8.1 Planning Committee dated 6 May 2025
 - 8.2 Environment Committee dated 7 May 2025
 - 8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 May 2025
- ***ITEM 8.3.1 IN CONFIDENCE*****
- 8.3.1 Arising from Item 11 – Revive High Streets (Report attached)
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- 8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 14 May 2025
- 9. Deputation Request
- 9.1 Branch Out Community Group (Report attached)
- 10. Response to Resolution – Road Traffic Law (Report attached)
- 11. Resurfacing Work at Holborn Avenue Car Park (Report attached)
- 12. Consultations
- 12.1 Response to Consultation – Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill (Report attached)
- 13. Sealing Documents
- 14. Transfer of Rights of Burial
- 15. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
- 16. Notices of Motion
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*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

- 17. Queen's Parade Update (Verbal update)
- 18. Swim Ulster and Swim Ireland Request to Host 2026 Irish Open Championships at Bangor Aurora (Report attached)
- 19. Request to Return Blair Mayne Medals (Report attached)
- 20. Organisational Redesign (Report attached)

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

**LIST OF MAYOR’S/DEPUTY MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS
FOR MAY 2025**

Thursday 1st May 2025

- 15:15 DAERA Ministerial Visit, Strangford Lough Activity Centre, Sketrick Island
- 19:00 Civic Awards 2025, Bangor Castle

Saturday 3rd May 2025

- 10:00 Spring Coffee Morning, Hospital Committee, Strean Presbyterian Church
- 14:00 Castle Bowling Opening, Bowling Pavillion, Ward Park

Sunday 4th May 2025

- 13:30 VE Day 80th Anniversary Wreath Laying, Ward Park War Memorial

Monday 5th May 2025

- 10:00 May Day, Holywood

Tuesday 6th May 2025

- 10:00 Beat Carnival Photocall, Millisle Community Hub
- 12:00 Bloomfield Litter Pick, Bloomfield Community House, 189 Ballyree Drive, Bangor

Wednesday 7th May 2025

- 09:00 Community Planning 10 Year Summit (Deputy Mayor), Clandeboy Lodge Hotel
- 10:00 Mayor's Charities Golf Day Tournament, Bangor Golf Club, Broadway, Bangor

Thursday 8th May 2025

- 08:45 Raising of VE 80 Flag, Bangor Castle North Lawn
- 20:30 VE 80 Beacon Lighting, Bangor Castle

Friday 9th May 2025

- 10:00 Ward Park Play Park Launch, Ward Park Playpark beside the Tennis Courts
- 19:00 VE Concert Band of the Royal Irish, Castle Park, Bangor
- 19:00 Kings Badge Celebration Ards BB (Deputy Mayor), Ards Arts Centre

Saturday 10th May 2025

- 13:00 VE Celebration Event, 23a Queens Square, Newtownards
- 20:00 Big Band Concert, Nendrum College

Sunday 11th May 2025

- 14:00 War Memorial Service and Parade, Donaghadee War Memorial

Monday 12th May 2025

- 14:15 Photo Op, Groomsport
- 15:00 Photo Op, Eisenhower Pier

Tuesday 13th May 2025

- 17:3025th Anniversary of Open House Festival, The Court House, 16 Quay Street, Bangor

Wednesday 14th May 2025

- 10:30 Play Park Opening, Londonderry Park Play Park

Thursday 15th May 2025

- 09:45 Street Cleansing Visit, Bridge St, Bangor

Saturday 17th May 2025

- 12:00 Official naming of new Bangor Lifeboat, Bangor Lifeboat Station
- 13:15 Fostering Family Fun Day, Crawfordsburn Country Park
- 14:00 Pedal Park Event Launch, Outside Bangor Castle
- 15:00 Love Ballyholme Community Fair, Ballyholme Presbyterian Church

Monday 19th May 2025

12:30 Retirement Lunch

Tuesday 20th May 2025

19:00 Arts & Heritage Grants Celebration, Queens Hall, Newtownards

Wednesday 21st May 2025

10:00 Dementia Safeguarding Photo Op, Bangor Castle

19:30 Bangor Abbey visit of Guides and Rangers, Craig Room, Bangor Castle

Thursday 22nd May 2025

14:00 Portavogie Culture/Heritage book launch, Craig Room, Bangor Castle

17:00 Ards Peninsula Business Awards, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor

Friday 23rd May 2025

10:45 Ballyholme in Bloom

17:30 KWC Litter Pick, Starting Old Market House, Bangor

19:00 Bangor Football Club Reception, Bangor Castle

Saturday 24th May 2025

12:00 Sea Bangor

Sunday 25th May 2025

13:00 Official Opening for East Belfast District Camp Scouts, Crawfordsburn Country Park

Tuesday 27th May 2025

18:00 Social Group Visit, Bangor Castle

Thursday 29th May 2025

10:00 SET Volunteers Visit (Volunteer Week), Bangor Castle

17:00 ForM Sculpture Exhibition Launch, The Walled Garden, Castle Park

19:00 Plein Air Festival 2025, Market House, The Square, Portaferry

Friday 30th May 2025

- 11:30 Mae Murray Launch, Groomsport Beach
- 12:30 Bioblitz, Skipperstone Beach, Bangor
- 19:30 Mayor's Charity Quiz, CD Club, Victoria Road, Bangor

Saturday 31st May 2025

- 10:00 Litter Pick, Linear Park, starting near Ashbury shops, Bangor
- 12:00 Tea Party - North Down Friends of Marie Curie, West Church, Bangor
- 13:00 Model Railway Visit, Bangor 1st Presbyterian
- 14:00 Diamond Softball Opening, Ward Park, Bangor

ITEM 7

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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 30 April 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)	
Aldermen:	Adair	McAlpine
	Armstrong-Cotter	McRandal
	Brooks	McDowell
	Cummings	McIlveen
	Graham (7.41 pm)	
Councillors:	Ashe	Kennedy
	Blaney	Kerr
	Boyle	McBurney
	Chambers	McClellan
	Cochrane	McCracken
	Douglas	McKee
	Edmund	McKimm (zoom)
	Gilmour (7.10 pm)	McLaren (zoom)
	Hennessy	Moore
	Hollywood	Morgan
	W Irvine	Thompson (7.07 pm)
	S Irvine	Smart
	Irwin	Wray
	Kendall	

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), 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 (J Glasgow)

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman Smith, Councillor McCollum and Councillor Harbinson.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Thompson and Councillor Gilmour.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hollywood declared an interest in Item 6 – Deputation – Community Advice Ards and North Down.

Councillor Chambers declared an interest in Item 16 – Decision process for future leisure provision.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated that he was saddened to learn of the death of Councillor McCracken's mother, Gwendoline Davis. He remarked from the tributes paid at her funeral it was obvious that Gwendoline played a significant role in her local community in Holywood and would be fondly remembered and sadly missed by so many, not least her family.

He noted the death of Pope Francis and expressed condolences to all those with Catholic faith within the Borough. The Council had opened a book of condolence.

The Mayor reminded Members that a Wreath Laying Remembrance Service would be held at the War Memorial on Sunday 4th May 2025 and asked Members to advise Democratic Services of their attendance to allow for their robe to be made available.

The Mayor highlighted that his Charity Golf Tournament would be held on Wednesday 7th May and Charity Quiz would be held on Friday 30th May.

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor advised that he had written letters of congratulations to US Masters Champion Rory McIlroy, NIFL Championship winners Bangor Football Club, and Anderson Cup winners Bangor Hockey Club. It had been an extraordinary few weeks for sport in Ards and North Down, that was on top of the small matter of two Olympic gold medals and ten Olympians from the Borough who competed in last Summer's Paris Olympic Games. The Mayor advised that he had held a Mayoral reception for Bangor Hockey Club and had one planned for Bangor Football Club. The Council would continue to engage with Rory McIlroy's team to find a fitting recognition for his extraordinary achievements.

The Mayor wished to acknowledge that Ards and North Down Borough Council was ten years established this month, and he wished to put on record his thanks to the staff and Members for all their hard work and dedication to service over those years and looked forward to the next ten years.

NOTED.

5. **MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2025**

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Mayor's/Deputy Mayor's engagements for the month of April 2025.

The Mayor remarked on the Guitar Festival and Bangor International Choral Festival.

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

(Having previously declared an interest in Item 6, Councillor Hollywood withdrew from the meeting)

6. **DEPUTATION - COMMUNITY ADVICE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN**

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above presentation.

The Mayor welcomed and introduced Louise Togneri (CAAND Chair) and Derek McGregor (CAAND Manager) to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation.

Ms Togneri undertook a Powerpoint presentation which she commenced by providing a brief introduction to the services of CAAND. The service provided advice and advocacy services and was well known for providing advice on welfare benefits with a high level of advice queries related to Universal Credit and PIP and she noted the complexity around those systems. Free, non-judgement and impartial advice was provided across the Borough.

(Councillor Thompson entered the meeting – 7.07 pm)

In terms of staffing and funding, Ms Togneri outlined that CAAND core funding came from the Council. Other specific funding was received to deliver projects, and she provided examples of such.

(Councillor Gilmour entered the meeting – 7.10 pm)

Staff were highly trained to assist people when they were at their most vulnerable. Ms Togneri then outlined the value of the services, CAAND provided a monetary value to the local economy and provided an impact on people's quality of life. She further outlined the rate of return, and the income generated.

Mr McGregor provided information on the impact the service had on individuals and read out case studies as examples.

(Councillor McKimm entered the meeting via zoom – 7.17 pm)

The Mayor thanked Ms Togneri and Mr McGregor for the presentation and invited questions from Members.

Councillor Chambers thanked the representatives for the presentation stating that he had spoken with people who had availed of the services and who had only complementary feedback. He questioned what difficulties were currently being faced to meet the demand for the services. Mr McGregor stated that the demand was extensive. The cost of living was having a massive impact on everyone's lives including an impact on family life, relationships and mental impact. Recently it had been reported there had been a 15% rise in people presenting with mental health issues. Further to that a 10% in rise in domestic violence which could stimulate money problems within the household. Mr McGregor further outlined the impact of the rise in national insurance and the employment issues that stemmed from that. Supply and demand were big problems for CAAND and funding from the Council had not increased from 2016. Training was a big issue to ensure staff were kept up to date with the change in regulations which took time and money and ensuring the standards were adhered to.

Councillor Moore referred to the complexity of the issues and the circumstances of the clients, and she raised a question about working collaboratively. Mr McGregor stated that collaboration was a massive part of the service. He outlined the large range of partner organisations that CAAND worked with and how they worked together.

Councillor Blaney raised a question in terms of the wider impact. Mr McGregor outlined the wider impact noting the numbers reported were as individual cases and that could be doubled in terms of impact on community. The income generated had an impact on local businesses. In relation to mental health, assisting people in such issues as debt alleviated pressure on the health service and impacted on the wider community.

Councillor McKimm spoke highly of the service offered and thanked CAAND for the work it undertook. He wondered what the Council could be doing with funding, and should have been increased by 25%. Mr McGregor stated that funding was a massive issue. A lot of the external funding it received was project specific. Seeing people face to face was a massive part of their work and they were trying to meet the demand in that regard but were struggling. Monetary wise, the service would probably need another 4 advisors to satisfy the demand. The service had never turned anyone away though they had discussions recently regarding having to do that. Cases were becoming more complex which took time.

Councillor McLaren added her thanks to the representatives. She referred to people who had fallen on hard times and whilst the Members role was to act as advocate, very often the role involved signposting people and therefore it was important Members were aware of the services offered by CAAND. She referred to the up-and-coming change in the benefit system particularly in relation to PIP and she questioned if people were coming in worried about the impending changes.

Mr McGregor stated that any change provided worry for people particularly in relation to benefit cuts. Any small change needed additional training for staff. CAAND was a growing and proactive organisation, and he detailed a new initiative that was commencing working with GP surgeries, with a CAAND advisor in what were called health villages to assist with issues.

The Mayor thanked the representatives for the presentation, and they withdrew from the meeting.

NOTED.

(Councillor Hollywood re-entered the meeting – 7.34 pm)

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 26 MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Audit Committee dated 24 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.2 Planning Committee dated 1 April 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.3 Environment Committee dated 2 April 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.4. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 3 April 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.5. Corporate Services Committee dated 8 April 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.5.1 Matters Arising - Licence to Cloughey Tennis Club – shelter at Cloughey Tennis Courts

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

8.5.2. Matters Arising - Request to use Council Land – Donaghadee Horse Relay Event 2024

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

The Mayor stated that above two items would be considered at the end of the meeting in the exclusion of the public/press.

Referring to the two items arising from the minutes that were to be considered in confidence, Alderman Brooks did not understand why those could not heard in public. The Director of Corporate Services explained that all land matters were considered in confidence due to the legal issues pertaining to those.

In respect of Item 10.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor McLaren – Councillor Wray wished to amend his motion and it was proposed by Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Smart, 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.

This Council acknowledges the vital role that the community and voluntary sector play in both the preparation for, and response to such events. Officers will engage with the sector and consider how they can best aid in the delivery of the initiative. 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.

Following feedback from Members after the Committee meeting, Councillor Wray explained that he wished to amend his motion slightly and include aspects in relation to engagement.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the Notice of Motion, as amended, be adopted.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes, as amended be approved and adopted (with the exception of those matters to be considered in the exclusion of the public/press)

8.6. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 9 April 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

In respect of Item 3, Page 4 – Response to Notice of Motion 636 Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex Celebration; As a matter of accuracy, Councillor Douglas noted that it stated that ‘the Chair permitted Councillor Douglas to ask a question’. She clarified that the Chair had permitted Councillor Moore to ask a question.

(Alderman Graham entered the meeting – 7.41 pm)

In respect of Item 22 – Leisure VAT Update; Councillor McClean wished to raise the item in the exclusion of the public/press.

In respect of Item 3 – Response to Notice of Motion 636 Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex Celebration

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Wray, that Council approve the development of Option 1 and commit a budget of approximately £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 provided a background to the issue commencing at the first decision to build the new Ards Leisure Centre during the legacy Ards Borough Council which then became the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex which opened on 2 January 2019. During that year the project had been described as having attracted unprecedented demand since opening mainly due to the versatility of the building and the wide variety of activities on offer. The Council had never recognised or celebrated the success of the excellent facility. An official opening had been planned however did not take due to Covid-19. At the Council meeting on 30 October 2024, Councillor Boyle stated that he had brought forward a Notice of Motion which he outlined, and had been subsequently referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee. That motion had been discussed and agreed by the entire Community and Wellbeing Committee, and it was felt that an official opening was not appropriate as the facility had already been opened for a number of years.

Councillor Boyle read out a number of the comments made by Members at that Committee meeting. Following the motion, the report had been presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee of the options available in April 2025. He was encouraged that 1500 children and young people had enrolled in the Waves

swimming lesson programme and there were 5,200 members within the fitness and health suite provision. It had been estimated that over 3m visitors had utilised the facility since opening. Councillor Boyle viewed it as unfortunate, irresponsible and reckless that the event had been described as nothing more than a staff party and that headline in the media had been shocking. The message was inaccurate and was important to set the record straight with no reference ever to a staff party. That had been a wholly unacceptable comment which ratepayers should be made aware of. Councillor Boyle believed option 1 was best and he asked for Members' support to do the right thing for the excellent facility. He reiterated and wished for it to be made clear that the event had been talked about for a long time, and it was never to be a party for the staff.

Councillor Wray was surprised the matter had not been debated on the evening. He was in support of option 1. He would also be supportive of option 2, as he felt a Royal visit would be a fantastic way to celebrate 7 years. As previously stated, the report was as a result of a Notice of Motion which had received unanimous support as already alluded to by Councillor Boyle. Councillor Wray stated that there were four reasons why he felt the event should take place:

- Firstly, to acknowledge the staff, their level of expertise and customer service. He knew the team was doing its best to incentivise staff. However, he felt to date the message the team had received from the Council was rather mixed and referred to 'hokey cokey' decisions that had been made by the Council around leisure provision and he looked forward to that being resolved in the long term. It had an impact on the staff, and he understood how demoralising and deflating that could be and wanted the event to celebrate and acknowledge what the staff did.
- To send a message across Northern Ireland, that Ards and North Down was a premier Borough and a premier place to visit. Visitors should be encouraged to visit Ards and North Down and such an event would help stimulate the economy.
- It was a good news story and it was an opportunity and celebrate and come together as a community.
- It linked to the Council's leisure strategy in terms of numbers of visitors.

Councillor Wray respected the opinions of others however he found it wrong that objections were not spoken of in the first instance, Members had changed their minds which he viewed as a ridiculous and shameful decision.

Alderman McRandal clarified that the Community and Wellbeing Committee was content for a report to come back however costing was an issue. He felt that he could not support the recommendation as he did not understand what was involved in the costing, no breakdown was provided and no reasoning or benefits outlined.

Alderman McRandal also found the timing odd, why the event was being held 7 years since the centre opening and wondered why the Council could not wait until 10 years. He was unaware of any great community demand for the event and would like to understand the motivation a bit more. Furthermore, the £30k had not been budgeted for and had not been included within rate setting.

Alderman Adair agreed with Alderman McRandal, as a member of the Community and Wellbeing Committee he had supported the motion for the report to come back

to make an informed decision however there was nothing within that report that convinced him to support. Alderman Adair stated that the staff were valued. The official opening unfortunately did not take place due to Covid-19, which was regrettable. However, 7 years had now passed, and it was not a custom to mark such an anniversary. Alderman Adair stated that a celebration was a party and from reading the report he believed that those who would have been primarily attending the party were the staff. He stated that the negative headline came as a result of the comments made by Councillor Boyle at the Committee and some of those comments he viewed as disgraceful. Alderman Adair clarified that the reasons he was opposed to the report were due to the cost of £30k and the ratepayers that had contacted him were supportive of the Council's decision. It stated in the report that £30k would have come from underspend and he did not feel that was a good use of ratepayers money and there were many other priorities that money could go to including a hardship fund or support the playparks to provide disability provision. Alderman Adair felt supporting the proposal would send out the wrong message to ratepayers.

Councillor Kendall felt it was remiss that the matter had not been fully debated at the Committee meeting. Protests had been seen in terms of leisure provision, and she viewed it as odd that the Council would not celebrate the success. It was never called a staff party, and the staff were valued. Councillor Kendall was supportive of a celebration.

Councillor Smart recalled that the facility was delivered on time and within the budget and had taken huge determination for it to happen. It had been a huge transition for the staff, and he outlined the successes of the facility. He was supportive of either option 1 or option 2 and highlighting the event was less about an official opening and more about celebrating its success. The figure indicated was an approximate figure and he hoped such an event could be delivered for less. Councillor Smart felt a way of celebrating the success should occur and would grow the success of the facility. He added that the facility did have a soft opening during his time as Mayor.

The Mayor wished to highlight that day he had been with staff from the street cleansing section to provide recognition for their awards and felt such recognition did occur behind the scenes. He viewed the 7 years as strange and a 10 year celebration would be more appropriate.

The proposal was put to the meeting and FELL with 11 voting FOR, 23 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 3 ABSENT.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the matter be deferred back to committee with a further report detailing potential costs and potential benefits of progressing with the event.

Alderman McRandal had sympathy for the arguments made however he felt more information was needed.

(Councillor Chambers withdrew from the meeting – 8.07 pm)

Councillor Moore agreed that more information was needed on how the £30k was arrived at along with details of the ultimate aim of the event.

Councillor Boyle was supportive of the proposal and stated that such information could have been asked for at the Committee meeting.

(Councillor Chambers re-entered the meeting – 8.09 pm)

Alderman McIlveen was supportive of the proposal for further discussion however noted the £30k had not been budgeted for. He was concerned there was an underspend already when the budget had just been set. He viewed some of the language used round the debate at the meeting as shocking.

Councillor Kendall asked for an amendment in relation to a 10-year anniversary.

On a point of order, Councillor Gilmour stated that an additional amendment should not be allowed.

The Mayor did not feel the amendment was necessary.

Councillor Kendall was supportive of the inclusion of a 10-year anniversary celebration.

Councillor Gilmour did not have an issue with a further report coming back however felt a celebration for 7 years did not make sense. She was unsure if she could agree to the spend of a significant amount of money. The leisure provision across the Borough was excellent and the staff did a great job energising residents. She expressed concern regarding the flippancy of some of the comments in particular the reference to ‘hokey cokey’ decisions around leisure provision which should not have been referred to as such. Leisure had been performing well in house however still did not perform as a profit and Council needed to be mindful of the costs.

Councillor McClean felt it would have been better to tease out the issues at the Committee however noted that no one seconded the report at the Committee. There were alternative ways to show how valued staff were. He could not be persuaded to spend £30k on a 7-year anniversary and felt the wrong message was being sent. Councillor McClean was happy for the matter to be debated again however urged caution regarding the matter.

Alderman Graham stated that one of the most valuable pieces in the Council was the human resource and that needed to be valued. He had concern that one service and one group of staff was being picked to have celebration when there were other services operating on a daily basis. 7 years was not a rationale to have a celebration.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the matter be deferred back to committee with a further report detailing potential costs and potential benefits of progressing with the event.

In respect of Item 18 - Extension of Ice Cream & Hot Drinks Vendors at Various Locations in the Borough 2025-26; The Mayor wished to raise the item in the exclusion of the public/press.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes, as amended, be approved and adopted (with the exception of the items to be considered in the exclusion of the public/press.

9. DEPUTATION REQUESTS

9.1 Department of Education – RAISE (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching deputation request form. The report detailed that a deputation request had been received from representatives from the RAISE Programme, Department of Education.

The RAISE programme was a new initiative which aimed to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage and was 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 helped to deliver on the mission, set by the report 'A Fair Start', to ensure all children and young people regardless of background were given the best start in life

The request was to update Council as the programme progresses in the Ards and North Down Area. The areas identified for this Council area were Millisle and Donaghadee.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

9.2 Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching deputation request form. The report detailed that a deputation request dated 1st April 2025 had been received from representatives from Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club.

The application stated the request was 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 had requested to make the deputation to either the Place and Prosperity Committee or the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the deputations be heard at the heard at the relevant Committees (Community and Wellbeing Committee).

(Councillor Wray withdrew from the meeting – 8.23 pm)

10. RESOLUTIONS

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence at Items 10.1 and 10.2 be noted.

10.1 From Mid Ulster District Council – Road Traffic Law

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence in respect of the above.

(Councillor Moore re-entered the meeting – 8.25 pm)

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that this Council support Mid Ulster Council in their call upon the NI Assembly to develop and pass legislation requiring vehicles to stop for school buses that are picking up or dropping off pupils, in line with other best practise observed in other jurisdictions. This Council should also send a letter to Mid Ulster District Council expressing this support.

Councillor Morgan stated that child safety was paramount, not only for those children travelling on the bus but also for those in cars, walking or cycling to school. The school gates were congested, and children were vulnerable. Councillor Morgan welcomed the initiative and felt it should be supported.

(Councillor Wray returned to the meeting – 8.26 pm)

Alderman McAlpine referred to the recent sad death of a child who was killed when exiting the bus. She also referred to instances in the past where children had been knocked down and injured when getting off buses. The Borough was predominately rural and she felt the proposed piece of legislation would be a sensible addition for road safety.

(Councillor Blaney withdrew from the meeting – 8.27 pm)

Councillor Boyle rose in support of the resolution noting that it sought to offer more protection to one of our most important assets, our children. The resolution sought to improve safety measures with many buses travelling the roads particularly on the rural roads.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that this Council support Mid Ulster Council in their call upon the NI Assembly to develop and pass legislation requiring vehicles to stop for school buses that are picking up or dropping off pupils, in line with other best practise observed in other jurisdictions. This Council should also send a letter to Mid Ulster District Council expressing this support.

(Councillor Blaney returned to the meeting – 8.29 pm)

10.2. From Fermanagh & Omagh District Council – Diverse Workplace

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence in respect of the above.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence be noted.

11. COURSES/CONFERENCES, INVITATIONS ETC

11.1 Transport Decarbonisation Event - 4 June 2025 (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching event information. The report detailed that that Department for Infrastructure would be hosting a morning focused on transport decarbonisation as part of its series of 'Foundations for a Better Future' events.

The event would be held on Wednesday 4 June 2025, 9:30 - 13:00 followed by lunch in Craigavon Civic Centre.

This session would be an opportunity for you to find out more about the Department's work in this area and how that aligned with NI's wider climate commitments.

The invitation suggested two representatives from the Council be nominated to attend. Members should note that the deadline for nominations was 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 was to be held on the same date.

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the event information be noted.

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the seal be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Rights of Burial Numbers D40846 – D40885

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

No transfers were received.

RESOLVED, on the proposal by Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that these be noted.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

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

This item was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and it aimed 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 tracker.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

In respect of NOM 370 - Councillor Gilmour proposed that further to NOM 370, that an officer's report is brought back on the possible strengthening of no alcohol consumption byelaws on Council land and at the Borough's beaches and parks. Furthermore, the report would also explore options on possible restrictions of open fires and the use of disposable BBQs at beaches and parks.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor McClean.

Councillor Gilmour stated that the motion that appeared on the status report had been brought forward by the Mayor previously to review the Council bye-laws and she appreciated that piece of work would take some time. However, she felt it would be prudent to have a report back in relation to the alcohol consumption byelaws and the matter of fires and disposable BBQs being used on Council land. The Borough had many beaches which became busy particularly in the warm weather however that presented problems in relation to anti-social behaviour. Councillor Gilmour referred to the risks around the use of disposable BBQs and the disposal of those and wondered if there could be restrictions around their use, an appropriate disposal method or curtail areas for their use.

(Councillor Kendall withdrew from the meeting – 8.33 pm)

The matter of alcohol consumption on beaches had caused issues lately including anti-social behaviour, litter and the RNLI had also responded to situations when water safety had been compromised due to alcohol consumption.

(Councillor Boyle withdrew from the meeting – 8.34 pm)

Councillor Gilmour felt a report being brought to the Council would be useful to try and address the areas outlined.

Alderman McRandal was content to support the proposal. Anti-social behaviour and the problems associated with alcohol was something which Andrew Muir MLA had been working on.

(Councillor Boyle re-entered the meeting – 8.35 pm)

Alderman McRandal stated that he had also be working on the problem of fires on beaches particularly in Helen's Bay and Seapark.

The Mayor stated that it was a big issue which had been highlighted recently with the popularity of the beaches, and he felt it would be useful to look at all options. He was unsure why the motion had been on the status report for so long and thought that was perhaps due to the breadth of the topic. The Council's byelaws were outdated, and byelaws were not being used effectively to tackle the issues. The no alcohol consumption byelaw had been raised by himself a number of times by the PSNI and that needed to be addressed.

Alderman McIlveen wished to clarify that the proposal was pertaining to the Notice of Motion on the status report but was not a replacement.

(Councillor Kendall re-entered the meeting – 8.37 pm)

In respect of NOM 11 – Councillor McClean referred to the motion that was submitted in 2015 in relation to recognising the achievements of Rory McIlroy. He noted that discussions continued with his team and asked if the Chief Executive would have any detail of progress.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that the previous Chief Executive had conversations with Rory's team in relation to a lot of ideas. She highlighted the need to be respectful in relation to what Rory would want and the message that came back from Rory's team was that he did not want that recognition to be about himself but about supporting charities and up and coming youth. Posters had been erected around Holywood in celebration of his most recent success at the Masters. Officers were working up other ideas and she had reached out to Rory's team in the hope to pitch those ideas. It was envisaged that a report would be brought back following the summer.

Councillor McClean felt it was appropriate that Rory be given a grace period.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted and that further to NOM 370, that an officer's report is brought back on the possible strengthening of No Alcohol consumption byelaws on Council land and at our Borough's beaches and parks. Furthermore, the report will also explore options on possible restrictions of open fires and the use of disposable BBQs at our beaches and parks.

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 Executive's plan to mitigate against the negative impacts of such proposals, given the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy and Programme for Government commitments.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

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.

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

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 of 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.

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

Circulated for Information

(a) Housing Council Minutes dated 13 February 2025

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that information be noted.

(Having previously declared an interest in the item, Councillor Chambers withdrew from the meeting)

16. DECISION PROCESS FOR FUTURE LEISURE PROVISION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that since the merger of councils in 2015, ANDBC had 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 were operated by Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) and their leisure operating partner Serco (outsourced).

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 had 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 was 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.

Future Leisure Operating Models

Future operating models available to the Council included:

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 were 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.

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, was no later than the end of September 2025. That was due to the following reasons:

- If Council's decision was 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 was to bring all leisure operations inhouse, either fully, or via a LATC, the following must be noted:
 - The process would likely be complicated, resource intensive and time consuming. In relation to a LATC, Council had 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
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Information Required for Council's Decision Process

Members were asked to consider the level of information that would 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 intended 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*. <i>*For information only as a comparison cannot be made due to the current different operating models and potentially different operators going forward.</i> 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)* <i>*For information only as a comparison cannot be made due to the current different operating models and potentially different operators going forward.</i>
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.

Communication

As this was a complex subject it was important that communication was managed sensitively and appropriately to ensure minimal disruption to both staff and the leisure service across the Borough. Therefore, the following was proposed at this early stage:

NCLT and Serco Partnership engagement

NCLT/ Serco had been advised that Council would be considering a way forward for leisure services from 2028 during the coming months. Officers had offered to brief their staff however it would not be appropriate to engage beyond that as this may present a conflict if the decision was to outsource and they subsequently tender for the future opportunity.

Staff and Union Engagement

Early engagement had taken place with Union representatives to provide them with an update on the current position. Officers would continue to engage with trade union full time officials and local representatives throughout the process.

An initial meeting had taken place with Ards Leisure staff (24 April) to provide an update on the current position. Further meetings with staff would be arranged as the process continued.

Public communication and engagement

A public statement would 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 would be communicated as appropriate.

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.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendations be adopted.

Alderman McRandal stated that the matter needed to move forward and quickly. He did have concerns in relation to the timescales and sought reassurance that following the workshops, reports would be brought back to Committee or Council.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that the workshops would take place and then an update report would be brought to Council in July with a set of recommendations to Committee in September.

Alderman McRandal felt the steps and timescale was quite stretching and he wondered if the Council felt it was unable to make an informed decision at the end of the process was their contingency room.

The Director stated that advice had been taken from the procurement section who would be heavily involved in the process. Based on their advice, a decision would need to be made by September.

Councillor Kendall felt there was an urgency moving forward with the plan. She stated that she did have some concerns, and a decision should not be based on ideology but be based on accurate information and absolute facts. Without knowing fully, the cost of both insourcing and outsourcing contracts she was unsure how options could be fully exemplified. Not all costs were presented within the leisure budget, and the cost of outsourcing had not been robust information. Councillor Kendall was happy to propose the recommendations to move forward however she hoped such information in full would be forthcoming at the workshops before all models could be considered.

Alderman McAlpine stated that there were four models referred to within the report and highlighted that Belfast City Council was run by a social enterprise. She wondered if there was capacity to look at other outsourcing models to ensure a breadth was being covered.

The Director stated that the current arrangement included a charitable trust which was similar to that operated by Belfast City Council.

Alderman McIlveen stated that the process needed to occur as the contract was coming to an end with NCLT. He wished to raise the issue of the LATC. Previously it had been discussed that those would be CoCos and a report was expected to further explore that as an option. So many years had passed without any information in that regard. Alderman McIlveen expressed his disappointment with the progress that had not been made. He questioned if the information would be received in time for this process.

The Director stated that in reports in the past when considering the different extension opportunities, there had been reference to the LATC and CoCo model. He agreed that information had not been consolidated but that could be done as part of this process.

Alderman McIlveen noted that reference had been made to CoCos however the model had not been talked about in any great detail, and required a risk analysis. He did not feel the information had been put appropriately before the Council to allow for decisions to be made.

The Director stated that all the information would be brought together and a LATC could be one of the options for consideration.

Councillor Boyle had concerns in relation to the comments made by Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kendall. From his own perspective, he acknowledged a process was in place however he did not agree with such important decisions being made during July and August. There was not a lot of time with a lot of information to be explored to weigh the process. Councillor Boyle hoped the staff would be brought along in the process. He acknowledged there was a lot of work to do, and the

Council needed to ensure all the information was reviewed to make the right decision for the overall betterment of leisure provision within the Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendations be adopted.

(Councillor Chambers re-entered the meeting)

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

8.5. CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE DATED 8 APRIL 2025 CONTINUED...

8.5.1 Matters Arising - Licence to Cloughey Tennis Club – shelter at Cloughey Tennis Courts (Appendices VI - VIII)

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

Note:- This report was deferred from the Corporate Services Committee meeting.

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.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9pm and resumed at 9.13 pm.

(Councillor Kendall, Councillor McLaren and Councillor McKimm left the meeting during the recess)

8.5.2. Matters Arising - Request to use Council Land – Donaghadee Horse Relay Event 2024 (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 a request from Donaghadee Community Development Association to use Council Land for a Horse Relay event on 6th September 2025.

8.6 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE DATED 9 APRIL 2025 CONTINUED....

In respect of Item 22 – Leisure VAT Update

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

In respect of Item 18 - Extension of Ice Cream & Hot Drinks Vendors at Various Locations in the Borough 2025-26

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

17. FUNFAIR AT THE MCKEE CLOCK ARENA, BANGOR

*****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 that the arrangements for the Easter Funfair at the McKee Clock Arena, Bangor.

18. REQUEST FOR A FUNFAIR AT BALLYWALTER ROAD, MILLISLE

(Appendices XII - XIII)

*****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 consider the request for a funfair on Council Land at Ballywalter Road, Millisle.

19. QUEEN'S PARADE

*****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)

The item was a verbal update in respect of the current status of Queen's Parade.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.12 pm.

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 6th May 2025 commencing at 19:00.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell

Councillors:	Cathcart	McClean
	Harbinson	McKee (zoom)
	Hennessy	Morgan
	Kendall	Smart
	Kerr	Wray
	McCollum	

Officers: Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Planning (Acting) (G Kerr), A Todd (Senior Professional and Technical Officer), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers), Principal Professional and Technical Officer (L Maginn) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from the Interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough) and an apology for lateness was received from Councillor Hennessy.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hennessy declared an interest in Item 4.1: LA06/2022/0265/F – 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor and Item 4.5: A06/2023/2406/F - 5 Tarawood, Holywood

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 01 APRIL 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

4.1 LA06/2022/0265/F - Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking - 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report, addendum report.

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer explained that the case had been presented to the Planning Committee at its last meeting in April. Members had deferred the application to allow the planning department an opportunity to explore issues raised by an objector speaking against the recommendation.

For clarity, the application sought full planning permission for a single dwelling to replace a commercial workshop building Located at 31A Sheridan Drive in the Ballyholme area of Bangor. The area comprised a wide range of densities and house types. The plot size was similar to that of other plots within the wider area.

Members were shown site images containing a commercial workshop, separate WC building and a small yard area.

It was important to highlight that whilst the premises were vacant at the time of writing, a recent certificate of lawfulness established the use of the site as a commercial workshop. The Premises had a commercial history that dated back over 40 years. The site was accessed via a private lane that connected Sheridan Drive with Lyle Road and the commercial workshop was not the only building that could be accessed via the laneway. The second image in the presentation showed a dwelling located immediately east of the site that solely fronted onto the lane and can only be accessed by it. The lane also provided rear vehicular access to a number of properties and garages that fronted onto Sheridan Drive, Groomsport Road and Sandhurst drive. An image was shown to example the informal parking along the land to the north of the site. Two in-curtilage car parking spaces had been proposed and given the former use of the site as a commercial workshop, he proposed one-bedroom dwelling would not result in any intensification of use of the existing access to the public road.

The proposed dwelling was modest with a low overall ridge height of 5.5 metres and was just 3 metres to the eaves. The footprint was smaller than the existing building and a modern vertical cladding finish was proposed. The design was significantly amended during the processing of the application to prevent harm to residential immunity with a reduction in scale and a removal of a balcony and first floor windows.

Objections had been received from eight separate addresses. The main issues raised included the potential impact on the character of the area, residential amenity, traffic and parking as well as impact on the existing sewage infrastructure. All material considerations raised in objection letters had been considered in detail in the case officer report and various addendums.

In regard to matters raised at the last committee meeting, the objector had queried the extent of the red line and ownership of a small triangular portion of land beyond the southwest boundary of the site. In subsequent correspondence, the objector did not

claim ownership of this land but rather stated the area was used to manoeuvre into a car parking space associated with the objector's property. The lease map for the existing commercial property was submitted to the Council with the map including an annotation that stated the land referred to by the objector was part of a right-of-way.

The area was highlighted in green on the site location plan and was located beyond the red line boundary of the site. The applicant's agent had confirmed that the certificate of ownership was correct and the applicant owned the lands within the red line boundary. A small discrepancy was identified between the site location plan and the original site layout plan in that a small corner of a parking space extended beyond the red line boundary. The site layout had been amended to ensure the parking space was contained entirely within the red line.

It was considered that any meaning dispute regarding a potential right of way was a civil matter to be resolved between interested parties outside of the planning process. The objector had stated that the scale of the parking spaces on the site layout were substandard and it was further suggested that land associated with the access to number 107 Groomsport Road on the opposite side of the lane may be required to manoeuvre vehicles into the parking spaces.

It was clear that the application site had historically been used for parking in association with the commercial vehicular repair business and it was considered that the application represented a realistic fallback at this site. The layout showed that the small existing WC building to the rear of the parking area would be demolished which would further increase the depth of the area.

The objector had a parking space immediately west of the application site. And it was noteworthy that the combined depth of the objective parking space and the laneway was shorter than the combined depth of the proposed parking spaces and the lane. The two parking spaces each measured 4.8 metres long by 2.4 metres wide which meant that the basic parking space dimensions detailed within the published parking standards had been met with Dfi Roads having offered no objections to the application.

The Council's Planning Department asked DFI Roads to reconsider the application in the context of the objector's concerns in relation to the dimensions for parking and manoeuvring. DFI Roads referred to the previous use of the site and the traffic generated by the commercial garage and confirmed the proposal would not result in road safety issues.

DFI Roads confirmed that it had reviewed dimensions using the both the scale drawing and also GIS and that it appeared acceptable. The response from DFI Roads stated that anyone exiting the site could turn left or right either reversing or travelling in a forward direction and there should not be a manoeuvrability issue any more than the previous use had.

Subsequent objection had reiterated concerns relating to potential overlooking with particular reference being made to the velux window on the northern roof pane serving the loft bedroom. This velux window was small in scale. The terrace dwellings to the north of the site had long rear gardens. The small velux window was orientated towards the garages and access points at the end of the long gardens and it was therefore considered that no unacceptable degree of overlooking would occur.

In addition, the objector had expressed concern in relation to potential overlooking from the proposed ground floor window on the western elevation towards a first-floor window to the rear of their property at No. 31 Sheridan Drive. This window was already open to public views from the laneway itself. The windows would not be directly opposing and given the separation distance of 16 metres, it was considered that no unacceptable adverse overlooking would arise. The proposed ground floor window was in a similar location to the main opening of the existing commercial workshop.

Further comments were also made in relation to the level of useable amenity space. It was agreed that this would equate to approximately 22 square metres and it was considered that the amenity space provided was adequate to serve the needs of a small one-bedroom dwelling and therefore complied with planning policy requirements. The site was also in short walking distance to public amenities and facilities in the area including Ballyholme Beach.

In summary, this was a unique brownfield site which had recently benefited from a certificate of lawfulness for a commercial workshop. Objections had been received from 8 separate addresses and the Planning Department had considered, in detail all the material planning considerations raised.

The Applicant significantly amended the scale and design of the proposed dwelling to address concerns in relation to residential amenity. The proposal was for a modest one-bedroom dwelling and would not result any intensification of use of the existing access and no objection had been received from DFI Roads. Moreover, no objection had been received from NI Water in relation to wastewater capacity issues.

RECOMMENDED that permission is granted.

Mr Asman Khairuddin was invited to the chamber, speaking against the application. The Chair, Alderman McIlveen reminded Mr Khairuddin that he had three minutes to speak.

Mr Khairuddin believed Members had been looking at misleading drawings that haven't represented the application correctly. Referring to Slide 9, he advised that the garage next door had been represented as being three times larger than its actual size. He suggested that whenever anybody looks at a building in order to assess its size, they would look at a neighbouring building.

Mr Khairuddin explained that one of the objectors, Mr. Armstrong, who owned the house next door had a long garden with a very small garage. The garden was split into three sections with grown shrubbery, a lawn in the middle and the garage at the end. The centre section was that which was used most often by Mr Armstrong and it was that portion of the garden that could be seen from the velux window.

Mr. Robin Mulholland, who owned land directly opposite the two car parking spaces had explained that part of his driveway had been used in order to get in and out of spaces at the commercial garage. He would be declining future use of this part of his drive by third parties, especially the two cars parked directly opposite his driveway. The reversing space for the proposed spaces would be 3.7 metres; a smaller reversing space than would be available in shopping centre car parks. In conclusion, Mr Khairuddin believed that parking for a dwelling would mean users regularly arriving and leaving the premises for daily life which would lead to an intensification of traffic.

With no questions from Members, Mr Khairuddin returned to the public gallery and Mr Wilson, speaking in support of the application, entered the chamber to speak.

Mr Wilson explained that he had set up a practice in Bangor in 1993 for domestic and commercial projects in the town which had made up the majority of his work over 32 years.

Living within 100 metres from the application site in the terrace property, Mr Wilson had been involved in similar applications along Lyle Road. This application was made in late March 2022, running for three years to date. The existing commercial garage use generated the need for a contaminated land report which involved boreholes to a depth of five metres culminating in a lab analysis and a 91-page report at a cost of £5,500. Initially, NI water required a wastewater impact assessment and sewer requisition of approximately £2,500. As the workshop already had WC facilities, wastewater connections were already in existence. Mr Wilson thought it prudent to establish that the principle of the dwelling on the site was acceptable before commissioning reports and it had taken a few drafts to settle on a design the planning team considered appropriate. Apart from minor amendments to the boundary treatment, that design had not changed since November 2022. During the process, the contaminated land report concluded that there was no risk and NI water granted a waiver on single dwellings during consultation in January and they had no objections to the application.

Local residents had made objections to the scale and height of the original application, and it had been duly reduced twice in the early redrafts. With a recommendation to approve in January, objections concentrated on NI water and the status of the existing use as a garage workshop from which regular statistics were taken. The record for commercial rates existed back to the 1980s.

The certificate of lawful use was approved in February, so the analysis of traffic based on the garage workshop stood and had been accepted by DFI Roads as it had been previously. This had also been comprehensively covered in the case officer's first addendum. New additions were allowed to the objector's speaking notes at the meeting in April with objections to parking standards and overlooking. The roof windows were for light and escape and below eye level which would be very difficult to look out of unless one ducked.

Mr Wilson had rechecked all survey data and confirmed that the application had met the parking standards. He had used the existing parking spaces and amended one position to keep within the red site boundary. DFI Roads were consulted once again and had no concerns. This was also comprehensively covered in the Case Officer's second addendum with the report confirming that the proposal was compliant with all aspects of the local development plan, draft plan and regional planning policy. As it was a unique site, it would not cause precedent and there were no objections from any of the statutory consultees after repeated consultation.

The dwelling was viewed as a betterment in terms of its visual impact. It is residential use in a residential area. The proposal was a cool, clean, compact dwelling and the alternative fallback was a commercial garage workshop.

Mr Wilson thanked the planning team for the continued work behind the report and respectfully asked the Committee to endorse and grant permission for the proposal that he believed could only improve the character of the area.

As the Chair (Alderman McIlveen) invited questions from Members, Councillor McCollum, in confirming Mr Wilson's proximity to the application site, asked of the current busy nature of the laneway, if Mr Wilson was or had been operator or manager of the garage, whether anything but anecdotal evidence existed for the garage's use of parking spaces. Mr Wilson lived on Ballyholme Esplanade within 100 metres of the site. Though parking occurred on the lane, traffic was still able to get by. Mr Wilson had never been part of the garage's commercial past but recalled its operation. Two signs still stood for the garage's visitor parking which inferenced the two-car limit. Whilst the in-curtilage parking was two as well, the garage would have generated more traffic with staff, vehicle visits and parts deliveries whilst the application was for a one bedroom building.

Mr Wilson returned to the gallery at 19:22.

Councillor McCollum raised several questions in relation to parking in the application, specifically in relation to size and manoeuvrability. The Senior Professional & Technical Officer explained that the spaces measured 2.48 by 2.4 metres which were the standard for parking. The commercial garage would by its very nature attract more traffic whether that be repair, services, deliveries or workers. Vehicular movement in the area would be dramatically reduced if the application site became residential. DfI had also been contacted on several occasions who also held the same view by way of GIS systems and expert knowledge on traffic, movement and different uses. In regard to the objector who had denied use of his driveway for manoeuvring, DfI had confirmed that the site layout and dimensions provided were considered acceptable and that there should be no issue.

Councillor Cathcart referred to PPS7, safeguarding the character of established residential areas, suggested this would be the only section of land in the area that had a house built onto Sheridan Drive as opposed to a house and how it could be approved with such a difference in mind. The Senior Professional & Technical Officer, whilst using slides as an example, showed one building with access off Sheridan Drive. The site was also standalone outside the curtilage of any dwelling. With concern amongst Members of a precedent being set for subdivision of plots, the Senior Professional & Technical Officer advised the application before Members did not set precedent as it did not involve subdivision and had been a long-standing commercial site.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

Councillor Morgan believed a dwelling would be more appropriate in the area than a commercial garage and that vehicular movement would be reduced given the different use. Alderman Graham agreed, citing the many deliveries and vehicular visits that would occur for a commercial garage versus a small one to two person apartment. Councillor Cathcart also agreed, adding that the site should never have been approved for commercial use even though it now had an established use, but that a dwelling was a betterment of the two options.

On being put to the meeting, with 10 voting FOR, 3 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the proposal was agreed. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (10)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
Graham			Smith
McDowell			
McIlveen			
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Cathcart	Kendall	McKee	Hennessy
Harbinson	McClean		
Kerr	McCollum		
McBurney			
Morgan			
Smart			
Wray			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Morgan and by a vote of 10 FOR, 3 AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 2 ABSENT, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

4.2 LA06/2023/2459/F - 2No. detached dwellings with detached garages and associated car parking and landscaping - Site immediately to the North of 134 Killinchy Road, Comber

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

The Acting Head of Planning advised that the application was for two detached dwellings with detached garages and associated car parking and landscaping at a site immediately north of 134 Killinchy Road Comber

The application was before members as it had been called in by the Mayor from the weekly delegation, week commencing 20 March 2025. The recommendation was to refuse planning permission

Members were shown google Earth imagery of the application site’s location in the countryside. The site lay within the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as shown in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

The roadside site was located lands between 126 and 134 Killinchy road Comber. Killinchy Road was a protected route.

The site sloped downwards from the road towards the rear boundary. There was a field entrance directly from the Killinchy Road. A laneway ran adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site serving 126 and 128 Killinchy Road. An opening on to this laneway had also been created from the application site allowing access.

The application site was part of a larger agricultural field. Hedging denoted the boundary with the road, a post and wire fence separated the proposed site from the remainder of the field and the side boundaries were also hedging, some of which was sparse. The surrounding area consisted of agricultural fields and isolated single or pairs of dwellings with varying plot sizes.

With regard to planning history on the site – at the time of writing there was an enforcement case open under reference: LA06/2024/0092/CA for an Alleged unauthorised entrance with stone walls and unauthorised hardstanding on which the decision was pending. The application had received one letter of objection to the proposal. Members were shown site imagery of the surrounding area and dwellings at 134 and 128 Killinchy Road.

The next slide showed policy CTY8 of PPS21 – which dealt with infill development which listed criteria to be met. The buildings within the substantially built-up frontage were considered to be when travelling in a southerly direction. With a dwelling and garage at number 126, the laneway, access and application site, a dwelling at 134, a dwelling and outbuilding at 136 Killinchy Road, the plots within which these buildings stood about the road therefore had frontage. Given there were a line of three or more buildings along this section of the Killinchy Road which all shared common frontage with the road, this part of the policy had been met

The second part of the assessment was to confirm an infill opportunity existed for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of 2 houses. The amplification text stated that, for the purposes of the policy, the 'gap' was between buildings. It was considered that the gap between the built-up frontage at this location on Killinchy Road was too large and could accommodate more than the permitted maximum of two dwellings. As shown in slides, the frontage width of the proposed gap site was approximately 154.6m and the gap between the existing buildings at No. 126 and No. 134 Killinchy Road was approximately 154.2m. Given the gap between the buildings measured 154m it could effectively accommodate 2 dwellings with a frontage of 77.7m. This was close to 1.5 times the width of the average plot width of 54.1m.

A gap of 154m could accommodate close to three dwellings each with a plot width of just over 50m in line with the average. This demonstrated that the gap site was too large for two dwellings and three dwellings could fit within the gap that respected the existing pattern of development along the frontage. Members were asked to note that although this calculation was useful the assessment of whether a site was suitable for infill development, it was not purely a mathematical exercise but rather a matter of considering and balancing all the evidence, against policy requirements.

The gap between number 126 and 134 represented an important visual gap as could be seen in the slides, between two visually separate buildings. Guidance on the interpretation of CTY8 provided in a judicial judgement (Gordon Duff V Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (2022) NIQB 37) stated Justice Scofield KC held that whether a site offers a visual break of such importance or significance was '*a matter of planning judgement; but it is a matter of common sense, and consistent with the guidance ...that the larger the site, the more likely it is to offer an important visual break. ...however, the size of the gap alone will not be determinative.*'

CTY8 required that a proposal for infill development should respect the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size and meets other planning and environmental requirements. With regard to a visual assessment, it was considered that the application site provided a significant visual gap between No 126 and No 134 Killinchy Road.

The existing dwellings along the frontage were intervisible at certain points along the road with the two dwellings on the opposite side of the road when travelling south, however the mature trees along the southern boundary of number 126 and the location of the dwelling towards the rear of the site, meant the existing were not visually linked when travelling north to south.

If the development was to go ahead, the result would be a suburban style of development with the visual gap lost thereby creating a ribbon of development and consequently failing the requirements of Policy CTY8 of PPS21 and the related provisions of the SPPS. In addition, the infilling of this gap and the creation of a ribbon of development would result in a suburban style build-up of development detrimental to the rural character of the area and contrary to Policy CTY14 which related to rural character.

Members were asked to note recent permission granted for the site to the south of the application site for outline planning permission. The image shown to Members illustrated that when the proposal was considered alongside the existing and approved dwellings, it would add to an existing ribbon of development which would span over a distance of approximately 750m from number 96 to the north and number 136 to the south.

Given the considerations set out in the presentation and detail within the case officer report the recommendation is to refuse outline planning permission

RECOMMENDED planning permission be refused.

Councillor Morgan asked for more information on what was meant by a, 'protected road,' and the policies that existed for it. The Acting Head of Planning explained that there were certain roads in Northern Ireland that were protected routes with policies stating that intensification or direct access onto such protected roads would not be allowed. The laneway was already in place upon which access had been created that had raised the enforcement case. There was a map online of all protected roads in Northern Ireland at ArcGIS via the Department for Communities.

Mr Liam Walsh and Dr Elaine Rusk were invited to the Chamber to speak in SUPPORT of the application for five minutes. Dr Elaine Rusk attended by Zoom.

Dr Rusk explained that the recommendation for refusal was based upon on the Case Officer's opinion that the gap site was too large for two dwellings due to the width of its frontage. This referred to CT 8 of PPS 21 which would allow development of a small gap site provided it was only wide enough for a maximum of two houses. The Case Officer's report was otherwise resoundingly positive in terms of the appropriateness of the proposed design and development. No consulted third parties raised any issues. And the one objection raised by a neighbour was deemed, '*not a material planning consideration.*' The case officer's report also acknowledged that the site met the criteria of CTY 8 for a substantial and built up frontage as it, '*includes a line of three or more buildings along a road frontage*'.

Dr Rusk advised that the only issue for the refusal was the plot size. The Case Officer's report suggested that three dwellings could fit on the site, meaning that in their view, this was not a small gap site for a maximum of two houses. Dr Rusk felt it had been demonstrated that the two plots proposed were commensurate in size with the existing plots along the frontage. They had proposed plot widths of 66 and 67 metres compared to an average of 56 metres. In the three nearest properties, others opposite and along the road were significantly wider. The depth of the proposed plots were the same as their neighbours, so there was no difference there and their area at 0.3 hectares each was only 0.05 hectares bigger than the average. It did not make them the largest plots in the row in terms of area. The others were 0.31, 0.28 and 0.17 hectares which meant that one property was skewing the average down. Plot width was therefore the only real issue being raised.

In order to argue the viability of three dwellings on the site, the Case Officer's report calculated a road frontage at the site of around 154 metres and a measurement also around 154 between the neighbouring buildings. Not between the boundaries but between the gables of the neighbouring buildings at number 126 and 134 to imply that the site could almost fit three dwellings stating that, given the gap between the buildings measured 154 metres, it could effectively accommodate two dwellings at the frontage of 77.7 metres, or close to three dwellings, each with a plot width of just over 50 metres. That would be true only if part of the gardens of numbers 126 and 134 and the shared laneway that accessed a house to the rear were incorporated into the new plot width, which was impossible

Dr Rusk suggested that figures were therefore misleading and that they failed to take into consideration the taper of the site which was significantly narrower further from the road where any houses would be built. They had measured in line with where the dwelling was proposed and existing dwellings would sit on the site and did not include the shared laneway or parts of the next door's gardens within their calculations. That, *'it is important that the overall average plot width is considered rather than picking individual plots as a comparison to the proposed development,'* and, *'we have demonstrated that squeezing three houses onto the site leads to a plot width and area which is not in keeping with the existing average plot width at 44 metres wide.'* These would be further than the current average plot width because they would have been 12 metres smaller than the proposed two plots, which were 10 and 11 metres greater than the average.

It is also important to consider the gaps between buildings. The existing measurement between numbers 136 and 134 was 24 metres in the proposal for two dwellings with the gap between buildings being at a range of 24 to 29 metres, whereas the illustration squeezing in three dwellings showed gaps of around 12 and 13 metres. This demonstrated in Dr Rusk's opinion that the proposal for two dwellings more accurately reflected the existing pattern of development along the road frontage. The Case Officer had cited PAC Decision 2021 A0014 where the commissioner concluded that the gap was too large to accommodate two infill dwellings at Ballycreeley Road. The fact that the Commissioner upheld the decision was in large part because the two infill dwellings proposed were not, *'wholly representative of the pattern of development,'* which must also include consideration of the disposition of those buildings relative to one another and the plots within which they lay. In paragraph 14, it was highlighted that in order to assess a site, one must

take account of the settlement pattern along the road frontage rather than making a comparison with decisions taken elsewhere. Just because the site at Ballycreeley Road was not deemed suitable where the surrounding plots were narrower did not mean that it followed that this proposal where the surrounding plot widths were wider would not be suitable for this context and therefore the decision was not relevant. Dr Rusk suggested that if Members concluded as they had, that this was a small infill site in accordance with CTY 8, then refusal reason 3, the integration of point CTY 14 would fall away because the small infill sites were an exception. If Members were convinced that the site was a small infill site, that would be sufficient grounds to overturn the recommendation for refusal because it was the only real argument being put forward against the development. Dr Rusk thanked the Chair and Members for their time.

After clarifying the site entrance location onto the laneway as opposed to the main road, Mr Walsh returned to the gallery and Dr Rusk returned to the zoom gallery.

In response to Councillor Cathcart's query on plot size clarification, The Acting Head of Planning advised that the measurement was between buildings and there was no indication of what size sites were, whether there were laneways or other elements, The measurement had been between buildings as it had been for previous assessments either for refusals or approvals for infill development. This was called in regarding the size of the gap and also it had been noted that there was previous approval further along the site. Slides were shown to explain that the gap site of a previous outline approval from 2021 was smaller than the site in this evening's application. That particular site was in last week's delegated list which had since been approved. By the very virtue of that approval, if this application were to go ahead, it would create a continuous line of development along the stretch of road. On one slide, the proposition of two dwellings could be seen but it was shown that three could be placed which showed a clear demonstration that the site was too large.

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

Councillor Wray agreed that a ribbon of development would be created, as did Councillor Morgan.

On being put to the meeting, with 12 voting FOR, 2 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was agreed. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (12)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (1)
Aldermen	Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
McDowell		Graham	Smith
McIlveen			
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Harbinson	Cathcart		
Hennessy	Kerr		
Kendall			
McBurney			
McClellan			

McCollum
McKee
Morgan
Smart
Wray

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Morgan and by a vote of 12 FOR, 2 AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 1 ABSENT, That the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be refused.

4.3 LA06/2024/0230/F - Change of use from agricultural building to dwelling to include extension, detached garage and relocation of access - Land 55m NE of 56 Portaferry Road, Cloughey

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report, addendum report.

The Acting Head of Planning advised that the application was for a Change of use from agricultural building to dwelling to include extension, detached garage and relocation of access at Land 55m NE of 56 Portaferry Road, Cloughey. The application was before members due to a call in by Councillor Kerr

With regard to the site and surrounding area. The application building was a barn located on a corner road- side plot of the junction of Portaferry Road and Drumarden Road. The building was set back 3 to 4 metres from Portaferry Road with extensive views of the site from the public road.

There were long distance views of the site when travelling southwest along the Portaferry Road. The existing stone vernacular building had a pitched clay tiled roof is gable ended onto the public road. It had a 0.13ha curtilage which was defined by fencing and hedging. The building had a prominent and very visible position within the locality at the junction of the two roads. The surrounding land was flat and there would have been longstanding views of the building on approach from both sides from a considerable distance.

The rectangular barn comprised one single section/room and had 2 door openings (one wider than the other) and 2 window openings along its southern elevation. There were no openings on the rear wall. The building displayed some architectural merits given its form which was that of a stone vernacular building. With regard to historic features, supporting information had been provided under the previous permission to demonstrate that the building had been present for almost 200 years as per OSNI 1846 to 1862.

Members were asked to note that the bar was set high for any conversion of a building to a dwelling and this was also reflected in the SPPS. Paragraph 6.73 of the SPPS stated that provision should be made for the sympathetic conversion and re-use, with adaption if necessary, of a locally important building as a single dwelling. This went further than Policy CTY 4 of PPS 21, which referred only to a 'suitable building'.

Paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS stated that where the SPPS introduced a change of policy direction and/or provided a policy clarification that would be in conflict with the retained policy, the SPPS should be afforded greater weight in the assessment of individual planning applications. As such, the term 'locally important building' should have taken precedence over 'suitable building' from PPS 21 Policy CTY 4.

With regard to the policy criteria of CTY4, it is stated that, *'the building must be of permanent construction, which it is. The criteria then goes on to state that the reuse or conversion would maintain or enhance the form, character or architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have any adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality.'* It also states that *any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style and finishes of the existing building.'*

The proposal was also considered to be contrary to the policy requirements of CTY13 – 'Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside' and CTY14 – 'Rural Character'

Planning history of this site was of particular relevance to the assessment of the current proposal. Planning permission was granted on 21 October 2021 (planning ref: LA06/2020/0973/F) on the same site for conversion of the building on the site to a dwelling to include extension and relocation of access. This permission was due to expire on 20.10.2026

This permission included conditions which removed the permitted development rights for that permission with a mind of protecting the character of the original building and to prevent further development on the site creating an adverse visual impact. This was considered to be a sustainable permission which respected the policy – reusing an old building of character and bringing it into residential use which being mindful of the sensitivities of the area

The previous extension measured approx. 6.6m by 3.9m giving a total floorspace of approximately 26 square metres. The extension was less than half the length of the existing building. Its height was set to match the existing ridge height of the building. With regard to the current proposal, the main characteristics of the proposal were that the proposal building varied in height, width and length due to the levels of the site which the extension The extension was to be at its highest 5.5m, at its widest 10m and at its longest 11.7m. In addition, there was to be a wall around an outdoor seating area which extended 6.2m long and 1.8m high.

There was approximately 180 square metres of additional space to the original building of 62 square metres of floorspace - a significant increase in size going beyond what was considered sympathetic to the existing building in relation to its scale and massing, as required by policy CTY4.

The proposal would appear as almost an entirely separate building to the original building, bearing no resemblance to the original simple vernacular character. The extension would dominate the original building being a full two storeys in height. Due to the extremely open site and long-distance views the proposed development as a whole including the detached garage would not visually integrate into the surrounding landscape and would be intrusive,

The existing trees would also need to be removed to accommodate the access, which would open up the site even more with the site no longer benefitting from a backdrop when viewed on approach along the main road. If approved, the proposed extension would be highly visible and prominent within the surrounding flat and open landscape due to the overall scale and massing, the topography of the site and the surrounding land. Therefore, it was considered that the proposed development would have a negative impact on the character of the area.

CTY13 stated that planning permission would be granted for a building in the countryside where it could be visually integrated into the surrounding landscape, and it was of an appropriate design. The site currently had limited natural boundaries and due to the site's roadside location, an extension of this scale would appear as prominent over long distances when approaching from all directions.

Although a planting scheme had been submitted along with this proposal, it would not overcome the prominence of the proposed extension and the subsequent dwelling as a whole. Furthermore, CTY13 stated that a proposal should not rely primarily on the use of new landscaping for integration. Although, smaller in scale than the proposed extension, the proposed garage combined with the proposed extension, would further erode the character of the surrounding area. As previously noted, the previous approval had the permitted development rights removed. This was to ensure that there was no further development on the site that would negatively impact on the character of the area. The proposed increase in size of the extension and the inclusion of a garage was considered to be unacceptable and would be of detriment to the landscape.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be refused.

Alderman McIlveen queried the previous planning permission and development rights having been removed, asking for clarification. The Acting Head of Planning explained that it meant any changes to the layout would need to be applied for, such as extensions and would then be assessed to ensure it was sympathetic. Councillor Hennessy asked why the proposed building would not be sympathetic. The Acting Head of Planning advised it was due to the sheer scale, massing and roof levels which would result in the original building being completely lost amongst such elevations.

Mr Steven Dickson was joined by the applicant, Mr Mark McKeown to speak in support of the application.

Mr Dickson explained that having had lengthy discussions regarding revisions or total redesign options with the Acting Principal Planning Officer, proposals were submitted on the 29th November. Mr Dickson suggested the Acting Principal Planning Officer had given him verbal assurances that an amended solution could be negotiated as a refusal alternative may create futile work and abortive work for both parties. Following further enquires as had been saved as email on the 16th December which stated, *'I am sorry for the delay in this. I have been hectically busy. I will chat with the case officer on Wednesday and get back to you. If I'm not in the office today, I'm on leave tomorrow. I hope that's okay.'*

Being the week before Christmas, Mr Dickson advised that he did not pursue this until January. He had understood from the Case Officer, that the Acting Principal Planning Officer would support the proposal and, on that basis, if the applicant was willing to wait on his return to work.

Mr Dickson advised that he was both surprised and concerned to see that there had been no replies to his emails or phone calls from Michael Creighton prior to his departure.

Without any notice the application was on the delegated list two weeks ago for refusal and presented to this committee in expedient fashion. The ownership had changed on the property and the three-bedroom proposals were provided in order that the applicant's accommodation could be required for a normal family for the established local building was for a two bedroom proposal extending linearly towards Cloughey on the highest part of the site This locally important building would be compromised by losing character with the unimaginative run-of-the-mill continuation of a rendered extension. Mr Dickson advised the application would see that the stone walls were retained, refurbished and repointed, providing a breathable sustainable structure to the existing building. It would secure its upkeep and retention enhancing the characteristics of the rural vernacular building by maintaining it wholly and completely as a local important building and as a record of the past.

The proposal was modern and would replace the existing truss roof and tiles with traditional feature trusses, using slates to create a ground room high-level thermal value. A sustainable design with an unintrusive glaze connection with minimal intervention to the original structure and a modest barn style extension would provide additional living accommodation suitable for a family of four.

The extension would be contrasting, acceptable, similar in scale, architectural style and finishes providing simple a rural design element reflecting farmhouses and outbuildings contrasting with the pattern and dispersed farmsteads seen throughout the rural area and would have no adverse effect on the character or appearance of locality.

Mr Dickson challenged the assessment of the Planning Department, suggesting the comparison had not been carried out properly but with haste and devoid of a site visit. Photographs had been supplied to the Planning Department which appeared to show the building as larger than it was. With the principal policies under which the application was being assessed and the two which Mr Dickson had cited, he believed were different with regard to CTY 13 integration and design of the buildings into the countryside and CTY14 regarding rural character. Whilst Planners had advised that the proposed building would have adverse character on the locality due to prominence, Mr Dickson believed the examples would have to be viewed physically to understand the scale and impact and prominence in comparison. The application design sat low to the ground, sloped down and away from the road and the public viewpoints and extension had a curved roof below the original barn. As such, Mr Dickson believed it would help Members would be willing to take a site visit. The image shown on the principal view coming from a Cloughey direction did have a backdrop of trees which were on the other side of the road. Two trees were to be taken away for the access, one of which came down in the storm, but the

remainder of the trees which provided the backdrop were on the other side of the road.

In answer to Councillor Kerr's query on the changes that had occurred between proposals, Mr Dickson explained that the original proposal was the same with higher eaves whilst the floor-level extension was higher and had been reduced by 600mm and eaves by 450mm. The garage had initially been removed when the officer returned from holidays. He had suggested during discussions that it would be worth considering the garage as the applicant was self-employed required a facility for storage. The garage would be submitted virtually straight away after the application.

Councillor Wray clarified the timeline with Mr Dickson including the change of ownership and asked on his thoughts of the proposed building dominating the current structure. Mr Dickson had been waiting on a response from the Planning Department to an email he had sent before Christmas. Mr Dickson explained the simple nature of the original proposal and that the application before Members this evening was more sustainable and cost effective. The original building had been used as a dance hall and an isolation block during times of famine and plague with a nearby building being used a hospital. As such, it had historical significance and the application would ensure its existence.

A brief discussion ensued regarding inclusion of photographs and Mr Dickson's belief that one was factually incorrect. These photos would be shared at the appropriate moment in the discussion. Councillor Kendall queried the factually incorrect photo and how Mr Dickson believed the application would not be prominent given its much larger size. Mr Dickson referred to CTY 13 and CTY 14 applying in all applications. The original building would be maintained as a whole with glassed connections and extensions. As part of the main submission, photos showed the site from different directions which gave a different perspective to that of the 3D rendition.

Councillor Smart asked if all matters had been discussed in the report and that there were no additional issues. The Acting Head Of Planning advised the application was on the delegated list last year and had been taken off for amendments to be submitted. As an Officer had been on sick leave and matters were never determined by an individual, the Acting Head of Planning and other Officers duly discussed the matter with refusal having been the recommendation. The addendum had been available before Easter, and it had only been on this day of Committee that the agent had raised issues about information being incorrect. Examples had been given of different policy contexts where pictures were supplied of a replacement dwelling policy, which was totally different to CTY 4. There was also an image provided that was just for illustrative purposes only. All the material issues were available to view online. There was always the option for appeal if the agent chose to do so in the event that refusal was agreed.

Alderman Graham asked if the development rights being taken away were to ensure the conversion could not be used as a stepping stone to a larger building. The Acting Head of Planning advised that not every building passes the test for conversion and that it had to be capable of conversion as opposed to demolition and rebuilding. In this case, the building was structurally sound given the previous approval. Though

not many conversion applications were requested, proposals should be sympathetic to the original design which was not the case with plans before Members.

The Acting Head Of Planning reaffirmed the fact that the proposed building could not rely on new vegetation to integrate into the landscape and that it could be seen from several long-distance views on what was a long and flat landscape. Planners had to take CTY13 and CTY 14 into consideration in such cases. Councillor Kendall asked whether there were limitations to the amount of applications made on the same proposal site. The Acting Head of Planning advised that the Planning Department prided itself on high level designs in the borough through negotiation. There was nothing to stop an agent repeatedly submitting an application. Last year, the application was removed from the delegated list to allow for a series of amendments to be made and, given the significant development before Members, it was not considered acceptable. Though the agent had suggested removing the garage, Members had to decide on the application based on what was before them this evening as opposed to discussing what could be removed to make it worthy of approval.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr, seconded by Councillor Wray, that Members engage in a site visit.

Councillors McClean, Morgan and Smart all agreed a site visit would not be of benefit as it only involved Officers and Members with no discussion. It would only allow for Members to view the site which would not be the best use of Council time.

On being put to the meeting, with 10 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal of a site visit fell. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (2)	AGAINST (10)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (1)
	Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
	McDowell	Graham	Smith
	McIlveen		
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Kerr	Cathcart	Kendall	
Wray	Harbinson		
	Hennessy		
	McBurney		
	McClean		
	McCollum		
	Morgan		
	Smart		

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

Though Councillors Morgan and Harbinson agreed that they could not see how the current design could be sympathetic, other Members including Councillors Wray, Kerr and Alderman McIlveen were not content. As such, another vote was called.

On being put to the meeting, with 8 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was agreed. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (8)	AGAINST (5)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (1)
Aldermen	Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
McDowell	McIlveen	Graham	Smith
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	
Harbinson	Cathcart	Kendall	
Hennessy	Kerr		
McBurney	Smart		
McClellan	Wray		
McCollum			
McKee			
Morgan			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Harbinson and in a vote of 8 FOR, 5 AGAINST, 2 ABSECTIONS AND 1 ABSENT, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be refused.

[The meeting went into recess at 20:53, resuming at 21:10.]

4.4 LA06/2023/1336/F - Cohousing development consisting of 32No. dwelling units, common house to provide ancillary residential facilities, 5No. garages, community car parking), new access road and service lanes and associated works - Lands to the north side of Cloughey Road (opposite 9-17 Cloughey Road) and to the rear of Rectory Wood and extending 130m to the rear of 8 Cloughey Road (The Rectory), Portaferry

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

The Acting Head of Planning explained that the application was for a development of a Cohousing development consisting of 32No. dwelling units, a common house to provide ancillary residential facilities, 5No. garages, community car parking, new access road and service lanes and associated works at Lands to the north side of Cloughey Road (opposite 9-17 Cloughey Road) and to the rear of Rectory Wood and extending 130m to the rear of 8 Cloughey Road (The Rectory), Portaferry. The application was before members as there had been 6 objections received from 6 separate addresses. 8 letters of support had also been received in relation to the proposal. The summary of objections included issues such as flooding risk, traffic and a narrow footpath leading into Portaferry, unacceptable impacts to residential amenity caused by main vehicular access- devaluation existing properties, noise and overlooking into properties.

The scheme was community led with Environmental sustainability at its heart. The proposed houses were energy efficient and affordable which was desperately needed. Portaferry Cohousing would become part of Portaferry's existing community and had already engaged with local residents and stakeholders. DfL Roads has no objection to the scheme. In terms of evidence for the impact of community led housing - a recent report by Dr Penny Clarke, the University of Westminster, had demonstrated that cohousing communities generated less than 65% of the carbon

footprint of mainstream housing. Capital Economics had demonstrated that community led housing as value for money offering a return of £2.7 in social and environmental value to every £1 invested. The London School of Economics had demonstrated that community led housing was better able to reduce experiences of isolation and loneliness than mainstream housing.

It was noteworthy that although the planning officers were focused on the principle of the development on the site during the consideration of the case, this development would in effect mark the first of its kind in any of the 11 council areas.

Cohousing was an intentional community in which residents had private homes, but also shared common facilities such as dining rooms, laundries, and recreational spaces. The goal of cohousing was to create a more interconnected and sustainable way of living, while still maintaining the independence of individual households. As a pedestrianised development, Portaferry Cohousing (PC) would encourage and facilitate active transport, where cars were minimised in importance and people-movements were prioritised. Potential residents would be fully vetted and there was currently a waiting list of people interested in living on the site

The site was located on the northern side of Cloughey Road within the settlement limit of Portaferry as per the extant Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 as shown on the extract from the local area plan. The site was within zoned lands for housing (HPA4), only part of HPA4 was for the cohousing proposal and not the entire zoned area. The site was, at the time of writing, agricultural lands. As the site was within development limit of Portaferry and was zoned for housing there was a presumption in favour of development of these lands for housing given the plan led system

The site gently fell towards the north and east and the layout had been designed to respect this and allow the dwellings to integrate with the existing topography. Changes to the existing levels of the site were minimal.

The site was designed and arranged to accommodate 32 dwellings positioned around a central common house and social space, placing the communal provisions and community life in the core of the development.

There were a mix of 32 dwellings of semi-detached and detached units situated along the natural contours of the site.

The proposed arrangement of dwellings consisted of 5 house types of different scales designed to accommodate the various needs and household sizes of the cohousing communities' members. Additional amenity space providing communal gardens including space for a polytunnel and growing space for vegetables and other food crops was provided to the north of the site.

A large portion of the site to the east was to be set aside for rewilding to provide and reclaim natural habitats for local and native ecosystems. It was considered that the areas of communal open space of the total site area are above the expected 10% provision advised in Policy OS 2. The open space had been designed as an integral part of the development. The dwellings adjacent to the open space had been

designed to overlook it to provide an attractive outlook and security. The provision of public open space contributed to creating a quality residential environment. The ambition of the cohousing development and community members was the reduction of cars within the site by providing and promoting communal car sharing therefore reducing the need for additional service road infrastructure and individual private driveways. DFI roads were consulted on the proposals and had agreed the adoption of the access junction for both vehicle and pedestrian access to the site from the Cloughey Road. The development would have a lower flow of traffic to, from and within the site, compared to that of a standard housing development, due to a reduced number of private cars within the cohousing community. There was a centralised communal car parking area close to the proposed new access road, the common house and community garages.

A travel plan was submitted and supporting information which had also been agreed. There were garages/stores proposed as part of the development with greenhouses to the southern side (with a 'lean to' design) which would enable the growing of plants year-round and would also visually screen the car park and this along with additional green landscaping on the car park periphery) from both the road and the houses to the south and north of the car park will provide additional screening. Landscaping would be provided within the site to soften the visual impact of the proposal. Existing mature trees would be retained as shown on the detailed landscaping plan with planting of new native species trees throughout as illustrated. New native species, hedgerows and trees would augment existing boundary vegetation. A 10m planted buffer would be along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site.

The density of the proposed development was not considered as significantly higher than the surrounding residential area. The list of Key Design Considerations for the zoning did not include density specifications. The proposed density of the proposed development was approximately 7 dwellings per hectare, which was the same density as that in the local area. It was considered that the density on site would not erode the character of the area as the form, scale, massing and layout of the new development would respect that of adjacent housing and would create a quality residential environment.

There was a pedestrian access to the site located separately from the main vehicular access. This 2m wide pathway was placed closer to Portaferry town and connects to the existing pedestrian footpath along Cloughey Road to be used by the majority of people accessing the development on foot or on bicycle. As the internal service lanes would not be adoptable, Portaferry Cohousing (PC) would provide and maintain lighting throughout the site. The intention was to use solar powered low-level bollard-lighting and minimise unnecessary light pollution – friendly to wildlife and yet protective for people and children moving around the site.

The Common House had a 6m ridge height and would be finished in similar materials as the dwellings (powder coated metal roofing system and fine wet dash render painted walls and Upvc double glazed windows and doors) as illustrated

The common house was at the core of the cohousing development for the enjoyment of the cohousing community members. The common house acted as an extension to the dwellings within the development and provided a shared space for community members to meet, eat, socialise. The common house consisted of a multifunctional hall for community dining, a large kitchen with food store, a space for children to play, a shared office space for working from home, guest accommodation, laundry facilities and entrance lobby/lounge space with a central postal delivery space. The design of the common house would provide sustainable and efficient accommodation through the incorporation of renewable technologies

The dwellings were a mix of single storey and one and a half storey semi-detached, detached and terraced units to provide a wide variety of house types to meet the needs of the cohousing community members ranging from 1 bed to 5 bed dwellings. As the common house presented centralised, shared community space and facilities meaning that individual residential houses did not need to provide everything needed by a conventional household (such as spare rooms, washer/dryers, storage of tools, or a home office).

This meant that houses could have both smaller rooms, and a lower number of rooms.

All dwellings would front onto the internal shared driveways which respected the pattern of development in the area. Garages would also be provided adjacent to the car park. The north facades featured small windows to reduce heat loss. While southern facades prioritised glazing to maximise passive solar thermal gains and natural day light into the primary daytime living spaces.

The primary archetypal feature shared by each house type was a south facing roof pitch to accommodate the dwellings solar energy capture comprised of solar PV panels to produce energy and solar thermal panels to provide hot water.

Materials and finishes had been selected to reflect the aesthetics of the local context through the use of white render and dark roofing material and feature cladding systems that are sympathetic in appearance to the context yet characterful in appearance, sustainably sourced, manufactured, long-lasting, easily repairable, replaceable and or recyclable/compostable.

This was a sustainable model of development which complied with planning policy on land zoned for housing within the development plan and recommendation was to approve planning permission with delegated powers to finalise and refine wording of conditions prior to the issue of any decision notice

Councillor Smart clarified the zoning status of the land with the Acting Head of Planning which had been zoned for housing since 2015.

Murray Bell and Fay Ballard joined the Chamber to speak in support of the application. Mr Bell advised that he was the Architect on the proposal representing a creative group of hopeful residents who formed the Portaferry co-housing community, some of whom were present and Faye Ballard who would be speaking as their representative. Mr Bell advised the proposal had received a positive recommendation from officers. The project was more than bricks and mortar, it was about pioneering a new model of living in Northern Ireland, one that fostered community, sustainability and well-being, all while respecting the character and needs of Portaferry.

The proposed site was within the settlement limit of Portaferry and was zoned for housing under the Ards & North Down area plan. In planning terms, the principle of development had already been established, but what made the proposal exceptional and worthy of support was what it brought to the community and to planning in the area and wider places. This would be Northern Ireland's first purpose-built co-housing community. Co-housing was not communal living. It was an intentional neighbourhood design that combined private homes with shared amenities. Residents and stakeholders were involved in the process, decision making and in the stewardship of the place they would call home.

Mr Bell introduced Faye Ballard, a member of Portaferry Co-Housing and representative at the evening's meeting.

Faye Ballard explained that she was one of a group of about 25 people forming 15 households of what would be 32 in total. They were continuing to welcome people who were interested in living in a way that they know and engage with their neighbours in the wider community. The vision was to create a place to live where people could have a rich community life with a plan to build energy efficient homes suitable for people of all ages and incomes meaning it would be accessible to young people, families and older adults. There would be shared spaces indoors and outdoors, including a common house which would allow for houses to be kept smaller.

A space was included for preparing and eating shared weekly meals, guest accommodation and space for remote working. There would be laundry and a children's play area. Outside, there would also be wildlife habitats, areas for food growing and workshop space with over 2000 native trees having already been planted, many of them fruit trees. There was a wider interest of others wishing to build similar communities and they hoped that this application could act as both catalyst and an inspiration for other groups.

Decisions were made by consensus using a highly participatory process to design the site, taking a year working together with Murray Bell and his team to produce the design before Members today. People in control of the design, not a developer and the co-housing group hoped to work with local contractors for the build. With weekly meetings, there was a very high motivation to make the project work. And although there was no religious affiliation, there were shared values, including wanting to face challenges together, to care for one another and to find joy and fulfilment in connecting with other people.

They were excited at the idea of making the Island of Ireland's first co-housing a reality in Portaferry. Portaferry co-housing would have a lower carbon footprint than standard developments thanks to some key design issues such as passive solar design, timber frame construction, PV and solar thermal panels and minimal car usage with a car sharing scheme.

All homes had modest private gardens with large shared green spaces. The density was low, similar to neighbouring developments and fitting appropriately into the landscape. This development was pedestrian centred and roads were minimal. Parking was gathered and discreetly screened with green landscaping and garages featuring integrated greenhouses. Living in the development would encourage walking and cycling and aligned with both local and national aspirations for active and low carbon travel.

Portaferry co-housing had also included a dedicated pedestrian entrance connected to the existing footpath network, encouraging the use of Portaferry's amenities mere minutes away. From day one, this had been a community-led scheme with a full site management plan already in place that governed everything from car usage and deliveries to lighting, refuse and maintenance.

The proposal has had support from all the planning department and statutory consultees including DfI Roads, Environmental Health and the Rivers Agency, demonstrating a commitment to full regulatory compliance. Portaferry co-housing, would be grateful for the ongoing support to resolve the ultimate connection issues or foul and Storm which were live across Northern Ireland.

The proposal represented a better way of building homes, sustainable, thoughtful and community first. It respected planning policy, enhanced local character and set a positive precedent for housing in Northern Ireland.

In response to a questions and queries from Members, Mr Bell advised that the model had come from Denmark where 10% of their housing consisted of co-housing. In England, Scotland and Wales, there were 20 projects which all had a high demand. The location was felt to be an excellent one by those involved and that there would be shared openness for those planning trips or delivers to either car share or travel together on public transport. The central common house would have space to store deliveries and shopping, playing a central part in the community's design. There were plans for accessible trollies to assist with bringing produce to the houses. Fifteen households had committed already with a membership fee and reserved site. The common house would be built in the first phase to ensure the community plan went ahead and should be financially viable from the first space committed to.

The aforementioned waiting list had been in reference to other co-housing communities. The project would be open to all regardless of age or ability. They would ensure any applications were committed to a co-housing lifestyle with a few hours a week volunteered to the community. Prospective members would be vetted through meetings to ensure they bought into the ethos with a decision made by members of the community. Houses would only be built once individuals had committed to buy.

Though not orientated toward vehicular use, the site would allow for access for service appliances and accessibility issues for any users would be catered to in line with building control.

In relation to any foreseeable NI Water issues, Mr Bell hoped the continued support of Council would assist during the next phase of regulatory compliance.

There would not be restrictions on reselling, however it was hoped future buyers would also buy into the ethos as there would be associated fees living in the co-housing development.

Mr Bell and Fay Ballard returned to the gallery.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

Councillor Kendall praised the co-housing model and its positive outlook and benefits that could address issues such as isolation and vulnerabilities. Councillor Hennessy was also delighted to support the application, citing its clearly thought out structure based on values and way of life.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, That the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

[Councillor McCollum left the meeting due to a Declaration of Interest in Item 4.5 at 21:48]

4.5 LA06/2023/2406/F - 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 - 5 Tarawood, Hollywood

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report, addendum report.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that Item 4.5 was an application that sought full planning permission for a replacement dwelling with garage and garden room at 5 Tarawood, Hollywood. The application had been brought before planning committee for consideration as six or more representations contrary to the officer's recommendation to approve had been received.

The application was due to be presented at last month's meeting, however, following receipt of a late detailed submission from an objector, the application was withdrawn from the schedule to allow officers sufficient time to consider the submission. A further submission was then received from the same objector on Friday the 2nd of May. The planning department's consideration of the issues raised in these submissions had been set out in two addendums to the planning report which were circulated to Members.

The site was located in an established low density residential area within the development limits of Hollywood, approximately 300 metres from the coast. The site was also located within the proposed Marino, Cultra and Craigavad Area of Townscape Character. The existing dwelling was a rendered bungalow constructed sometime around the 1970s, similar to the majority of the dwellings in the area. The Planning Department had no objection to the demolition of the dwelling as it was not considered to be of any particular architectural merit or to display any particular features which made a material contribution to the proposed ATC.

[Councillor Kendall left the meeting at 21:51]

While Tarawood itself contained predominantly single story dwellings within the wider context of the site, there were a variety of house types, including many examples of larger two and two and a half story dwellings. The slide showed the footprint of the existing and proposed dwelling overlaps. However, the new dwelling would assume a T-shaped plan with a separate small garden room also proposed.

The planning department was content that the extent of proposed development was appropriate for the site and did not represent overdevelopment that would be out of character with the established residential area. The remaining garden area would still be very generous in size and remain comparable in size to others. The private amenity space to the rear would be well in excess of the recommended average of 70 square metres as set out in creating places. Adequate parking provision was also proposed and line with the recommended standards.

The area was characterized by mature plots with long established trees and hedgerows along the boundaries and the application site was no exception. The Tree Impact and Protection Plan showed the extent of existing trees and hedges to be retained. Trees within the application site were not protected. However, trees located on neighbouring sites at 4 Tarawood and 13 and 15 Clanbrasil Road were protected by TPOs. The Council's tree officer had been consulted extensively on the application and was satisfied that the proposal would not result in any adverse impact on the protected trees subject to the recommended conditions.

The next slide showed the proposed elevations and floor plans of the dwelling which would be single story in the main part with a small one and a half story element to accommodate two bedrooms at first floor. The design, height, scale and massing of the dwelling was very much in keeping with the established existing built form in the area and respectful of the predominantly single and one and a half story house types within Tarawood itself.

Finishes included a natural slate roof, sand collar facing brick and timber cladding. While the dwellings within Tarawood had predominantly render finishes, officers were content that the light sand coloured brick would blend sympathetically with this and it was noted there were already other examples of similar brick use within the area. A photo montage prepared by the architect was provided to give an idea of how the replacement dwelling would appear in its context.

Public views of the dwelling from within the wider area would be very limited. The site was located at the end of a cul-de-sac with the dwelling only visible from this

public view and as it would sit approximately 1 metre below road level, it would not appear dominant within the overall streetscape.

The next slide showed some contextual sections through the site and the two adjacent properties at 6 Tarawood and 13 Clanbrassil Road.

These demonstrated that the overall height and scale of the dwelling would be respectful of the adjacent properties with development stepping down gradually from the higher ground to the east down towards the lower ground on Clanbrassil Road.

17 letters of objection had been received from six separate addresses throughout the processing of the application. The nature of the objections and issues raised had all been set out and considered in detail in the case officer's report and the subsequent addendums. The main concerns related to the impact of the development on the character of the area, the demolition of the existing dwelling and the impact on the residential amenity of the closest property to the site at 13 Clanbrassil Road by way of loss of light, loss of privacy and potential dominance.

The proposal was amended in May 2024 to address some concerns raised by the planning department. The amendments were shown on slide 11 included moving the dwelling 2.5 metres further away from the boundary with number 13 and lowering the finished floor level by 0.25 metres.

In terms of potential loss of daylight to 13 Clanbrassil, slide 12 demonstrated that the proposal would comply with the 25-degree light test, which was the appropriate test to apply in situations with existing and proposed development position directly opposite. The two sections taken through the single and one and a half story elements of the proposed dwelling demonstrated that the proposal would not dissect the 25-degree angle. The proposed dwelling was therefore considered to be sufficiently low in height and far enough away from number 13 to ensure that there would be no unacceptable loss of light occurring to the ground floor rooms of number 13 which faced the site.

In terms of potential loss of privacy to number 13, the next slide showed that there was good, established trees and vegetation along the party boundary which already offered a good level of screening between the two properties. There were, however, some gaps in the vegetation as could be seen in a central image on the slide, the impact of which had been considered very carefully.

Slide 14 showed the extent of proposed windows on the northwestern elevation which would face number 13. IT was recommended that three of these windows, the ensuite, WC and studio, be conditioned to have obscure glazing. The utility room window and the plant room door would not serve as habitable rooms, therefore it was not considered that there would be the potential for any unacceptable degree of overlooking from these windows.

There may be potential for some views from the small bedroom and office, however, these were mostly screened by the existing boundary vegetation.

Weight also had to be added to consideration of the fact that an extension to the existing dwelling with windows in a similar position to those proposed could, at the

time of writing be erected under permitted development rights without the requirement for a planning application.

It was therefore considered the proposed windows would not result in any significantly greater impact than what could be constructed.

A small garden room was also proposed in the northeastern corner of the site. Given the minor scale and low flat roof. It would not have any adverse impact on the adjacent dwelling at number 6 Tarawood.

The proposal was considered to comply with the development plan and all the relevant policy requirements of PPS 7 on the addendum to PPS 7. The principle of a replacement dwelling was acceptable and it was not considered that the existing dwelling made any material contribution to the overall appearance of the proposed ATC.

It was considered that the design and scale of the proposed replacement would respect the established built form and would cause no demonstrable harm to the character or appearance of the area. The potential impact of the development on neighbouring property had been very carefully assessed and the planning department were satisfied there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of these adjacent properties subject to the recommended conditions. All statutory and internal consultees were content.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Councillor McClean wanted to clarify if the property being moved 2.5 metres away from the adjacent property had been at Council's request. The Senior Planning officer advised that an initial assessment had been carried out on the the proposal, including taking objections into consideration at which time it was discovered that the light test had not met requirements. As such, the agent moved the building back and reduced the finished floor level to ensure the proposal complied with the light test.

[Councillor Kendall returned to the meeting at 21:59]

Mr I Wright, joined by Mrs Rossiter who lived at 13 Clanbrassil Road joined the Chamber at 22:00 to speak against the application.

Mr Wright advised that he had been asked by Susan Prosser to say this was not a question of, 'not in my backyard,' It was a requirement to have a decision which was fair and consistent and reasonable. In relation to 13 Clanbrassil Road, the proposed dwelling was dominant, overbearing and oppressive. The difference in land levels between 13 Clanbrassil Road and 5 Tarawood was 1.8 metres. The difference in floor levels was that the proposed dwelling would be two to four metres higher than 13 Clanbrassil Road. The location, height and massing were wholly inappropriate.

Number 13 when it was built, was required to be at the rear of the site, which meant the rear elevation was close to the boundary by approximately 6 metres. The existing dwelling was at an angle of 53 degrees. Referencing the drawing, Mr Wright suggested that it was of minimal impact, notwithstanding the very large site, the main part of which was 46 metres by 40. The two-story part of the proposed dwelling

which was 21 metres long had a ridge height of over 9 metres which was classed as over three stories right above the garden next to the amenity areas of 13 Clanbrassil Road and the windows of the living accommodation. This was because the proposed dwelling was only 5.8 metres from the boundary. Mr Wright suggested it had been accepted that there would be oversight into adjacent properties and that the existing footprint was minimal, having only been moved approximately 18 metres at the northeast corner. Additionally, he suggested the ridges were not 1.6 metres as stated in the report but 2.66 metres higher than 13 Clanbrassil Road.

There was an issue related to the location because of a failure to apply policies consistently. Other redevelopment in the area were either on the footprint, applying the criteria of creating places with 20 metres separation or 10 metres from the boundary or the site in Cultra. Some were so large that distances were greater than 20 metres. This appeared to be the only development in the area where replacement had actually been moved nearer a boundary which objectors found as very unfair. Due to close proximity, a condition was imposed that for obscured windows, one of which was a very large studio window which Mr Wright described as completely perverse.

The next house, 6 Tarawood which was on the front side was considered in the report as having 20 metres separation although, 6 Tarawood was higher. Mr Wright suggested that the case officer had applied the wrong tests.

Whether it was harm caused to the area or an existing dwelling should have been considered a material contribution. These decisions were based on the harm to areas having the key features and characteristics of the ATC or the designated ATC. The Planning Appeals Commission report made it absolutely clear that it was not the criteria that applied as it was in fact excluded and that approaches of the areas generally should be objectively assessed. As such, Mr Wright suggested the recommendation was fundamentally flawed on that basis and the recommendation would be unsafe.

Determining the extent of the harm. Again, the Lakeland case was cited regarding size which Mr Wright believed had no relevance to this case. It was concerned with the conservation area. The adverse effect on 13 Clanbrassil Road could be mitigated by conditions either that it remains within the existing footprint or locate the elevations with 20 metres separation or 10 metres from the boundary. At the moment, it was proposed as being 5.8 metres which gave an overall separation of 11.8 metres. As a final point, Mr Wright referred to fairness in the SPPS which he believed were non-existent in the present case.

Councillor McClean noted that five minutes was a tight timeframe for speaking on the subject and asked for clarity on Mr Wright's comment regarding officers being wrong on points relating to ATC 1 and 2. Mr Wright directed Members to a 2015 order where it stated, "an area of townscape character was either an area in an adopted plan or an area in a draft plan." He suggested this was the only legislation governing demolition and required planning consent which a planning officer he had entered into discussions with did not realise. As such, he suggested that the planning department's view would be that they did not apply as they were not an ATC and adopted plan. However, PAC had made it clear that the BMAP was actually a

material consideration which Mr Wright therefore believed made ATC 1 and 2 material considerations. Case relied upon included Farnham Park which adopted a completely different approach. One had adopted ATC 2 which was an inconsistency and Mr Wright was even more concerned by the South Lakeland Case. He had raised this on 30 December 2023 in submitting his first objection and had no response until the second addendum received recently which he did not believe addressed how the case applied. The principle that Planning had decided upon was the interpretation of preserving in the context of English conservation area legislation as opposed to ratio which should have been the principle that applied. Mr Wright believed the Planning Committee had been misled.

Mr Wright and Mrs Rossiter returned to the public gallery. Mr Ewing, attending via Zoom was invited to speak in support of the application.

Mr Ewing explained that a quality building had been designed that was in keeping the surrounding area, The original buildings that had existed for fifty years were great family houses in their day but things had moved on. This had a very poor energy rating of 44% and the maximum from refurbishment would be 66%

The new building was partially on the footprint of the original and was designed to be in form of the buildings that were within Tarawood. 10% of the building was going to be built into the roof, which happened in other areas in Tarawood. It was a T-shaped plan form, which was the same as 1 Tarawood. The only real difference in the materials was that the majority of Tarawood was rendered whilst the proposed building would be brick. There were similar elements in other parts of Tarawood with the same tones. Brick was chosen as it weathered better and was more sustainable being within an area that had a lot of greenery in it.

The applicants were very keen for the building to be as sustainable as possible and one of the reasons for the original flat roofs which had changed to pitch roofs was the discrete use of the PV panels and using PB slates, which would be integrated into them. There was no real building line in Tarawood. This was a corner site with a lot of landscaping which meant that there were limited views. The ground floor level one meter below the road and various shadow analysis and data analysis had been carried out to determine the location of the placement dwelling would not cause any more detrimental effects on number 13 compared to current arrangements.

Number 13 was overshadowed, mainly due to existing planting between the two buildings and the large blue cedar tree which was planted and the retaining wall. Number 13 as already shaded and had limited daylight. The 25 degree light test was carried out, which determined the proposal would cause no material impact on daylight. During the scheme the building was moved further along and its level reduced. The level of the building was now at ground level on the existing building with the corner of the existing house being closer to number 13 than the proposed dwelling. There was also a large first floor window in this gable which would overlook the patio of number 13. It was also noted that by 09:00 on an early April morning, the sun had already passed the end of what would be the one and a half storey portion of the house so therefore, there would be no additional overshadowing. Mr Ewing advised that as much care as possible had been used to produce something that was of quality whilst being good to neighbours and should be an asset to Tarawood.

Mr Ewing was returned to the zoom attendee gallery at 22:16.

Councillor McClean asked officers to comment on Mr Wright’s statements that the Council had not applied ATC 1 and 2 or had been inconsistent in their approach over the application. The Acting Head of Planning advised that issues of contention were prevalent in application assessments particularly where there were objections. The Planning Department believed the policy and case law had been assessed correctly with a consistent approach in bringing applications into ATCs before Members. Some previous cases had been brought through the legal team and an issue such as this had not been raised before. The Senior Planning Officer advised that all PAC decisions in the past two years had no weight placed in ATC 1 or 2. The policy was clear in stating that they apply to designated ATCs, not proposed ATCs. However, Planners were still required to objectively assess the impact of development on the overall appearance of a proposed ATC and that was a consist approach across all applications. Since Farnham Road, there have been other decisions such as Seacliff Road in 2022 and Station Road in 2024 which all took the same stance that regard could not be given to policies that applied to designated ATCs.

Councillor Hennessy queried the ridge height differences quoted by Mr Wright. The Senior Planning Officer explained that there was a difference of just under 2 metres in the finished floor level plan between the dwellings with the maximum height of the proposed dwelling being seven metres.

Councillor Morgan requested more information on the 25 degree light test and hedge row intersecting the light angle. The Senior Planning Officer advised that the test was an accepted standard of best practice when measuring impact on light which had been through the British Building & Lighting Institute. It was carried out by measuring two metres above a finished floor level and projecting a 25 degree angle. If the angle was not intersected, it was deemed that there was sufficient light. Hedges would not be a material planning consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

Councillor Morgan spoke of the difficulty in making such decisions when knowing there will always be someone displeased by the decision.

As there was dissent, a vote was called.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 11 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the proposal was agreed. The vote resulted as follows:

FOR (11)	AGAINST (0)	ABSTAINED (3)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen		Alderman	Alderman
Graham			Smith
McDowell			
McIlveen			
Councillors		Councillors	Councillors

Cathcart
Hennessy
Kerr
McBurney
McKee
Morgan
Smart
Wray

Harbinson
Kendall
McClean

McCollum

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor McBurney and in a vote of 11 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 3 ABSENTIONS AND 2 ABSENT, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

[Councillor McCollum returned to the meeting at 22:25)

4.6 LA06/2022/0040/F - Pool House - Dunratho House, 42 Glen Road, Holywood

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

[Councillor Morgan left the meeting at 22:26)

The Senior Planning Officer explained that Item 4.6 sought full planning permission for a pool house at 42 Glen Road, Holywood The application had been brought before committee for consideration as six or more representations contrary to the officer's recommendation to approve had been received.

The site was located on Glen Road in an established low density residential area within the development limits of Holywood and a short distance from the coast. The site was also located within the Marino, Cultra and Craigavad Area of Townscape Character as proposed in draft. BMAP The existing dwelling on the site was a substantial red brick villa dating back to the late 1800s, early 1900s was set within a large well-established plot. The original curtilage of the dwelling had already been subdivided over the years to accommodate the development of new dwellings.

[Councillor Morgan returned to the meeting at 22:28]

Slides were shown of the historical map and the most up-to-date aerial view explaining that the proposed site of the pool house was on an area of lawn adjacent to the driveway of number 42. A substantial three-meter-high red brick wall ran along the southeastern boundary. Beyond this, on the neighbouring plot of land was a dwelling that was under construction at the time of writing with the approved permission shown on the site layout plan. While the building would sit forward of the existing dwelling at number 42, due to its single storey design, it was not considered that it would appear dominant in the context of the existing dwelling or from the public road given the considerable setback from the road.

The Pool House itself would have a ridge height of five metres to the flat and six meters to the glazed roof lantern. The building had been designed in the style of an

orangerie with extensive glazing along the northwestern elevation and a red brick finish which would match the existing dwelling. The height and scale of the building would be subordinate to the existing dwelling and its design was to be sympathetic to and complement the existing dwelling.

The proposed floor plan and the roof plan were shown to Members as well as the views of the site from Glen Road which were limited on approach from the southeast and along the site frontage. Due to the setback, difference in levels and the mature trees and vegetation, the main views of Dunrathro House were from the coastal path and approaching the site from the coast along Glen Road.

A view was shown from the road as where the ridge height of the two-storey dwelling under construction could be seen. Adjacent to the site was just about visible. As the proposed Pool House was single story with an overall height of no more than six metres and the dwelling under construction had a height of eight metres, it was clear that from this viewpoint the building would not be visible. Behind the mature roadside hedge. Views were shown from the coast on the next slide from which it was evident that the dwelling under construction with the taller ridge height would be more visible from than the proposed pool house. From the coastal viewpoint, the pool house would appear very much subordinate to the main dwelling at number 42. There were a wide variety of house types, designs and finishes within the immediate area along Glen Road. There was no uniformity of design and therefore it was not considered that the pool house could be considered as being out of character with any particular existing architectural style or features or cause any harm to the overall appearance of the proposed ATC.

The design of the building was considered to be sympathetic to the host dwelling and would complement it. It was acknowledged that the pool house and new dwelling under construction would be positioned within close proximity, with a separation distance of 3.9 metres between the buildings. However, it is not considered that this close positioning would be at odds with the established pattern of development in the area which already included many examples of existing dwellings along Glen Road positioned in close proximity to one another.

The next slide showed a section which demonstrated the relationship between the proposed pool house and the adjacent dwelling under construction. The height of the pool house would sit well below that of the dwelling and therefore would not result in any unacceptable degree of dominance.

Proposed elevations of the pool house and the approved dwelling that will face each other were shown. The Pool House would have no windows proposed on this elevation and the existing three metre high boundary wall would remain, further ensuring no loss of privacy.

The building also did not incorporate any type of roof terrace and it had been recommended that was is attached to any approval prohibiting the use of the roof as a terrace. As such, there would be no potential for any loss of privacy to the adjacent dwelling. The dwelling under construction would have a number of windows on its elevation which could potentially be affected by the development by way of loss of light. This had been very carefully considered in the case officer's report.

At ground floor, there was only a utility room door and two small high level windows serving the utility room and the dining room. The main source of light to the dining room would be via large floor to ceiling glazing on the western elevation.

The first floor windows located on the elevation would be set back from the pool house significantly and this separation distance combined with the low height of the pool house would ensure that no unacceptable loss of light could possibly occur to these windows. 15 letters of objection from six separate neighbouring addresses had been received. The main concerns related to excessive scale, height and massing, the location of the building in the front garden area, dominant impact upon the adjacent dwelling under construction and loss of privacy and the overbearing impact on adjacent dwellings. These issues had all been considered in detail in the officer's report. In summary then, the proposal was considered to comply with the development plan and all the relevant policy requirements of the addendum to PPS 7 residential extensions and alterations. The planning department was fully satisfied that the proposal would meet all the requirements of policy EXT1. The scale, massing, design and materials were sympathetic to the built form of the existing dwelling and would not detract from the overall appearance of the area or the proposed ATC. The impact of the proposal on the residential amenity had also been carefully considered. While it was acknowledged the building would be sited in close proximity to the adjacent dwelling under construction, this would not result in any unacceptable impact. All the statutory consultees were content with the proposal

RECOMMENDED that Planning Permission be granted.

Alderman Graham queried a note in what he believed to be the speaking notes, asking if this could be built under permitted development. The Senior Planning Officer explained that was not the case as it would have to be set behind the front elevation of the existing building and there would be restrictions on the height and proximity to the boundary which the proposal before Members would not comply with.

Councillor McClean believed five metres was high for a pool house and was curious if that was the original height or because of the lantern design used to assuage concerns of a rooftop terrace. The Senior Planning Officer explained that the original building would have been taller as it had a roof terrace with a spiral staircase and parapet walls.

Mr David Donaldson and Mr Barry McKiernan joined the chamber to speak against the application.

[Councillor Kendall left the meeting at 22:37]

Mr Donaldson began by quoting from SPSS, paragraph 2.3; '*That good neighbourliness and fairness are amongst the yardsticks against which development proposals should be measured,*' and asked Members to keep this in mind when considering this application. The proposals were initially presented as a large bland box sited adjacent to the boundary wall of Mr McKiernan's new dwelling at 46A.

Initially, it was proposed that open rooftop of this box would be utilized as an entertainment area with barbecues, a hot tub etc. On a January 25, a further 2.4-meter-high fence suddenly appeared on top of the existing boundary wall and was removed again following objections. Mr Donaldson explained that it was clear that no consideration whatsoever had been given by the applicant to the privacy or immunity of number 46A.

There had been some cosmetic amendments, coming from a starting point which was seen as ridiculous by objectors. The fact remained that the proposal was for a 26-metre-long box of some 200 square metres or over 2,000 square feet. This was larger than many family houses. Importantly, it was also over five meters in height and potentially closer to six metres when the lantern was included; an equivalent to two stories of accommodation. The proposal had attracted objection not just from Mr McKiernan but from five of the nearest neighbours; numbers 39, 44, 45, 46, and 48.

Mr McKiernan was amidst building the adjacent house. Of particular concern was that this 26 metre long wall of the pool house would have an overbearing impact especially as this high blank wall would project more than six metres beyond the rear building line of his house and dominate his amenity space. It would also project forward above the flat roof garage at the front of his house. Mr Donaldson believed there was no necessity for a pool house to be 26 metres long especially when squeezed into what was a relatively small front garden. He could not understand why the pool house had a requirement for a ceiling height more than five meters above the swimming pool. Page 9 of the committee report suggested that the spacing between buildings was similar to other properties on the Glen Road but the dwellings referred to were all designed to respect their neighbours.

They were all in larger plots and they had single story eaves abutting each other. It was worth noting that the two-story element in Mr. McKiernan's house was respectfully stepped back from the boundary wall. Mr Donaldson was concerned particularly surrounding policy EXT1 of PPS addendum, PPS 7 addendum was a critical policy in relation to residential alterations and extensions which was barely mentioned. Furthermore, the relevant guidance in paragraph 27 was not mentioned and only the briefest reference was made to paragraph A31 which contained the core guidance in respect of dominance and hemming in.

Policy EXT1 required proposals to be in keeping with overall character and appearance and not unduly affect privacy or immunity of neighbouring residents. Paragraph A27 stated that the amenity of all residents should be protected from, *'neighbourly extensions that cause problems through overshadowing dominance or loss of privacy.'* The extent to which such problems could arise was usually dependent on separation distance, which was minimal.

The height and depth was excessive. Mr Donaldson believed the application was clearly unneighbourly. On paragraph A31, it stated that neighbouring occupants should not be affected by, *'a sense of being hemmed in'* and it also that this could often result from construction of a large blank wall. This was precisely what had been proposed in this case and more than six metres of this two-story equivalent high wall would run alongside and dominate Mr. McKiernan's amenity space. The proposal was excessively large, excessively close and excessively high.

It would clearly have a dominant impact, particularly in the outdoors and space at the rear of number 46A.

Mr McKiernan had no objection to his neighbours having a pool house. Instead, his objection was to the excessive height and the fact that this long blank wall extended more than six meters beyond the rear of his house and would dominate his main outdoor amenity space. As presented, it was contrary to policy EXT1 of PBS 7 addendum.

Councillor McCollum entered into a series of questions with Mr Donaldson, asking if they agreed with the single-storey description of the pool house, the elevation differences between properties including the glass lantern and how the proposed building ran adjacent to the adjoining space and the possibility of being hemmed in.

Mr Donaldson explained that the pool house was single-storey in the literal sense of the word but the height itself was equivalent to a two-storey building. The boundary wall was three metres high with the wall of the pool house being another two metres above that and the lantern a further one metre, totalling a 6.3 metre difference. Mr Donaldson added that there had been a difference of opinion as he believed dominance had not been assessed correctly. Issues of light and character were acceptable but dominance as referred to in A31 of EXT1 was of great concern as a five metre high wall was projected twenty six metres along the boundary wall. Mr McKiernan's house was predominantly lit from the front and rear whilst the proposal was to the side of the house. They had expressed concerns such as the long, narrow front garden that the pool house would fill. Paragraph A12 of PPS7 advised against development in front gardens as it resulted in cramming. When Mr McKiernan's house was designed, many elements were considered as to respect the boundary and not dominate surrounding houses.

Alderman Graham queried if the two-storey element had been insisted upon by planners. Mr Donaldson believed the original owner of the site was asked to step-back plans but when the house was redesigned, the architect stepped it back as a matter of good practice.

Mr Donaldson and Mr McKiernan returned to the gallery at 22:51 whilst Mr Eamon Loughrey joined the chamber speaking in support of the application.

Mr Loughrey explained that the application was for a pool house in the garden of number 42 Glen Road. His client welcomed the recommendation for approval. It was a straightforward application for a well-designed traditional pool house in an Orangerie style. Pool houses could be constructed under permitted development rights and this proposal only required planning permission because of its height. At five meters, it was one meter above permitted development rights.

The application came before the Planning Committee because six objections had been raised. However, the surrounding neighbours were not materially affected by the proposals which were compliant with Planning Policy Statement-: Residential Extensions and Alterations. The proposal complied with Policy EXT1 as it was designed to complement the host dwelling at number 42. It did not detract from the

character of the area nor unduly affect privacy or immunity of neighbouring residents. It also did not harm ecology or natural heritage. Adequate space would remain within the site for parking and recreation. The case officer's reports provided a thorough and fair assessment of the application, noting that the applicant had made repeated amendments to the proposal at the request of the case officer to make the application acceptable to protect residential amenity. The applicant had reduced the height of the proposed roof, removed the roof terrace and external staircase, reduced the pitch, introduced a pitched roof and introduced a lantern window; all to mitigate concerns raised by objectors. A condition was added preventing the roof being used as a terrace, as recommended by the case officer and the applicant had no objection to this. The proposal respected the surrounding area and was subservient to the Dunratho House. The pool house was for personal use of the applicant and was consistent with a draft ATC.

As the house would remain an attractive Victorian dwelling and the Orangerie architectural style of the pool house was complementary to that character and design there were no critical public views of the proposal, and the landscaping of the site allowed it to fit in with setting. The main objections were raised from future residents or occupiers of number 46A Glen Road. This was a detached dwelling that's positioned on a former tennis court. There was no main window facing the proposal and it utilised its western elevation as its main light source. The proposal would not impact on that. Number 46 was approved and partially constructed as a substantial two-story house and the separation distances between the proposal and its neighbour is 3.9 meters including an intervening boundary wall.

There was adequate separation distance to mitigate any concerns of dominance. The case officer had carefully applied multiple angle tests and clearly demonstrated there was no loss of light to number 46A because of the position of the buildings and their associated windows and height. The proposal had no impact on trees, parking or ecology. With the benefit of the concessions made by the applicant, all material objections to the proposal had been addressed or were insufficient to outweigh the compliance of the proposed with planning policy and general good design and the rights of a property owner to benefit from the enjoyment of their own home.

Councillor McCollum asked if the height of the pool house could be lowered as it had been the primary issue for objectors whilst commending the work that had been carried out already to address issues. Mr Loughery advised that the host house was a three-storey, substantial Victorian building and that if a building was to be added or placed near to it, too low a level would lose all proportions and appear poor quality. As it was a pool house, there had to be certain dimensions whilst catering to the size of the house it was placed by. The height and length of the pool house was appropriate whilst the owner of Dunratho would not wish to build anything that could devalue or degrade his house. Councillor McCollum suggested the new building would be visible from the shore which Mr Loughery denied, advising that the case officer's report had evidenced this would not be the case.

Alderman Graham had no issues with the design, only the positioning. In speaking notes, it was suggested that 60% of the curtilage remained in the garden. It was the intensification of space adjacent to a neighbouring house that was troubling. He asked if there were any alternatives on placement. Mr Loughery advised that with the

sea on one side and garden space at the back, the selected location was the only obvious choice as otherwise, it would block the view of the coast.

Mr Loughery returned to the gallery at 23:02.

Councillor Smart was curious as to the flexibility of change regarding the roof's original proposed use and the lantern that was now in place; whether it was possible to condition the construction to ensure the lantern was a requirement to avoid an alternative use in the future such as the original roof-garden. The Senior Planning Officer agreed it could be a possibility if Members were so minded. Though thirteen of the Committee were in favour of adding a condition to the lantern, Councillor McCollum proposed in opposition, making the condition a moot point.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be rejected and planning permission be refused.

Councillor McCollum was supportive of property owners maximising the use of their land but advised it needed to be done both sympathetically and in line with guidance. It was disappointing that so much effort had gone into so many renditions to only result in a proposal that could not content locals in the area. She believed the scale of the pool house was a major factor with the front garden being completely occupied by the proposed building. It would also cause hemming between two properties. The structure was intrusive and dominant which would negatively impact the area. Despite the case officer's report advising otherwise, Councillor McCollum believed the building would cause a loss of light, overshadowing and be overly dominant.

Councillor McClean agreed, and though he was satisfied the design attempted to honour the Victorian styling, it was too large.

Alderman Graham believed the positioning would result in hemming in, with the proposed building being box-shaped, long and high.

Councillor Hennessy, in clarifying the elevation differences, suggested it was the six metres beyond the rear patio that seemed to cause overbearing and the two metres above that wall. As such, it was not the pool house that caused overbearing into the property that was being built and as such, he could agree with the officer's recommendation.

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

FOR (7)	AGAINST (5)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Alderman	Alderman	Alderman
McDowell	McIlveen		Smith
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors

Graham	Cathcart	Morgan	Kendall
Harbinson	Hennessy	Wray	
Kerr	McKee		
McBurney	Smart		
McClean			
McCollum			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor McClean and in a vote of 7 FOR, 5 AGAINST, 2 ABSENTIONS AND 2 ABSENT, that the recommendation be rejected and planning permission be refused.

[The meeting went into recess at 23:15. Alderman McDowell left the meeting at 23:16 and resumed at 23:29]

4.7 LA06/2024/0912/F - Single-storey rear extension - 48 Ashley Drive, Bangor

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

The Acting Head of Planning explained that Item 4.7 was for a single-storey extension to the rear of 48 Ashley Drive Bangor. The application was before members as it was made by an elected member of the Council. The application site lay within the settlement limits of Bangor within a residential area with community uses adjacent to Ballyholme Presbyterian Church and halls adjacent. Slides were shown of the site and surrounding area.

The proposed extension was small in scale to the rear of the property. The proposal extended 0.4m beyond what was considered permitted development and would be 0.2m lower than the 3m permitted by the legislation

One letter of representation was received which, while noted as an objection, was conciliatory in nature and sought reassurance that these issues of light would be considered. This had been fully addressed in the case officer report and the extension meets the light test.

RECOMMENDED to grant planning permission.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor McClean, That the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

4.8 LA06/2024/1011/F - Erection of Commemorative War Memorial - 9m SE of Newtownards War Memorial, Castle Street, Newtownards

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

The Acting Head of Planning advised that the application was for the erection of a Commemorative War Memorial structure in the Cenotaph-war memorial ground in

Newtownards. The application was before members as it was located on council land.

The site was located within the grounds of the Cenotaph, Court Square, Newtownards and was surrounded by a number of listed buildings and existing monuments. The slides showed the location of the proposed monument in the memorial ground to the east of the site. The site lay within the Court Street/Court Square Area of Townscape Character and an Area of Archaeological Potential. The proposed memorial respected the design and positioning of the existing memorials.

All consultees were content with the proposal. With regard to the Area of Townscape Character, there would be no impact as the monument was small and was not intrusive. The local streetscape would not be impacted upon by the proposal. The design was appropriate for the historic character of the area. There would be no impact on the Area of Archaeological Potential with all consultees being content with the proposal. There were also no public objections to the proposal.

The proposed war memorial consisted of a rectangular base of approximately 0.95m high by 0.5m wide with a sloped triangular plinth top which added approximately 0.25m to the height structure on one side.

The design and materials were of a high quality and inclusive of black granite with the commemorative text completed in gold lettering. The memorial statue were to make reference to the service of a number of historical police forces that were formed across Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Proposed by Councillor Smart seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

Councillor Smart was happy to propose and lamented on the difficulty of not proceeding with a memorial in a memorial garden but appreciated the policy for what it was.

Alderman McIlveen was pleased to see the memorial was agreed. It had come via Alderman Cummings for the Royal Irish Constabulary.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor McCollum, 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;

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was upheld on 24 March 2025.

PAC Ref	2024/A0055
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0267/F
Appellant	Mr James Overton White
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of Dry storage unit (Use Class B4) (Retrospective) & replacement of entrance gate at existing builders' storage yard as per confirmed lawful use of land under ref LA06/2021/1233/LDE (Re-determination of planning application)
Location	7 Glenburn Park, Bangor

The above application was refused by the Council on 23 May 2024 for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal was contrary to the SPPS, Local Development Plan, Creating Places (para 3.11), and criterion a), c) & j) of Policy PED9 of PPS4 in that the proposal would result in a Storage Unit not in keeping with its surroundings and the built form, appearance, and character of the surrounding area and which breached the established building line.
- ii. The proposal was contrary to paragraphs 4.26 & 4.27 of the SPPS and criterion a), b), c), j) and k) of Policy PED9 of PPS4 in that it would have an adverse visual impact on the appearance and character of the area by way of size, scale, quality of design, external material and finishes 'temporary type unit', and landscaping resulting in adverse impact on the appearance and established residential character of the area.
- iii. The proposal was contrary to paragraph 2.3 of the SPPS, paragraph 3.11 of Creating Places and criterion a), b) & e) of Policy PED9 of PPS4 in that it would have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbours.
- iv. Insufficient information had been submitted to satisfy DFI Roads in respect of PPS3 Access, Movement and Parking and criterion g) and h) of PED9 of PPS4 in that if permitted it would prejudice the safety and convenience of pedestrians and road users and adequate access arrangements, including splays and parking have not been provided.

The Commissioner determined that refusal reasons 1 and 2 could not be sustained. Policy PED 9 of PPS 4 (Planning and Economic Uses) provided general criteria for economic development. As the position of the unit on site was similar to other surrounding developments, the Commissioner considered that criterion (a) of Policy PED9 was not offended (i.e. it was compatible with surrounding land uses). She found no evidence of the unit's encroachment on the vegetation cover along the river and therefore was not persuaded that criterion (c) was offended (i.e. it did not adversely affect features of the natural or built heritage).

In relation to the hedge along the front, she considered that if it were maintained at a minimum height of 2.2m (to generally cover the window openings forming the design

feature that would be most noticeable) this would preserve an appropriate degree of enclosure and comply with criterion (k) (i.e. appropriate boundary treatment and means of enclosure are provided and any areas of outside storage proposed are adequately screened from public view).

Criterion (j) of Policy PED 9 required the promotion of sustainability and biodiversity. The Commissioner could find no evidence of harm to natural heritage features and disagreed with the Council and third parties that the proposal is unsustainable, given that the use is established and there is no evidence of intensification.

Having regard to the third refusal reason, the Commissioner was not persuaded that there would be any significant increase in noise over and above the background levels, or in the number of vehicles visiting the site. For these reasons she determined that the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of residents.

In relation to the fourth refusal reason, despite DFI Roads having advised that visibility splays should be shown in each direction, along with a 5 metre set back of gates and a 5m wide access, the Commissioner considered that given the established lawful use on the site which has unrestricted vehicle movements, this appeal could not revisit these existing lawful use rights. The existing gate was to be replaced with a sliding gate which remained in the same position and, thus the changes were solely aesthetic. On this basis, she did not consider that Policy AMP 2 of PPS 3 or Policy PED9 criterion (g) or (h) were offended.

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

New Appeals Lodged

2. The following appeal was lodged on 24 March 2025.

PAC Ref	2024/E0055
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0246/CA
Appellant	
Subject of Appeal	Alleged <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Unauthorised change of use of the land and change of use of agricultural buildings to facilitate a Dog Kennelling Business;ii. Unauthorised erection of metal dog's kennels
Location	Land and buildings adjacent to 16 Ballie Road, Bangor

3. The following appeal was lodged on 1 April 2025.

PAC Ref	2024/A0139
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0676/F
Appellant	Mr Robert Anderson

Subject of Appeal	Refusal - Extension to residential curtilage and erection of single storey detached ancillary residential accommodation
Location	55 Woburn Road, Millisle

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachment.

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

6. THIRD QUARTER 2024/25 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Previously circulated:- Report from the Director of Prosperity

Background

The Department for Infrastructure's Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch published provisional statistics for Planning activity on 27 March 2025 for Quarter 3 (October - December) of 2024/25.

The Statistical Bulletin was attached to this report.

Members could view the full statistical tables at : <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-october-december-2024>

Detail

Local Applications

The Council determined 108 residential applications in Quarter 3 of 2024/25 compared to 131 such applications in the same period of the year before. The majority of applications received in Quarter 3 were in the residential category at 71% (108 out of 153).

The average processing time for applications in the local category of development in Quarter 3 was 21.2 weeks, higher than the statutory performance indicator of 15 weeks with 39.7% of applications processed within 15 weeks.

Major Applications

Recorded in the statistics ere two applications determined in the major category of development with an average processing time of 29.3 weeks against the statutory performance target of 30 weeks. This compared to 78.7 weeks for the same period of the year before.

The two applications related to the Section 54 applications:
LA06/2023/2248/F - variation of condition to accommodate the wildlife corridor associated with the residential development at Beverley Heights on Bangor Road, Newtownards; and

LA06/2024/0559/F – variation of phasing conditions and new drainage solution at Queen’s Parade application (planning ref LA06/2024/0559/F).

Further information on majors and locals was contained in Tables 3.1 and 4.1 respectively of the Statistical Tables.

Enforcement

The Planning Service opened 64 new enforcement cases in the third quarter of 2024/2025, whilst 58 cases were concluded resulting in a conclusion time of 92.5% (against the target of 70% of cases concluded within 39 weeks).

66 cases were closed with the reasons as follows:

Closure Reason	Number
Remedied/Resolved	22
Planning permission granted	9
Not expedient	13
No breach	17
Immune from enforcement action	5
Enforcement appeal upheld i.e. planning permission granted under ground (a) appeal	0

Householder Applications

During Quarter 3 the Planning Service processed 62 applications within the householder category of development.

28 of these were processed within the internal performance target of 8 weeks (45.6%), with 38 being processed within the 15-week statutory performance indicator (61.3%).

Additional Activity

Additional activity details the "non-application" workload of the Planning Service, and includes Discharge of Conditions, Certificates of Lawfulness (Proposed & Existing), and applications for Non-Material Changes.

Type	No. Received	No. Processed
Discharge of Conditions	33	19
Certificates of Lawfulness (Existing/Proposed)	20	19
Non-Material Changes	12	8
Pre-Application Discussions (PADs)	3	2
Proposal of Application Notice (PANs)	2	2
Consent to carry out tree works	21	19

The Planning Service continued to suffer from a significant number of vacancies at a variety of levels within the Development Management Service Unit, for which

recruitment was ongoing, as well as suffering long term sick absences and resultant file reallocations, which continued to have impacts on case processing times.

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

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

7. UPLIFT IN PLANNING FEES

Previously circulated:- Report from the Director of Prosperity

1. The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) wrote to the chief executives of councils on 13 March 2025 to advise of the introduction of a new Statutory Rule in relation to Planning Fees, which had applied a one-year inflationary uplift of approximately 2.1% across all fee categories, from 01 April 2025.
2. The letter from DfI advised that the uplift in planning fees was to help councils and the Department in resourcing the delivery of their development management functions.
3. DfI is also updating Development Management Practice Note 11 (Planning Fees), which was available for viewing following commencement of the Regulations on its website.
4. This uplift represented only the fifth uplift in Planning Fees since 2015 with examples as follows:

Single dwellinghouse – Outline - £425 (2015) £515 (2025)

Extension to dwellinghouse - £285 (2015) £347 (2025)

5. Members may have recalled that the Public Accounts Committee in its report on the Planning System in Northern Ireland, March 2022, highlighted that the current funding model did not recognise the value of the planning system and was not financially viable. This matter of financial viability continued to be explored via the Planning Improvement Programme.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report and the attached letter.

Councillor McCollum received clarification that this applied across all Council areas and not just Ards and North Down.

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

8. DFI STATISTICS - CONSULTATIONS ISSUED BY PLANNING SERVICE 01 APRIL - 31 DECEMBER 2024

Previously circulated:- Report from the Director of Prosperity

1. Members will recall a report presented at Planning Committee in October 2024 detailing the Annual Performance Report for 2023/2024 prepared by the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) which set out the performance of statutory consultees in the Planning process. Members had specifically requested detail on response times relevant to Ards and North Down.
2. DFI recently provided the Council with an Excel spreadsheet detailing all consultations issued by the Council's Planning Service from 01 April to 31 December 2024. In addition to the raw data for all consultations (detailing each specific application), there was also pivot table giving headline information for the statutory consultation requests made during this period – which has been extracted and provided below for information.
3. DFI had advised that this is the first issue of the data extracts which will be issued at the end of each quarter going forward.
4. Members were asked to note that DFI advised the figures quoted were not official statistics and should not be quoted as such. Rather, they had been provided more as a management tool for staff within the Planning Service to be used for information.

Count of FinalResponse	Column Label				
Row Labels	Within Target	Within Extended Target	Outstanding - No response	Late - took over 21 days	Grand Total
Local	594	1	14	222	831
Belfast City Airport	4				4
Belfast International Airport	1			1	2
DAERA EMF NIEA	148		4	47	199
DfC/HED	50			19	69
DfI Rivers	43	1	5	41	90
DfI Roads	224		4	111	339
HSENI				1	1
NI Water	124		1	2	127
Major	27	1	4	26	58
Belfast International Airport	1				1
DAERA EMF NIEA	5		3	10	18
DfC/HED				1	1
DfI Rivers	3		1	6	10
DfI Roads	10	1		9	20
HSENI	2				2
NI Water	6				6
Grand Total	621	2	18	248	889

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report.

Councillor Morgan was disappointed that only three of the eleven Councils had achieved the local development target of 15 weeks. This was a key economic driver and Councils as well as consultees were slowing it.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted and the report be noted.

The Acting Head of Planning agreed that improvements had to be made. There had been a change in personnel at DfI which she hoped would show progress. Ards & North Down Borough Council's Planning Department had to carry out more consultations because of the virtue of location to Ramsar sites, scientific areas, hydrological links to special areas etcetera.

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

Exclusion of Public/Press

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

9. LDP DRAFT SCREENING RURAL NEEDS IMPACT

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

Option : 3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Summary

A report pertaining to draft screening exercise in relation to 'Rural Needs' for Members information in respect of the setting out 'policy in development' for the Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy (dPS) to progress to a publication consultation exercise. The draft screening shall be presented to the Council's Screening group in May.

10. LDP DRAFT SCREENING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

Option : 3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Summary

A report pertaining to draft screening exercise in relation to 'Section 75 – Equality and Good Relations' for Members information in respect of the setting out 'policy in development' for the Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy (dPS) to progress to a publication consultation exercise. The draft screening shall be presented to the Council's Screening group in May.

11. LDP DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY REPORT

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

Option : 3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Summary

A report pertaining to responses to the LDP Preferred Options Paper for Members information which has informed the 'policy in development' for the Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy (dPS) and associated screening exercises.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 23:57.

As this was Alderman McIlveen's last Planning Committee as Chair, he thanked all Members for their participation throughout the year, just as many members also gave thanks for Alderman McIlveen having chaired the Committee.

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, 7th May 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: McAlpine

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings (Zoom 8.15 pm)

Councillors:

Blaney (Zoom)	McKee (Zoom)
Boyle	McLaren
Cathcart (Zoom)	Morgan
Douglas	Smart
Edmund	Wray
Kerr	

Officers: Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Head of Assets and Property Services (P Caldwell), Head of Regulatory Services (Interim) (R McCracken), Licensing and Regulatory Services Manager (D Martin) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Irwin and McKimm. Apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Cummings.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. NOM SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT – REINTRODUCTION OF PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AT COUNCIL HRCS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that further to the report on pedestrian access to the Council HRCs brought to the April 2025 meeting of the Committee, officers had reviewed bookings at both Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs. The review undertaken through the online booking system considered the number of bookings made in one-hour blocks from 8.00am – 5.00pm and the times when service vehicles were on-site. In both cases the first hour (8.00am – 9.00am) was the most underused slot and only a minor

adjustment would be needed at Donaghadee to avoid the presence of service vehicles. Historically site use peaked at weekends and dropped off from Monday through to Thursday. As a trial it was proposed that a one-hour slot be provided from 8.00am – 9.00am for three days per week at the respective sites (Monday to Wednesday at Holywood HRC and Tuesday to Thursday at Donaghadee). It was further proposed that the trial be conducted for three months to determine if the demand justified a permanent arrangement for pedestrian users.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree that a three-month trial be undertaken as outlined in the report.

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

Councillor Morgan was happy to propose the three month trial but expressed a small degree of concern with the time chosen since it was generally a slot of lower demand and therefore not a true trial and she thought that the Council should be mindful of that. It was her opinion that ideally it would be better to have a Saturday slot or one in the late afternoon, but she appreciated that that might be difficult.

Councillor McKee had been disappointed in the report but welcomed the fact that it had been acted upon quickly. He thought that it would not give a true understanding of the needs of residents and wondered how residents in the real world would be able to use the proposed time slots. He thought the time suggested in the report was baffling since, while it might suit the Council, it might be inconvenient for those the Council was trying to assist. He did not think it was widely convenient, nor did he think it was an equitable or fair option and for that reason he could not support the recommendation.

The Director clarified the Council's position and stated that officers had not chosen this time for its own convenience but rather it would minimise disruption to both pedestrians and those arriving by private transport. He stressed that this was a decision for Members and that officers could look at different times if that was considered to be preferable.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing informed Members that later in the day, on any working day of the week, external contractors could visit sites at short notice to take away recycled materials and that would result in short closures while those operations took place. The benefit to pedestrians of the earlier time slot was that they could be assured that there would be no contractors, and therefore no delay, on the site at that early time and access would be guaranteed during the booked timeslot.

Councillor McLaren made it clear that she was happy with the report and assumed that when officers had considered this request Saturday had been looked at but discounted due to large demand from vehicular traffic. She added that what was being proposed might not be ideal, but it gave consideration to the serious health and safety risk at these sites and would allow the Council to record the level of interest that existed for those coming on foot.

Alderman McAlpine asked if a report would be brought back to the Committee on the trial and the Director confirmed that was the intention, and also that other options could be considered on the back of Councillor McKee's earlier comments. He emphasised that those would have to give consideration to the operational servicing of sites at unpredictable times after 9 am each working day.

Following a question from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter about accessibility and servicing of the sites the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services explained the process of the monitoring and filling of skips and how those were serviced by external contractors. A service user could potentially have an appointment at a site at a time when it needed to be closed for servicing and the option in that case was to wait or the booking could be transferred to an alternative site in the Borough. There were different materials collected by different service vehicles and it was impossible to predict precisely when this would be required for each, as this very much depended upon the volume of recyclable material being brought to sites over any particular time period.

Given that information, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter understood the reticence that could be expressed about changing times to pedestrian slots later in the day.

Councillor Blaney had two questions; first if the Council would record what was being recycled by pedestrians and secondly what level of interest would be considered to be a success. The Director confirmed that site staff could record material types brought by pedestrian customers, and this would supplement information captured by the online booking process itself. On the second question, officers had no preconceived ideas about what success would look like in terms of the numbers of people visiting the site on foot. That would be for Members to decide going forward.

With the exception of Councillor McKee, Members were in agreement to accept the recommendation.

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

4. NOM REPORT – TOWNLAND NAMES SIGNAGE

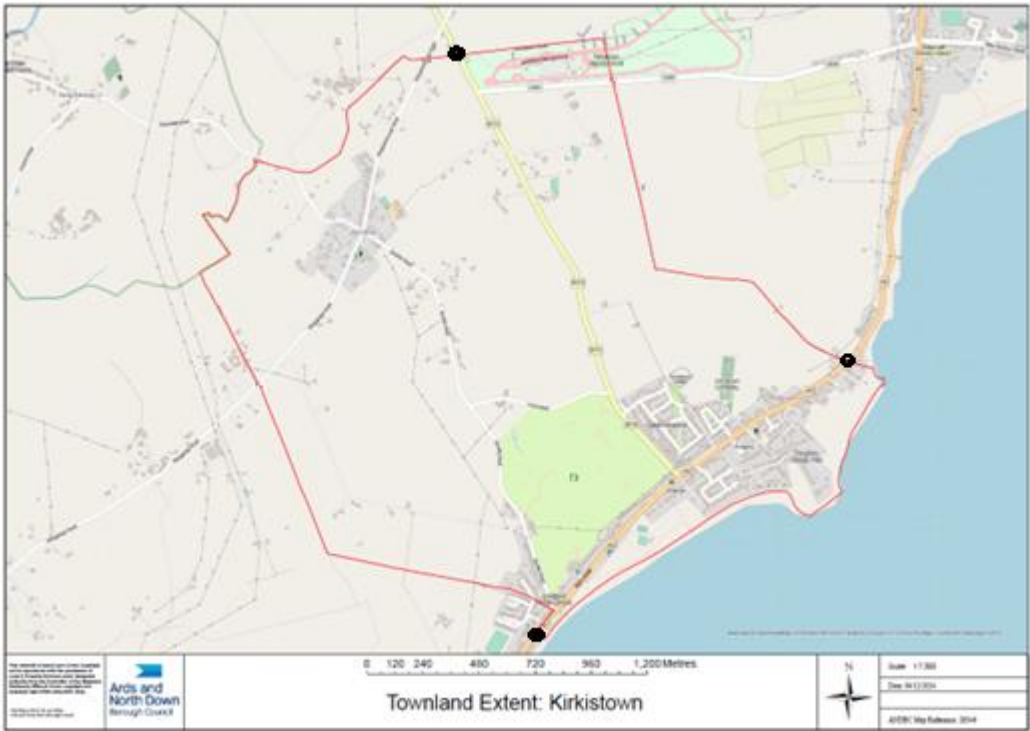
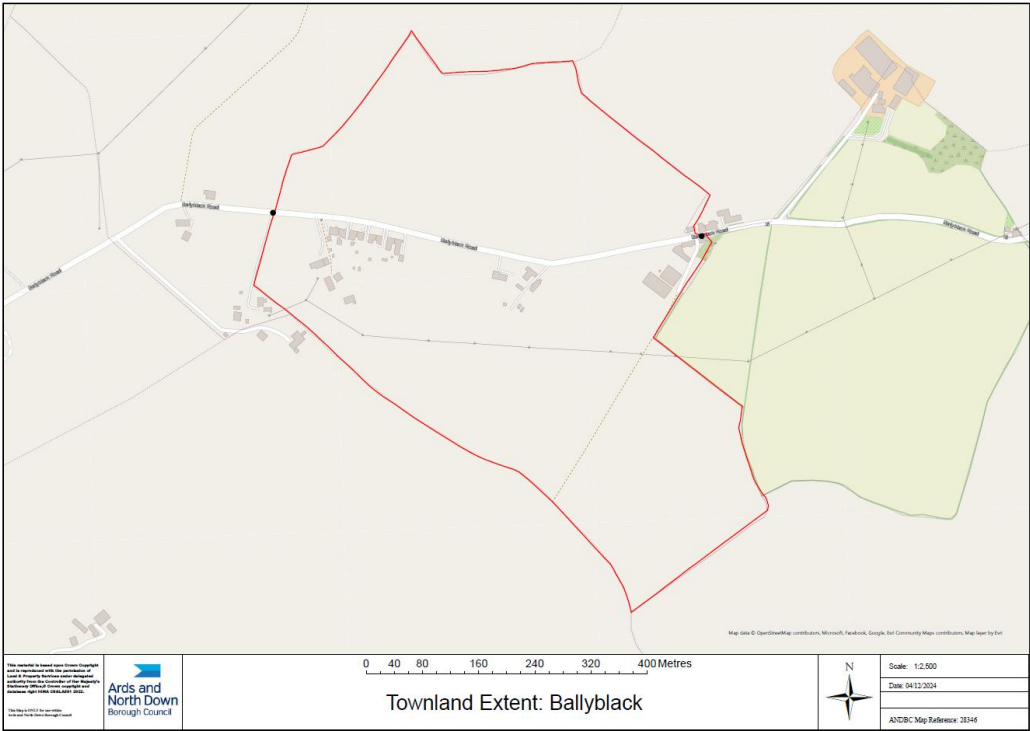
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in September 2023 the Council agreed a Notice of Motion stating:

“That council task officers to bring back a report on the costing to install signage identifying the townlands of Ballyblack and Kirkistown and that officers are tasked to bring forward proposals to incorporate townland signage across our Borough”.

Quantity of Signs Required

Officers had produced the below maps to show potential quantities of signs for the two requested townlands.

Townland	Quantity of signs required
Ballyblack	2
Kirkistown (main roads only)	3



Costs

Each sign cost approximately £500 for installation and on average cost £275 per sign to manufacture, giving an approximate total of £775 per sign. Therefore, the requested signage would cost £3,875.00 for the main roads in both townlands.

Associated Costs of Borough-Wide Implementation

There were 287 townlands within the Borough; allowing an average of three signs in each townland would equate to £2,325 per Townland or £667,275 for the whole Borough.

Given that, prior to this request, there had only previously been a couple of requests for townland signage within the Borough, it would seem inappropriate to spend such a sum on its blanket implementation.

In consideration of the infrequency of these requests, officers would suggest that future requests for townland signage be brought by Members on a case-by-case basis, using a Notice of Motion.

RECOMMENDED that the Council:

1. agrees to adopt a policy of installing townland signage only when specifically requested by elected Members, via a Notice of Motion.
2. decide if they wish to proceed with the signs at Kirkistown and Ballyblack, at a cost of £3,875, utilising existing maintenance budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Councillor Edmund made an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor Kerr.

That Council agree the recommendations and proceed to install signage at Kirkistown and Ballyblack as outlined in the report utilising existing budgets and agrees to adopt a policy of installing townland signage only when specifically requested by elected Members via Notice of Motion.

Councillor Edmund explained that to many communities, particularly those on the Ards Peninsula, townlands offered a strong sense of uniqueness, belonging and identity and he urged Members of the Committee to support the recommendation and suggested that future requests be brought through Notice of Motions.

Seconding the amendment Councillor Kerr agreed with his colleague that townlands were very important on the Peninsula and that at this stage the two named, Ballyblack and Kirkiston, should be given priority.

Councillor Cathcart thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak and suggested that while it was not explicit in Standing Orders, Alderman Adair had requested speaking rights on the Item, and it might have been useful to hear what he had to say before the Committee discussed the matter.

Alderman Adair was invited to speak, and he explained that a townland was a small territorial division but was inclusive of everyone and was part of our shared heritage. He paid tribute to a past colleague in Council, Kieran McCarthy, who had carried out a lot of work to preserve that heritage and he asked that his thanks for that be put on record. The reason that he had brought the Motion was due to the requests that he had received from local residents who felt a strong connection to both of these townlands, and he was asking for agreement due to that local demand. He pointed out that the cost of that could be met through existing maintenance budgets and so he encouraged Members to support the proposal and in doing so support the area's history and heritage.

Councillor Wray asked for clarification on the current position which was to install the signs in the two townlands requested and have future proposals brought through Notice of Motions. He stressed that this was a massive amount of money for a limited amount of signs and he was not swayed by the fact it was not additional funding since the budget was still tight. Generally, he was happy to support signage for these areas and he was aware of the local pride expressed by people living in these townlands.

The Head of Assets and Property Services described the signs which were the size of a normal street plate, and the cost depended on the length of each one; so, an average was taken to illustrate costs. It had become a significant cost generally to the Council to replace signs and they were repaired as far as possible rather than being replaced.

Councillor Boyle thanked Councillor Wray for his comments but had difficulty with the proposal and while appreciating the strong support to identify with townlands in some areas the Council could potentially be opening a can of worms, because there was not a large enough budget to support further desires for signs. This was a serious amount of money in his opinion and while there might be a desire to draw a line, practically that might not be possible. While he had every sympathy for the proposal, he thought that the bigger picture needed to be considered.

Councillor Morgan was in agreement with Councillor Boyle's comments and questioned why those two areas were more important than other townlands around the Borough. She felt that sloppy financial management should be avoided and while she saw the aspiration behind the proposal, she could not give it her support.

Councillor McLaren understood both sides of the debate, she had witnessed the pride and ownership that people local to those areas had for their townlands but was also wary of opening a door that could not later be closed.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had a couple of questions and wondered how many requests had been received since Kieran McCarthy had first spoken about preserving townlands on the Peninsula. This had been the only one in the past eighteen months and there had only been a couple in the past ten years. She stressed that requests such as these were rare and not utilised often and even if they were to be it could be allocated in the rates, a precedent had been set and one of the benefits of the Council was that it could move and breathe and react to decisions under its own policies. If the Council did not want to agree to further

signage in the future it would be free to do that, but the Committee should not pretend that it was impossible to agree to this for Ballyblack and Kirkiston.

Councillor McKee had listened to the debate and thought that it had cemented his opinion to approve the proposal, and he viewed it as a sensible way forward and that the Council could be guided by the policies it had in place.

At this stage Alderman Armstrong-Cotter requested a recorded vote.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 7 voting For, 3 voting Against, 3 Abstaining and 3 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (7)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINING (3)	ABSENT (3)
Alderman	Councillors	Alderman	Alderman
Armstrong-Cotter	Boyle	McAlpine	Cummings
Councillors	Harbinson	Councillors	Councillors
Cathcart	Morgan	Blaney	Irwin
Douglas		McLaren	McKimm
Edmund			
Kerr			
McKee			
Wray			

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Kerr that Council agree the recommendation and proceed to install signage at Kirkistown and Ballyblack as outlined in the report utilising existing budgets and agrees to adopt a policy of installing townland signage only when specifically requested by Elected Members, via Notice of Motion.

5. OUTCOME TO NOM – STATION ROAD DOG CONTROL ORDER
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council as followed:

“That Council brings a report with a view to implementing a “dogs on leads” policy on that part of the Coastal Path which traverses the private road serving the properties 91 to 117 Station Road, Hollywood, inclusive.”

A report was subsequently brought to the Committee, and the Council agreed to proceed with the statutory process for making a Dogs on Leads Order.

A public consultation exercise was undertaken in the month of March and details of correspondence received were attached in Appendix A.

Enforcement History

In a search of Council records for the past year, there had only been one reported incident on this section of the coastal path, of a 'dog not under adequate control'. There had been no recorded incidents of dog fouling in that time period.

Consideration of Possible Introduction of Dog Control Order

Benefits of creating this particular Dog Control Order included the regulation of a section of coastal path where:

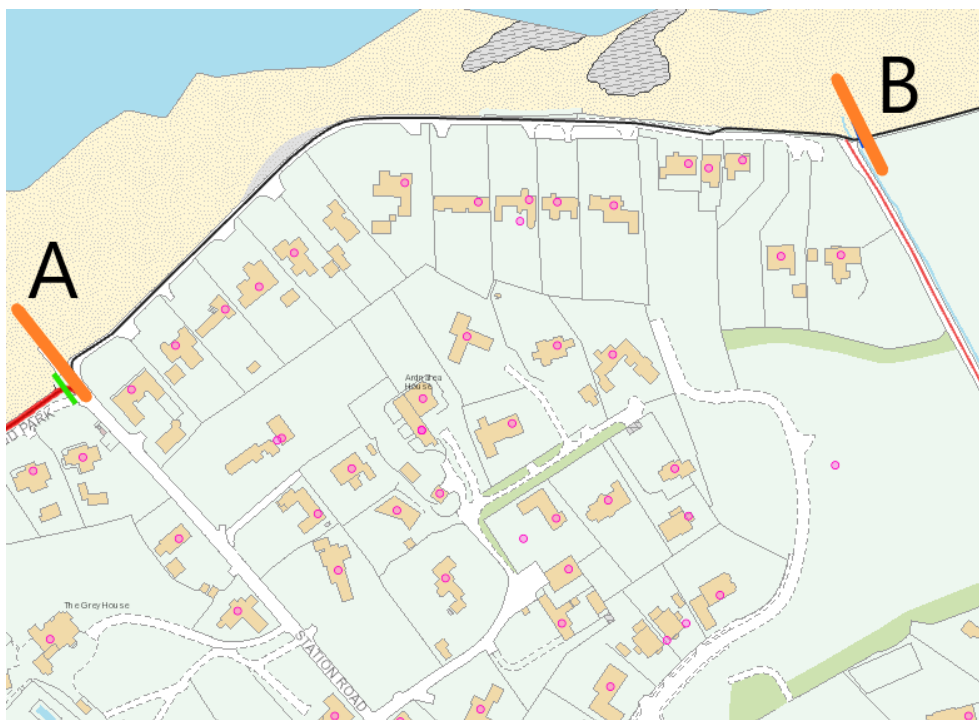
- Residents directly affected may welcome the introduction of such a control
- Dogs on lead cannot stray into adjacent gardens
- Dogs on lead are unlikely to foul without the knowledge of the responsible dog walker
- Dogs on lead are more likely to be under control and be less likely to be involved in attacks or incidents with runners or cyclists

Disbenefits of creating this dog control order include:

- The added restriction imposed on dog exercise may be unpopular
- Council enforcement capacity will be limited, with associated difficulties associated with identifying offenders
- Potential to create an expectation of further control areas elsewhere in the Borough, with the added resource pressures that would create
- No offence is committed where the person has a reasonable excuse for failing to keep the dog on a lead, or the owner, occupier or other person or authority having control of the land has consented (generally or specifically) to the person failing to do so. Landowners and occupiers will be exempt and can permit others to walk dogs without leads, only on the land owned by them. They may also oppose introduction.

Land Ownership

The area of land under consideration was a section of the coastal path, between points A and B on the map below. It was a private road with a common law asserted public right of way over it. It was not owned or maintained by the Council and officers were aware of previous land dispute issues in the vicinity.



Statutory signage would be required at either end of the designated roadway. If officers were unable to establish ownership of those sections, then the installation of poles and signage would be at risk. The Order could not be enforced without signage.

The specified wording to be used in, and the form of, a Dog Control Order was detailed at Appendix B. The statutory procedure for implementing Dog Control Orders was outlined in Appendix C.

Next Steps

Should the Council decide to make a Dog Control Order as set out in this report, the cost to the Council of implementation was envisaged to be in the region of £1,000. That did not allow for any legal costs associated with potential land dispute issues that may arise with the making of an Order at this location.

RECOMMENDED that the Council considers this report along with the consultation responses received and decides whether to make a Dog Control Order (Dogs on Leads Order) as described.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Council proceeds to make a Dog Control Order as described in the report.

Proposing the recommendation Councillor Cathcart stated that when Alderman Graham had originally brought the Motion forward, he had been wary of restrictions in general but pointed to the fact that this was a very small area of the coastal path in front of residential properties. He could not speak about greater dog fouling in the

area but thought that if they were to escape into people's gardens, that was a general nuisance and he did not believe that responsible dog owners would object to the small changes being suggested. Indeed, he as a dog owner would not object and thought it a perfectly fair proposal. As seconder Councillor Edmund was in agreement and felt that the case had been made well.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Council proceeds with making a Dog Control Order as set out in the report.

6. ITEM WITHDRAWN

7. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN OFF-STREET PARKING (PUBLIC CAR PARKS) ORDER 2025 (Appendices II & III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in July 2024, the Council enacted the Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2024 (2024 Order) under the Road Traffic Regulations (NI) Order 1997, in respect of certain Council owned car parks. A copy of the Order was attached as Appendix 1.

The public car parks covered by this Order were legacy car parks owned by the Council and the former DfI owned car parks were currently included in the Off Street Parking Order 2000 (2000 Order) which currently remained in force.

A Car Parking Order set out the powers and regulations that applied within each of the car parks which could be enforced by the Council, normally through the action of the Traffic Attendants.

As Members may be aware, Council officers had been liaising with DfI to encourage them to repeal the 2000 Order, which would allow the Council to implement control measures (including a new tariff structure), as agreed in the Car Park Strategy.

Officers had prepared a new Car Park Order which would be required when the 2000 Order was repealed by DfI, attached at Appendix 2. Deletions were tracked with additions and amendments to the Order highlighted in yellow.

The Proposed Order would:

1. Bring both the legacy Council owned car parks as included in the 2024 Order and the former DfI car parks as per the 2000 Order, into the same Order under Council control.
2. Implement the tariffs as agreed by Council in 2022 as part of the Car Park Strategy, as stated in Schedule 2 of the Order.
3. Amend the current contravention in relation to caravans (motorhomes) using the car parks in Schedule 1 to allow the Traffic Attendants to take more effective action in respect of offenders. An Officer's working group is

examining the potential for motorhome parking facilities across the Borough (and any further amendments of the Order that may be necessary as a consequence of that work, can be considered by Council thereafter).

4. Legislate for buses/coaches.
5. Remove provision 18 from the Order. The 2024 Order includes a provision for blue badge parking which is not in line with the provisions of the current 2000 Order and which cannot be facilitated within the capabilities of the current pay and display system; it is proposed that this can be further reviewed at a later date, as technology changes/permits.
6. Bring the charging hours for all charged car parks across the Borough into line, as 8am – 6pm.
7. Extend the maximum stay in all car parks from 12 hours to 14 hours.

The Order repealed the existing 2024 Order and would not be enacted until the DFI Order (the 2000 Order) had been repealed. It would then allow the Traffic Attendants to enforce within all car parks listed in Schedule 1 as required.

Enactment Process

The process to enact an Order was specified in the Road Traffic Regulations (NI) Order 1997

1. The Council agrees the draft Order.
2. The Council must then consult with such persons as the Council considers appropriate. It is proposed that the Town and City Steering Groups are consulted as per the consultation process previously used for the 2024 Order, and any other party as deemed appropriate based on Council's legal advice.
3. Place a Public Notice in a newspaper(s) circulating in the area advising that objections must be received within 21 days of the Notice. A copy of the draft Order will be placed on the Council website.
4. Consider any objections and confirm the Order (with amendments if required).
5. Advertise in the local press that the Order has been made and the date of implementation.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2025 as per Appendix 2 and proceeds with the enactment process as detailed in this report.

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

Councillor Morgan was pleased to see the recommendation coming forward but was aware that it might be some time before it was enacted due to action required by the Assembly, but at least the Council would be prepared and ready when that happened. Councillor Wray was also pleased to see the progress and asked about the situation with overnight motorhome stays in car parks. The Director provided an update and stated that the Council could not legally facilitate overnight stays at the moment, and that was a holding position until it could facilitate that aspect of tourism demand – at which time the Car Park Order could be appropriately amended.

Currently, motorhomes could park in car parks but were not permitted to stay overnight.

Councillor Cathcart asked for clarification in relation to where the Department was in terms of amendment of the current Car Park Order covering former DfI car parks, and the Director replied that since the Council had prepared the report before Members it had received a response from the Minister which would be brought to next month's meeting of the Environment Committee. He went on to say that it was clear that progress was unlikely to be made quickly, since the Department was stressing the need for all Councils to indicate they were in a state of readiness with their own Car Park Orders such as this one. Councillor Cathcart expressed his frustration stressing that the Department had had a decade to consider the matter.

Councillor McKee agreed with Councillor Cathcart's frustration and was staggered that the matter had been delayed for so long while suggesting that the Council write to the Department reminding it of its obligations to the Council. He had a number of questions on the Order itself such as the enforcement of certain restrictions such as idling of vehicles and if there would be guidance provided for that. The Director indicated that he was unaware of any specific prescribed guidance for enforcement or such restrictions, indicating that generally any effective enforcement action would stand or fall on the strength of the evidence gathered in any particular instance.

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

(Alderman Cummings entered the meeting at 8.15 pm via Zoom)

8. 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. All Weather Pitch, Parkway, Comber

Applicant: Roy Murray, Comber Regenerations Community Partnership, 29 Dermott Avenue, Comber, BT23 5JE

Days: 21st June and 30th August 2025

Type of entertainment: Outdoor musical entertainment

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

2. Ballyphilip Parish Centre, Church Street, Portaferry

Applicant: Rhoda Dorndorf, 9 Rockfield Park, Newtownards

Days and Hours: 14 Unspecified days within 12 months 8am – 10pm

Type of entertainment: A theatrical performance, Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind, Equipment for playing snooker or similar games.

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

3. Kirkistown Race Circuit, 130 Rubane Road, Kircubbin, Newtownards, BT22 1AU

Applicant: Darren Gilmore, 22 Parsonage Road, Kircubbin, BT22 2RJ

Days and Hours: 14 Unspecified days within 12 months 8pm – 1am

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

There had been no objections received from PSNI or Environmental Health. NIFRS had requested further information.

The application had been received in order to facilitate an event on 15 June 2025. At the time of writing this report, no objections had been received, however, objections could be made up until 15 May 2025. Should objections be received a further report outlining those would be brought to the Council in May for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants Entertainments Licences to Comber Regeneration and Ballyphilip Parish Centre subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services, and to Kirkistown Race Circuit subject to no objections being received by 15 May 2025 and to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services.

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

Proposing the recommendation Councillor Kerr thought these were all very worthwhile events and he was happy to propose. Councillor Boyle agreed and supported the licences being given to the three organisations.

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

9. XL BULLY INCIDENT ON 3 APRIL 2025
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a dog attack took place at a dwelling in Rathmullan Drive, Newtownards on the evening of 3 April 2025 in which two adults were injured.

The attack involved an XL Bully dog which was licensed and had an Exemption Certificate issued by the Council in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The PSNI responded to the incident. Council officers were not contacted or involved in the incident which took place outside normal working hours.

While there had been much speculation on social media channels, the Council's Neighbourhood Environment Team had not received any actionable complaints about this dog prior to the incident.

Following the Notice of Motion submitted to the Council in regard to the Rehoming of XL Bully dogs, the response to the letter requested by Council had been received and was attached in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Boyle asked the Director to explain what noting a report meant and if it was agreeing. The Director explained that for this report no follow up action was being recommended, and he considered that a Member did not necessarily have to agree with the content of a report in order to agree to note it.

Councillor McKee referred to the response from the Minister in context of the incident which had been horrendous but had been dealt with well by Council officers. He thought members of the public were right to have safety concerns but he was of the opinion that breaches in the legislation were the wrong way to approach that. There had been a furore in the media reporting leading to a campaign around XL Bullies. He thought the dogs themselves were guilty of circumstances and the strengthening of the law had directly led to an increase in dodgy breeding and the euthanasia of healthy animals. He concluded by stating that in his opinion the system needed to be changed.

Alderman Cummings reiterated the points made by Councillor McKee agreeing that it had been a traumatic incident that had required swift action. He thought that there might be lessons to be learnt, such as the contact made and if there would be an obligation on the Council's enforcement staff to investigate further. There were implications in terms of the safe housing of dogs and the ability of the owner to look after a dog.

The Director highlighted that the Council and its Neighbourhood Environment Team had not received any actionable complaints from the owner or anyone else, and the Council would respond to a complaint of an alleged attack. As it stood Council officers had received no actionable complaints, the Council was aware of the dog and an exemption certificate had been issued for this animal through the proper protocol.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked about the difference between an actionable complaint versus one that was not actionable. The Director advised that it would not be appropriate to go in to the detail of this specific case, but confirmed that complaints may be received in respect of which the Council was unable to take any enforcement action – compared to complaints received which could be followed up with some form of enforcement action.

Councillor McLaren understood that this was an extremely emotive subject, many people loved animals but the Council was discussing banned breeds and they were banned for a reason since historically they were predisposed towards aggression. She had witnessed the injuries first-hand and stated that if those could be done to an adult, she dreaded to think of what the dog could do to a toddler. She thanked the team which had worked tirelessly to make sure that people adhered to the exemption certificate rules in keeping the public safe. She welcomed the letter which had come from the Minister outlining the reasons why a banned breed could not be rehomed.

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

10. Q3 LICENSING 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 from **1 October 2024 – 31 December 2024**. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Licensing Service.

Applications Received

The Service dealt with a wide range of licensing functions which required officers to consult with the PSNI, NIFRS and a range of other Council Services in making their assessment of an application.

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Same quarter last year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Entertainments Licence	71	58
Cinema Licence	1	0
Amusement Permits	3	4
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	1	0
Pavement Café Licence	0	5
Street Trading Licence	0	0

Lottery Permits	4	5
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Most of the licences issued were renewals and hence the workload was constant year on year. Renewing a licence still entailed considerable work when assessing the application and consulting with the other bodies.

Regulatory Approvals

This was the number of licences, approvals and permits that had been processed and issued.

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Same quarter last year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Entertainment Licence	30	23
Cinema Licence	0	0
Amusement Permits	0	5
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	0	1
Pavement Café Licence	2	4
Street Trading Licence	0	0
Lottery Permits	2	0

Inspections

The Service carried out a range of inspections in connection with the grant and renewal of licences to establish if the premises were suitable. In some cases, they inspected with the NIFRS.

During performance inspections were an important element in ensuring the licensees were abiding by their licence terms and conditions and that premises were safe for patrons.

The Service had been unable to complete its annual planned programme of 'during performance inspections' which concentrated on the higher risk premises such as night clubs through the year due to resourcing issues.

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Same quarter last year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Initial/ renewal Entertainment Licence Inspections	12	35
During performance Inspections	0	0
Initial Inspections of Pavement Cafes	0	0
Initial Inspections of Places of Marriage and Civil partnerships	0	0

High Hedges

High Hedge legislation required complainants to attempt to resolve their complaint informally prior to lodging a formal complaint with the fee of £360. That generated a large volume of queries for officers in an advisory role, which were not reflected in the statistics for 'formal complaints'.

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Same quarter last year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Formal Complaints	0	0

CCTV incidents

Period: 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024

Date	Location	Incident	Action
12/10/24	High Street, Bangor	Assault	Requested by and provided to PSNI
10/10/24	High Street, Bangor	Cyclist damages car wing mirror	No requests made
19/10/24	High Street, Bangor	Theft	Requested by and provided to PSNI
3/11/24	Main Street, Bangor	Theft	Requested by and provided to PSNI
6/11/24	Conway Square, Newtownards	Surveillance	Internal request to monitor Paddington Bear
16/11/24	High Street, Bangor	Assault	Requested by and provided to PSNI
29/11/24	High Street, Bangor	Assault	Requested by and provided to PSNI
25/12/24	High Street, Newtownards	Murder Enquiry	Requested by and provided to PSNI
28/12/24	High Street, Bangor	Two males fighting	Requested by and provided to PSNI

Off Street Car Parking

The Council currently operated 22 pay and display car parks in Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards.

Table 1: Income from Ticket Sales

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Previous year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Income from ticket sales	£204,147.23	£196,205.19

Table 2: PCN's Issued

	Period of Report 1 October 2024 - 31 December 2024	Previous year 1 October 2023 - 31 December 2023
Total	1064	1213

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor McLaren had a question for the Director in relation to the issuing of pavement café licences and noticed that the applications were only in single digit numbers when it seemed that when the sun shone there was a proliferation of pavement cafes around the Borough. She hoped that they were paying the necessary fee for that and adhering to the Council's guidance.

The Director explained that the figures only related to applications for the period described and any application lasted for three years so there was a cumulative effect in the overall numbers of extant licences over time. In total there were 57 licensed pavement cafés in the Borough and that was periodically reviewed by officers.

The Director highlighted that he had attended the ten year celebration of the Community Plan at Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor, earlier in the day and informed the Committee that the Chair of the Disability Forum, who was registered blind, reported a marked improvement in conditions for disabled people on the high streets of the Borough as a consequence of the Council's enforcement of the Pavement Café Licence regime.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

11. REVIEW OF CITY/TOWN CENTRE CCTV
(Appendix V)

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

EC.07.05.2025PM

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

A report on the review of Council's Town Centre CCTV system was considered.

It was agreed that officers should liaise further with the PSNI in relation to Option 2 as set out in the report, with the view to bringing back a further report to the Council.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.50 pm.

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 8 May 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor Gilmour	
Alderman:	Adair (Zoom) Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
Councillors:	Ashe Blaney Edmund (Zoom) Hennessy	Hollywood McCollum McCracken Smart

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Economic Development (A Stobie), Capital Project and Programme Manager (S Ferguson), and Democratic Services Officer (R King).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillor McKimm, Councillor McLaren, Councillor Thompson and the Director of Prosperity.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest notified.

3. ITEM WITHDRAWN

4. DONAGHADEE SIGNAGE – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 628 (FILE RDP14)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailed as follows:

Background

A Notice of Motion was agreed at Council, October 2024 “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.”

Urban Regeneration Programme

The Council had secured funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) to deliver an Urban Regeneration Programme. Within this programme an action identified was the design, production, and installation of directional and informational car park signage for both Bangor and Donaghadee.



Donaghadee Signage Working Group




Considering the Notice of Motion and the action under the Urban Regeneration Programme, a Signage Working Group was established to lead on both projects collaboratively and avoid any potential duplication.








The Signage Working Group consisted of elected members, representatives from Donaghadee Community Development Association (DCDA) and Council officers. It should be noted that representatives from Sir Samuel Kelly Project had also been in attendance on occasion.

The Signage Working Group had completed an audit of existing signage and had agreed the following signage proposals considering both projects.

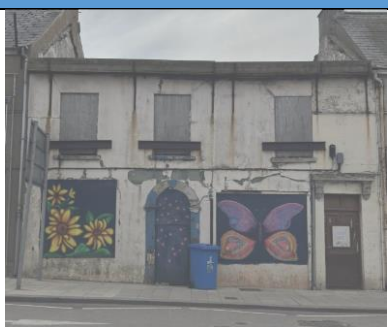



Signage Proposals

Location	Current Signage	Request	Image
Crommelin Car Park	2no signs already in place	Combine both signs into one sign. Can be incorporated within the Crommelin Car Park scheme.	
Crommelin Car Park	Double sided P located at the bottom of Union Street at grass area	<p>Another 'P' sign is required on opposite side of road further up for Donaghadee direction traffic (located nearby Moat Street garage)</p> <p>The existing 'P' sign is sufficient for vehicles approaching the car park and is double sided for both directions of traffic.</p> <p>Additional signage for approaching the car park from the Moat Street garage will require DfI approval. Application to be submitted.</p>	

Crommelin Car Park	New Request	<p>Request for signage to Welcome Visitors to Crommelin Park.</p> <p>Double sided signage can be installed within entrance to car park with car park rules on one side and welcome/visitor information on reverse side. Will also incorporate details of places of interest nearby such as Moat, Camera Obscura, Sir Samuel Kelly etc.</p>	
Moat Car Park	New Request	<p>Informational signage located in car park.</p> <p>Double sided signage can be installed within entrance to car park with car park rules on one side and Moat/ Camera Obscura information on reverse, with listing of places of interest nearby.</p>	
Copeland Distillery Signage	White and blue sign with arrow pointing to Copeland Distillery	<p>Remove and replace existing signage with approved directional signage to Visitor Attractions.</p> <p>Directional signage to Copeland Distillery, Sir Samuel Kelly Project, The Commons and include car parking</p>	 

William Street Car Park	New Request	<p>Additional 'P' sign required on wall at Bow Bells.</p> <p>The previous car park directional signage was on a pole that may have been removed under the public realm scheme. To reinstate the pole the signage to Bow Bells would be blocked.</p> <p>Proprietor consent required to install wall signage to Gordons Chemist.</p>	
Harbour	New Request	<p>Wayfinding Signage</p> <p>Placement of wayfinding markers fixed to existing buildings to reduce street clutter (locations to be included - Sir Samuel Kelly Project, Copeland Distillery, The Commons, Moat/ Camera Obscura.</p>	
Community Centre Car Park	New Request	<p>Commons East/Harbour Car Park and Sir Samuel Kelly directional signage.</p>	
Commons East/Harbour Car Park	New Request	<p>Wayfinding Signage</p> <p>Finger posts to direct visitors to places of interest nearby such as Pinks Green Playpark, Lemon's Wharf Playpark, The Commons, Copeland Plaza.</p>	  
Lemon's Wharf Play Park	New Request	<p>Wayfinding Signage</p> <p>Finger posts to direct visitors to key sites – Sir Samuel Kelly Project, The Commons, Crommelin Park, Moat and Camera Obscura, Public Toilets</p>	  

In addition to the agreed signage requests detailed above, the Signage Working Group had identified further opportunities to enhance movement within the town should funding become available:

Location	Request	Image
High Street	<p>Directional/ informational signage vinyl applied to vacant/ derelict property located on High Street.</p> <p>This will serve as a wayfinding guide to pedestrians and highlight the key sites within the town.</p> <p>Note – proprietor consents will be required.</p>	 
Moat Entrance, Moat Street	<p>Upgrade of archway leading to Moat and Camera Obscura, making it more prominent and visually appealing.</p> <p>Will require relevant consents and funding source.</p>	 
Print Materials	<p>Review of existing print materials in circulation within the town and online – update as necessary and distribute to local sites including but not limited to the Library, Public Toilets, Visitor Information point, Community Centre, Moat, etc.</p>	
External Information Board	<p>An external information board is in situ at the Public Toilets. This is updated with print materials by the DCDA. Potential to look at other options for providing visitor information and directional/ informational signage in replacement of the notice board.</p>	

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Urban Regeneration Programme Variance Request

It was proposed to submit a variance request under the Urban Regeneration Programme to increase the allocated budget for Directional and Informational Car Park Signage and to expand the description to include directional and information signage to places of interest. Officers had held discussions with DfC officials who were supportive of the proposed request.

Please refer to Item 13 report on the Urban Regeneration Programme.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves officers to proceed to:

- 1. Submit the variance request under the Urban Regeneration Programme to increase the allocated budget and extend the project description to include informational and directional signage to nearby places of interest,
- 2. Should the variance be approved, officers proceed to make the necessary applications to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the required consents,
- 3. Officers proceed to work with the Signage Working Group to deliver the Signage Programme (within the budget parameters), and
- 4. Officers continue to seek funding opportunities for any items listed within the Signage Programme that cannot be met under the Urban Regeneration Programme due to budget constraints.

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

The proposer, Councillor McCollum explained that she had spoken to Alderman Brooks who had proposed the original notice of motion and he too had welcomed the report. She commended officers for taking advantage of opportunities that this funding provided, and bringing this together, establishing leadership and a pathway.

Councillor McCollum added that she had taken part in the signage audit and it had been a fantastic experience to visit a town from a different perspective and felt that the experience had been beneficial.

The seconder, Councillor Hennessy added that he had attended two signage meetings to date and thanked officers for their support. He recalled that everyone at the meeting, including the community representatives, had been happy with the progress and that their ideas and opinions had been considered. He explained that wider feedback from people in the town had also been positive.

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

5. CONCEPT DESIGN BINGHAM LANE (FILE RDP152)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailed as follows:

Background

The Regeneration Unit had an annual budget allocated to work up future projects. The budget provided the opportunities for projects to be developed to the design and/or planning stage.

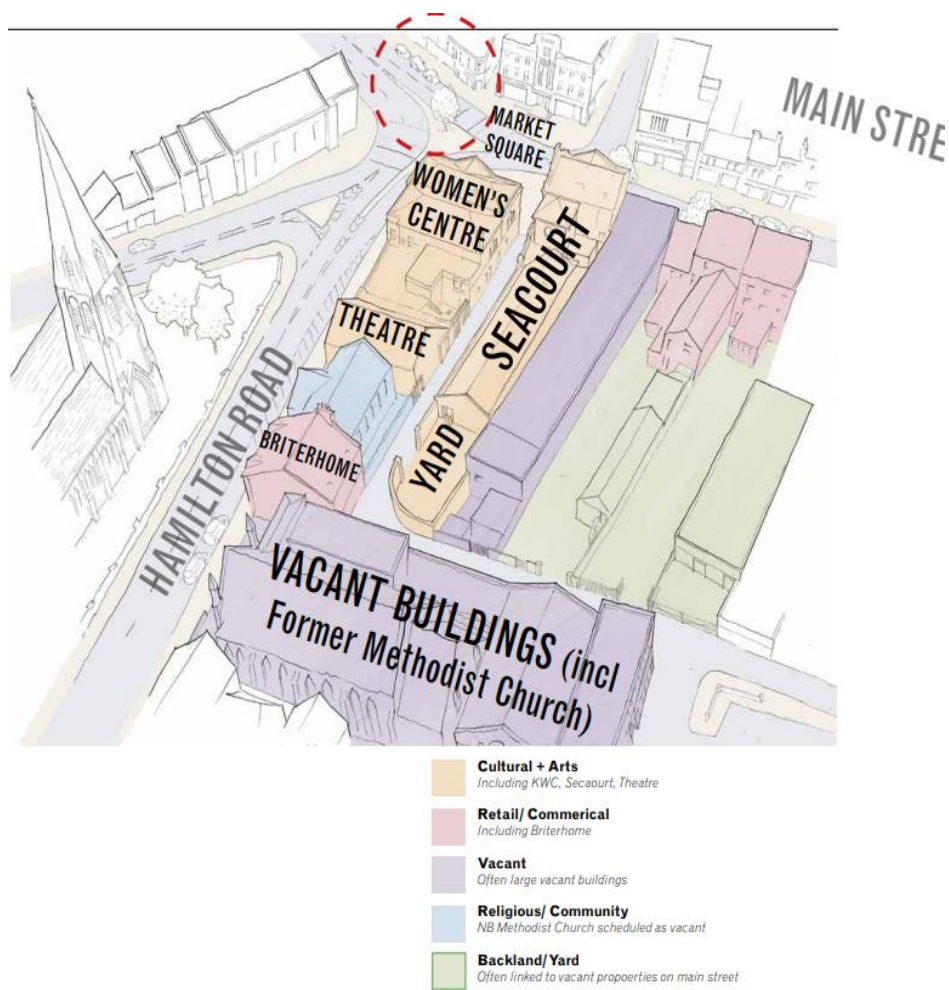
In June 2024, Members agreed the development of a concept design for a pedestrian walkway in Bangor, from Bingham Lane to Main Street, to be taken forward. The project aimed to develop a design to transform this key connecting laneway into a vibrant and inviting public space in alignment with Priority C ‘Make the Streets People Friendly’ and Priority D ‘Connect with the Centre’ of the Bangor Masterplan.

Appointment of Consultants

In November 2024, officers issued an invitation to quotation to seven local consultants for the delivery of a concept design. OGU (Lead Consultant) and MMAS architects were successfully awarded the contract and commenced in December 2024.

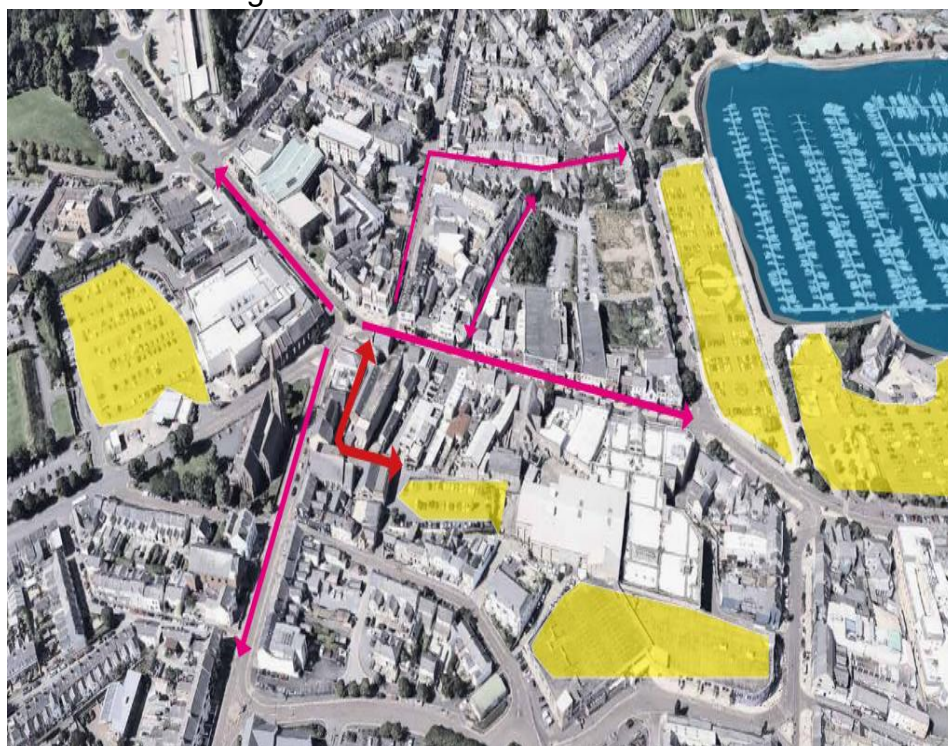
Concept Design

The appointed consultants assessed the current site, identified medium to long-term opportunities, and proposed immediate short-term actions to revitalise this connecting walkway.



Bingham Lane was located off the Market Square at the geographical centre of Bangor. The lane had developed a cluster of community, retail, and cultural buildings around it.

- Historic and geographical centre of Bangor
- Public transport links
- Filtering streets to the public realm and future Waterfront and Queen's Parade development
- Availability of parking (shown in yellow)
- Primary route along Hamilton Road
- Direct link to the Main Street
- Direct link to the High Street



The consultants looked at the existing conditions, as well as drawing on its assets and opportunities:

Assets and Opportunities:

- Existing condition – the area had significant assets but faced issues like direct lack of access and low surface quality. Improvements could enhance its roles as a primary site.
- Market Square entrance – featured high quality stone paving and listed buildings but lacked clear connection to Bingham Lane. Opportunities existed to improve visual and physical engagement.
- Reuse of historic buildings – successful reuse of heritage buildings by Seacourt Print Workshop and Kilcooley Women's Centre had created active community hubs. Potential existed to expand cultural uses, including the vacant Methodist Church.
- Cluster of cultural spaces:
 - a. Seacourt Print Workshop – offers printmaking workshops, studios and a gallery but could improve visibility and connections to the street.

- b. Kilcooley Women’s Centre – provided diverse community services and was working toward full restoration of its building.
 - c. Studio 1A – a long-standing cultural asset.
 - d. Artist Studios – Seacourt and Boom Studios – 40 affordable studios with demand for more. Greater visibility for artists and evidence-based support for additional spaces are needed.
 - e. Yard Spaces – Seacourt’s Yard could be opened to activate Bingham Lane with potential outdoor workshops and events.
- Heritage features – historic walls, concertina gates, and architectural features could be repurposed to enhance the area’s character and activity.
 - Back-land sites – underutilised yards and buildings offered opportunities for housing or studio spaces, supporting the cultural quarter and city vitality.
 - Vacancy – vacant Methodist Church – a key site with potential for cultural and community uses. Short-term activation and long-term redevelopment were possible.

Main Issues:

- Lack of activity and connections along Bingham Lane.
- Poor pedestrian access from Bingham Street.
- Low surface quality and informal car parking.
- Graffiti, which could be addressed through high-quality street art.

Opportunities:

- Improved signage, connections, and surface quality.
- Activate spaces like Seacourt’s yard and Kilcooley Women’s Centre gate.
- Repurpose vacant buildings, including the Methodist Church. A large portion of Bingham Lane was fronted by the church complex which was now vacant.
- Develop back-land sites strategically for long-term quality. There were several yards and back-land sites which were underutilised.
- Encourage activity by exploring how some of the spaces could open or engage better.
- Bangor had a perceived high number of artists living and working in the Borough and this therefore had created a vibrant scene for various scales of arts businesses and activities.

Public Engagement

A public engagement workshop was held on Wednesday 19th March 2025 in Market House, Bangor. Members of the public were invited to attend and view the concept design proposals and provide their feedback, 25 people were in attendance. In addition to the public engagement workshop, the designs were available to view online with an opportunity to provide feedback.

Short, Medium, and Long-Term Proposals

The concept design had provided the following proposals as short, medium, and long term interventions:

Short Term Summer 2025
Bingham Lane Festival

The idea of a Bingham Lane Festival was to build momentum around what might happen with the street and its spaces. This was about testing and piloting what could happen more frequently or permanently. A festival or event would help put Bingham Lane back on the radar of people who did not know much about it or the buildings and organisations along it. This would in turn drive usage and footfall along the lane as a shortcut and thoroughfare during normal days. This method allowed the street to be tested when it was in a different 'destination' mode with activity along it.



Short Term | 12 months

Cleaning and Maintenance

During the public engagement it was mentioned by a few people that beginning the process of cleaning and tidying up the alleyway would be a good starting point. It should be noted that the laneway was owned by the Department for Infrastructure, and it was therefore its overall responsibility. Litter picking and some general tidying could be organised. The 'Love Your Laneways' project in Melbourne was an inspirational project that showed the impact of getting some of the basics right around cleaning, bins and maintenance - this was now a primary attraction in the city.



Existing conditions.

Street Art

Bangor (and Northern Ireland generally) had a vibrant street art and mural scene. There were high level street artists working locally as well as a wealth of international artists working in Northern Ireland. This could add another dimension of discovery along the laneway - with the large gable above the Seacourt Yard being an obvious site to do something significant and impactful. The walls along the laneway were also potential sites.



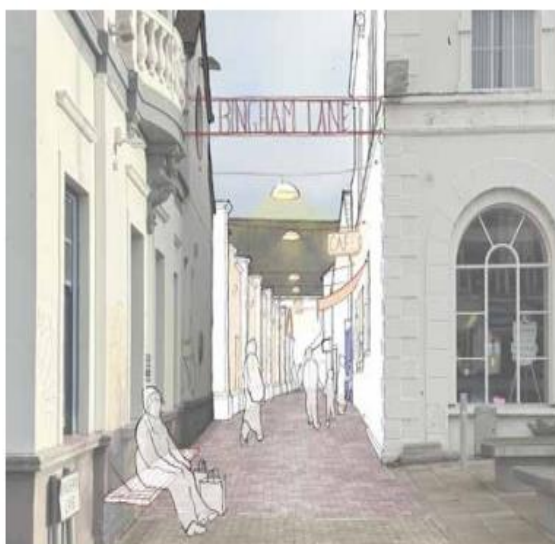
Seacourt Sign

Seacourt was a prominent and important part of the entrance to and along the lane (alongside the Kilcooley Women's Centre/ Market House building). Located within a listed former bank, its presence was not always obvious for people who did not know it was there or were not regular gallery visitors. An appropriate sign could enhance the existing building in a way that helped people to discover what Seacourt was. This would also support and work with the art yard idea and people moving within the building. If there were issues in terms of the historic context and hand painting (similar to previous examples)- it would be possible to discuss removeable vertical signage.



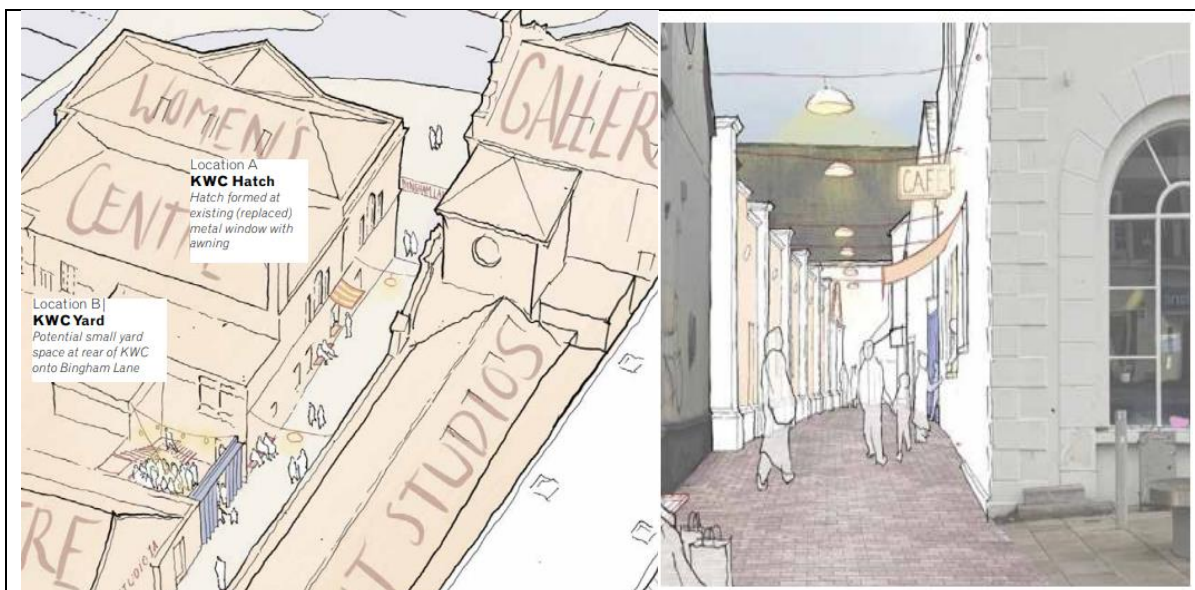
Bingham Lane Sign

Developing footfall and activity on the lane was the main purpose of most proposals. Wayfinding and signage could be important in designating spaces as public and safe. Bingham Lane was not on the 'mental map' of Bangor for many people walking past. Alongside other measures discussed, a quality metal sign, lit in an appropriate way for the context of the listed buildings would be helpful in identifying it as a safe route for pedestrians to use.



Hatch

An early proposal by the Kilcooley Women's Centre during initial engagement recognised that the street needed activity along it. A hatch along Bingham Street at the existing metal side window was discussed. Two options/ locations for exploration had been provided. The capacity and idea of this could be tested during the street festival.



Art Yard

One of the most impactful projects in the short term would be to repurpose the yard to the rear of Seacourt into something which was an outdoor hub for the building. It could be informal and the kind of place that people would drop into casually. The Bingham Lane Festival would be a chance to test how it might function and develop as a space in the longer term.



Greening

Adding planting and greening either in rain gardens and integrated ways or edge planters and pots could be a useful way of improving lanes and yards. The 'Love Your Laneways' movement generally showed lots of good examples of where this had been completed effectively. The planting could also be included in controlled spaces in yards and expand out onto the public realm.



Medium Term | 1-3 years

Surface Improvements and Seating

The existing Market Square had been landscaped in good quality stone paving. The quality of this should be extended along the laneway, supporting the laneway as a public route and encouraging use. Alongside other measures (like improved lighting and signage) this would help encourage more people to use the laneway as other developments take shape.



Lighting

Good quality catenary lighting with low maintenance provided a sense of intimacy and human scale that would support the street as a public space and help the feeling of safety in the laneway. It would make it much more utilised as a local connecting lane and (with other developments) a destination in its own right. It must be noted that lighting should carefully consider the listed context of adjacent buildings and had a quality befitting the type of atmospheric developing laneway the project was encouraging with cultural and community spaces along it (this was not a scheme for basic infrastructural lighting typically provided by DfI).



More Direct Connections on the Lane

There were a number of places (i.e. vacant church building) if occupied by other types of users could open onto Bingham Lane. This would help promote the use of the street as a destination as well as a connecting pedestrian route.



Long Term | 2-5 years

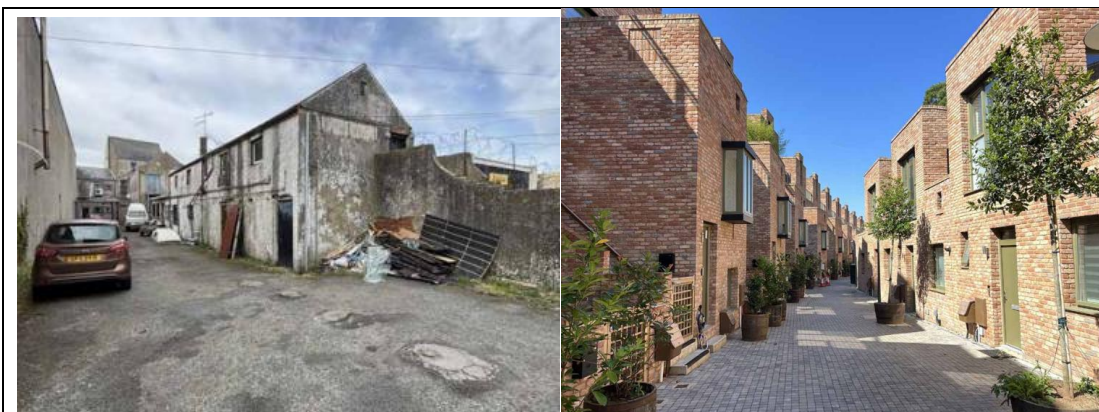
Permanent Cultural/Community Space in Repurposed Church Buildings

The church buildings had an interesting layout with a series of spaces which would support a range of community and cultural uses. The approach here could be light touch in terms of investment such as 2 Royal Avenue in Belfast which was about getting the doors back open or potentially with some refurbishment to repurpose the building if a partner organisation was involved.



Mews Housing

It was now recognised that towns and cities which had large numbers of people living in the central cores - helped to support all sorts of commercial, retail, and cultural uses. The back-land sites of Bangor and Bingham Lane as a demonstrator showed how an atmospheric mixed-use street could develop. There was a clear need for housing in NI and this housing could support artists living near their studios and older people wanting to live centrally with facilities and a train station on their doorstep.



The proposals had been carefully designed to acknowledge the importance of this central location and its associated heritage and cultural assets. Feedback from local stakeholders, public input, and insights from relevant case studies had informed this proposal, showcasing a variety of short, medium, and long-term proposals that had the potential to significantly enhance this vital connecting route.



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and the intention of officers to explore various funding opportunities for each of the proposed elements and report to the Committee should any funding opportunities be identified. Officers will additionally assist stakeholders, if requested to, in obtaining funding for a Bingham Lane Festival in 2025/2026 to serve as a trial for the proposed future uses.

Proposed by Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the Council notes this report and requests that officers take forward a planning application for the draft proposals. That would support the intention of officers to explore various funding opportunities for each of the proposed elements and report to the Committee should any funding opportunities be identified. In addition, officers would consult stakeholders about the potential for a Bingham Lane Festival and would support them in obtaining funding if requested to do so.

Speaking to his alternative proposal, Councillor McCracken praised the report, explaining that he had worked personally with the architects involved so had a good understanding of the quality that they had brought to this.

He felt that the work had captured a sense of place for Bingham Lane and thought through how the different elements could cluster and mutually reinforce one another to create something that worked well beyond the sum of its parts.

The proposer was aware however, from previous experience, pointing to an example in Hollywood, that the funding from Central Government was very short term in nature and contained tight deadlines within its terms and conditions. Those deadlines were completely unrealistic if planning consent was required.

Pointing to various positive elements of the scheme - he highlighted signage and lighting - but believed they would all require planning permission. He felt therefore it would be prudent to invest a small amount in to getting the planning consent before perusing those external funding opportunities. It would mean that projects would be ready to go.

He believed that a quick win could be to undertake a deep clean of the lane which he understood would be welcomed by businesses.. That would at least start the process of enhancing the lane.

Continuing, Councillor McCracken queried how that would work in terms of DfI involvement and if any conversations had already taken place with DfI officials and the Head of Regeneration confirmed that there had been some initial engagement with DfI in terms of a deep clean and how that could look. He said that officers had agreed that it would help improve the attractiveness of the area.

Councillor McCracken queried the festival, explaining that he would be less concerned about holding a festival this summer, in 2025, given the area was not looking its best, but he felt some quick wins at this stage would work and the festival could take place next year with the possibility of capital funding. He felt that a

discussion with stakeholders would be beneficial but the Council should not force the issue.

The Director of Place felt that this could be a good starting point as a 'bid project' and complement the larger plans for the area.

The seconder Councillor Blaney welcomed the project and felt it was what the Council needed to look at across the Borough, particularly in this area of Bangor.

Main Street had endured its share of dereliction and he noted that a hardware store that backed on to the area had recently become vacant too. He also felt that this area tended to be avoided and the underpass in Main Street was often favoured instead.

Continuing, Councillor Blaney felt that this area could be turned into a vibrant hub. He praised officers for their work and hoped that what was a great idea on paper could be turned into a final product. He therefore supported the alternative proposal and felt that small quick steps were a good way to start instead of just waiting for the entire project to be completed at once. If the Council was halfway towards this within a year or two, it would be good progress.

Councillor Smart welcomed what he felt was an exciting project particularly given an emerging art scene in Bangor. It was a good opportunity to develop that and build on it in terms of the festival offering. He was supportive of the alternative proposal and agreed with the proposer in terms of having the planning permission in place being key to securing the funding when it became available.

He queried the task required to pull that planning application together, noting that the work would involve other partners. He wondered if it was the right time to proceed with that and if officers felt it was achievable.

The Head of Regeneration said his team felt it was worth pursuing and it was known from experience that if projects were already worked up to a shovel ready stage, the Council was in a good position to act when funding became available.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the Council notes this report and requests that officers take forward a planning application for the draft proposals. This will support the intention of officers to explore various funding opportunities for each of the proposed elements and report to the Committee should any funding opportunities be identified. In addition, officers will consult stakeholders about the potential for a Bingham Lane Festival and will support them in obtaining funding if requested to do so.

The Chair welcomed the Strategic Capital Project and Programme Manager to what was his first meeting of the Committee and advised that he was overseeing the Bangor Waterfront project.

6. **UPDATE REPORT ON THE DEPUTATION FROM DONAGHADEE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMPANY (SIR SAMUEL KELLY CENTRE) (FILE RDP42)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailed as follows:

Background

Members would recall a deputation by representatives from Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company (Sir Samuel Kelly Centre) on 9 January 2025. Included in the deputation was a concept design for a Visitor and Heritage Centre to provide a suitable permanent site to store the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat. The design also proposed a kitchen and café, toilets, a space for other heritage items, meeting rooms, and a balcony.

It was subsequently agreed that officers should present a report detailing the steps necessary to take forward the requests made by Donaghadee Heritage and Preservation Society.

Update

Three requests of the Council were detailed in the deputation. Each request and the subsequent considerations were detailed below.

1. Council to grant the Company a long lease on the site

Location of the Centre

Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company had detailed the intention to apply for a 99-year lease on the current site. The current lease expired in October 2028. It was envisaged that a long-term lease would increase the likelihood of the Company securing the substantial funding required to deliver and operate the Centre.

Since the deputation, consideration had been given to relocate the site from its existing location to an area closer to the entrance of the car park. Envisaged benefits of this relocation included:

- Improved proximity and connectivity to the town centre
- Improved access from the coastal path
- Increase the unobstructed view to and from the Centre
- The potential to store the lifeboat in a rectangle rather than a square which would be of operational and visitor benefit

Planning considerations

Subject to any agreement on securing the land, Planning Permission would need to be applied for. The Sir Samuel Kelly representatives would be advised to submit a Pre Application Discussion (PAD) to the Council's Planning Department identifying this area. This would enable officers to assess the proposal in advance of any formal submission being made to consider if the proposal complies with the local area plan and prevailing planning policy. In addition, this would be an opportunity to garner

views of statutory consultees in particular with regard to potential infrastructure and traffic implications.

Consideration of applicable rent costs

An additional consideration as part of the decision-making process to grant a 99-year lease included the cost of the use of land for the duration of the agreement. The current rent to Council was nominal given that the Company was a charity and was leasing the land for the purposes of restoring the Council owned lifeboat. The nominal rent was approved by the Department for Communities (DfC).

The proposal detailed a request from the Company that the lease would permit an agreed range of activities that would be deemed non-commercial, and any profit arising from sales would go back into the project. For example, the sale of refreshments, branded merchandise, and hire charges for use of the meeting rooms.

Additionally, the proposal detailed the intention to facilitate a commercial tenant/s to generate funds to contribute towards the Centre's operational costs. If the proposal was approved and in readiness for this possibility, flexibility within the rent charged would need to be documented. Advice would be taken from the Council's valuer on the applicable rent costs.

2. Council recommendation to decide upon a site by the Summer 2025

To enable an informed and meaningful decision-making process to be completed and agreed by the Council, a decision by Summer 2025 would be unfeasible owing to the following processes:

- A pre application discussion (PAD) with the Planning Service.
- The Lands Department initiating an internal consultation process regarding a potential 99-year lease agreement. The request for a lease would need to be reported to the Corporate Services Committee.
- The request for a below market value charge of rent for a substantial timeframe, and the associated impacts, will need careful consideration by the Council. Advice from the Council's valuer will be sought and a final decision would most likely be dependent on agreement from DfC
- Any potential limitations for other uses or infrastructure requirements of the car park was required to also inform part of the decision-making process.

3. Council to assist the project going forward

To date, Regeneration and Lands officers had worked in collaboration with representatives from Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company (Sir Samuel Kelly Centre) and this would continue.

Next steps

If the project progressed, Council officers would collaborate further given the multi-faceted nature of the project and to ensure effective communication with the Sir Samuel Kelly representatives as necessary.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Hennessy reported that Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company was excited by this progress since its deputation in January. He was aware that it had brought forward additional proposals which looked at re-siting to a more prominent position, closer to the path. The organisation accepted that this was subject to Planning approval and its representatives hoped to engage with the Planning Service in respect of a pre-planning discussion (PAD) which had been requested at the end of January.

He was aware that the organisation had not yet had a response and feared that it may not get a decision before the end of the year. The proposer asked for an update on that process and the Director of Place would follow that up with the Planning Service.

The seconder, Councillor McCollum was pleased with the report which had resulted from her proposal at the meeting where the deputation had taken place. She added that the planning process in terms of the PAD was important to enable DHPC to prepare plans and stay on top of any funding opportunities that became available.

The Chair was aware that DHPC was extremely active in exploring all avenues, pointing out that Peter Martin MLA had set up a meeting with the DfC Minister. She would be glad to see the boat in its final home.

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

7. UPDATE ON VILLAGE PLANS 2025-2035 (FILE 160135)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailed as follows:

Background

Regeneration officers were currently developing a new set of Village Plans for each of the villages within the Borough. The new Village Plans were required as the existing plans had now expired and were no longer fit for purpose.

Village Plans 2025-2035

The new Village Plans aimed to provide a strategic framework for the development of each village over the next ten years, prioritising adaptability through annual reviews in collaboration with the community groups to ensure they remained relevant and reflective of the changing needs and aspirations of the community.

Process of Developing the Village Plans

The development of the new Village Plans had been a three-stage process and officers were currently in the final stage.

Stage 1 – Desktop Research and Public Engagement (Completed)

April 2024 – November 2024

- Extensive desktop research was completed for each village and an analysis of statistical data completed by officers.
- Extensive public engagement was delivered between May 2024 and October 2024, this included public workshops, involvement of community groups and local activity groups, local primary school workshops, attendance at public events, conducting on-street surveys, and supported with an online survey.

Stage 2 – Identify and Refine Priorities (Completed)

December 2024 – April 2025

- In December 2024, officers commenced the process of analysing the data from the various public engagement, identifying emerging themes, and priorities for each village.
- A further stage of public engagement was delivered to ensure the emerging themes and priorities were indeed reflective of the community's needs whilst providing an opportunity to refine these further. This included a public workshop in each village and an online survey. Stage 2 closed for responses on 28th February 2025.
- Between March and April 2025, a final review of the emerging themes and priorities was delivered in collaboration with each of the community groups.

Stage 3 – Draft Plans for Review (In Progress)

May 2025 – June 2025

- Workshops with each of the various internal departments had commenced to gather their insights and contributions, recognising that many of the identified priorities would require collaboration across various departments. This process would enable forward work planning and provide an opportunity for Regeneration and other departments to secure the required resources to begin to deliver on the themes and priorities.
- Officers had commenced developing the Village Plan template and were currently populating a template for each village.
- Following a request from the community groups, officers had agreed that the final draft of each Village Plan would be issued to each of the community groups for a final review before sign-off.

- Officers would arrange a meeting of the various rural partnership groups (North Down, Strangford, and Peninsula) in June 2025 to agree the final set of plans.

Completion and Launch of New Village Plans

It was expected that the Village Plans would be launched in September 2025, consisting of a central launch and village specific launches.

The Village Plan would be in digital format as a 'live' document, this would enable the themes and priorities to be reviewed and updated annually by Regeneration officers. Each plan would feature a video introduction. Further video content and live links could be added to showcase and evidence project delivery.

Each plan would be accessible on mobile, iPad, laptop or similar devices and could also be downloaded as a pdf.

In addition to the digital plan, a printed summary flyer would be available for each village, outlining the key themes and priorities identified.

Village Plan Communications

Officers were currently developing a communications strategy for both the launch and delivery of the Village Plans, this would include both internal and external communications.

Effectively communicating the delivery of the Village Plans would be essential to maintaining the long established and more recently established working relationships with each of the villages and the wider village partnerships. The communications would be focused on showcasing success and demonstrating local views were valued, with the core message emphasising 'your village – your voice, and, 'you spoke – we listened'.

Officers would bring a report to committee in June 2025, this would include:

- The themes and priorities identified for each village
- The Communications Strategy for the delivery of the Village Plans
- The proposed methodology for assessing project prioritisation

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and acknowledges the slight delay in completion due to the additional time needed for the community groups to review the final drafts.

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

Alderman Adair praised officers on their work in progressing the village plans, noting that in Greyabbey and Portaferry over 100 people had attended public consultation events. He had noticed a strong appetite from the community in taking part in the process and asked if the views expressed had been taken in to account.

The Head of Regeneration explained that all of the views provided throughout the process had been considered and the plans once completed would be brought back to each village for confirmation. He also referred to a communications plan which would aid that process. He added that officers had engaged with everyone that had given responses to the consultation process and it was not just the views of one specific consultation group which had been a further concern raised by the proposer.

Alderman Adair described the previous work around village plans as a copy and paste job, so he was reassured by the officer's response. He thanked the Regeneration team and looked forward to the published plans which would be important for accessing funding when it became available.

Councillor Edmund added his thanks to the Regeneration team and recognised it was a totally different consultation to the previous one which had been put out to consultants. This process had been more sensitive to the views of village representatives. He looked forward to the plans being finalised and that everyone's views had been taken in to account.

Councillor McCollum endorsed those comments believing that the process was working extremely well, reflecting on her time representing two different DEAs during this Council's mandate. While there was a level of variance in terms of engagement between the two areas, she felt that was possibly due to the demographic of those particular areas.

Councillor McCollum was aware of feedback from Conlig Community Regeneration Group which had queried what tangible actions were expected from their village plan and had raised a further query which sought clarity on the boundary of Conlig village. She requested that officers provide further engagement with the group and the officer was happy to do so. He explained that it was hoped each village would undergo one development within the first year of the plans which he hoped would provide reassurance as a tangible action. He clarified that it would not necessarily be delivered by the Regeneration service but possibly other sections of the Council where appropriate.

The officer would also provide details of the boundary lines for Conlig village and it was clarified that it was only recognised as a village in the context of Regeneration's Village Plans but officially it was a suburb of Bangor.

The Chair noted that there were frustrations around previous village plans and that many aspirations had failed to materialise due to the lack of available funding. However, she was pleased that these plans were being drawn up by Council officers, as opposed to appointing consultants, as the officers knew each village well.

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

8. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL (BRCD) UPDATE (FILE RDP22/RDP56)
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place and Director of Prosperity detailed as follows:

1. Background

As previously advised, the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) represented a transformative £1 billion capital investment programme designed to drive inclusive economic growth across the Belfast City Region. The Deal focused on four strategic pillars: Innovation and Digital, Tourism and Regeneration, Infrastructure, and Employability & Skills. Collectively, the BRCD aimed to create up to 20,000 new and better jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and deliver long-term benefits for people and communities across the region.

2. BRCD Update

The BRCD Programme Director post still remained unfilled with the Programme Managers currently fulfilling the operational functions associated with the programme.

2.1 Council Panel

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council hosted a meeting on 26th March 2025 of the BRCD Council Panel. Minutes of the meeting, as yet, had not been circulated. Councillor McKimm attended the meeting with the Interim Director of Place.

3. Digital & Innovation Update

Innovation Commissioner: The post was advertised in June 2024 and Dr Adrian Johnston MBE took up the role in January 2025 contributing to the Digital Pillar.

Innovation Challenge Fund Programme: This programme collaborated with the BRCD Centres of Excellence to complement capital investments. It works with SMEs in relevant sectors to unite academia, researchers and businesses together to develop solutions for:

- Smart buildings
- Reducing emissions in the supply chain
- Low carbon processed in manufacturing
- Green computing for waste energy recovery
- Smart integrated power systems.

Augment the City Challenge Fund Project: This project supported the creative digital sector offered a challenge fund for SMEs to create solutions to engage citizens and visitors to Belfast.

- **Phase 1:** 10 companies received up to £10k to test ideas through a 5G installation at Belfast City Hall.
- **Phase 2:** Six companies received up to £35k to further develop their projects.
- **Phase 3:** Held in April 2025, this phase was held in Belfast City Hall to reduce the number of companies from six to three. All six companies presented their concepts which use immersive and digital technologies to gather, curate, and present stories about Belfast and its people. The selected three companies would receive up to £100k to develop prototypes, with learnings shared among BRCD partners.

Enabling Infrastructure Fund Project: Led by Digital Catapult this fund was seen as a key enabler across the region prioritising wireless connectivity.

The investigation into the investment required to establish a 5G ecosystem across the City Deal region had been completed. Key findings highlighted the need for significant investment in infrastructure to support widespread 5G deployment, including the installation of new base stations and the upgrading of existing ones.

Efforts were underway to build capacity among BRCD partners to ensure preparedness for future funding opportunities. This included training programs and workshops to enhance technical and strategic capabilities of the partners. As more details were shared updates would be provided as appropriate.

4. Employability and Skills

Skills Assessment: The Advanced Manufacturing Skills Assessment and Digital Skills Assessment reports had now both been approved by the BRCD Executive Board. A review of the identified actions was currently being undertaken to determine suitable actions for inclusion in the BRCD Employability and Skills action plan.

Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre Skills Strategy: This strategy was being progressed, and Members would be updated upon conclusion.

5. Bangor Waterfront Update

The Bangor Waterfront Project Board continued to meet regularly to oversee delivery of this major project. Progress remained on track and in line with the Milestone Dates set out in the Contract for Funding. A detailed update on all current workstreams was provided in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCracken noted the appendix referred to five character areas from Skippingstone in the west to Banks Lane in the east. He queried what the other three areas were and the Capital Project and Programme Manager advised that the route started in the west at Skippingstone, then covered Bangor Marina, Seacliff Road, Kingsland and ended at Bank's Lane.

Referring to the Kingsland area, Councillor McCracken felt that it was a strong asset along that stretch and while once popular had suffered degeneration over the years and hadn't received the attention it deserved. He felt it was right to focus on five areas for the £18million investment rather than spread the pot too thinly over 3.2km of coastline.

He asked what development was expected to take place in the Kingsland area and how it would link in with Ballyholme Yacht Club.

The Capital Project and Programme Manager explained that an ICT process was about to commence and advised that in relation to Kingsland there were proposals for a number of kiosk type facilities, a cafe area and it also included some play space

for young children. There was also an urban sports facility and parkland in and around that location. There were no direct links to Ballyholme Yacht Club.

Councillor McCracken felt that an attractive public realm was important for what would be a water sports centre of excellence but he felt what was being discussed sounded positive.

In a further query, he had noted that the Council had appointed consultants to work up private investments for the Waterfront scheme. He was aware that consultants would be tasked to undertake the same process for the separate Queen's Parade development plans which was on the same stretch of coastline. He asked how officers would ensure there was no duplication between the two consultants of the two separate projects which were likely to have competing objectives.

The Director of Place advised that the two private consultants should not be in competition. There needed to be some synergy between them to attract money into the Borough. While the two would be communicating, he explained that the type of investment for each project would be different and the Council would focus on the 2.2 mile stretch that it was responsible for. He clarified that the land side of the Queen's Parade development was the responsibility of Bangor Marine and the Department for Communities.

(Alderman Adair left the meeting – 7.33pm)

The seconder Councillor Hollywood welcomed the progress and was pleased to see that at least one aspect of development along the seafront was moving in a positive direction.

The Chair raised a query around the planned installation of a playpark within the Marine Gardens development to replace the one at Pickie Fun Park which would make way as part of separate development at that location. Given those two developments were intended to complement one another, she wondered if delays to the Marine Gardens development would change the plans at Pickie Fun Park.

The Director of Place explained that it was intended to install the tier one playpark in advance and while he was unable to clarify a start date for the Pickie development he advised that it would be out of the Council's control if the private operator of Pickie Fun Park closed off the park for development but that was not a concern at this time.

Councillor Blaney welcomed the update but felt that a lot of the plans were a long way off development. He questioned whether the Council was in fact delaying other assets from being developed because it was waiting on this 'great plan'.

He referred to unused land at Kingsland which would not see money spent on it for a quite a while and he felt that a commercial opportunity could be developed there for a café for example. This could go some way to regenerating the area before the masterplans were fulfilled. He feared that in this case, great could be the enemy of good.

He pointed to the success of the Council's former bike shed at Ward Park which was now a very successful café. He felt that Council therefore could make pieces of land here available for commercial use and which could be up and running within six months.

The officer advised that the ICT process would consider that option and look at the opportunities over the 2.2-mile stretch. Those could be brought to the Committee for agreement to be put out as a development brief ahead of reaching the final plans. He explained that officers had discussed what could be done, in terms of a commercial element, outside of the Waterfront plan.

In a further suggestion, Councillor Blaney felt that building commercial pods now for example would be more attractive for someone to open a shop. In Kingsland for example, it would have a knock-on effect of lowering the value of a Council owned building that was currently used by a Camera Club due to commercial activity already being established in the area.

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

9. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other business.

Councillor McCracken wished to place on record that he had attempted to bring an item of Any Other Notified Business but it had been rejected by the Chair in advance of the meeting.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

10. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL (BRCD) ISSUES (FILE RDP22)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

Council was asked to agree with recommendations in relation to the Court House Development Phase 2, the Marina and also note the Innovation Hub update. Further discussions on these if agreed will be held with the relevant government departments.

11. REVIVE OUR HIGH STREETS PROGRAMME PROPOSAL (FILE RDP43)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:4 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

Consultations with DfC officials are ongoing and have been in advance of a formal application, pending approval by the Council. Any reporting of potential funding amount, or projects, are likely to negatively impact the application process and working relationship with DfC.

Additionally, the full details of Level 2 are yet to be finalised and therefore any reporting of the scheme could potentially negatively impact its design or delivery.

12. CASTLE STREET GAP SITE COMBER – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 639 (FILE RDP14) (Appendix)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:1 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO AN INDIVIDUAL.

Given the previous media attention the private landowner has received upon reporting of a previous report on this project it is strongly recommended that this report be In Confidence. Additionally, the report being In Confidence would seek to protect the integrity of the ongoing negotiations with the landowner, DfC, and officers.

13. DFC/ANDBC URBAN REGENERATION PROGRAMME (FILE RDP43) (Appendix IV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:4 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

Consultations with DfC officials are ongoing and have been in advance of a formal application, pending approval by the Council. Any reporting of potential funding amount, or projects, are likely to negatively impact the application process and working relationship with DfC.

NB – Appendix 001 DFC ANDBC Urban Regeneration Programme 2024 – 26 Action Plan should also be In Confidence.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

PP.08.05.25PM

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TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.50pm.

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 13 May 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Irwin

Alderman: Brooks McRandal
Graham McIlveen
McAlpine

Councillors: Chambers McCracken
Cochrane Moore
Gilmour Thompson
Irvine, S

Officers in Attendance: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Strategic Capital Development (A Dadley), Corporate Project Officer (R Farr) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Smith and Councillor W Irvine.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Alderman Brooks – Item 11 - Request from Donaghadee Sailing Club to renew the lease at the Former Baths Hotel, Donaghadee.

NOTED.

3. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL CONSULTATION EQUALITY AND DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025 – 2029 (FILE EQ1)

(Appendix I – II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

Background

This report was deferred from April 2025 Corporate Services Committee. An email responding to queries raised at the meeting had been issued to the committee. Several amendments had been made to the Action Plans as a result of comments made at committee. These had been included in red for ease of reference in the appendices.

Update

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 these 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 these 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 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.

The 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.

The draft Equality and Disability Action Plans 2025-2029 had been further amended to reflect comments made at April 2025 Corporate Services Committee.

Many of the actions in the draft Equality and Disability Action Plans were based on good management, in-house training and revised service delivery. This 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 in June 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). This survey would also be advertised on Council social media channels for the general public.

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 12 June until 4 September 2025 at 4.00pm. This 12-week period is 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 had been and would continue to 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 in October 2025.

In the intervening period, the current Action Plan would continue to run until an updated one was approved.

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

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

The proposer, Alderman McRandal, was content to propose the recommendation, noting that the further information requested had been provided.

Alderman McIlveen welcomed the new formatting which provided some clarity in terms of Section 75 groups and would help people reading and assessing it.

He could not support the proposal however and went on to raise issues around public access areas and while he appreciated there had been some rewording, the Committee was discussing an Equality Plan that had not been decided yet.

While he was pleased to have His Majesty's photograph displayed in the Chamber, if whenever the Council was looking at a new Council Chamber and there were objections made to displaying the Head of State because people felt it created an

inharmonious workplace when in fact this was a political chamber, then the Council was making a rod for its own back.

He noted a similar situation with the Diversity, Equality and Inclusivity strategy that had not yet been discussed in this Chamber. He was aware of a campaign from the Local Government Staff Commission and he was not in a position where he could necessarily agree or tie himself to its development.

Given those points, he was opposed to the proposal and if it fell, he wished for it to proceed without those two aspects.

As there was objection to the proposal, a vote was taken.

On being put to the meeting, with 7 voting FOR, 6 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 3 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

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

4. ASSERTION OF ALLEGED PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY FROM THE HILL TO THE LANE BETWEEN 24-26 THE BRAE, GROOMSPORT (FILE PROW AQ)

(Appendix III – V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the route between The Hill and the lane between 24 and 26 The Brae, Groomsport (the “Lane”) was an alleged public right of way and was added to the Council’s records as such in 2024, following an enquiry into its status from the Groomsport Community Association. A map showing the route of the alleged public right of way on the Lane was included in this report as Appendix 1.

There was a statutory requirement in the Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 for Councils to assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any public rights of way in their areas.

Investigation

Evidence had been collated to investigate the existence a public right of way on the Lane. In accordance with the legislative guidance this was summarised below:

- The alleged public right of way on the Lane is located from a public place, The Hill, Groomsport (a DFI adopted road), to another public place, the lane between 24 and 26 The Brae, Groomsport (a DFI adopted lane) and was easily passable, with defined boundaries. It provided an access route between Groomsport village, The Hill, The Brae and the surrounding area.
- The alleged public right of way followed a consistent line and was approximately 53m long and its width ranges between 1.5m – 4m between boundaries.

- The alleged public right of way on the Lane was in good condition. It could be easily navigated with a tarmac surface for most of it and a gravel surface for the remainder. The boundary treatment of the public right of way on the Lane consisted of a hedge on one side and a hedge and a wooden fence on the other side.
- The alleged public right of way on the Lane was located on unregistered land. An extensive search for the landowner was undertaken including contacting the adjoining landowners. Law searchers were commissioned to carry out a Registry of Deeds search and preliminary enquiries identified a family estate as a possible landowner. The solicitors of the family estate were identified and contacted, and landownership was confirmed. After corresponding with the landowner's solicitor on many occasions, including giving a final submission deadline, no objection was received in relation to the proposed assertion.
- Eighteen Witness Evidence Forms were received by Council, all supporting the allegation that the route on the Lane is a public right of way. Returned Witness Evidence Forms evidence frequent, uninterrupted use of the alleged public right of way on the Lane without the consent of the landowner, as a convenient access link from Groomsport village to The Hill, the Brae, and the surrounding area, as follows:

(0-9 years)	2 people have used this route for less than 10 years.
(10-19 years)	7 people have used this route between 10 and 19 years.
(20-29 years)	1 person has used this route between 20 and 29 years.
(30-39 years)	3 people have used this route between 30 and 39 years.
(40-49 years)	None has used this route for between 40 and 49 years.
(50-59 years)	5 people have used this route between 50 and 59 years .

- Evidence showed that the alleged public right of way on the Lane was regularly used by pedestrians for recreational purposes and access to Groomsport village.
- Evidence in the form of various historical maps, dating between 1900 and the present, showed an access route in the same location.

Officers did not hold any information on this route before it was enquired about in 2024. However, evidence of use provided in the completed Witness Evidence Forms (and the lack of any evidence to the contrary) together with the historical evidence was sufficient to conclude that the route has been used as public right of way for many years. Until now formal assertion of the alleged public right of way on the Lane had not been sought.

An Assertion Statement and Assertion Map was included in this report as Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- (i) asserts the alleged public right of way from The Hill to the lane between 24 and 26 The Brae, Groomspport (as set out in the Assertion Map) as a public right of way for pedestrian use;
- (ii) authorises the execution of the annexed Assertion Statement (enclosing the Assertion Map).

Proposed by Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, welcomed the report, explaining that he had been involved in the matter for a few years having received reports that the section of the lane was covered in overgrown weeds, grass and brambles, creating an obstacle. He had tried unsuccessfully to establish ownership of that section so it was fantastic that the Council had now been able to get to the bottom of it.

He recalled previous clean-ups coordinated through the local MLA office and queried if the now confirmed owner had the means to maintain the land themselves and if they were willing to do so.

The Head of Administration explained that the landowner was made aware of the matter and had lodged no objections so she could only assume that was the case. In response to a further question, the officer was unable to confirm if the owner lived locally.

In a final point, in relation to accuracy, the Deputy Mayor had noted that the report referred to Groomspport Community Group but asked that it be amended to the correct name of Groomspport Village Association.

The seconder, Councillor Cochrane, welcomed that a public right of way had been asserted, noting that so often reports came through with recommendations to reject them. Appreciating there were data protection considerations, he asked the officer if she could let Members know privately who owned the site so they had a point of contact. In a further query, he asked if the Council would be promoting this as a public right of way.

The officer committed to updating Members on the ownership of the land and while there was still a period of time required to complete the necessary paperwork beforehand, the new right of way would be published on the Council's website. She explained that it would be included in a map of public rights of way and this was a statutory requirement.

In a further query, the seconder asked if Groomspport Village Association and other groups had been updated on this and the officer explained that in line with procedure, all interested parties would be informed of the assertion.

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

5. **UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCILLORS (FILE FIN23)**

(Appendix VI – X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Department for Communities (DfC) recently commissioned a review of the roles and responsibilities of Councillors. The review reported to the Minister in August 2024 and published in March 2025 along with the Departmental response.

The report made 12 recommendations of which the Department fully accepted three, partially accepted one, would consider one in the future and did not accept the remaining six recommendations.

In light of this response the DfC issued a new determination in respect of the maximum allowances that councils may have paid and indicated that it would seek to amend legislation to allow the DfC to set allowances rather than councils.

This had been incorporated into to a draft revised scheme of allowances (appendices 4 and 5), for the consideration of Council. The main changes would be as follows:

- a. Page 1 – future basic allowances will follow the maximum the DfC determines.
- b. Page 2 – future special responsibility allowances track the DfC determination but are based on approximately 35% of the maximum, in line with previous schemes. The previous claiming structure has been retained for chairing of the standing committees.
- c. Page 5 – subsistence rates increased in line with inflation.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this report.

Proposed by Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council accepts the determination from Department for Communities on the roles and responsibilities of councillors.

The proposer felt it was right and proper that decision making on these matters was taken out of the hands of Councillors and that the determination from DfC should therefore be the direction of travel.

(Councillor Gilmour left the meeting - 7.10pm)

The Committee was unable to reach agreement so a vote was taken.

On being put to the meeting with 5 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 4 ABSENT, the Chair opted to use her casting vote in favour, so the proposal was CARRIED.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council accepts the determination from Department for Communities on the roles and responsibilities of councillors.

6. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION:

6(a) NOM 642 – CONCERN AT THE DECISION OF THE POST OFFICE TO PROPOSE TO CLOSE ITS BRANCHES IN MAIN STREET, BANGOR, AND FRANCES STREET, NEWTOWNARDS

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council at its meeting in November 2024:

“That this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the Post Office to propose to close its 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”.

A report was presented at the Corporate Services Committee meeting in February outlining that further to a meeting held between the Chief Executive and the External Affairs Manager of the Post Office, the Post Office Board was due to make a decision on the future of the Directly Managed Branches in their network by the end of March. In two emails received by the Chief Executive from the Post Office dated 8 April and 14 April, it was confirmed that Post Office would move to a fully franchised network as part of its commitment to bring about a New Deal for Postmasters. This meant that all of the Directly Managed Branches, including the branches at Bangor, Main Street, and Newtownards, Frances Street, would be franchised. They intended to move at pace and franchise by the Autumn, subject to Government funding.

The Post Office had confirmed that although the strategic decision was made to franchise the Directly Managed Branch network, the exact details of what this would mean for the branches at Bangor and Newtownards was still unknown and under consideration. As soon as such decisions were made, the Post Office would engage directly with the community and local stakeholders.

While, they had confirmed that no branches would be closed, the new franchise partner may have wished to either keep the branch where it was or move it to a new location. They would ensure that all communities currently serviced by a Directly Managed Branch had at least one Main branch within 1 mile radius of the existing Directly Managed Branch.

As outlined in the previous report, there may have been an opportunity for Council to meet with both the Post Office and Royal Mail to understand potential solutions for investment/additional uses for the buildings, should the locations be changed.

The Chief Executive would keep in touch with the management team at the Post Office and would bring a further update report back to Council in due course.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this update.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McIlveen noted that this was a motion brought by Councillor Wesley Irvine and Councillor Steven Irvine. He felt that the response had not provided what Members had really wanted to know and had failed to include the security of a decision.

The response also lacked clarity on whether the Post Office branches would remain in the positions they were currently in and a one-mile radius was still considerable distance both in respect of Newtownards and Bangor. He further noted that there had been a request for a representative of the Post Office to attend a meeting but that had not been accepted and it was now at a stage where a decision had been made to franchise. While that did give some hope that a decision was not closed completely, he felt that Post Office locations within town and city centres were key footfall drivers for surrounding shops and businesses. It was therefore hugely important that the Newtownards and Bangor branches were retained in their locations and that a franchisee would step in. He felt that the Post Office in Newtownards especially was located in an important place and he noted that Post Offices had stepped in when banks had withdrawn from town centres. They were owed a debt of gratitude for continuing that service and it was important that they remained within the Borough's town and city centres.

(Councillor Gilmour returned to the meeting – 7.14pm)

Councillor S Irvine appreciated the stated intention to retain the services and commitment to ongoing engagement with the community but expressed concern and caution particularly around the messaging used in relation to relocations, franchising and plans being subject to Government funding. He felt it left the future of Post Offices far from guaranteed.

Continuing, he believed that Newtownards and Bangor Post Office branches played a critical role in local infrastructure, especially for older residents and those who relied on in-person services. Many would be unsettled by the prospect of such a fundamental change and Council should not underestimate the impact of a relocation, change in quality or even temporary closure.

Councillor S Irvine added that it was not about how the strategy looked on paper but whether it genuinely safeguarded and enhanced access to vital services in our communities. He urged the Post Office to ensure that any proposed changes for Bangor and Newtownards were discussed transparently and locally before decisions

were finalised and that the needs for our community remained in the heart of the process.

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

7. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (FILE HR27)

(Appendix XII – XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Charter Framework for Member Development helped councils to support councillor development and recognises those that had built an effective approach. The Elected Member Development Steering Group led the work involved and provided a comprehensive menu of development opportunities across a 4 year period after each election.

Council's accreditation for Member Development was as follows:

Level of accreditation: Date:

- Charter March 2018
- Charter Plus January 2024 (criteria and report enclosed)
- Charter Plus Review January 2027

Following the annual Training Needs Analysis process, a draft Member Development Programme for 2025/26 had been compiled (copy enclosed). Invites to each event would be forwarded via the Democratic Services calendar booking system on Outlook. Additional detail, including presentations from past events could be found [here on MANDi](#). The contact for Member Development queries is the Organisational Development Manager (samantha.rea@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk).

RECOMMENDED that the Council to note the information contained in this report.

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

8. CYBER AWARENESS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Cyber security awareness was crucial for protecting organisations from cyber threats and was highlighted as a High Priority recommendation in an Advisory Review by Internal Audit stating, *“that the Council should implement a formal security awareness and training programme that provides adequate security awareness training throughout the Council”*.

This report analysed the effectiveness of a cyber security awareness programme which had been in place based on two key metrics: the click rate on phishing emails and the completion rate of cyber awareness training.

Phishing Email Click Rate

The click rate on phishing emails was a critical indicator of how well employees could identify and avoid malicious content. In March, the Council had a **4.97% click rate and the average click rate for Q4 2024/25 is 5.68%** (January 6.15%, February 5.92%) on phishing emails. This reduction in click rate suggested that the majority of participants in the programme were becoming more vigilant and could recognise phishing attempts. However, it also indicated that there was room for improvement, as even a small percentage of clicks could lead to significant security breaches.

Cyber Awareness Training Completion Rate

The completion rate of our cyber awareness training reflected how engaged employees were with the training programmes. A **62% completion rate** was a positive sign that the majority of participants are engaged with the training. This rate is essential for ensuring that participants are equipped with the knowledge and skills to protect the Council against cyber threats.

Analysis

1. **Effectiveness of Cyber Awareness Training:** The 62% completion rate indicated that the training programmes were reaching a significant portion of the workforce. However, increasing this rate going forward could have further enhanced the Council's overall security posture. Further work would be undertaken to remind employees and elected members of their responsibilities to undertake the training as the Council moved to a new provider.
2. **Impact on Phishing Email Click Rate:** The click rate on phishing emails suggested that the training was effective but not foolproof. Continuous training and simulated phishing exercises could help reduce this rate further. Regularly updating employees on the latest phishing tactics and encouraging a culture of vigilance can also contribute to lowering the click rate.

Next Steps

The current programme ended in March, and we had engaged the services of another provider, BoxPhish – this tool was used by Council's across the UK Local Government sector. The aims of the new programme would be to:

1. Introduce more engaging and interactive training modules to make the training more relatable and effective.
2. Conduct regular simulated phishing exercises to test participant's ability to identify phishing emails. Provide immediate feedback and additional training for those who fell for the simulations.
3. Regularly review and update training content to reflect the latest cyber threats and best practices. Encourage feedback from employees to improve the training programmes.
4. Continue to raise awareness through the display of posters and targeted computer backgrounds.
5. Report on a quarterly basis to Committee on the effectiveness of the training.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the report.

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

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) 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.

(Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall, attending remotely, joined the meeting – 7.17pm)

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

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor McKee explained that he and Councillor Kendall had brought the motion due to serious concern at the announcement made on Tuesday 18th March by the Work and Pensions Secretary, proposing significant changes to the social security system.

The implications were deeply worrying — particularly for disabled people, who once again found themselves at the sharp end of decisions made without adequate consultation or transparency.

It was known that across Ards and North Down, people were already struggling with the cost of living, access to health and social care, and barriers to employment. For disabled people, these challenges were even more acute. Many faced a daily battle just to access the support they needed — and now that limited support was under threat of being eroded even further.

The Trussell Trust had warned that 114,000 people were at potential risk of falling into poverty as a result of these proposals. That was not just a statistic — it was a potential humanitarian failure. Withdrawing or cutting support from those who needed it most would not just deepen poverty; it would also increase pressure on already overstretched public services — from the NHS to local councils like ours.

It was important to remember that behind every welfare policy change were real people — individuals and families in our community who relied on these systems not for luxury, but for dignity, independence, and survival.

These proposals risked undermining that dignity — and as a Council, we could not and should not remain silent.

That's why this motion was important because it called on the Council to write to the Work and Pensions Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the Minister for Communities — not just to express concern, but to demand answers.

We needed to know what these proposals would mean for Northern Ireland along with the plans that the Executive had to protect our most vulnerable citizens. We needed to know how these decisions aligned — or more likely, conflicted — with the Programme for Government and the yet to be published, Anti-Poverty Strategy.

There were more progressive and fairer ways to generate revenue for public services. Across these islands, the Green Party had long championed the introduction of a wealth tax on the richest in our society — ensuring that those with the broadest shoulders contributed their fair share.

Shifting the burden onto those already at risk of poverty was not only unjust; it was economically short-sighted. It was important now to speak up as a Council on behalf of those who were too often overlooked.

In closing, he urged the Committee to support this motion and to send a clear message: Ards and North Down stood for fairness, inclusion, and the protection of rights for all.

The seconder, Councillor Kendall urged the Committee to not be mistaken, poverty was a political choice.

The current UK government, and the one before it, wanted us to believe that by taking pounds from the poor, older people and pensioners, the disabled, workers, and small business owners, that the UK would be richer and the welfare state supported.

However cuts to our social security systems only further crushed low- and medium-income households. Despite no additional social security cuts announced in the Spring Statement, the Government had sneaked a further range of cuts in the Green Paper 'Pathways to Work' which would primarily affect people with disabilities.

The Labour Party, which once stood for a strong welfare state, publicly funded services and rights for workers, Liz Kendall and Rachel Reeves had chosen to target the most vulnerable, instead of asking those with the most, to give just a little bit more. This was shameful and we could not stand back and let this happen.

Before the pandemic, and before the cost-of-living crisis, one in five children were living in poverty, 67% of those children in working households, now it was estimated to be 1 in 4. This was a disgrace.

Residents of this Borough were worried about the impact that changes to social security would have, and in a recent Consumer Council Survey, 50% of surveyed

residents from this Borough said they had had to cut back spending on essentials after their mortgage/rent and any loan or overdraft payments had been made.

Northern Irish politicians did not need to make poverty their legacy, and Councillor Kendall now asked that this Committee agree to urge action to secure, safeguard and support the vulnerable, to stand in solidarity with those at risk of being pushed further into marginalisation and destitution.

In closing, she urged the Committee to support this motion, sending a clear message together that a just society was one that protected the vulnerable, invested in our people and their wellbeing, and delivered support based on compassion.

Councillor S Irvine rose to support the motion and echoed the serious concerns it raised regarding the proposals announced by the Work and Pensions Secretary.

He feared that the proposed changes could have a profound and damaging impact, particularly on disabled people who already faced significant daily challenges. It was deeply troubling that such wide-reaching reforms were being considered without care assurances or safeguards for those most vulnerable in our society.

As a Council we had a responsibility to speak up when the rights and well-being of our residents were at risk and it was absolutely appropriate, we wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister of Communities to seek urgent clarity.

Council needed to understand how these proposals would be implemented in Northern Ireland and crucially how the NI Executive planned to mitigate any negative consequences.

This was especially important in the context of the anti-poverty strategy and the Program for Government commitments, both of which needed to be more than just words on paper. They needed to translate into real practical protections for those in need.

He commended the proposer for bringing the motion and gave his wholehearted support for it.

Adding further support to the motion, Alderman McIlveen explained that he would have supported both this and the second motion that was listed on the agenda but assumed that the similar motion at Item 6(b), would now be withdrawn following agreement of this one. He did believe however the wording in the second motion was better and asked the proposer to clarify what he was asking Council to say to the Work and Pensions Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

He assumed that Council would be asking the Work and Pensions Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that they don't proceed with these plans given our concerns and the disproportionate effect that would have in Northern Ireland, noting that it had a higher number of PIP claimants, particularly in relation to mental health conditions.

Alderman McIlveen felt there were no depths to which this Labour government would plumb in terms of impacting people's wellbeing and referred to other decisions which attacked pensioners and farmers. He had noted the public's reaction to recent local Government elections in England which reflected how badly the Labour Government was viewed.

He was disappointed by the Prime Minister's reaction claiming that he was going to listen and what he was hearing was that the Government should go 'faster and further', which was a stunning example of the deafness of the Government and the arrogance that came with having such a large majority. He felt the majority was only a result of the vote split in England, Scotland and Wales as opposed to Labour being given a mandate.

Alderman McIlveen went on to raise concerns about what Stormont would be able to do in terms of mitigation, noting that it had already been mitigating against Westminster decisions around Universal Credit and the Winter Fuel Allowance. That all costed money and placed the NI Executive in a very difficult position.

In closing, he added that he was happy to support the proposal provided the proposer could clarify the points he had raised regarding the content of the letters.

In summing up, Councillor McKee thanked the speakers for their support and agreed in response to Alderman McIlveen that it was important to state the Council's clear opposition when writing to those Labour ministers and that they needed to take a different course of action. He felt it was fair to say that many thought the removal of the Tories from power would see the end of austerity but the Labour Government seemed desperate to prove they could just be as cruel as the Tories they replaced.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the notice of motion be adopted.

(Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall left the meeting – 7.30pm)

(b) 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.

Following the outcome of 6(a), Councillor S Irvine advised that the Notice of Motion was to be withdrawn.

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

(Having declared an interest in Item 11, Alderman Brooks withdrew from the meeting – 7.31pm)

11. REQUEST FROM DONAGHADEE SAILING CLUB TO RENEW THE LEASE AT THE FORMER BATHS HOTEL, DONAGHADEE

(Appendix 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)

The Council was asked to consider a request from Donaghadee Sailing Club to renew the lease at the Former Baths Hotel for a boatyard.

The recommendation was that Council renewed the lease.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Alderman Brooks returned to the meeting – 7.33pm)

12. REQUEST FOR AN EASEMENT AT BURR POINT

(Appendix XVI)

****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)

The Council was asked to consider a request for an Easement on private land at Burr Point, Ballyhalbert.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the recommendation.

The recommendation was agreed.

13. **REQUEST BY PHL FOR AN ADDITIONAL CCTV CAMERA**

(Appendix XVII – XVIII)

****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)

The Council was asked to consider a request from Peninsula Healthy Living (PHL) for an additional camera within their leased premises at Kircubbin Community Centre.

The recommendation was that Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

14. **REQUEST FROM NORTH DOWN HOCKEY CLUB TO PLACE A SHED AT COMBER LEISURE CENTRE**

(Appendix XIX – XX)

****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)

The Council was asked to consider a request from North Down Hockey Club for a licence at Comber Leisure Centre. It was recommended that the Council granted the licence

The recommendation was agreed.

15. **ALLEGED PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY FROM WARREN ROAD TO THE SHORE, DONAGHADEE**

(Appendix XXI – XXII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PRIVILEGE

The report outlines the issues, and legal advice received, in relation to the alleged public right of way from the Warren Road to the shore, Donaghadee. The report recommends that Council does not assert the route from the Warren Road to the shore, Donaghadee as a public right of way based on the legal advice received.

The recommendation was agreed.

16. REQUEST FOR AN EASEMENT AT THE SQUARE, BALLYWALTER

(Appendix XXIII – XXIV)

****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)

The Council was asked to consider a request from a property developer for an easement over Council Land at The Square, Ballywalter.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request for an easement.

The recommendation was agreed.

17. BANGOR CASTLE OPTIONS APPRAISAL FUTURE USAGE (FILE PCU59)

(Appendix XXV – XVII)

****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)

The Council was asked to note the outcome of the Phase 2 options appraisal for Bangor Castle and North Down Museum and agree to take forward the preferred option to Stage 3 of the OBC process.

The recommendation was agreed.

18. STEP BOARD REPORT MARCH 2025

(Appendix XVIII)

****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 an update on the performance of the STEP Programme for the period November 2024 to March 2025.

The recommendation was agreed.

19. **FUNFAIR IN MILLISLE**

****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)

Members were advised that an application had now been withdrawn.

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.34pm.

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 14 May 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Brooks

Alderman: Adair McRandal
Cummings (zoom)

Councillors: Ashe S Irvine
Boyle Kendall
Chambers McBurney
Cochrane McClean
Douglas Moore
Hollywood

Officers in Attendance: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development (A Faulkner), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill - zoom), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Head of Strategic Capital Development (A Dadley) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor W Irvine.

On the passing of Councillor W Irvine's father, Alderman Adair requested that a letter of condolence be sent to Councillor W Irvine on behalf of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. DEPUTATIONS

3.1 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - RAISE (Appendix I)

The Chair welcomed and introduced Claire McClelland (Director) and Michael McGinley (Programme Manager) to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation.

Mrs McClelland provided an update on progress with the programme overall and also within the Borough. Members had been circulated with a briefing paper. The RAISE Programme was rolling out in 15 localities across Northern Ireland to support

the Department of Education's vision that "every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding". The RAISE Programme provided an important opportunity to look afresh at the educational issues caused by deprivation and the barriers to learning and educational achievement that some of our children and young people were facing. The Programme would deliver a range of education support measures to help address educational underachievement and tackle educational disadvantage through a whole community and place-based approach.

Within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, RAISE would be operating within Millisle and Donaghadee.

The main focus of the RAISE Programme at present was the establishment of Locality Reference Groups to drive forward the development of Strategic Area Plans in each of the localities. The plan would set out the context of the area, current provision and the gaps. Key to that strategic area plan would be setting out of objectives detailing what the locality wanted to achieve through the RAISE funding. Against those objectives, the Department would seek projects, Ms McClelland explained that once the strategic area plan had been developed, it would be assessed by a panel following which a call would be issued for projects and guidance was available with regards the process.

A further element of the RAISE programme, was a series of cross cutting initiatives with 30% of the budget being used to complement locality projects by –

- a. responding in a strategic way to cross-cutting priorities; and
- b. bringing additional opportunities to communities around key themes e.g. literacy / numeracy support.

The Minister had identified a number of initiatives that he wished to take forward and further information would be published in that regard in due course.

In terms of Millisle and Donaghadee, since the first engagement event in Millisle and Donaghadee in November 2024, the RAISE team had been working with key stakeholders to understand the context of the area and identify the key issues around educational underachievement. Children and young people had been involved in engagement sessions, along with parents. Work had occurred with Stranmillis to undertake a series of engagement sessions to tease out the key issues. A workshop was held on 6 May 2025 to support the development of a Strategic Area Plan for the area with key issues being discussed. The Locality Reference Group consisting of a cross-section of all key stakeholders would meet on 4 June 2025 to finalise the Strategic Area Plan for Millisle and Donaghadee and it was expected the plan would be submitted to the Department for consideration later in June 2025.

In relation to the emerging priorities which children and young people, educators, stakeholders and parents felt that there needed to be a focus on included:

- Transitions and improving pathways
- Improving relationships with education, children/young people and parents
- Attendance
- Building confidence and aspirations of children and young people.

Ms McClelland advised that there was £183k available for Donaghadee and Millisle and she was hopeful to get really good projects to meet the needs of children and young people for rolling out in the new academic year.

The Chair thanked the representatives for the informative presentation and invited questions from Members.

As a representative for Donaghadee, Councillor Chambers noted that there had been an engagement event held in November 2024 and a workshop on 6 May 2025 and questioned the key issues discussed at those. Ms McClelland added that since the first workshop, the locality coordinator had held a series of engagements with schools, youth organisations etc in the locality. From those, an area profile had been built, the needs of children and young people identified, the key issues unpicked, and work was currently occurring on the objectives. It was important that objectives were clear to get the right project and delivery organisations.

Councillor Hollywood asked the rationale for the areas chosen. Ms McClelland recognised there had been concerns on where the project had been chosen to be rolled out. She explained that a series of data was used, firstly breaking down all of the areas in Northern Ireland into super output areas, those were ranked including 7 indicators which included educational indicators e.g. free school meals, educational needs, attendance and GCSE outcomes along with crime and deprivation indicators. Once those super output areas were ranked, they were then prioritised by GCSE attainment. Ultimately the programme would seek to improve educational outcomes and therefore that measure was used. Whilst the 15 localities had been ranked, Ms McClelland stated that it was important to note the Minister had agreed to a degree of flexibility and if there was an area of influence outside the locality then that could be looked at.

Councillor Boyle noted that across the Borough there was a lot of educational disadvantage and deprivation. He questioned if Millisle and Donaghadee were the only schools identified. Ms McClelland stated that the advice that went to the Minister was based on the available data. She clarified that no schools had been identified, the localities had been identified where those pupils with the most disadvantaged backgrounds lived. Any school within a RAISE locality could be involved in the project and no schools had been ruled out. It was recognised that there would be schools outside the locality that would be involved in the programme.

In response to a further question from Councillor Boyle, Ms McClelland explained that the localities identified was based on where the pupils lived rather than where they were attending school.

Councillor S Irvine questioned who would deliver the programmes. Ms McClelland stated that the programme was about a whole community approach to education, recognising that the schools could not do everything. In terms of who would deliver the projects, at this point of time the specifics were not known but project applications but would be expected to be received from community and voluntary organisations, collective group of schools and was open to range of organisations.

Councillor S Irvine noted that there was £183k of funding available and he asked if there was a timeframe to spend the funding. Ms McClelland advised the funding was available via the shared island fund. For the RAISE programme itself there was approximately £16.6m available, 60% of that for the locality programmes, 30% into the cross-cutting programmes and 10% held to administer the programme. The first amount of money was available for two years to 2027. Conversations were occurring with the Irish Government in terms of future funding. It was therefore really important to have the plans and projects on the ground to demonstrate the case for future funding.

In response to a further question from Councillor S Irvine, Ms McClelland advised that Stranmillis and Parent Focus had come to Millisle and Donaghadee to carry out a range of engagement. Millisle Youth Forum had visited Stormont as part of the RAISE programme.

Councillor McBurney raised a question in respect of the longevity of the programme, when the programme ended there would be valuable learning from the specific projects. She was interested to know about the learning from the programme, the best practice and what the DfC approach would be in relation to information sharing. Councillor McBurney welcomed the community approach, within communities there was real aspiration for their children.

Ms McClelland stated that the learning was critical, and evaluation was critical to the programme. Evaluation would be looked at in three levels, at system level, locality level and project level. DfC would shortly be going out to tender for an independent evaluator to evaluate the programme as a whole. The programme was about a whole community approach to education and the DfC already sponsored a number of projects. She reassured the member that they had been really intentional making sure they that the learning was not taken away and embedded future policy. That aligned with the Transform Ed strategy and tackling educational disadvantage was one of the key elements of that.

Councillor Cochrane asked if educational provision was included within the scope of the report. Ms McClelland stated that in terms of the programme funding there was no capital funding available. If there were issues around transport and barriers to education raised those would be reflected.

NOTED.

3.2 ROSEMOUNT REC JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB (Appendix II)

The Chair invited Paula McConkey (Club Secretary) and Stephen Atcheson (Chairperson) to come forward and present to the Committee.

Stephen Atcheson commenced by explaining that he was in attendance on behalf of the Rosemount Rec Junior Football Club to ask the Council to fund a new multi-use games arena at the site at the tennis courts in Greyabbey. The tennis courts were due to be resurfaced at a significant cost to Council. As part of Greyabbey's village

plan, a MUGA was to be placed at a different location in the village however a MUGA would be better suited at the tennis courts.

Stephen Atcheson and Paula McConkey then undertook a powerpoint presentation.

Executive Summary

- RRFC proposed the development of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) on the site of the underused and deteriorating tennis courts adjacent to Greyabbey Village Hall. This facility would serve as a community-focused sports hub, featuring a 3G synthetic surface suitable for football, tennis, basketball, and other recreational activities.
- This would lead to:
- Inclusive Access for All: A muga surface would support a wide range of activities accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Increased Health & Well-being Opportunities: The improved facilities would encourage greater participation in physical activity, contributing to the health of our community.
- Better Facilities for Local Youth: Youth teams, including Primary School and church groups would benefit from a modern and safe, all-weather pitch/surface for year-round play.
- Alignment with other Villages: This project would bring the team in line with neighbouring communities that already enjoy benefit from similar facilities.

Rationale

Greyabbey lacked adequate year-round sports infrastructure to support its various community groups. The proposed MUGA would:

- Replace unsafe and outdated Courts
- Encourage local youth participation and retain talent within the area
- Provide inclusive, accessible sports facilities for all ages
- Enhance community health, engagement and cohesion.

In terms of Community Backing, the project was the project was fully supported by a range of groups within the village.

Current site condition

- Existing tennis courts are broken, unsafe, and under-utilised
- Do not meet the needs of the growing community, particularly for youth training.
- Car parking was available, that was a designated area and was a great advantage.
- Enough room around the tennis courts to facilitate the MUGA.

About Rosemount Rec Football Club

- **Large Community Club**
- Wins a significant number of players & coaches at every level (1 & 2 Teams & Youth)
- A committee that encompasses many age groups and backgrounds
- Attracts large crowds to majority of home & away games

- **Current Costs**

- Currently had to train in Newtownards at Londonderry Park
- Resulted in higher cost & increased travel time for players & staff

- **History of Success**

- One of the most successful clubs in the borough both historically and in recent years
- Junior Football to the Highest level of Amateur Football inside 10 years 2 5 round appearances in the Irish Cup (vs Glenavon & Loughgall)
- Multiple League & Cup wins

Rosemount Rec Youth Football was established in 2023. It consisted of 3 different age groups with view for expansion (2021 team to start in September). Registrations from Greyabbey, Carrowdore, Ballywalter, Newtownards, Kircubbin & Cloughey. The teams compete in North Down Small Sided Games. They currently train at Trinity Presbyterian Church Hall in winter and Island view pitches in Summer.

The Future of RRFC

- The main reason for Rosemount as a club setting up this new youth academy was to secure its future.
- Rosemount was a huge part of the community in Greyabbey and had provided a platform for many young people to play football. It had brought funding to the area with many supporters of away teams using the villages amenities. With the success it has had it has put the village on the map.
- The problem was that players were moving elsewhere due to the lack of training facilities the club had.
- The club had to use Londonderry park for training at a huge cost.
- This was also an issue as local players were deciding to longer play as they did not want to train outside the village.

Strategic Importance

The MUGA aligned with Greyabbey's Village Plan, where the proposal received the highest level of community interest and engagement. Greyabbey recorded the highest turnout of any village in the Peninsula at the last planning meeting.

Key Benefits

- **Inclusive Access for All:** A muga surface would support a wide range of activities accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- **Increased Health & Well-being Opportunities:** The improved facilities would encourage greater participation in physical activity, contributing to the health of our community.
- **Better Facilities for Local Youth:** Youth teams, including primary school and church groups would benefit from a modern and safe, all-weather pitch/surface for year-round play.

- Alignment with other Villages: This project would bring us in line with neighbouring communities that already enjoy benefit from similar facilities.

The Chair thanked the representatives for the presentation and invited questions from Members.

To provide a better understanding to the Committee on the lack of facilities for the children and young people of Greyabbey, Alderman Adair asked the representatives to expand on the challenges faced training in the church hall. Mr Atcheson explained that training currently took place in the church hall, it was quite small, and the surface was a normal hard wooden floor. The main problem was room but also noise and that caused difficulties to coach the children.

Alderman Adair noted the number of residents in the Ards Peninsula that did not have access to a car. Public transport links to Greyabbey were limited and he questioned what difference the facility would make particularly to those children and young people that did not have access to a car.

Mr Atcheson stated that it would allow children to attend locally with no need to drive. The Club had to put a cap on players in the youth due to limited space and the new facility would allow the Club to expand, bring in more coaches, more players and train on more evenings.

Alderman Adair asked if the Council had of went with the original plan to upgrade the tennis courts and not the MUGA what benefits could have been lost to the community in Greyabbey. Mr Atcheson stated that the tennis courts were underutilised. A new facility could be used by a variety of sports.

Alderman Adair welcomed the formation of the youth aspect of the club and felt it was vital for the area.

Councillor Chambers supported the Clubs ambitions stating that he was a huge advocate for having good sports facilities for all the towns and villages. He questioned if the Club had a management model in mind. Mr Atcheson stated that they were open to options in that regard.

Councillor Chambers stated that if the facility came to fruition, it would be a great community asset for Greyabbey. As the Club expanded, he questioned how the facility could remain of use for the whole community and not just for football. Mr Acheson stated that Greyabbey was a close community, and he did not feel there would be any issues for shared use.

Councillor Boyle recognised that the tennis courts were deteriorating, were used less frequently, and the area could be brought to better use. It was clear that the Club had a passion for a new facility. One of the biggest factors was bringing and keeping children of the streets through sport. The facility had community backing and he noted that further conversations could occur on the operating model. In terms of numbers, Councillor Boyle asked how many children the Club had. Mr Acheson advised that the teams were per age group, they had approximately 40 plus kids however that number had to be capped.

Councillor Boyle give his support to the project.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their presentation, and they returned to the public gallery.

Following the deputation withdrawing to the public gallery, it was proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council incorporates the Rosemount Rec Presentation as part of the Greyabbey MUGA report.

Alderman Adair highlighted that the facility was within the village plan, it was within the Council's play strategy to provide a MUGA in Greyabbey and there was a need for better facilities for children and young people in the village. Alderman Adair wished to see a positive report coming forward. The facility would be of benefit not only to Greyabbey but for the children and young people across the area.

Councillor Boyle added his support, it was clear a facility was needed for the future of children in Greyabbey.

Councillor S Irvine added his support to the proposal, the facility would be worthwhile working cross community within the village.

Councillor Douglas added her support.

Alderman Adair thanked Members for their support stating that he was determined to bring the needs of Greyabbey to the attention of the Committee. He looked forward to the positive report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council incorporates the Rosemount Rec Presentation as part of the Greyabbey MUGA report.

4. SOCIAL SUPERMARKET

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that an open call was held for the Social Supermarket provision in April and May 2024. Provision for Donaghadee, Bangor and Holywood was awarded to Kilcooley Women's Centre (KWC) whilst provision for Newtownards, Comber, Ballygowan and Peninsula was awarded to Bangor Food and Community Support (BFCS). This call covered a 3-year period until March 2027, subject to the receipt of funding each year from Department for Communities (DfC).

Council received notification on 1 April 2025 that support had been provided by the Department to cover the three-month period from 1 April to 30 June 2025 totalling £31,955.56. That was based on 2024/25 allocation. The total amount of SSM funding received in 2024/2025 was £127,822.24.

To ensure a continuation in service KWC and BFSC were issued with a Letter of Offer to cover the Quarter one period as follows:

Area		Population	Funding for 31 March 2025 – 30 June 2025, based on 2024/25 budget Quarter 1
Bangor, Holywood, Donaghadee	KWC	55%	£17,575.56
Ards, Comber, Ballygowan, Killinchy Peninsula	BFCS	45%	£14,380.00
Total			£31, 955.56

RECOMMENDED that Council retrospectively approves the award of £17,575.56 to Kilcooley Women’s Centre and £14,380.00 to Bangor Food and Community Support for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 which ensured immediate continuity of service provision pending a further letter of offer from the Department for Communities.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Adair commended the service that was available in Portaferry and paid tribute to the work of Bangor Food Bank. Ken Scott had been the driving force of the food bank and was getting out in the community to ensure those people that were most in need could avail of the service. Work had also been occurring with Saint Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, Church Groups and community groups in the area which was great to see.

(Alderman Adair withdrew from the meeting - 7.57 pm)

Councillor Hollywood supported the recommendation, stating that in his work in the community sector he dealt with many people in poverty and destitution. Continuing the service would go some way to alleviate poverty across the Borough.

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

5. **CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS UPDATED AGREEMENT (FILE GREL415)** (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching updated agreement. The report detailed that Council initially approved a Cultural Expression (CE) Agreement in April 2015, following an extended period of community consultation with relevant groups throughout the Borough. The agreement sets out the principles by which groups that celebrate culture by way of a festival and associated bonfire or beacon around the 11th of July and 31st October may work with the Council.

The Agreement was supported by The Executive Office and Council's Good Relations Action Plan and contained a number of core principles and local agreements which constituted community groups agree and sign up to in return for funding towards cultural festivals. A number of reviews had taken place since it was first introduced in association with stakeholder community groups and partners.

To carry out a further review, the 2024 Agreement was issued to each of the groups by email in the Autumn of 2024 with an offer of a follow up meeting with the Good Relations Team to discuss any potential amendments.

The circulated agreement contained a number of suggested amendments to update the document and with the support of the communities engaged, a number of changes had been proposed for 2025.

In previous years the CE Agreement advised that advice should be sought from NI Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the proximity of the bonfires to other buildings and the height of bonfires. NI Fire and Rescue Service confirmed a few years ago that it would no longer offer such advice following an incident in Belfast when houses were burned beside a bonfire which NIFRS had provided safety advice towards.

The Council's Good Relations Team do not provide any advice in relation to size, or proximity of bonfires to surrounding properties, nor impose distance from houses as this would be a matter for specialists to advise upon.

Bonfire and Beacon sites were jointly over seen by a multi-agency statutory group. These partner meetings in relation to bonfire sites, together with weekly site visits to each of the Council, NIHE and EA sites throughout the Borough have begun for 2025.

Staff continued to engage with representatives from each of the sites, when necessary, and following approval of the CE Agreement for 2025 would ask each site to sign up prior to any funding being released.

A further report on the CE programme for 2025 would be brought to the Committee later in the year.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to the Cultural Expression Agreement 2025-2026.

Proposed by Councillor S Irvine, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor S Irvine welcomed the agreement. He was of the view that there had been a discussion about issuing the money as soon as possible and questioned why the matter had taken so long to come to Committee.

(Alderman Adair re-entered the meeting – 7.58 pm)

The Head of Community and Culture stated Officers were waiting for the rate to be to be struck to ensure that the monies would be made available.

Councillor S Irvine asked that the monies be issued as soon as possible.

Councillor Cochrane welcomed the report and the work that had went into the agreement. He felt it was great to see the funding available for community groups.

Councillor McBurney referred to point 7 of the agreement which stated that bonfires should be at a safe distance from the surrounding buildings and property. That was one of the conditions of the funding however she noted in the report that the NIFRS or the Good Relations team did not advise on the matter. Councillor McBurney was keen to understand how the bonfires were meeting the agreement. In respect of the environmental impact of the bonfires, one of the key priorities of the agreement was to encourage more environmentally friendly alternatives with one of the aims of the agreement to enable Council to fulfil environmental obligations. However, Councillor McBurney noted that the amount payable was the same for a bonfire, willow burner or gas burner and she did not understand how the money payable could be the same as one which was much more environmentally friendly.

In terms of a safe distance, the Head of Community and Culture stated that the Council Officers advised as much as it could in that regard and within a safe distance. In relation to environmental impact, she noted that the majority of material now wood and a lot less materials were now not being used. Sustainable Willow Burners were encouraged and those would be put in place for communities that wanted them.

Councillor Moore felt that a number of bonfires were not adhering to the agreement. Dumping of potentially toxic materials was still occurring and was masked with pallets. She would have been interested to see the previous agreement and how that compared. There were elements of the agreement that could not be measured and therefore could not be enforced. Councillor Moore viewed the balance in the agreement as disproportionate, with the amount of funding being the same. Insurance was also mentioned in the agreement for the festival however a bonfire could not possibly be insured. Councillor Moore stated that she had concerns in relation to the enforcement of the agreement. The agreement included good principles however none of those were being adhered to by a significant number of bonfires within the Borough.

Councillor Boyle voiced his concerns in relation to the agreement and felt it was letting community groups do what they wanted to their bonfires. He felt the term 'local agreement' had been used too many times within the document and in particular in relation to 'local agreement that emblems and effigies will not be placed on the bonfire' with a £100 fine associated with that. Councillor Boyle felt that emblems and effigies would continue to be placed on bonfires, progression had not occurred and that was worrying. Councillor Boyle recognised that Officers were working hard, however could not understand why people would want to celebrate their culture by insulting others through the placement of emblems and effigies and viewed that as a strange culture.

Councillor Kendall recognised developing a cultural expression programme, took time and she appreciated the efforts being made to try and move forward. She

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outlined an issue she had been attempting to deal with in her own DEA and the point within the agreement that 'only festivals associated with established bonfires that have been in situ for a minimum of 3 years, have followed the core principles and local agreements during the 3 years and under an established constituted group will be considered for funding'. The issue she was dealing with was that the group had held a bonfire for many years but on different pieces of land in the area and the group had contacted her asking about funding and had expressed an interest in a beacon. However, the group did not qualify due to the point in the agreement and instead could put a bonfire in the same place for 3 years to be part of the programme. Councillor Kendall felt the policy had been a detriment in this instance and she would have much preferred to have seen a beacon. Councillor Kendall explained that she wanted to support the agreement, however could not do that if it was going to have a negative impact.

Alderman McRandal emphasised that he would like to see tracked changes in such documents to see the updates that had been made. He stated that he had issue with the timing of the report and felt that the report should be presented in the autumn. The matter was now rushed and there was potential for the debate to get heated. In relation to established bonfire sites, he questioned how many applications had been refused or monies clawed back from in the past number of years.

(Councillor Hollywood withdrew from the meeting – 8.15 pm)

The Head of Community and Culture was not aware of any instances where funding had been clawed back, or any applications having been refused, however there were occasions where receipts were required for reimbursement and if receipts were not provided funds were not paid.

Alderman McRandal stated that there had been instances where the aims had not been complied with, and the Council had shown itself to be toothless in terms of enforcement. He had no issue with the document and the cultural expressions programme however his issue was that on occasions the Council did not take action. There were examples of good bonfires and groups that complied however there were groups that were not content unless they were upsetting people or bending the rules. Until the Council started putting the enforcement of the agreement into practice, he could not support it.

(Councillor Hollywood re-entered the meeting – 8.17 pm)

Alderman Adair commended the Head of Community and Culture and her team and supported the report. He felt there had been progress over the years, but everyone needed to work together to achieve further progress, and the Good Relations team had worked hard in that regard.

The proposal was put the meeting and declared carried with 8 voting FOR, 4 AGAINST, 3 ABSTENTIONS and 1 ABSENT.

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

6. **RE-WILDING INITIATIVE 2025 UPDATE (FILE PCA63)**

(Appendices IV, V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Existing Rewilding Sites and Strategic Rewilding Links. The report detailed that the purpose of this report was to recommend an extension of the rewilding sites managed by Council, and update Members on the recent progress of the Council's Rewilding Initiative.

Rewilding was about the restoration of natural ecosystems and encouraging a balance between people and the rest of nature where each could thrive. The creation and maintenance of meadow grasslands was taking place in public open spaces across the UK. The vision of the Rewilding Initiative within Council was to manage the natural assets in a way that promoted nature's recovery. Amenity grassland was the Council's biggest landholding and yet the least biodiverse land that we own. Changing the management of this land stood to make the biggest impact for our local biodiversity. The promotion of biodiversity was a statutory requirement under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The current sites equated to a total of 132,302 m² as shown in Appendix 1. It was intended those sites continued to be subject to the altered maintenance programmes with a view to encouraging increased diversity and abundance of floral species which would in turn benefit pollinators and overall biodiversity at each site. In addition to the ongoing maintenance, the schedules would be altered to take account of infrequent event use on certain sites. It was critical that the rewilding parks project works in harmony with the overall use of parks and a balanced offering was available across the park's portfolio. Events and community use would be catered for in the integrated grassland management of each chosen site.

Key updates 2024-2025

Community Engagement

Whitespots Bioblitz: A Bioblitz was held at Whitespots Country Park, Newtownards on the 16th and 17th August 2024 including within the area designated for rewilding under the initiative. The bioblitz was an amazing success with a total of 335 species identified over the 2-day event. This event allowed the *invisible* benefits of the rewilding initiative *visible*, bringing the community together, showcasing the benefits of the initiative to both people and nature and strengthening the case for expanding the initiative.

Celebrating the Rewilding Initiative: To coincide with World Rewilding Day on the 20th March 2025, Council promoted its Rewilding Initiative. This involved the placement of the first permanent rewilding sign at Brompton Road Rewilding site. Brompton was unique in that it was the first wildflower meadow created under the initiative, with native wildflower seed harvested from Crawfordsburn Country Park, less than 2km from the site. The permanent rewilding signs provide key information on rewilding and its benefits for nature and people. The signage would help raise awareness of the initiative and inform the public on why areas are being subjected to a different mowing regime, this helps to avoid confusion or negative assumptions. The signage would help build transparency and maintain public trust by being open

about land management changes. They would also help to promote understanding. Many people may not be familiar with the environmental benefits of reduced mowing as well as the benefits to their health and well-being. For those wanting to know more about the rewilding initiative a QR code linking back to the Rewilding page on the council website was available on the sign. The development of a new webpage expands on the information from signage giving the community a deeper understanding of the initiative. Over the coming months permanent signage would be placed across the Borough at sites managed under this initiative.

Rewilding Through the Seasons: Parks and Cemeteries had engaged with a local photographer to help visually capture the rewilding process on sites managed under the initiative through the seasons. It was hoped that would help monitor visual changes of the landscape throughout the year and the evolution of the sites over time. That would be used alongside other data and survey results to monitor and evaluate the changes we have made in relation to our maintenance practices. This visual imagery would assist Council to broaden public understanding on rewilding. Images and information on site specific species captured through the project would help showcase biodiversity recovery, seasonal beauty, and nature's resilience, creating awareness and promoting rewilding practices.

Inclusion of Additional Sites

As well as providing an update on the initial sites where rewilding had been established this report also outlined proposals to extend the Council's rewilding portfolio by 21,700m². After further consideration and discussion permission was sought to extend the existing rewilding portfolio to include selected areas as indicated in the report.

- Hunts Park, Donaghadee (5,000m²)
- Holywood Nature Park, Holywood. (11,700m²)
- Ward Park, Bangor. (5,000m²)

RECOMMENDED that Council continues to approve the above initiative and supports the ongoing development of the parks rewilding project to enhance and promote biodiversity across the Borough.

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

Councillor Kendall felt the rewilding projects were doing well. She recognised that it was different to what people were used to. There was a crisis of biodiversity, and something needed to be done about it. Rewilding was widely supported when the communication was right. It was about encouraging grasses to come back, making sure the native species were able to grow, encouraging native flora, fauna, bugs and biodiversity. Councillor Kendall welcomed the approach, slow incremental changes focusing on rewilding in certain pockets at a time and welcomed the communication continuing.

Councillor McBurney welcomed the initiative and in particular the signage that had been placed in Brompton that was keeping people informed.

Councillor Boyle welcomed the report overall however stated that many felt the rewilding was just areas left untidy and untouched. Education was important, there used to be signs in place however they had disappeared, and he asked if more information could be made public. Councillor Boyle wondered if there was a target for rewilding.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that funding had been received for additional permanent signage, 2 signs had been placed at Brompton and 13 additional signs would be placed throughout the Borough. Temporary signage would be placed in the smaller areas. Education was vital, there were QR codes on signs providing more information and cutting around the area of the grass to provide an understanding that it was a rewilding area. There was a misperception that it was about saving money. That was not case as it was environmental initiative and there was still maintenance required in rewilding. There were no set targets, work occurred with local communities to try to achieve buy-in to the rewilding. Currently 4.4% of the Council's area was rewilded and that would increase to 5.1% with the inclusion of the recommendation.

Councillor Moore agreed that education was hugely important, and it was not just about informing residents but that the residents then become advocates themselves and become better informed. She referred in particular to the wildflowers at the roundabouts and suggested that communication occur in those busy areas.

Alderman Adair added his support, the way forward was education, and he felt it would be good to get the schools involved. There were other sites within the peninsula that would lend itself to rewilding.

Referring to the plan for Ward Park, Alderman McRandal wondered if that included the bank where the solitary bees were nesting. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that was included, expanding the area.

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

7. FOOD LAW CODE OF PRACTICE AND PRACTICE CONSULTATION RESPONSE (FILE CW22) (Appendices VI, VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing Committee attaching Consultation Response and Consultation Pack. The report detailed that the Food Standards Agency had launched a Consultation on the Proposed amendments to the Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland) and Practice Guidance. The Consultation closed on 19 May 2025.

The Code set out instructions and criteria to which District Councils in Northern Ireland must have regard when discharging their duties in relation to the delivery of official food control activities.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the consultation response.

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

In trying to gain an understanding of the response, Councillor Kendall raised questions in respect of the risk-based model. She felt it was a good response and highlighted the need for the funds and systems to ensure that residents were assured.

The Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development stated that it was complex but there was a theme flowing in the consultation to make matters more flexible for businesses and Officers. There was a suggestion in the consultation that there would be more self-policing of businesses, the response in that regard was that Council would only be supportive of an element for very low risk category businesses. It was up to the Council to look at ways of monitoring that self-policing, with targeted interventions and spot checks.

In terms of the frequency of turnaround for the risk rating assessment, Officers would be supportive of that however that had a resource element. There was also a question around diluting the qualifications of Officers and having Officers qualified in a different way in order to do food inspections, the response detailed that Officers would not generally be supportive of that to ensure standards and quality was maintained high. The Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development noted that post Covid Officers had to do a lot of work to bring businesses back up to standard from when inspections were not taking place.

Councillor Kendall thanked the Officer for the explanation and was grateful for the protective response.

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

8. MAE MURRAY FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP (FILE CDV55)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing Committee detailing that a partnership arrangement between Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Mae Murray Foundation resulted in the development of the first inclusive beach in the Ards and North Down area at Groomsport, where people of differing physical abilities can take part in activities independently. The unique specialised equipment loan scheme and purpose-built changing room facilities enable people who live with mobility challenges to experience the Groomsport Beach freely alongside people of all ability.

To access the equipment at the Inclusive Beach, pre booking was required and could be accessed via Mae Murray Foundation. A trained member of staff was also at hand upon the arrival of the user.

Season 2024 overview

The programme attracted over 600 people in total attending the Groomsport inclusive beach. In addition, there were a series of family fun days during June

to September 2024, which the Mae Murray Foundation delivered, funded by ANDBC through the Events and Festival Fund.

Numerous schools and organisations visited the inclusive beach in 2024, including:

- Clifton School
- Everton Day Centre
- Sydenham Court
- Gateway organisation

Operation for 2025

The initiative was now moving into its third year and would operate for the season from Friday 30 May 2025 to Sunday 24 August 2025. There would be some adjustments to the schedule based on lessons learned from previous seasons.

The specialised loan equipment scheme would be available on Fridays and Sundays from 11am until 5.00pm. The ANDBC Community Development section provided funding to allow for two staff members both trained directly by the Mae Murray Foundation. In previous years the service was available on Saturday and Sundays from 9.30am until 5.30pm. The change followed a review of last year's attendance, which demonstrated limited public interest on Saturdays. There were also older people homes that expressed an interest in being able to visit the beach during the working week.

Additional dates would be available this year during July. The service would extend to cover six additional days ensuring greater accessibility during the peak holiday periods:

Tuesday 8 July, Wednesday 9 July, Thursday 10 July, Tuesday 15 July, Wednesday 16 July and Thursday 17 July 2025.

Opening Season 2025

The season for 2025 would be launched on Friday 30 May 2025 with press coverage, to raise awareness of the Inclusive Beach initiative at Groomsport and encourage community participation. Mae Murray Foundation representatives would be in attendance and there would be activities for young people and families to enjoy including the full range of equipment out on the sand ready for use.

The Groomsport inclusive beach was advertised widely using social media platforms, Mae Murray Foundation website, ANDBC website, and Visit Ards and North Down – tourism.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Ashe felt the initiative was an excellent one and important for the Council to champion inclusivity. The report included a list of organisations that had enjoyed access to the beach she wondered if it was necessary to be part of an organisation

that was linked to Mae Murray to access the beach. The Head of Community and Culture explained that users had to register and book the equipment.

Councillor Ashe asked about the provision of transport and if there was any underspend for that to be considered. The Head of Community and Culture stated that the budget was tight, she would like to have staff on site more often however the budget was not available.

Councillor Chambers praised the partnership between Council and the Mae Murray Foundation. The fun days had been extremely successful. He wondered if there was a target for participation. The Head of Community and Culture stated that there was no target any longer and it was about encouraging as many as possible to use the facility.

Councillor Hollywood enjoyed reading such reports, he felt it was a fantastic initiative and commended those involved.

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

9. GOOD RELATIONS ANNUAL (FILE GREL424) (Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching the Good Relations Annual Report for 2024-2025 outlining the work of the section in delivering the Good Relations Action Plan for 2024-2025.

The Good Relations section was normally externally funded 75% from The Executive Office (TEO) and 25% by Council. However, the total Good Relations budget from TEO was reduced in 2024-2025 to £110,534.72.

The Good Relations Strategy (2022-2025) informed an annual action plan, which was submitted to The Executive Office for assessment. The Action Plan was based on the four key themes of the Executive's strategy, Together Building United Communities:

- Children and Young People
- Shared community
- Safe Community
- Cultural Expression

The Good Relations section works closely with PCSP, PEACE and Community Development sections to avoid duplication and ensure a cohesive delivery of programmes to the community.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Kendall felt the report was really positive and she thanked Officers for continuing to progress. She remarked on the Youth Voice event which had been really positive and looked forward to next round of Good Relations work.

Alderman McRandal enjoyed reading the report about the great work and engagement that was occurring. He thanked the Head of Community and Culture and the team for the hard work throughout the year.

Alderman Cummings commended the Officers for the good relations work that occurred across the Borough. He noted that there had been a 25% decrease in the budget that came from the Executive Office last year and he asked if the Council had seen a significant drop in programmes or had the Council had to contribute to that budget.

(Councillor Kendall withdrew from the meeting – 8.42 pm)

Continuing, Alderman Cummings stated that statistical returns and outcomes were important to measure, and he would like to know if there had been any negative impact.

The Head of Community and Culture advised that the cut in the budget meant that the programs had to be reduced. The Good Relations team had been working hard to deliver programmes that did not cost a lot of money to mitigate against that, and delivering programs in partnership. The budget for this year similarly had been impacted and next month she would be bringing an updated Action Plan to the Committee for 2025/26 outlining the offered budget and the impact. While the Council had already agreed the Action Plan, a letter of offer had been received and that included a significant reduction.

(Councillor McClean withdrew from the meeting – 8.43 pm)

Alderman Cummings looked forward to the outcome of the report and noted that the partnerships played a significant role going forward.

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

10. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ST VINCENT DE PAUL (SVP)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that it was agreed by Council in March 2025 that officers bring forward a report to the Community and Wellbeing Committee that considered support and funding opportunities from Council to assist the work of St Vincent De Paul Ards and North Down.

Background to DfC Hardship Funding

Members would be aware the Council was awarded Hardship Funding for 2023–2024 from Department for Communities to the value of £344,027.

The purpose of the fund was to address hardship due to the then cost of living crisis, particularly the increases in energy and food costs. The Hardship Funding Programme was developed in recognition of the difficult financial circumstances which existed for communities.

The Hardship Funding invited applications for grants between £10,000 to £30,000 as an open call. The grants were advertised on the Council grants webpage, Council social media and sent to all contacts on the Community Development Database. Following the call, Council approved 23 grants totalling £330,186.61 with SVP obtaining a grant of £20,100.

At the Community and Wellbeing Committee in November 2023, concern was expressed that one organisation had been able to avail of two grants due to citing two different areas of the Borough being covered and Members requested that the criteria be reconsidered in future to ensure this did not happen again.

During March 2024, the organisation concerned contacted the Head of Service to confirm it was unable to produce required receipts for the allocated funding of the two grants totalling £40,000 and therefore they were unable to claim the funding allocated. Subsequently a request was made to the Department of Communities to carry forward the funding of £40,000 to 2024–2025, in addition to a small underspend of £7,000.

At the Council meeting held on 28th August 2024, it was agreed that “Council writes to the Department for Communities to highlight our disappointment at their failure to provide Hardship Funding this year. Furthermore, that this Council asks The Department for Communities to commit to use funding in future monitoring rounds to provide hardship funding in 2024-2025”. A letter was sent to this effect on 17th September 2024.

A response dated 24th September 2024 was received from Colum Boyle, Permanent Secretary of Department for Communities stating that due to the financial constraints on the Department’s budget the Department was currently unable to provide any hardship funding for 2024-2025, and due to the continuing uncertainty in funding, it would not be possible to consider a recurrent funding model at this time.

The Community Development section launched a call in relation to the funding pot of £47,000 on 9 September 2024, with a deadline of 24 September 2024 for grants up to a maximum of £3,000 per group/organisation. The application process was amended to take account of Members concerns that the process should be fair and equitable. Application and guidance notes stated that only one application would be allowed per group/organisation.

The call was advertised on Council grants webpage, Council social media, sent to all contacts on the Community Development Database and also in the Newtownards Chronicle and Spectator Newspapers. 31 applications were received by the deadline. 22 applications met the pass mark which equated to the total value of £64,751.00 and each received a percentage of the total pot with SVP awarded £2,190.00.

As outlined by the Minister, Hardship funding would not be made available for the foreseeable future and therefore there would not be any further funding calls for Hardship grants at this time.

Alternative funding opportunities

- Council's Community Development section circulates a weekly newsletter via email to all those registered on the Community Development database outlining details of a number of funding opportunities. The Team conduct "Grant Finder" searches on a daily and weekly basis to ensure all relevant funding opportunities are maximised within the Borough.
- Staff can also provide one to one advice on funding and support with applications, where required and upon request.
- All Council grant funding opportunities are advertised widely and open to all relevant sections of the community to apply.
- Council channels funding for two social supermarkets to cover the whole Borough and SVP are able to refer clients to the services.
- Foodbanks are also available throughout the Borough and SVP are able to access and signpost services to those in need.
- Contact had been made with representatives of each of the 6 conferences of SVP in the Borough to invite them to submit the required form to allow their details to be held on the database to ensure they are each made aware of all future funding opportunities.

Future Hardship funding

Should Hardship funding be forthcoming from the Department in the future, updated guidance and an updated application form would be screened and brought to Committee for approval prior to the fund being advertised, in line with the updated Grants policy. Members would be able to determine at that time how they would wish the fund to be administered in the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Councillor Kendall re-entered the meeting – 8.44 pm)

(Councillor McBurney withdrew from the meeting – 8.44 pm)

Alderman Adair felt that going forward there was a need to ensure the matter was done right and the report detailed a roadmap to provide better use of the hardship fund to assist those most in need.

Councillor Boyle noted that previously the awards were made on the basis of the Councils agreed policy, and there were social supermarkets and food banks which St Vincent de Paul could signpost and refer those in need.

(Councillor McClean and Councillor McBurney re-entered the meeting – 8.42 pm)

He felt it was worth noting that St Vincent de Paul received 85% funding from those who attend mass, yet they tried to distribute to around 100% of the Borough. He felt that should be given some thought and maybe churches could contribute. SVP did fantastic work yet had received no increase in funding.

Alderman McRandal was disappointed that nothing more could be done for SVP at this stage but that the report gave some comfort for the way forward if there was a future hardship fund.

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

11. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT (FILE CDV54) (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Community Development Annual Report. The report detailed Please find attached the Community Development Annual Report for 2024-2025 outlining the work of the section throughout the year.

The Community Development section worked closely with the PCSP, PEACEPLUS and Good Relations sections of the Community and Culture Department to avoid duplication and ensure a cohesive delivery of programmes to the community.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Kendall noted that across many areas the community development team had shown the impact it had through engagement, grant support and community support. She thanked the community development team for their ongoing work and commitment. Councillor Kendall felt community development was a really important part of the Council services, she viewed it as one of Council's most vital services. Many residents looked to community development, they helped and enabled the community both directly and indirectly and brought indirect social, economic and cultural outcomes. The work the team done was vast and she felt the Committee needed to be mindful of that when setting budgets for the section as she felt it was really important to keep enabling and supporting groups, organisations and people within the Borough to deliver for their own communities.

Councillor Hollywood was in agreement and felt that the community development team did vital work. He noted that the Neighbourhood Renewal programme was distributing a new Kilcooley newsletter and he asked if members could be copied in.

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

12. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG APRIL 2025) (FILE SD155)

(Appendices XI - XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Successful Event Report, Successful Goldcard Report, Successful Individual Travel Accommodation Report and Unsuccessful Report. The report detailed that The Ards and North Down Sports Forum administers grants for sporting purposes on behalf of Council under the Council's Grants Policy agreed in 2024. The report outlined the March 2025 grants that have been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum and was for noting purposes only. That was in line with the Council's Grants Policy effective from 5 December 2024. £70,000 had been allocated within the 2025/26 revenue budget for this purpose.

During March 2025, the Forum received a total of 31 applications: (1 Coach Education, 2 Events, 9 Goldcards, 1 Club Travel/ Accommodation and 18 Individual Travel/Accommodation).

A summary of the 28 successful applications were detailed in the attached 2025/26 Successful Events, Successful Goldcard, and Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

2025/26 Budget £70,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded March 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	£1,818.80	*£6,181.20
Seeding	£2,000	£0	£2,000
Travel and Accommodation	£28,000	£3,016.87	*£24,683.13
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£660
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000	£0	£2,000
8 Goldcards Awarded in March 2025 (8 Goldcards in total during 2025/26)			

*The proposed remaining budget for events of **£6,181.20** was based on an award of **£1818.80**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£24,683.13** is based on a proposed award this month of **£3,016.87**

The proposed remaining budget for 2025/26 was **£62, 524.33** (11% of the 2025/26 budget spent).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Ashe congratulated the recipients and in particular made mention of North Down Hockey Club for their inclusion hockey sessions which had been very popular.

Councillor Boyle congratulated the team who worked on the grants.

In respect of travel and accomodation, Councillor Douglas raised a question in respect of the amounts requested and the amounts awarded. The Head of Leisure Services explained that additional funding had been secured for the grants, a higher amount had been available which the applicant may not have been aware of. No funding was awarded unless receipts were provided.

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

13. BI-MONTHLY UPDATE REPORT ON PORTAVOGIE 3G, PENINSULA 3G & PORTAFERRY SPORTS CENTRE (CW74)
(Appendices XV – XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Portavogie 3G Update February 2025, Peninsula 3G Update February 2025 and Status Update on Portaferry Sports Centre Floor Repair. The report detailed In February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

“that Council notes the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns, recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks Officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term. As a matter of urgency Council tasks Officers to bring forward a bimonthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry Sports Centre and Portaferry 3G Pitch to this committee.”

This report provided the three updates requested on a bi-monthly basis, and for the two capital projects, in a ‘RAG’ format as further requested by the proposer in May 2024.

1. The update report for the Portavogie 3G project was attached to the report at appendix 1.
2. The update report for the Peninsula 3G project was attached to the report at appendix 2. A further report on financial matters had been provided for Members consideration in the in confidence section of the committee’s agenda.

3. The status update for the defective floor at Portaferry Sports Centre was attached to the report at appendix 3.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the three update reports.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Council appoint a Roads Engineer with a view of challenging the Department for Infrastructures Planning Objection.

Alderman Adair's proposal was in relation to the Portavogie 3G pitch which had experienced a number of hurdles with the latest hurdle being that the DfI had lodged an objection. The proposal originally had full planning permission when DfI had expressed no objection. He did not feel the Council should just accept the objection and would like a road engineer to counteract the DfI objection. A lot of work had gone into the project.

Councillor Boyle sought clarity on the appointment of a road engineer against the DfI objection and questioned how much that would cost. The Director stated that the cost would be impossible to say at this stage. The Council did have an integrated consultancy firm which it could use for advice.

Councillor Boyle was unsure of the reasoning for the need for a roads engineer.

The Head of Strategic Capital Development explained that the entrance to Portavogie 3G pitch was narrow. When the application had been first submitted to planning, DfI had expressed no objection. The application had sat with planning for a number of years due to an issue with NI Water. When that was rectified, Planning had renotified and at that stage DfI had expressed an objection with the entrance, they felt it should be wider and should compile to guidance.

Councillor Boyle sought further clarity on the matter and received confirmation that the plans had remained the same.

Alderman McRandal questioned if there had been change to the car park. The Head of Strategic Capital Development advised that no change had been made. He stated that he could ask for further advice from the Planners.

Alderman McRandal asked operationally would such matters be critically assessed. The Head of Strategic Capital Development was unsure at this stage if the matter could be successfully challenged. The laneway was narrow into the facility.

Councillor Kendall was content to explore the options however was hesitant in respect of the cost, the methods and who could assist in the challenge.

Councillor Hollywood questioned if the entrance was narrow why it could not be made bigger. The Director explained that the entrance was landlocked between two properties and to accede to the DfI's request would require negotiating with the property owners and buying land.

Alderman Adair clarified that he wished for a roads engineer or planning consultant with a view to challenging Dfl’s objection. There had been inaction so many times on the project and it needed progressed for the people of Portavogie. He believed the matter had to be meaningfully explored to see if the objection was challengeable. Alderman Adair called for a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was undertaken and was declared CARRIED. The vote resulted as follows:-

FOR (13)	AGAINST (0)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (1)
Alderman Adair Cummings McRandal		Alderman Brooks	
Councillors Ashe Boyle Chambers Cochrane Douglas Hollywood Irvine, S McBurney McClellan Moore		Councillor Kendall	Councillor Irvine, W

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Council appoint a Roads Engineer with a view of challenging the Department for Infrastructures Planning Objection in relation to Portavogie 3G Pitch.

At this point the chair permitted Councillor Boyle to ask about the status of the Portaferry Sports Hall floor defect. The Director confirmed that the Head of Leisure Services was regularly liaising with the Department of Education and the last update was to say that progress had not yet been made due to other competing priorities.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9.13 pm and resumed at 9.25 pm.

14. NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH WORKING GROUP MINUTES FOR 6 JANUARY 2025 (CW30) (Appendix XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching minutes of the meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group which was held on 6th January 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the minutes.

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

15. LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2024-2033 (FILE PCA1)
(Appendix XIX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching summary of Actions and Updates. The report summarised progress made against the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) that was agreed in 2023.

Background

The provision of biodiversity was a statutory requirement under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 or WANE Act. The Act required public bodies to take reasonable steps to further the conservation of priority habitats and species or to promote such actions by others. This production and delivery of the LBAP would assist in demonstrating the Council's compliance with the statutory duty. Under the WANE Act, the Council was responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity:

- Protection of Biodiversity
- Maintenance of Biodiversity
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Restoring Biodiversity
- Promoting Biodiversity

The Borough's second Biodiversity Action Plan was approved and adopted in April 2023 and had helped to coordinate efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity across the Borough. The development of the plan was a crucial step in recognising the importance of our local biodiversity. It aimed to ensure that international, national, regional and local biodiversity objectives were achieved through a range of partnerships.

A total of eighty-four actions were proposed across four themes in the LBAP, the actions listed were to help protect, conserve, and enhance those priority habitats and species within the Borough identified through the audit. LBAP actions were listed under one of the following four themes i.e. Theme 1: Education and Awareness, Theme 2: Research and Monitoring, Theme 3: Land Management & Theme 4: Building Partnerships.

Meeting Corporate Objectives

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) played a vital role in supporting the strategic objectives of Council and operational priorities set out in the Parks & Cemeteries Service Plan for 2025–2026. It strengthened the Council's overarching commitment to environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and active community engagement by providing evidence of ongoing work and measurable progress in local biodiversity.

A key area of alignment was with the strategic objectives of climate recovery and biodiversity gain. This report and associated appendix demonstrate significant contributions to these goals through a range of actions including protecting and enhancing areas for biodiversity, educating and engagement with the public and working in partnership with a variety of key stakeholders to support the LBAP. These efforts contribute directly to carbon sequestration, improved air quality, and enhanced biodiversity. Ongoing monitoring - either formally through formal surveys and bioblitzes, or informal community-based surveys and citizen science type events - would assist us to build a picture of the condition of our local biodiversity and green spaces. The LBAP meets several Service Plan Performance Measures including maintaining 130,000m² of rewilded council land, whilst also contributing to Bloom/Best Kept Awards and 7 Green Flagged Sites.

The Council's LBAP not only advances environmental and climate goals but also significantly contributes to community wellbeing, aligning closely with the 'Five Steps to Wellbeing' framework. Outdoor Initiatives such as bird watching, bioblitzes, dawn chorus events and engagement activities encourages our community to engage more with green spaces and appreciate and protect their local environment. This provides not only health benefits through time spent outdoors but also breaks down feelings of social isolation by bringing people together under a shared interest in their environment.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

Referring to the report and the sanddunes in Cloughey, Alderman Adair stated that the Notice of Motion he had brought was in relation to the sand dunes in Cloughey and Portavogie.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that the NOM was different to the action in the LBAP and confirmed that the actions therein would include Portavogie.

Alderman Adair referred to number 52 and that the Council would not cut grass around the periphery of sports grounds and noted that the Council had reverted that decision in November and he wondered why that had been not been documented. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries stated that the grassland management strategy included that change in decision, the LBAP had not been amended. The LBAP was the document as it was agreed and actions going forward included the amendments made. He confirmed that grass would continue to be cut around the periphery of sports grounds.

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

16. TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY UPDATE (FILE PCA4) (Appendix XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Tree and Woodland Strategy Update report. The purpose of this report was to update Members on the recent progress of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy that was agreed in March 2021. The purpose of the Tree and Woodland Strategy was to recognise the importance of trees, the many benefits they afford us and the increasingly important role they can play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The strategy was required to ensure the Council's limited budget was focused on positive planting programmes and managing tree care and risks.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the progress of the Tree and Woodland Strategy.

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

Alderman McRandal referred to trees that had a story attached to them within the Borough and wondered if any joint up work was to occur to elevate the importance of trees.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries referred to some of the actions within the strategy which would link art and show the stories and provided an example in that regard. Further updates would be brought to the Committee in celebration of the heritage of trees within the Borough.

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

17. PLAY PROVISION, LOUGHRIES (CW4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing the undernoted:-

A Notice of Motion was agreed by Council in October 2022:

"That Council task officers to carry out a review of Play Provision in Loughries with a view to its inclusion in the Councils Play Strategy going forward."

A report on this was brought to Council in December 2022 when the following was agreed.

"That Council review the potential for play provision for Loughries in the future when the thresholds as outlined above have been met unless provision is made as a result of the planned discussion with others outside of Council. Council notes the report and will review Play Provision in Loughries in 2024."

Play provision was reviewed as agreed in 2024, and in May that year a further report was brought to Council which highlighted that the position had not changed in terms of thresholds being met. At that stage, the following was agreed:

“That Council task officers to engage with local landowners with a view to providing an open green space / informal play area for the community of Loughries in line with the council play strategy. Furthermore, agree that Officers review the potential for play provision for Loughries in the future when the thresholds as outlined above have been met.”

This report provided a further update to the previous work undertaken.

Context

The Council’s Play Strategy was finalised in 2021 and outlines the strategic approach to play provision in the Borough until 2032. Loughries was assessed in the development of the strategy, but no specific actions in relation to the settlement were included. This was because Loughries was classified as a Small Settlement (as defined in the Ards and North Down Area Plan 2015). The approach to play provision for Small Settlements and rural areas was outlined in the Councils agreed Play Strategy (Section 6.4) as follows:

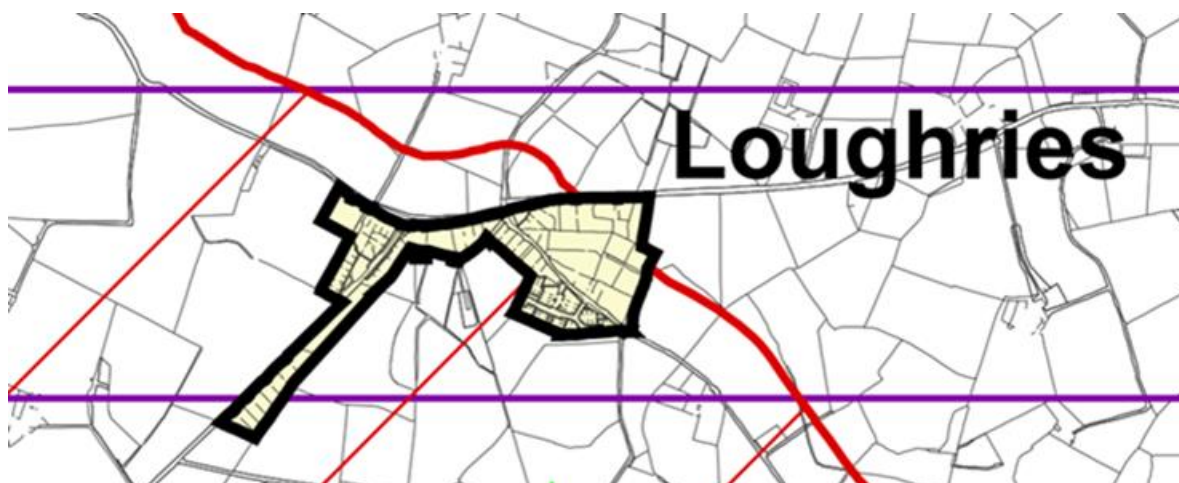
“Rural Provision Providing fixed play areas in rural settings needs to be measured and balanced against a range of factors including those outlined above in terms of demographics, distance to other settlements and playparks, as well as the need for land acquisition and budget constraints. In rural areas households tend to be generally dispersed within the landscape. In some cases, clusters of dwellings are defined as Small Settlements in terms of the settlement hierarchy which is outlined in the relevant Local Development Plan. The approach in other Council areas in Northern Ireland is only provide formal fixed play provision in settlements which are classified as Villages and above. In planning terms, the need for play areas is outlined under Planning Policy Statement 8, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (Policy OS 2, Public Open Space in New Residential Development). This is a useful benchmark to consider along with the previously mentioned considerations when determining the need for play provision.”

Therefore, a fixed play area would be considered if a Small Settlement has:

- More than 100 residential units within the defined Settlement Limit (as delineated by the Area Plan) or
- Minimum of 100 residential units within the catchment radial of the play area

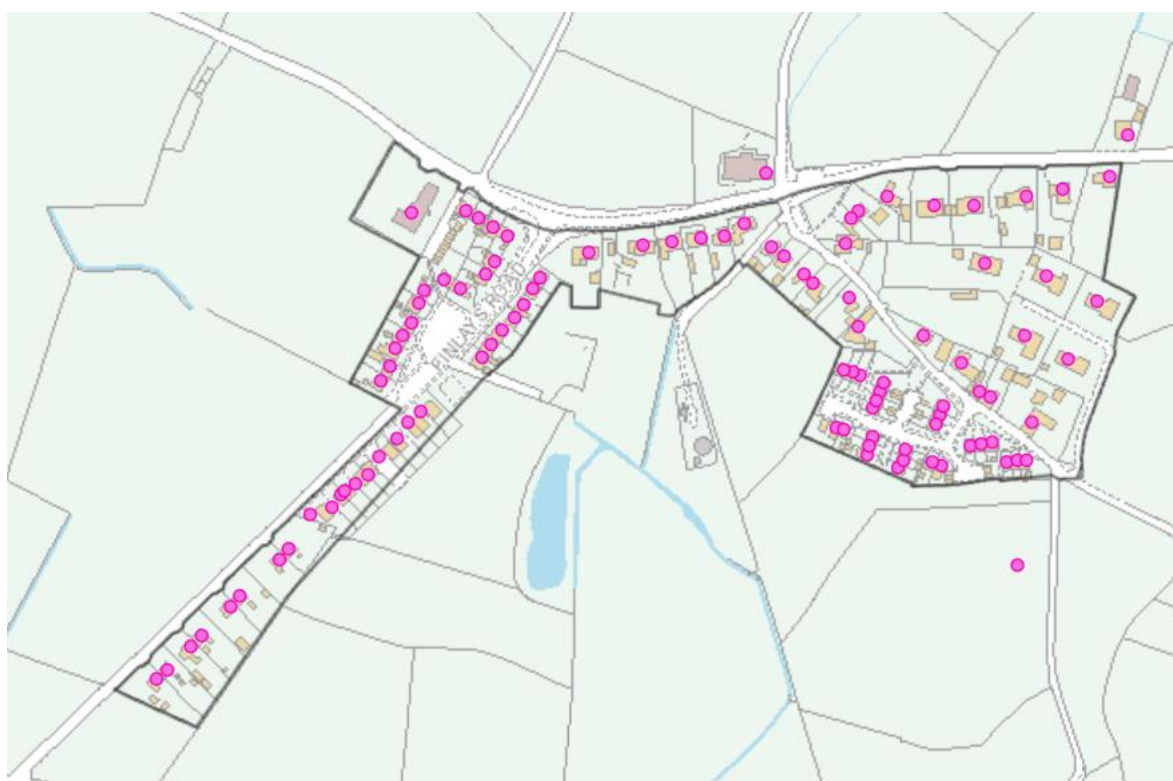
If a Small Settlement meets the criterion and in conjunction with the other considerations as outlined above, then the installation of a play area would be considered (if suitable land can be acquired if the Council does not have any other land available within the settlement). If a play area was deemed necessary, then it was considered that a Tier 3/Doorstep Facility would be appropriate.

Alternatives to fixed play provision could be deployed in rural areas such as exploration of Play Partnerships with schools (if they have play areas), Play Events and Play Pods which have been discussed previously within the Play Strategy. This was to be progressed by the appointment of a Development Officer (Play and Recreation), who was now in post and who had been running a series of events across the Borough since starting in July 2024. Further work in relation to alternative play was being progressed. The Settlement Limit for Loughries as defined by the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 was shown below.



Settlement Limit of Loughries in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015

Using the Council's GIS (Geographical Information System) all address points registered in the Borough were shown. This information was updated on a regular basis using Address Pointer Data received via Land and Property Services. There were currently 98 addresses registered within the Settlement Limit of Loughries with one being the Church and another a school, which were not residential, as was shown below. The black line denotes the Settlement Limit.



Address Points in Loughries



Address Points in Loughries

The above was a recent orthophotography image of Loughries with the address points shown and the Settlement Limit was delineated by the red line. While the number of address points hasn't changed since the reports in December 2022 and May 2024, it may have been perceived that some new houses have been built along Finlay's Road, but at the time of the December 2022 report, the address points had already been registered with Land and Property Services and were annotated on the map and were therefore counted at that time.

Furthermore, Council currently had no land holdings within or out with the Settlement Limit, so therefore land acquisition would be required to deliver any play provision in Loughries.

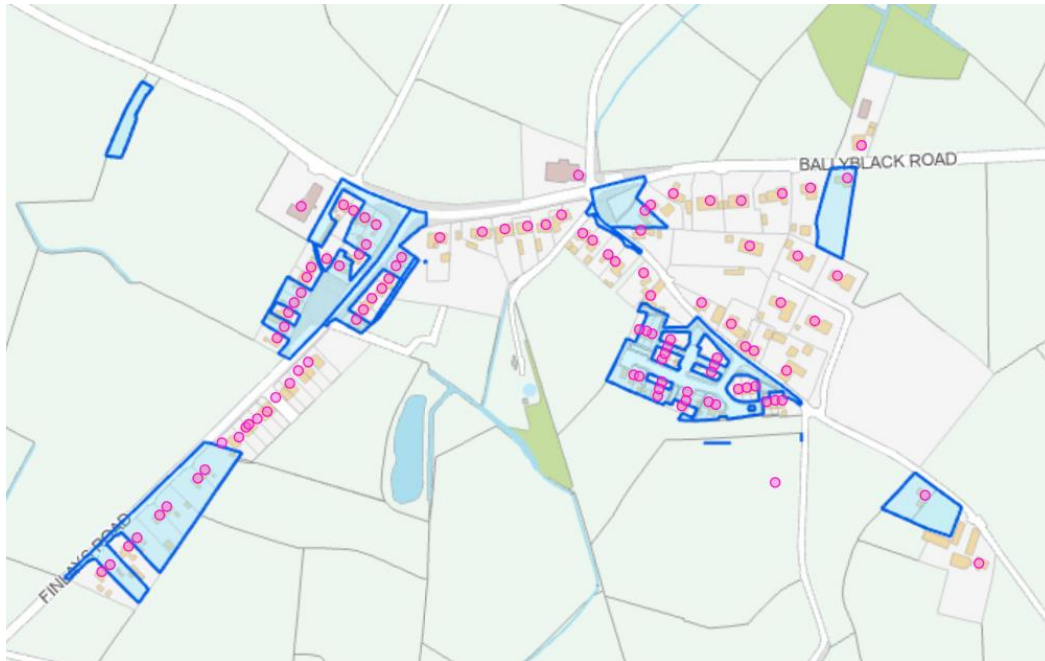
Summary

Currently Loughries did not meet the criteria as defined in planning policies and outlined in the Play Strategy, as:

1. the threshold of 100 dwellings has not been reached and
2. there is no Council land available.

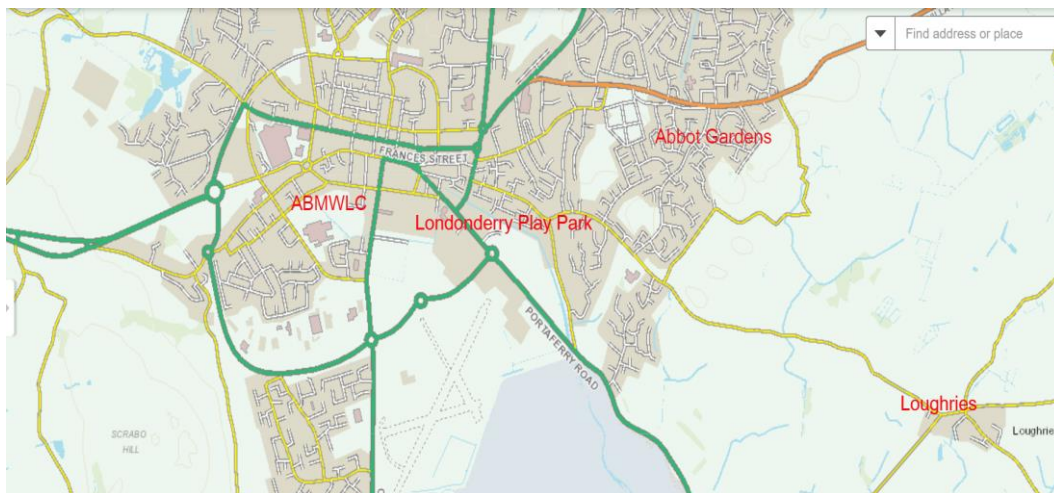
Future Options

In the May 2024 report, it was put forward that if the residential unit threshold was met, Council could potentially look to explore a partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who have some land holdings in Loughries (see map on page 5). However, their land holding maps had now been updated and there was no land that would be deemed suitable for the creation of a play area.

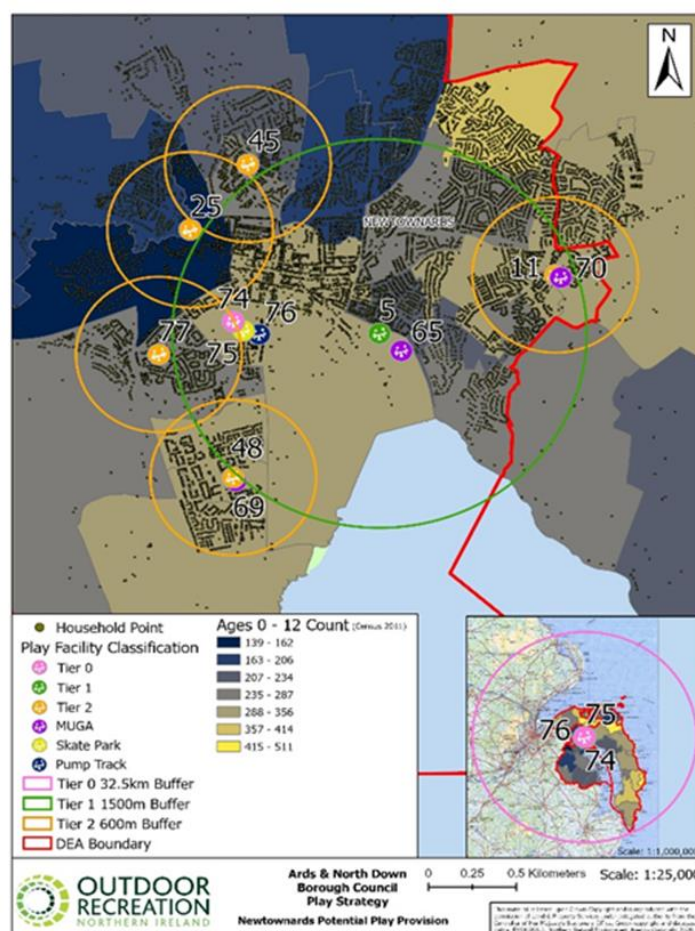


NIHE Land in Loughries

It should also be noted that there are other play parks which were close to Loughries, with the recently refurbished Londonderry Park (Tier 1) being 2.4 miles (by road) and ABMWLC Tier 0 which had an even wider catchment area as shown on the map insert below as well as Abbot Gardens (Bowtown) (Tier 2).



Nearby Play Parks in Newtownards



Catchment Areas of Play Parks in Newtownards

Private Land

Officers had written to the landowners of nearby parcels of land. To date Officers had not received any replies to the request to entered into discussions to see if the land could be used for a potential informal play and recreation area. Officers were continuing to make attempts to engage with the landowners to ascertain if the option of acquiring a piece of land for use as an informal play and recreation area was feasible in the future.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the matter be deferred for three months.

Alderman Adair advised that there was prospect of opening up the lines of communication with landowners and he was asking for a small postponement to facilitate that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the matter be deferred for three months.

18. CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ON WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS (CW173)

(Appendices XXI, XXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing attaching letter from Council Chief Executive to the Prime Minister and response from the Minister for the Department for Work and Pensions. The report detailed at the meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council on 30th October, Council stated the position that it strongly opposed the UK Government's recent Winter Fuel Payment policy change and agreed to write to the Prime Minister concerning the matter. A response had now been received.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the correspondence.

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

Councillor Kendall expressed her disappointment with the response.

Councillor Cochrane viewed the response as appalling and a disgraceful treatment of pensioners.

Alderman Adair also expressed his disappointment with the response and the changes that the government had made which had targeted the most vulnerable.

Councillor McClean shared a story from a constituent who was 102 years old who had contacted him asking for assistance. He noted that Bryson House had gone above and beyond to assist.

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

19. NOTICES OF MOTION

19.1 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 in August 2025, thereby completing an historic grand slam of Major tournament victories, his enormous contribution to golf through 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.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor McCollum stated that last month, Rory McIlroy became the sixth player in the world and the first European to complete the career grand slam which put him in the history books alongside legendary names Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus. She

stated that it give her enormous pride to propose the motion not just as a Councillor for Holywood and Clandeboyne but for many years she had served in the parent teacher associations in both Rory's former schools; St Patrick's Primary School and Sullivan Upper, Holywood. Throughout her many years in those schools, she remarked that rarely a week went past when a parent or teacher did not point to the legacy of hard work focus and determination of Rory and the inspiration remained for many pupils there. On the morning after the Masters, the mood of Holywood Main Street was one of absolute elation, sheer relief and enormous pride for Rory. Councillor McCollum thanked Council Officers for delivering to all the traders in Holywood really beautiful congratulation posters. She advised that her son had been at the Masters and had spoken about the love and admiration for Rory across the world and were just as jubilant and moved at his sheer stature as a sportsman. Rory retained the grounded humility of which he was raised. He had steadfast refused to get sucked into the politicising and instead focused resolutely on his game. In doing that he was a phenomenal ambassador for Holywood, Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland and throughout the world. Councillor McCollum felt the main message from the historic win was the triumph of hope, determination and resilience. The Mayor had already written a letter of congratulations to Rory, and she was aware Officers were engaging with Rory's team to try and establish a fitting appropriate tribute from the Borough. She asked that Officer's continued to engage with Rory's team with momentum in order to harness the enormous goodwill the historic win had generated.

Alderman McRandal stated that it was great honour to speak on the matter. Rory was born and raised in Holywood and that was where his talent was nurtured. Rory grew up to be one of the world's best golfers and Holywood was bursting with pride. Rory's achievements were worth great acknowledgement however highlighted the need to respect to celebrate his success and that it must be with his consent. The Council had a long-standing notice of motion that called for recognition of his achievements. Alderman McRandal asked when a report would be expected to come to Committee.

The Director advised that Officers were meeting with Rory's team at the end of the month following which a report would be brought to the Committee.

Councillor Hollywood welcomed the motion and rose in support. Rory's positivity could be seen across the world. He hoped something could be place that was prominent and permanent for all to see. He felt the Council's appreciation to Rory needed to be highlighted on a much bigger scale.

Councillor McClean believed that there was much more to come from Rory. He highlighted the need to look at golf more strategically with many unbelievable courses in the Borough which he felt was a massive untapped potential.

In summing up, Councillor McCollum welcomed the update from the Director on the engagement. The Borough was the home of Rory, enormous mileage could be yearned from that, and she was aware the Head of Leisure had ideas in that regard in line with new leisure strategy.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that this Council acknowledges with pride the outstanding achievement of Rory McIlroy in winning the US Masters tournament in August 2025, thereby completing an historic grand slam of Major tournament victories, his enormous contribution to golf through the world and his continued close association with and support for his hometown of Hollywood.

19.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan and Councillor Ashe

Postponed to June Community and Wellbeing Committee

We are all aware that dog ownership has increased significantly over the past years. There is a 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.

20. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

21. PEACEPLUS TENDERS – THEMES 2 AND 3 UPDATE (FILE PEACV-1)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was considered that recommended the award of tenders for themes 2 and 3 of the Councils proposed PEACEPLUS Action plan

- Theme 2 - Thriving and Peaceful Communities
- Theme 3 - Building Respect for Cultural Identities

It was noted that the committee had delegated authority to approve the tenders on behalf of Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the award of the PEACEPLUS tenders for themes 2 and 3 in accordance with assessment carried out on the tenders. Letters of Offer will be issued upon receipt of a Letter of Offer to Council from SEUPB.

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

22. PENINSULA 3G UPDATED COSTS REPORT (FILE CW74)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the report provided updates on the required capital requirement, income and operating costs to inform Council of the expenditure to construct, operate and sustain the proposed facilities.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the committee notes this report; and, in light of the cost overruns, provides as part of the future business case, a number of value-engineered options to be considered alongside to the current proposal so as to ensure the best likelihood of a facility being created in the area.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

Members paid tribute to the work of Alderman Brooks during his time as Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting of terminated at 10.22 pm.

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	28 May 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	21 May 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 - Branch out Community Group
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request had been received from Pamela Shaw, Branch Out Community Group. See appendix attached.

Council was asked to note that Pamela Shaw had requested to deliver the presentation to 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:	Pamela Shaw
Date of request:	17.04.2025
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Branch Out Community Group
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Community and Wellbeing

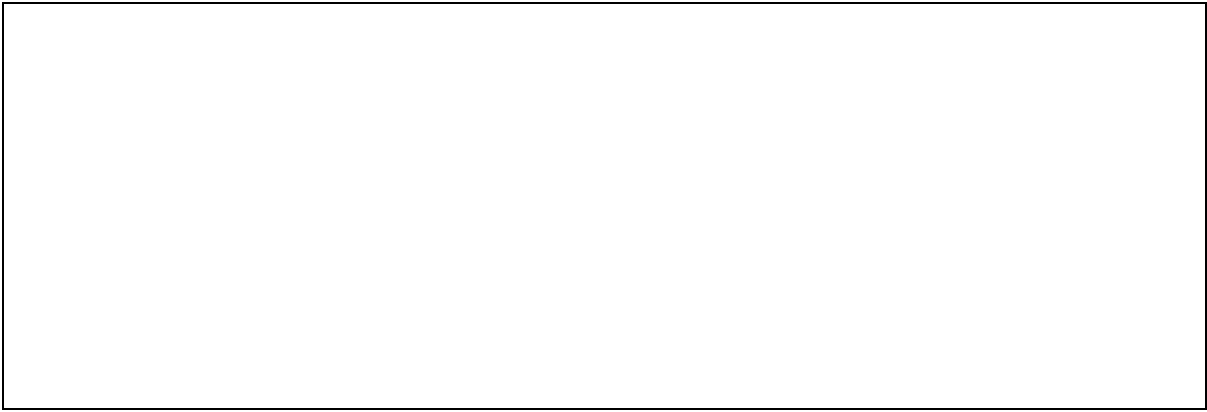
Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Branch Out Community Group have been working to get long-term access to a previously derelict woodland in the Talbot Street area of Newtownards. We have now successfully obtained a 20 year lease on the part that is owned by the Education Authority. The remaining portion belongs to the DfI Roads Service and will be transferred directly to the organisation via a Community Asset Transfer, with the Council acting as a sponsor body.

With the assistance of the Development Trust NI, we have employed a landscape architect who has now completed detail drawings of our plans for the site.

We would like to present this to the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, as well as key staff members from planning and parks if possible.

This will form part of a wider Consultation process and ensure the Council are confident in assisting us moving forward.



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 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	28 May 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	14 May 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	Response to Resolution – Road Traffic Law
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter from the Minister of Education - Road Traffic Law Appendix 2 - Letter from the Minister for Infrastructure - Road Traffic Law

Background

It was agreed at the Council meeting dated 30 April that:

“This Council support Mid Ulster Council in their call upon the NI Assembly to develop and pass legislation requiring vehicles to stop for school buses that are picking up or dropping off pupils, in line with other best practise observed in other jurisdictions. This Council should also send a letter to Mid Ulster Council expressing this support.”

The Chief Executive wrote to the Minister of Education and the Minister for Infrastructure on 6 May. A response was received from both Departments on 12 May

Not Applicable

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and 13 May respectively. The two letters of response are appended to this report for noting.

The Chief Executive also wrote to Mid Ulster District Council to express support.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the correspondence.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



McCullough, Susie

Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR
private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

12th May 2025

CORR 0597-2025

Dear Ms McCullough

Thank you for your email of 6 May 2025 regarding the Council's concerns about school transport safety. I would like to assure you that both my Department and the Education Authority (EA) take the safety of children travelling to and from school extremely seriously and I thank Ards and North Down Council for raising this important issue.

I am giving careful consideration to school transport policy and operations in general and this includes exploring any measures that my department or the EA could introduce to improve bus safety for school children.

The EA is responsible for the operation and delivery of home to school transport, and it has a number of safety measures in place on its own fleet, including special lighting on all EA school buses which alert other road users to exercise caution as school children may be alighting or disembarking the vehicle. The EA also engages with Translink on a range of public transport safety initiatives, including its safety bus that visits schools across Northern Ireland.

I fully appreciate that road safety education provision within schools has an important role in developing children and young people's attitudes and behaviours to become safer road users, both as children and as adults in later life. There are opportunities throughout the curriculum for teachers to cover the issue of road safety. For example, at primary level the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning requires teachers to enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in keeping themselves healthy and safe. At post-primary level, the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning requires that pupils should have opportunities to "develop preventative strategies in relation to accidents in the home, school and on the road".

Whilst road safety is within the remit of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), I fully support a cross-departmental approach on developing any measures which would

improve the safety of children on our roads and I completely endorse DfI's current road safety community campaign '*Share the Road to Zero*', which aims to reduce road deaths in Northern Ireland.

The responsibility for road traffic legislation and the specialist expertise required to develop new road safety measures rests with DfI. My officials have been liaising with DfI on this issue, and I have asked that they work closely together and provide any support needed in the development of options to improve road safety for school children. The EA is also committed to working with partner agencies to further inform the development of policy and legislation surrounding transport of children to school.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Paul Givan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education



From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA

Susie McCullough CEO
Ards and North Down Borough Council

By Email
Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Private Office, 3rd Floor,
James House, Gasworks Site,
2 - 4 Cromac Avenue,
Belfast, BT7 2JA
Telephone: (028) 9054 0540
Email: Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference: COR-0365-2025
13 May 2025

Susie, a chara,

ROAD TRAFFIC LAW – SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Thank you for your email outlining the considerations of Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Too many lives are being lost on our roads, and I am committed to considering any initiatives that can improve road safety, which is a priority for me as Minister. The evidence is clear that the key to enhanced road safety is improved driver and road user behaviour. It is essential that drivers should exercise due care and attention on our roads, at all times.

With regards to school buses, I have asked my officials to look urgently at all the options that may be available to improve safety for school children. I also want to explore wider road safety measures, such as speed limit reductions, including 20mph zones in residential areas and outside schools. I have also asked my officials to reinforce the messaging to help keep all road users safe, especially the vulnerable.

Is mise le meas,

LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

Unclassified

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ITEM 19**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	28 May 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Assets and Property Services
Date of Report	16 May 2025
File Reference	65369
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Holborn Avenue, Bangor, Car Park Improvements
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Holborn Avenue Car Park

1.0 Background

As part of the Council's agreed Maintenance Strategy, which incorporates a "needs based" approach for its refurbishment programme, Car Parks are scored every year and the lowest scoring of them are earmarked for resurfacing, subject to budgetary constraints. In March 2025, the Council agreed the Car Park Capital Works for 2025-26.

As mentioned within the report, the Car Park at Holborn Avenue, Bangor, has consistently been the lowest scoring Car Park over several years, however an ongoing legal matter has meant that it was inadvisable to proceed with substantial works at the Car Park. Due to this, the report also advised that in 2025-26, more minor essential repair works would be undertaken here along with resurfacing of Old Cross East, Newtownards and line marking at various Car Parks.

Not Applicable

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2.0 Update on Legal Issues

On 1 April 2015, Off-Street Car Parks owned by DfI (then DRD) were transferred to the ownership of the Council. At that time, a general Scheme for the Transfer of Designated Off-Street Car Parks with a list of those car parks was issued. Certificates of Title were to be issued for each Car Park, however, documentary title could not be provided for all car parks, either for all of the lands or portions of land within the car park.

This was the case for Holborn Avenue Car Park, and as such, Officers had been unable to ascertain the extent of the land that had been transferred to Council, and what land DfI retained. It is now envisaged that this will be resolved in the coming weeks, and as such the Council will be able to proceed with more substantial works to Holborn Avenue Car Park.

There are a number of outstanding matters regarding encroachments on the car park boundary, for which DfI have been unable to provide written agreements. Officers will work with businesses and residents to formalise arrangements and will bring reports to Council in future, as required.

3.0 Car Park Improvements

The current Holborn Avenue Car Park is in a poor state of repair and in need of layout alterations to improve the car park and support the regeneration of Bangor.

As the existing Marine Gardens Car Park is due to close permanently as part of the Queens Parade redevelopment, it is important to enhance the usability of our existing Car Parks in Bangor, and studies have identified that Holborn Avenue is a key Car Park in terms of displacement.

Officers have produced a drawing of an amended layout which is attached at Appendix 1, which:

- Improves traffic flow within the car park
- Provides 61 larger sized parking bays
- Provides 6 blue badge parking bays
- Provides 2 EV parking bays (which will be provided as part of the On Street Residential Charging Scheme)

The current Car Park provides a total of 62 parking bays and 6 blue badge parking bays, however due to the current condition of the car park a number of these are unserviceable.

4.0 Budget Allocation

It is anticipated that the works required to upgrade the Holborn Avenue Car Park as per Appendix 1, will cost in the region of £100k.

The Council currently has budgeted £50k per year in capital budgets for car park resurfacing. It is proposed that rather than carry out the works as agreed in March 2025 (outlined in section 1.0 above), this budget is utilised towards the upgrade of Holborn Avenue Car Park in the 2025/26 financial year, given that it is the lowest

Not Applicable

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scoring car park and the legal issues preventing action being taken earlier will soon be resolved.

The Head of Finance has confirmed that the remaining £50k of Capital budget can be funded from either other capital underspends or from the new capital fund established during the recent estimates process. Localised line marking at the most needed car parks will still be undertaken utilising the “car park tidy-up” budget allocated for 2025/26.

As Members will be aware, new tariffs have been agreed as part of the Car Park Strategy, which will provide projected additional income of approx. £0.5M and therefore much needed additional funds for car park maintenance and enhancements. Unfortunately, implementation of the new tariffs continues to be delayed due to a legislative impediment and Officers continue to actively work on options to move forward in this regard.

In the meantime, Officers will continue cross departmental working to establish further funding opportunities which may arise to further enhance our Car Park estate in the 2025/26 year and complete the projects originally earmarked in the March report. A further report will be brought to Council should additional funding become available.

5.0 Timeline for Completion

Naturally, it is preferable to complete this work prior to commencement of the Queens Parade project and the subsequent permanent loss of parking at the Marine Gardens car park. However, as Members will be aware, the developer has no firm start date due to a number of ongoing issues. When a start date is provided, it is possible that only a short notice period will be given. It is for this reason that Officers believe that the Council must act swiftly and commence works at Holborn Avenue as quickly as possible.

On the assumption that the last remaining legal matters are resolved, it is proposed that the resurfacing works could commence mid-June and last approximately four weeks.

Whilst closing this car park in early summer is not ideal, Officers believe it is a better option than to inevitably close it at a later date, once the Queens Parade project has started and the seafront car park is removed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council agrees the proposed layout of Holborn Avenue, Bangor Car Park in Appendix 1 of this report and fund the work as outlined in this report.



Unclassified

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ITEM 12.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	28 May 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	15 May 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	NI Assembly Committee for Finance; Deaths, Still Births and Baby Loss Bill
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Consultation on NI Assembly Committee for Finance; Deaths, Still Births and Baby Loss Bill
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter from GRO Appendix 2 - Draft Consultatin response

The NI Assembly Committee for Finance has asked for views on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill (Appendix 1). The Bill was introduced by the Finance Minister, John O'Dowd MLA, on 25th March 2025. It is at its second stage, so the Committee is only seeking views on what is being put forward, rather than asking specific questions.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the law relating to the manner of notification of deaths and still-births and the manner of giving particulars relating to them. It will also provide a legislative basis for the introduction of a baby loss scheme and will address differences in registration processes for births and stillbirths between some same-sex female couples and opposite-sex couples.

The Council's draft response is in Appendix 2

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees the draft consultation response as detailed in Appendix 2.



GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
Colby House
Stranmillis Court Belfast,
BT9 5RR
Telephone: 0300 200 7890

Email: GRO_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk
Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro

Council Chief Executive via email

Date: 6 May 2025

Dear Chief Executive,

**THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020 (REGISTRATION OF DEATHS AND STILL-BIRTHS) (EXTENSION)
ORDER (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2025**

I am writing to advise you that the current temporary coronavirus provisions contained in the Coronavirus Act 2020 (Registration of Deaths and Still-Birth) (Extension) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 were debated in the Assembly today. As you will be aware, these powers facilitate the remote registration of deaths and still-births and the electronic exchange of documents between stakeholders in the registration process.

I am pleased to confirm that the Assembly has approved the continuation of the extension Order until 24 September 2025.

As stated previously, it is our intention to use this time to bring forward legislation which will make these temporary powers permanent – solidifying the current registration process.

I would be grateful if the Registrars could impart this information to any funeral director contacts.

If you have any specific questions, please contact NIROS.Support@finance-ni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Aoife Rooney
Deputy Registrar General

cc
Registrars' Line Management
Registrars



Appendix 1 – Draft Consultation Response

Consultation Name: NI Assembly Committee for Finance; Deaths, Still Births and Baby Loss Bill

Council draft response *in italics*

General comment:

There have been absolutely no negatives flagged by families, Funeral Directors or Registrar's Offices since remote legislation was implemented in 2020. The Coronavirus Act 2020 has been extended every six months since it was first applied. Every time the extension is due to go through the Assembly, the Registrar's Office has to prepare for the possibility that it does not go through and have everything ready to resume the old processes. This is unnecessary work for both the Assembly and the Council. The Council strongly encourages this to be made permanent.

The Bill will provide a statutory footing for a baby loss certificate scheme

It is proposed that there will be a public consultation on the details of the scheme. This will cover the content of the certificate, the details and who can apply for it. Baby loss charities such as Sands and Tommy believe that a certificate that recognises their loss, will help parents process their grief.

While such a scheme is to be broadly welcomed, at this point there is no suggestion that the Registrar's Office, and therefore the Council, will be involved in its implementation. If that is to change in the future, then we would like to be consulted to ensure the smooth implementation.

The Bill will rectify the differences in the birth and stillbirth registration process for same-sex and heterosexual couples who are neither married, nor in a civil partnership.

As all birth/stillbirth registrations must include the biological mother, when, in this case we refer to same-sex couples, it is same-sex female couples. On the certificate there is 'female parent' who is the biological mother and 'second female parent' who is the non-biological parent.

Presently, same-sex couples cannot register a birth or stillbirth in same manner as heterosexual couples and do not have the same options. They can only jointly register if their child was conceived under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, and they have a certificate of such from a UK clinic. It is an extra hurdle that same-sex couples have to face, and it is very restrictive. For example, parents who, in good faith, have used a clinic in the Republic of Ireland, cannot jointly register their child.

The current legislation is difficult and hard to navigate, as well as failing in terms of equality. We welcome this attempt to simplify it and give all couples the same rights when it comes to registering the birth or stillbirth of their child.

Unclassified

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ITEM 15

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	28 May 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	19 May 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 McLroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McLroy Organisation. Proposal currently being drafted related to supporting young people in sport for their consideration and then will be reported to Council.	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 to close off the NOM	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
370	Environment	13/09/19	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 Financial provision 2026/27	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 following meeting with them.	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 2024 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 still awaited on the details of that request. Report to June C&W Committee if that clarity is obtained in advance	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 May 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	Referred to C&W in 2024. Legal advice sought in 2024. Legal advice has been received April 2025. 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)	TO BE REMOVED ON THE BASIS OF THE RESPONSE FROM DFI
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. Report to June 2025 C&WC.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

549	Community & Wellbeing	09.12.22	Councillor Douglas & Councillor Walker	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to ' <i>Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls</i> ', 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.	Council December 2022 Corporate Services Committee January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024	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 June C&W Committee.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
564	Community & Wellbeing	08.02.23	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	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.	Council February 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023	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. Compliance section continues to chase	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	
567	Corporate Services	14.02.23	Councillor Adair & Councillor Edmund	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Council February 2023 Corporate Services Committee March 2023	A response has been received from the Cabinet Office and a report went back to Committee 30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update. Letters sent to the Cabinet Office requesting use of the Royal Name July 2024 - Advice now received - Report presented at September CSC. Agreed that combined EQIA more appropriate. A further report to be brought to CSC when EQIA ready to go. May 2025 - Advice now received on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	

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 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 Committee - date tbc</p> <p>Update report presented to 06.02.25 P&P Cttee</p>	Brian Dorrian (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 Distrcit 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 2025 C&W Committee. Meanwhile beaches continue to be monitored on a proactive basis.</p>	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

586	Corporate Services	16.10.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin	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.	Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024	Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor. July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor. Report to Corporate Committee in September 2024. June 2025: The Council has instructed its solicitor in relation to this matter, and they are liaising directly with the solicitor instructed by the landowners.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
595	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	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.	Council 29.11.2023	Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee. Second report to June 2025 C&W Committee	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
599	Community & Wellbeing	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	"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)	Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024	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.	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 27.03.24 Item 18.3 Environment Committee 10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 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. 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. Environment Committee April 2024 - Agreed to bring back a report.</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>	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
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>P&P 8.5.25 Prosperity Ctte - 5 September 2024 (Item 14.1) Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.2) referred to P&P</p>	<p>Report to be presented to P&P 8.5.25 Donaghadee Signage Working Group established. Audit completed of existing signage to provide rationale for additional signage. Update report to future P&P Committee 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 Clandeboye 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 with progress report as communicated to DEA members and local community in April and May 2025 on 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 Medallist - in recognition of his outstanding achievements in sport.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.1)	Meeting with Rhys McClenaghan took place in January 2025. June 2025: Further report to follow when more information available.	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 Committee 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1) Environment Committee 7 May 2025 (Item 3)	Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs 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)	
636	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.24	Councillors Boyle & Wray	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	Council October 2024 Item 23.3 - Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Report to April C&WC. To be referred back to a future C&WC as per April Council decision.	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 	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	Referred to the February 2025 meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee. Reported to April C&W Committee. April Council determined that Director & HoS to visit site. Date currently being arranged.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

646	Planning	10.12.24	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	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.	PC 04.02.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.4)	Agreed at 4.2.25 that the Notice of Motion be adopted. FURTHER AGREED that officers report back, where relevant, to the Place and Prosperity Committee. 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
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 for future P&P - date TBC	Director of Place/Head of Regeneration	
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 Goomsport 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.	Interim Director of Place	Adopted 6.3.25 - this is a 'priority' arising from Goomsport's Village Plan and progress will be reported as part of regular general updates

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</p>	<p>Council January 2025, Environment Committee February 2025</p>	<p>Repy received from DAERA Minister 29.04.25. Update report to be brought to June EC. Letter sent to DAERA Minister from the Chief Executive 14.04.25 Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Environment Committee 05.02.2025. Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council January 2025</p>	<p>Richard McCracken (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)</p>	<p>TO BE REMOVED</p>
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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 Brough 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 6.3.25 Council 26.02.2025	<p>Meeting arranged with Pipe Bands for 13.5.25</p> <p>Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion</p>	Interim Director of Prosperity	
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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 at 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. Council 30.4.2025 updated wording of NOM. June update: Report to follow.	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 partiality 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. June update - 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	Agreed at April 2025 Council	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
661	Corporate Services	21.03.25	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 and 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.	Council 30.04.25	NOM added to the Corporate Services agenda - May 2025		
662	Corporate Services	28.03.25	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	Council 30.04.25	NOM added to the Corporate Services agenda - May 2025.		Decision taken at CS 13/5/2 to withdraw this notice of motion. Remove from tracker after ratification.

664	Community & Wellbeing	14.04.25	Councillor McCollum and Alderman McRandal	<p>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.</p> <p>And further that this Council writes to congratulate Rory on his victory.</p>	Council 30.04.25			
665	Community & Wellbeing	15.04.25	Councillor Morgan and Councillor Ashe	<p>We are all aware that dog ownership has increased significantly over the past years.</p> <p>There is fenced of 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.”</p>	Council 30.04.25	Assigned to June 2025 C&W Agenda		



Minutes of the 515th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 13th March 2025 at 10.30 am in the Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast

Present:

Cllr Aaron Skinner
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Alderman Keith Kerrigan
Ald Amanda Grehan

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (In the Chair)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Derry City & Strabane District Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Virtual:

Ald Stephen McIlveen
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Ards & North Down Borough Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Mid Ulster Borough Council

In Attendance:

Grainia Long
Jonny Blease
Adrian Blythe
Robert Clements
Kelly Cameron
Maria McLaughlin

CEO, NIHE
Head of Communications, NIHE
Quality Improvement Manager, NIHE
Head of Sustainable Development, NIHE
Secretary, Housing Council
Executive Assistant, NIHE

Apologies:

Cllr Mark Cooper

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough 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, 13th February 2025</p> <p>Ald Stephen McIlveen had requested information on a judicial review in relation to intimidation points, which had been omitted from the minutes.</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and seconded by Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald</p> <p>Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes were approved.</p>	Secretary
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p>	
4.1	<p>Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>It was noted that an invitation had been extended to the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to join Members at the May Meeting, a reply was awaited.</p>	
4.2	<p>Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>A response, from Belfast City Council regarding the non-attendance of Cllr McCusker and asking that appropriate action is taken, is still awaited</p> <p>Following discussion regarding the dismissive attitude and lack of communication from Belfast City Council, it was agreed that the Secretary would seek advice from the Department for Communities on the way forward on how to resolve this issue.</p>	Secretary
4.3	<p>Replacement for Newry, Mourne & Down Council's representative</p> <p>It was agreed that the Secretary should contact Newry, Mourne & Down Council again, to seek their nomination on the Housing Council, as it also influences the Housing Executive Board membership from the Housing Council.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	Secretary
5.	<p>HOUSING EXECUTIVE'S EMERGING ISSUES & STRATEGIC ITEMS</p> <p>Grainia Long gave an update on the Housing Executive's Emerging Issues under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January Monitoring Round, budget update and implications; • Overview of Business Plan for 2025/2026 and submission of budget figures; • Programme for Government; • Final quarter completion, major focus on new build programme and completion of the planned maintenance programme; • Fundamental Review of Allocations – Intimidation Points; 	

- Progress re Homelessness provision, including NIAO report; and
- NIPSO investigation.

Referring to NIPSO investigation, Cllr Grehan reiterated the shoddy workmanship of contractors in her area and asked if there is sufficient focus on inspections of works.

Cllr Grehan also raised the issue of vulnerable people in temporary accommodation in hotels who are being sent to other areas with no support and she referred to a mother and child being moved from Lisburn to accommodation in Cookstown, as it was the only available temporary accommodation unit in Northern Ireland and the difficult transition for those vulnerable people.

G Long referred to the increased level of demand for temporary accommodation, she added that the Housing Executive are very mindful that hotel placements are not ideal or practical for children and currently there are less than 2% placements in hotels are children and Officers are constantly monitoring these placements, to seek alternative arrangements. It was noted that the Housing Executive this year has increased the number of single lets by approximately 180 across all the Regions.

Noted:

- It was recognised that certain cases within their areas could be used by Members as a way of illustration on highlighting issues, but individual cases should be sent directly to the Secretary to be triaged to the relevant Officers for a response.

Agreed:

- G Long undertook to provide the Housing Council with the steps the Housing Executive take to manage the transition out of hotel accommodation into temporary accommodation, and the obligations on landlords where we lease properties to ensure single lets are to an appropriate standard;
- It was agreed that Members would be briefed, at a future meeting, on the progress involved in raising a repair, how the Housing Executive responds, and how they measure quality of repair works undertaken, including how they deal with complaints;
- Presentation to be given to a future meeting on Disabled Adaptations; and
- Presentation, at a future meeting, on Homeless for Young People.

In response to Cllr Varsani's request for the Housing Executive to provide training on how to respond to the Pess in relation to housing issues, J Blease agreed to share factual briefings to Members, as and when they are issued, and when the Council's Housing Investment Plans are being launched key points and public statements will be shared with Members.

Housing Community Summit – 8th 9th September in Liverpool

Cllr Skinner raised the forthcoming Housing Community Summit in Liverpool.

Members

Secretary

**Secretary
Secretary
Secretary**

	<p>He reiterated that 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>G Long explained that the Housing Executive has engaged with the CIH organisers and have come back with some suggestions.</p>	
6.	<p>PRESENTATION ON THE HOUSING EXECUTIVE'S RETROFIT JOURNEY TO NET ZERO</p> <p>.</p> <p>Adrian Blythe and Robert Clements gave a presentation on the Housing Executive's Journey to Net Zero.</p> <p>Members noted that the Housing Executive's Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027) is a framework for helping tackle the climate emergency, the strategy outlines the commitment to sustaining our environment for future generations and providing quality, affordable housing. The Housing Executive has a target of producing net zero carbon emissions by 2050.</p> <p>Ways in which the Housing Executive are delivering and tackling energy efficiency measures and renewable technology in homes over the next year are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) – Ultra Low Energy New Build Pilot; • ERDF Energy Upgrades – Retrofit at Scale (1400 upgrades to non-traditional properties; • Cavity Wall Insulation (300 houses); and • Low Carbon Retrofit programme. <p>The Chair thanked Adrian Blythe & Robert Clements for a very informative presentation.</p>	
7.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p>	
7.1	<p>Written Ministerial Statement - Update on Intermediate Rent Funding Competition</p> <p>It was noted that the Department will be giving a presentation at the April Meeting on the progress, and next steps, of the Intermediate Rent Homes.</p>	Secretary
7.2	<p>Press Release - NIPSO proposes own initiative investigation into Housing Executive</p> <p>Press Release was noted.</p>	

7.3	Affordable Warmth Scheme query Noted.	Secretary
7.4	Figures in relation to Intimidation Cases Noted.	
7.5	Housing Waiting List Members requested a breakdown of the Housing Waiting list.	
8.	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10 th April 2025 at 10.30 am in Lisburn Civic Centre.	

Meeting ended 12.40 pm.



Minutes of the 516th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 10th April 2025 at 10.30 am in Lisburn Civic Centre, the Island, Lisburn

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Cllr Aaron Skinner
Ald Amanda Grehan
Cllr Martin Hearty

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (Chair)
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Virtual:

Ald Keith Kerrigan
Ald Stephen McIlveen
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Cllr Sean McGlinchey

Derry City & Strabane District Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

In Attendance:

David Polley
Heloise Brown
Diane Shiveral
Kelly Cameron
Maria McLaughlin

Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Secretary, Housing Council
Executive Assistant, NIHE

Apologies:

Cllr Deirdre Varsani
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Mid Ulster Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon
Borough Council

1.	Welcome	
	The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.	
1.1	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's representative	
	The Chair welcomed Councillor Martin Hearty to his first meeting of the Housing Council since his appointment.	

2.	Declarations of Interest	
	There were no declarations.	
3.	Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13th March 2025	
	The minutes were proposed by Cllr A Skinner and seconded by Cllr A Fitzgerald.	
	The Minutes were approved.	
4.	Matters Arising from the Minutes	
4.1	Invitation to the new Minister of Communities	
	The Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members at the May Meeting; the agenda and questions were discussed at the 'In Committee' session.	
4.2	Non attendance at meetings	
	As there has been no resolution regarding the attendance of the Belfast City Council's representative (Councillor Paul McCusker) at Housing Council meetings, advice has been sought from the Department for Communities and it has been agreed, going forward, to pause the issuing of Housing Council papers and minutes to the representative and Council, until this issue is resolved.	Secretary
4.3	Housing Council vacancy on Housing Executive Board	
	The Secretary undertook to contact the Department for Communities seeking confirmation on when the competition will commence for the Housing Council vacancy on the Housing Executive Board, given that Newry & Mourne & Down Council has nominated their representative.	Secretary
4.4	Invitation to Water Service, Department for Communities DfC) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	
	Invites were sent to the Water Service, DfC & DfI expressing concerns about wastewater infrastructure and the constraints this placed on the construction of houses, as well as the challenges of water connections stalling people moving into newbuild properties.	
	It was noted that a reply had been received from DfI declining the invitation stating that, as this was an operational matter, NI Water should provide an update on how they are approaching this matter.	
	It was agreed that Members would still like DfI to be represented from a policy viewpoint. The Secretary undertook to send another invite.	Secretary
	All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.	

5.

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES TOP HOUSING ISSUES

Members expressed their disappointment at receiving the report extremely overdue and that the report they received hadn't included updated information.

David Polley & Heloise gave an update on the Department for Communities Top Issues under the following headings:

- Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) – to provide an additional 400 social homes by March 2025 of which 10% will be wheelchair accessible;
- 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;
- To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy;
- 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;
- To review Housing Executive Administered Private Sector Grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Housing Executive;
- Deliver 2758 affordable warmth measures to 1428 homes by 31 March 2025 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme;
- To progress all appropriate tenancy fraud provisions within the Financial Provisions Bill;
- Develop proposals and draft legislation on Injunctions against Anti-Social Behaviour and Grounds for Possession;
- Deliver 846 new shared ownership homes by March 2025 (*via £22 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding*);
- Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent);
- To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness;
- To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022;
- 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.

	<p>Members Questions/Comments</p> <p>Referring to the Private Rented Sector (PRS), D Polley confirmed that PRIS rents are not regulated in Northern Ireland and, in the last two years, they have increased approximately by 10% per year, due to the demand within the PRS, higher level of mortgages, taxes, stamp duty and maintenance costs.</p> <p>In relation to electrical re-wiring in PRS properties, it was noted that the phase in period for the electrical safety checks in existing tenancies in the PRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Regulations are operational from 1 April 2025, for all new private tenancies granted on or after this date; • existing tenancies granted before 1 April 2025, have to 1 December 2025 to comply. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfC to provide the number of applicants, by Council area, currently on the waiting list who have intimidation points. • Presentation to be arranged on Decent Homes Standards at the June Meeting in order to feed into the consultation document. • Presentation to be arranged on the process of how Contractors are procured; how the Contractors are allocated; how the Housing Executive measure quality of works undertaken and how complaints are dealt with. 	<p>DfC</p> <p>DfC</p> <p>Secretary</p>
6.	<p>PRESENTATION ON INTERMEDIATE RENTS</p> <p>Diane Shiveral, Department for Communities gave a presentation on Intermediate Rent.</p> <p>It was noted that the Department for Communities has produced a new affordable housing policy which aims to create an additional supply of homes, providing a new affordable “Intermediate Rent” housing option. The Department has identified an Intermediate Rent Operator who will, in due course, be awarded funding to support the delivery of new affordable rented homes in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Intermediate Rent Policy intends to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a new supply of homes; • provide much needed high-quality housing at below market rents for those on lower to moderate incomes; • offer homes for rent with at least a 20% discount on prevailing private market rents for a similar property type and size within a locality; • provide homes of a size and type suitable for the number of occupants, in locations where people wish to live; 	

- alleviate some of the up-front barriers to accessing a rented home and be targeted towards eligible lower to moderate income households;
- offer enhanced security of tenure by making available tenancies of up to five years at a time and the option to renew subject to the agreement of the landlord and tenant; and
- offer tenants access to effective and prompt property management and tenancy support services.

The Department has now identified Maple and May Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Choice Housing Ireland, as Intermediate Rent operator to deliver 300 new Intermediate Rent homes across Northern Ireland over the coming years. Once these homes are built, they will be advertised and tenancies made available to eligible households, in line with DfC's policy. It is expected the first Intermediate Rent homes will be available for rent from 2026.

Ms Shiveral confirmed that talks are still ongoing as to identifying specific sites of where the 300 houses are going to be located. The Maple & May proposal should see new homes constructed over 11 sites across 8 Local Government Districts.

A Skinner raised the issue of tenants providing a guarantor which can be a barrier for many.

Concern was expressed that areas of housing need for social housing is not always identified and would the intermediate rent products feed into possibly highlighting these unidentified areas.

It was explained that work is ongoing with the Housing Executive who are working on the methodology to identify intermediate rent need.

D Polley explained that the rent is set at 20% below market level and the loan is for 25 years and, even if the loan is paid back within that period, the property has to remain as Intermediate Rent for the 25 year period.

In response to A Grehan's question asking if the Operator or local Council can buy off the shelf properties for intermediate rent, it was explained that initially Intermediate Rent will be delivered by the Operator who will develop their own houses for renting. D Polley added that there is no reason why a Developer or local Council cannot provide their own intermediate housing for rent outside of the DfC funding model if they abide by the Intermediate Rent policy and the design standards.

Members welcomed this Policy and the Chair thanked Ms Shiveral and Mr Polley for a very informative presentation.

7.	Any Other Business	
7.1	Waiting Lists by Local Government District Report noted.	
7.2	NI Audit Report - Homelessness in NI & Media Release Noted.	
7.3	Minister's Announcement Temporary Accommodation Noted.	
7.4	Update on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould Policy The Secretary undertook to arrange a presentation/update to be given on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould policy, at a future meeting.	Secretary
8.	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 th May 2025 at 10.00 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast. It was noted that the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members from 10.45 to 11.30 am.	

Meeting ended 12.10 pm.