


Agenda

Agenda

 *C 25.06.25 Agenda.pdf*

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1. **Prayer**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Mayor's Business**
5. **Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of June**

Copy attached

 *Mayoral Engagements June 2025.pdf*


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6. **Minutes of Council Meeting held on 28 May 2025**

Copy attached

 *C 28.05.2025 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *C 28.05.2025 MinutesPM.pdf*

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7. **Minutes of Annual Meeting dated 4th June 2025**

Copy attached

 *AM 04.6.2025 Minutes.pdf*

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8. **Minutes of Committees**

8.1 **Audit Committee dated 27 May 2025**

Copy attached

 *AC 27.05.2025 Minutes.pdf*


Not included

 *AC 27.05.2025 MinutesPM.pdf*

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8.2 **Planning Committee dated 10 June 2025**

Copy attached

 *PC.10.06.25 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *PC.10.06.25 Minutes PM.pdf*


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8.3 Environment Committee dated 11 June 2025

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 *EC 11.06.2025 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *EC 11.06.2025 Minutes PM.pdf*

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8.3.1 Matter Arising from Item 9 - Notice of Motion Update on Bangor Christmas Lighting

 *8.3.1 Matters Arising from item 9 - Notice of Motion Update on Christmas Lighting.pdf*


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 *8.3.1 - Appendix1.pdf*

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8.4 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 12 June 2025

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 *PP.12.06.25 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *PP 12.06.25 Minutes PM.pdf*


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8.5 Corporate Services Committee dated 17 June 2025

Copy attached.

 *CS Minutes 17.06.2025.pdf*

Not included

 *CS Minutes 17.06.2025 PM.pdf*

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9. Deputation Requests

9.1 Deputation Request - Smartphone Free Childhood

Report attached

 *9.1 Deputation Request Report - Smartphone Free Childhood NI.pdf*

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 *9.1 Appendix Deputation Request Form - R McClean - Smartphone Free Childhood*

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9.2 Deputation Request - U3A

Report attached

 **9.2 Deputation Request Report - U3A.pdf**

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 **9.2 Appendix U3A request.pdf**

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10. 10 Years of Community Planning in Ards and North Down

Report attached

 **10. 10 Years of Community Planning in Ards and North Down.pdf**


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 **10.1 The Big Plan for Ards and North Down_DIGITAL.pdf**

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11. Nomination to Outside Bodies

Report attached

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12. Update on possible Leisure Operating Models from April 2028

Report attached

 **12. Update on Possible Leisure Operating Models from April 2028.pdf**

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13. Heritage Grants

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 **13. Heritage Grants.pdf**

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14. Sealing Documents

15. Transfer of Rights of Burial

16. Notice of Motion Status Report

Report attached

 **16. Notice of Motion Status Report.pdf**

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 **16. NoM Tracker.pdf**

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17. Notices of Motion

17.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee

Responsible Dog Walking in Public Spaces

This Council, as a 'Dog Friendly Borough' recognises the increasing use of public parks and footpaths by professional and recreational dog walkers, and the need to balance animal welfare, public safety, and the enjoyment of public spaces for all of our Borough's residents.

This Council notes that:

- Multiple dogs under the control of a single individual may pose challenges to effective management and public safety;
- Excessive numbers of dogs being walked simultaneously can lead to increased risk of dog fights, interference with other park users, fouling, and uncontrolled behaviour;
- There has been an increasing number of professional dog walkers, offering services within the Borough and there is a lack of licencing, registration or other requirements which may lead to inadequate insurance, training and experience, adding further potential risks to people and pets; and
- Many local authorities across the UK, including our neighbour Belfast City Council, have introduced limits on the number of dogs that may be walked at one time.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Produce a report outlining the costs and steps required to introduce a local restriction under the relevant provisions of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act (Northern Ireland) 2011:
 - a. Limiting the number of dogs that any one person may be in charge of to a maximum of four at any given time in public spaces.

- b. Mandating that professional dog walkers must have dogs on leads at all times to ensure dog control and accountability for dog behaviours.
2. Include in the report, the provision and cost of a complementary public education campaign, to inform residents, recreational and professional dog walkers about the new limit, about what it means to have a dog under your control in public spaces (whether on or off lead), and what promoting responsible dog control and safety in shared spaces should be.
3. To write to the DAERA Minister to ask him to introduce, and provide funding support to Councils to enforce, mandatory registration of professional dog walkers to help to ensure suitable animal welfare standards, the provision of suitable training, experience, insurance, and public safety."

17.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Graham and Councillor Cochrane

"That this Council notes the popularity of public spaces such as beaches during the summer months.

Further to this Council will task officers to bring back a report to explore options for the extension of public toilet opening hours during the summer months to 9pm near beaches and other busy areas.

Council Officers will further bring back a report on expanding baby changing facilities within our Borough at public toilets. "

17.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson

"That this Council agrees that:

1. Bangor Marine should be invited to the next meeting of the Bangor CAG to update stakeholders on Marine Gardens and confirm a guaranteed start date.

1. Should it prove necessary, Council will liaise with the Department of Communities to consider alternative options for the delivery of the project, including the potential for an arms-length regeneration agency, that is publicly owned but with commercial freedom.

1. Council should work with the developer to create a commercial marketing plan to deliver at least £50m of investment for the rest of Queen's Parade. The initial plan should be brought to Committee before the end of 2025 and should dovetail with other critical developments in the area, helping to provide a catalyst for wider regeneration.

17.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Douglas and Alderman Adair

That Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises the need to tackle all sources of pollution affecting water quality in Lough Neagh and in rivers throughout Northern Ireland. Further to this Council expresses alarm at plans by the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir to impose stricter phosphorus limits on over 3,500 local farms, manage low emission slurry spreading equipment and require compulsory uncultivated buffer strips for those in the arable and horticulture sectors; believes such measures could devastate agriculture, reduce livestock numbers, add cost and undermine food security; stresses that any future nutrient management policy, which is focused on more sustainable agriculture practices, must be the product of genuine partnership, rather than punitive policies that risk the viability of our agri-food industry, further stresses the need to redouble efforts, and actions, to address the sources of pollution in wastewater treatment, and calls on Council Officers to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs asking him to immediately withdraw the current public consultation on the Nutrients Action Programme 2026-2029 in order to provide time and space to develop a genuine multi-sectoral and multi-agency approach that is fair and workable for all stakeholders.

17.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and

Alderman Cummings

That this Council notes the importance of farmers and rural dwellers to our society;

Recognises that farmers, agricultural workers and people living in rural communities can have lower access to cancer services due to the nature of their work and often living in isolated areas. We also recognise the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on a family business such as a family farm, including housing, the extended family, and the welfare of livestock.

Endorses the "Nip It In The Bud" campaign delivered by the Farming Community Network in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and acknowledges the benefits to the rural community.

Pledges to do all we can, to raise awareness and save lives, particularly using our social media platforms, to help rural dwellers in this Council area be aware of the symptoms of cancer and to seek immediate medical advice if necessary as evidence demonstrates that early diagnosis and treatment can save lives.

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

18. Q1 Funding - CAAND and Community Network

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

Report attached

 **18. Q1 Funding - CAAND and Community Network.pdf**

Not included

19. Memorandum of Understanding for Advice Services 2025-26

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

Report attached

 **19. Memorandum of Understanding for Advice Services 2025-26.pdf**

Not included

20. Community Development and Facilities Review

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

Report attached

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

19 June 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, 25 June 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 June (to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 28 May 2025 (Copy attached)
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11. Nomination to Outside Bodies (Report attached)
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*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

18. Q1 Funding - CAAND and Community Network (Report attached)
19. Memorandum of Understanding for Advice Services 2025-26 (Report attached)
20. Community Development and Facilities Review (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS FOR JUNE 2025

Thursday 5th June 2025

- 12:15 Photo Op: Presentation of Colin Middleton Works, North Down Museum
- 19:30 ANDBC Volunteers Event, Ards Arts Centre

Friday 6th June 2025

- 10:30 Killard Window Box Project, Killard School
- 12:00 Sod Cutting Event, Alpha Housing, Quarry Heights, Newtownards
- 15:00 Photo Op: Launch of Donaghadee Lifeboat Festival, Donaghadee
- 19:00 Blair Mayne Bursary Event, Ards Blair Mayne

Saturday 7th June 2025

- 15:30 Royal Ulster Yacht Club Regatta Reception

Sunday 8th June 2025

- 10:20 Nowhere to Run 5k, Ward Park, Bangor
- 12:55 Bangor Fire Cadets Display & Graduation Ceremony, Bangor Fire Station
- 17:00 Ards CCE End of Term Concert, St Comgall's Parish Centre, Bangor

Tuesday 10th June 2025

- 14:15 Photo Op: Supporting Thriving High Streets, High St, Bangor
- 15:00 Comber Earlies Passport Photo, Comber Square

Wednesday 11th June 2025

- 11:00 Creative Peninsula PR Photo, Portaferry
- 14:00 Guided Tour of Cycling Heritage Trail Map, Bangor

Tuesday 17th June 2025

- 11:00 Orchardville's Annual Awards and Celebration Event, Titanic Belfast

12:00 Book Launch Event - Bright Sparks, North Down Museum, Bangor Castle

Wednesday 18th June 2025

11:00 Photo Op: LMP Viability

18:00 Ards Cycling Club Town Centre Races, Conway Square, Newtownards

18:30 Inspiration & Transformation Art Exhibition, North Down Museum, Bangor Castle

19:15 Intergenerational Project Showcase, Bangor Castle

Thursday 19th June 2025

19:00 Myth Busting Event, Ards Arts Centre

Friday 20th June 2025

14:00 Loughries Primary School Growing Club

Saturday 21st June 2025

09:00 Armed Forces Day, Newtownards

19:40 Tina Turner Tribute Act, Parkway, Comber

Monday 23rd June 2025

14:30 Cancer Fund for Children – Donation Event, Ballywalter Village Hall

Wednesday 25th June 2025

11:00 Celebration of Carers Event, Carnegie Library, Bangor

Thursday 26th June 2025

19:30 Samaritan Opening Event, Belfast Road, Bangor

Friday 27th June 2025

19:15 Annual Finals Night, Queen's Hall, Newtownards

Saturday 28th June 2025

11:00 Comber Earlies Event, Comber

14:30 Donaghadee Sailing Club Regatta

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on 28 May 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

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

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

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited the Chief Executive to read the Council prayer.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage. Apologies were received from Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

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Councillor W Irvine, Councillor McCracken and Councillor Chambers declared an Interest in Item 18 – Swim Ulster and Swim Ireland Request to Host 2026 Irish Open Championships at Bangor Aurora.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor had been saddened to learn of the death of Councillor Wesley Irvine's father, John. From the tributes paid at his funeral it was obvious that John had played a significant role in his local community and would be fondly remembered and sadly missed by so many, not least his family. The Mayor assured Councillor Irvine that thoughts and prayers continued to be with the family.

He highlighted the excellent Sea Bangor event which had taken place across the weekend. Despite some unfortunate weather, it was wonderful to see people out in the city enjoying the wonderful display of local music, food and drink and family activities. He gave his thanks to the Council officers who had been involved in organising that event.

He reported that this afternoon an announcement had been made by Bangor Marine and the Council in respect of Queen's Parade. Negotiations were ongoing and he thanked all those involved in the process. Councillors acknowledged that the private discussions regarding the Scheme over recent months had caused frustration among ratepayers. Considering the significant public interest in the Scheme, all parties involved recognised that clear communication was needed moving forward.

The statement, issued ahead of this evening's meeting, aimed to provide as detailed an update as possible at this time.

- Major proposals of this nature were complex and took time. Specifically for Queen's Parade, it was essential that all three parties—the Department for Communities, the Council, and the Developer - agreed a robust legal framework to take the scheme forward.
- After months of negotiations, balancing the needs of the Crown Estate and the Developer, key legal matters relating to property and land were now resolved and agreed.
- As referenced in recent media coverage, Farrans had withdrawn from the Developer Consortium. Farrans did not typically become involved at developer level and decided to transfer its shareholding. The process was complicated and needed to remain confidential while being progressed.
- The Council was very pleased that Bangor Marine had today announced that Oakland Holdings would replace Farrans in the consortium. Oakland Holdings had a long track record of delivering large scale projects and offering financial support packages for developers including the Merchant Square Office complex and the 175 room Belfast Aparthotel.
- Having achieved the above agreements, the final legal documents to enable the development to start on site could now be signed by all partners and the

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Crown Estate to enable work to begin on site. There was a certain sequencing to the legal process that must be followed, and it would take around a week to complete.

- In recent weeks, Bangor Marine had procured a contractor to deliver Marine Gardens. The contractor could start work within 3 to 4 weeks of the final legal agreements being signed.
- In response to recent social media commentary, Bangor Marine had secured £9.8M from the UK Government for the Marine Gardens component of the Queen's Parade Scheme. The planning, design and construction costs would be met by Bangor Marine, not by local ratepayers. The total investment by Bangor Marine in Bangor upon completion of the entire scheme would be over £50M.

Bangor had been waiting for this for a long time and deserved to see it come to fruition. The city needed both the investment and the regenerative potential that it would release. While a start date could not be confirmed on site it was anticipated that that could be done over the coming weeks.

The Mayor advised that matters relating to Queen's Parade would be discussed further, later in the meeting and in confidence.

NOTED.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2025
(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor had been pleased to attend many of the Council run events that had been organised to celebrate VE Day during May and thanked officers for planning them. He referred to investment in, and opening of, two new playparks in the Borough, at Ward Park, Bangor and Londonderry Park, Newtownards.

During the month he had held a reception for Bangor Football Club following the Club's recent success in the IFL Championship and its promotion. He advised that he intended to write a Letter of Support for Bangor Football Club towards its funding application for The Northern Ireland Football Fund and also the Irish Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund. A similar application had been made previously for Ards Football Club.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the information be noted and that a letter of support be sent.

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6. **DEPUTATION FROM WOMEN'S AID** (Appendix II)

The Mayor welcomed and introduced Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive of North Down and Ards Women's Aid who was going to outline some of the work undertaken by her organisation in a Powerpoint presentation.

North Down and Ards Women's Aid was a Violence Against Women and Girls organisation. It had petitioned for the first Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in Northern Ireland, gaining 26,000 signatures for the Executive. It was a local organisation, had been around for over 40 years with both a centre and refuge in the Ards and North Down area, which also covered the Peninsula.

The main services were working with women, children and young people who were or had been affected by domestic and sexual abuse and included:

- Emergency accommodation: Refuge 7 women, 15 children,
- Floating support service for women in the community who did not need the support of a refuge
- Children's services team, any mother who used the service, their children could also receive support
- Personal Development groups
- Raising awareness about domestic abuse
- Educational preventative programmes
- Partnership working

Domestic abuse was considered one of the highest forms of violence against women and girls. Recent reports and studies suggested that Northern Ireland had a high rate of femicide compared to other parts of the United Kingdom. From 2020, twenty-five had been murdered and in at least twenty of the twenty-five deaths, the killers, or the suspects in their killings, were well-known to the women.

While other forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual assault and human trafficking, were also serious and widespread, domestic abuse stood out due to its prevalence, devastating impact, and the ongoing struggle for its recognition and prevention.

The Mayor appreciated hearing about the work of Women's Aid and found it very sobering and invited Members to ask questions.

Alderman Adair referred to the demand for Women's Aid services increasing, while reporting of incidents to the police had fallen and was concerned that rural funding was coming to an end. It was explained that applications had been made through community funding, and it was hoped that new funding would come to carry on the much-needed work in rural areas. The Member asked what the Council could do to assist, and it was suggested that it had a role to play in raising awareness of the services of the organisation.

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Councillor Irwin appreciated the presentation and the Women's Aid homicide review. She suggested that many women were driven to suicide through coercive control. Councillor McCollum referred to the under reporting and was concerned those statistics would affect the allocation of funding and wondered if the organisation had a role to play in that. It was explained that the Women's Aid needed an advocate with the police and that some perceptions needed to change. Councillor McCollum was impressed by the multi-agency panel and the strategic partnership that had been set up.

Councillor McKee asked about the funding that had come from the Violence Against Women initiative and if the benefits of that had been seen to date. Members were informed that the funding was being used for safe relationship training, through schools and community groups.

Councillor Kendall asked why it was so important to have a regional office in the Borough and it was explained that was vital for the Borough to have a local contact and specialism locally. Travel and transport were not readily available to every woman and it was important to meet people where they were.

Councillor Gilmour explained that a local MLAs office was a safe space signposting women to services that could help them in difficult situations. She also referred to the lasting effects from the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic where domestic abuse was said to have increased, and women became more vulnerable and that remained an issue for Women's Aid.

During his time as an Elected Member Councillor McKimm had referred many women to the services of Women's Aid and described how the organisation had been referred to as being like 'angels' and had helped to save women's lives in many cases. He asked the organisation to write to the Chief Executive explaining how the relationship between the two organisations could be developed.

Alderman McAlpine referred to changes in society and asked about the growing of incels and toxic masculinity and was that prevalent for Women's Aid. It was explained that both of those were very widespread and that disturbingly many young women did not know what a healthy relationship looked like.

The Mayor concluded the discussion by thanking Women's Aid for its informative presentation and wished it well for its ongoing work and he believed that many of the circumstances being faced were a national shame.

NOTED.

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 30 APRIL 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the Council meeting dated 30 April 2025.

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

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Planning Committee dated 6 May 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the Planning Committee dated 6 May 2025.

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

8.2 Environment Committee dated 7 May 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the Environment Committee dated 7 May 2025.

Proposed by Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

In respect of Item 3 – Notice of Motion Supplementary Report – Reintroduction of Pedestrian Access at Council HRCs

Councillor McKimm thanked Alliance Councillors for the position they had taken in respect of the time slot suggested. He thought that early time of day might not be convenient to many members of the public and that if the Council was trying to have sustainable practices pedestrians should be given greater priority.

Councillor W Irvine referred to the reduced capacity at the Balloo site recently due to a mechanical issue and asked if that had been resolved. The Director was unaware of any difficulty at that site but was aware that mechanical issues did, from time to time, affect the operational service at the sites.

Councillor Kendall referred to the introduction of the pedestrian access slots and agreed with Councillor McKimm that the time suggested seemed quite prohibitive to working people. The Director explained that there had been significant debate at the meeting around the reasoning for choosing that time. This was a time where the site was unlikely to be affected by a temporary closure for servicing and where there would be little vehicular traffic on the sites.

NOTED.

In respect of Item 7 - Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2025

Alderman McIlveen asked for some clarification on parking spaces and spaces for different types of vehicles, specifically for those who wished to access Changing Places facilities. The Director explained that the blue badge which was provided to people who had a disability was the only way to identify and enforce parking and there were no other exemptions currently. The Council could designate spaces for certain categories but could not guarantee that they could be enforced. That was

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true of Parent and Baby spaces too and the success of enforcement depended on the evidence available.

The Mayor asked the Director if there had been any move from the Assembly in relation to car parking and the Council was advised that a response had been made by the Department for Infrastructure and that would be brought before the Environment Committee in June and Members could have a say on that. Members were aware that this Council was being held up due to the lack of progress being made by other Councils not being ready and the Chief Executive would be raising that with Solace.

NOTED.

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

8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 May 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 May 2025.

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

*****ITEM 8.3.1 IN CONFIDENCE*****

8.3.1 Arising from Item 11 – Revive High Streets

The Mayor advised that this Item would be taken in exclusion of public and press later in the meeting.

NOTED.

8.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 13 May 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes from the Corporate Services Committee dated 13 May 2025.

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

In respect of Item 3 – Ards and North Down Borough Council Consultation Equality and Disability Action Plan 2025 – 2029

Alderman McIlveen proposed the following amendment to Item 3 in the Corporate Services Committee minutes which was seconded by Councillor Gilmour:

Propose the Equality and Disability Action Plan except in the section 75 category affected column to remove the word "gender" and use wording reflective of what is contained in the legislation, to remove section 6.2 and to remove the wording "all

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public access areas and employee workplace areas are free from display assets not in keeping with promoting a good and harmonious work environment" from section 6.4.

Alderman McIlveen explained from the outset that he fully supported treating everyone fairly and with respect and equality of opportunity was hugely important to him, however he had concerns that the Council was planning to adopt something that had not been debated in the Chamber. He added that there were already strong equality laws in Northern Ireland that this Council promoted those and the law behind them was clear.

The requirement to have this Strategy was not in legislation but rather was being pushed by the Staff Commission in his view, and he feared the exercise could become a trojan horse. The Council's goal was to have fairness in its services, it was not to get caught up in divisive virtue signalling and there was no suggestion that the Council was not already meeting its responsibilities. The Alderman said he would not support anything that would undermine the Borough's identity, history and culture and that included organisations that had defended the country, flag and the monarch.

Seconding the amendment Councillor Gilmour was in agreement particularly with respect to the Section 75 categories and she would be concerned at attempts to neutralise the Council environment. The rich history should be cherished and celebrated and as Mayor she had enjoyed showing visitors to the Borough some of the gifts that the Council held. For example, as Mayor she had hosted former RUC officers and she had been able to show them the gift that had been presented by that organisation to the Council when the Freedom of the Borough had been conferred.

Alderman McRandal said that it had been unfortunate that he had not been given an opportunity to consider the amendment but referring to sex and gender, if the Member was correct, he had no problem changing the wording to reflect the legislation however he would not support the amendment in its entirety.

Alderman Smith was happy to support the amendment, and it had been discussed previously and it was his view that Members were entitled to challenge what was being presented to them. This was a political environment, and it was important that the Council had the liberty to display certain elements, so the amendment was timely in his view.

Councillor McKimm said he could not support the amendment and called for a recorded vote.

Summing up Councillor Irwin stated that the Alliance Party would not be supporting the amendment since she believed the decision was being politicised and feeding into a discourse that she did not believe was healthy.

A recorded vote had been called for and on the proposal being put to the meeting with 22 voting For, 15 voting Against and 3 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

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FOR (22)	AGAINST (15)	ABSENT (3)
Aldermen	Aldermen	Councillors
Adair	McAlpine	Ashe
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell	Kennedy
Brooks	McRandal	Smart
Cummings	Councillors	
Graham	Boyle	
McIlveen	Harbinson	
Smith	Hennessy	
Councillors	Irwin	
Blaney	Kendall	
Cathcart	McBurney	
Chambers	McCollum	
Cochrane	McCracken	
Douglas	McKee	
Edmund	McKimm	
Gilmour	Moore	
Hollywood	Morgan	
Irvine S		
Irvine W		
Kerr		
McClean		
McLaren		
Thompson		
Wray		

NOTED.

In respect of Item 5 - Update on the Review of the Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

Alderman McIlveen asked to make an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Gilmour:

To propose that we note the review report and the Departmental response and consider this further at the next Rate setting process.

Alderman McIlveen wanted to bring this amendment since the Council had only recently agreed a pay increase and the Alliance Party was the only party to vote for it despite opposition from other parties. He had been very clear on this previously so his position should not come as a surprise to anyone on the Council.

Alderman McRandal replied that an independent review had been undertaken, and the Alliance Party was content with the decision and the principle agreed. He added that the DUP's own Minister and other DUP groups across Northern Ireland had given their support so in his view it would be wholly inappropriate to support the amendment.

Councillor Boyle urged Alderman McIlveen and his colleagues to get out of this Council area and speak to their own Party members in the other ten Northern Ireland

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Councils since he was not sure where they were coming from. He stated that this decision had been signed off in the Assembly. He added that many Elected Members were struggling financially and asked if the decision went through would the DUP members objecting now be willing to take the pay increase. He encouraged Members to oppose the amendment.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked to provide clarity believing that there was a gross misunderstanding on what was being proposed, the issue to her was that the Council could not go back on the decision it had taken two months previously to accept another pay rise since that would be disingenuous to the ratepayer. She had no problem with a just and proper pay award but did not think it should be done through the back door. It was not honourable or respectful to tell the ratepayer that the Council was going to do something only for it to make a complete turnaround a matter of months later.

Alderman Adair considered that Councillor Boyle's comments on his Party had been disgraceful. He had always sought to ensure to represent the people who had elected him and was not in politics for the money but to serve. He urged Members to consider and be under no illusion that their constituents were not supportive of this decision and public confidence was at an all-time low.

(Councillor Smart entered the meeting at 8.25 pm)

Councillor McCracken thought that a lot of debate was missing the point and that decisions relating to pay were to be made independently and centrally and it was not healthy for Councillors to be involved in that process. Politicians were paid so that the system was inclusive, and no one wished to live in a society where only the rich could become politicians. He did not think that the debate should be politicised and rather should be decided by the Department.

Councillor Kendall thought that it was high time that this was taken out of the hands of Councillors and made independently. She asked how she could be put in a position of making such a financial decision while not being aware of the circumstances of the people she was working with.

Alderman Smith considered that the debate alone showed the need for the decision to be taken out of the hands of Members so looked forward to the legislation coming forward. However, from his own perspective he would support the amendment since Members had agreed a pay rise and that was set in the Rate. He understood that others experienced different circumstances so might take a different view but he did not support the increase at this stage.

Councillor McClean stressed that no one had an issue in principle with the decision being taken out of Councillors hands but now was not the time to award Members another pay increase. If Members had difficulty with that, he felt they should abstain and wait until the next pay round.

Councillor Irwin wished to correct the thinking that the Alliance Party was determined to push this through and if anyone had it was more likely the Minister. She also

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pointed out that the pay rise that the Councillors had agreed recently had been for the previous year while this one was for the current year.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 20 voting For, 14 voting Against, 4 Abstained and 2 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (20)	AGAINST (14)	ABSTAINING (4)	ABSENT (2)
Alderman	Aldermen	Councillors	Councillors
Adair	McAlpine	Blaney	Ashe
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell	Kendall	Kennedy
Brooks	McRandal	McLaren	
Cummings	Councillors	Wray	
Graham	Boyle		
McIlveen	Harbinson		
Smith	Hennessy		
Councillors	Irwin		
Cathcart	McBurney		
Chambers	McCollum		
Cochrane	McCracken		
Douglas	McKee		
Edmund	McKimm		
Gilmour	Moore		
Hollywood	Morgan		
Irvine S			
Irvine W			
Kerr			
McClean			
Smart			
Wray			

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

8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 14 May 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes from the Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 14 May 2025.

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

In respect of Item 22 – Peninsula 3G Updated Costs Report

Alderman Adair indicated that he wished to raise a matter later in the meeting In Confidence.

In respect of Item 5 – Cultural Expressions Updated Agreement

Councillor Kendall asked to make an alternative recommendation in respect of this item which was seconded by Councillor McKee:

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That Council accepts the Cultural Expression Agreement, and that a workshop be organised in the Autumn for Members to discuss the Agreement and the Cultural Expression Programme.

Councillor Kendall stated that she would like a further opportunity to discuss the issues that had been raised at the Committee and understand that there were time limitations. She asked for a workshop to be arranged to allow her to explain the issues she had with that.

Councillor Wray thanked the Member for bringing this and the Good Relations team for their good work around the programme. He thought there should be more constituted groups and that they could express their culture in a positive way. The Council needed to get this right and while the parties inside the tent had been well consulted with those outside may not have been.

Alderman McRandal said he would consider supporting this on the day the Council actually started to enforce it. He acknowledged the good intent on this, but it required passing something which unfortunately he could not agree to.

Alderman McIlveen referred to the differences in how the two legacy Councils approached those matters and thought there was a danger when the Council started to pick over these things. He thought that officers did an incredible job in building relationships and managing them and he did not mind a workshop taking place but did not want to repeat the mistakes of the former North Down Borough Council.

As Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Alderman Brooks had nothing further to add.

A vote was taken on the amendment and 26 voted in FAVOUR, 11 voted AGAINST and 0 ABSTAINED so it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes, as amended be approved and adopted.

9. DEPUTATION REQUEST

9.1 Branch Out Community Group (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that deputation request had been received from Pamela Shaw, Branch Out Community Group. The Council was asked to note that Pamela Shaw had requested to deliver the presentation to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the Council agrees to the request.

10. RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION – ROAD TRAFFIC LAW (Appendices IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that it was agreed at the Council meeting dated 30 April 2025 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 2025. A response was received from both Departments on 12 May and 13 May respectively. The two letters of response were appended to the report for noting.

The Chief Executive also wrote to Mid Ulster District Council to express support.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the correspondence.

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

As the proposer Councillor Morgan would have liked to see something more positive and action focused in the response but was pleased that the feelings of the Council had been made clear.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. RESURFACING WORK AT HOLBORN AVENUE CAR PARK (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that as part of the Council's agreed Maintenance Strategy, which incorporated a “needs based” approach for its refurbishment programme, Car Parks were scored every year and the lowest scoring of them were 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, had consistently been the lowest scoring Car Park over several years, however an ongoing legal matter had meant that it was inadvisable to proceed with substantial works at the Car Park. Due to that, the report also advised that in 2025-26, more minor essential repair works would be undertaken there along with resurfacing of Old Cross East, Newtownards and line marking at various Car Parks.

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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.

That 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 the Council, and what land DfI retained. It was now envisaged that that would be resolved in the coming weeks, and as such the Council would be able to proceed with more substantial works to Holborn Avenue Car Park.

There were a number of outstanding matters regarding encroachments on the car park boundary, for which DfI had been unable to provide written agreements. Officers would work with businesses and residents to formalise arrangements and would bring reports to the Council in future, as required.

Car Park Improvements

The current Holborn Avenue Car Park was 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 was due to close permanently as part of the Queen's Parade redevelopment, it was important to enhance the usability of the Council's existing car parks in Bangor, and studies had identified that Holborn Avenue was a key car park in terms of displacement.

Officers had produced a drawing of an amended layout which was 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 would be provided as part of the On Street Residential Charging Scheme)

The current Car Park provided 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 those were unserviceable.

Budget Allocation

It was anticipated that the works required to upgrade the Holborn Avenue Car Park as per Appendix 1, would cost in the region of £100k.

The Council currently had budgeted £50k per year in capital budgets for car park resurfacing. It was proposed that rather than carry out the works as agreed in March

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2025 (outlined above), the budget be utilised towards the upgrade of Holborn Avenue Car Park in the 2025/26 financial year, given that it was the lowest scoring car park and the legal issues preventing action being taken earlier would soon be resolved.

The Head of Finance had confirmed that the remaining £50k of capital budget could 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 would still be undertaken utilising the “car park tidy-up” budget allocated for 2025/26.

As Members would be aware, new tariffs had been agreed as part of the Car Park Strategy, which would provide projected additional income of approximately £0.5M and therefore much needed additional funds for car park maintenance and enhancements. Unfortunately, implementation of the new tariffs continued to be delayed due to a legislative impediment and officers continued to actively work on options to move forward in that regard.

In the meantime, officers would continue cross departmental working to establish further funding opportunities which may arise to further enhance the Council's car park estate in the 2025/26 year and complete the projects originally earmarked in the March report. A further report would be brought to the Council should additional funding become available.

Timeline for Completion

Naturally, it was preferable to complete the work prior to commencement of the Queen's Parade project and the subsequent permanent loss of parking at the Marine Gardens car park. However, as Members would be aware, the developer had no firm start date due to a number of ongoing issues. When a start date was provided, it was possible that only a short notice period would be given. It was for that reason that Officers believed 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 were resolved, it was proposed that the resurfacing works could commence mid-June and last approximately four weeks.

Whilst closing the car park in early summer was not ideal, officers believed it was a better option than to inevitably close it at a later date, once the Queen's Parade project had started and the seafront car park was removed.

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.

Councillor Gilmour suggested an alternative amendment which was seconded by Councillor McClean:

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That the Council agrees the proposed layout of Holborn Avenue, Bangor Car Park in Appendix 1 of this report, excluding the raised kerbs sections which should be removed from the design and fund the work as outlined in this report.

Councillor Gilmour stated that this car park had been long overdue some attention, it was a space that had been looked at as a potential space for events. She thought an opportunity should be taken to remove the kerbs to ensure that the surface was more versatile and usable and future proof it.

Councillor W Irvine had no issues with supporting that and welcomed the investment in this area but referred to work also starting at Queen's Parade and the resulting traffic disruption. The Director replied that once work started at Queen's Parade the Council would have signage to direct drivers to other car parks.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the Council agrees the proposed layout of Holborn Avenue, Bangor car Park in Appendix 1 of this report, excluding the raised kerbs sections which should be removed from the design and fund the work as outlined in this report.

12. CONSULTATION

12.1 Response to Consultation – Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill (Appendix VII & VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Finance had 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 25 March 2025. It was at its second stage, so the Committee was only seeking views on what was being put forward, rather than asking specific questions.

The purpose of the Bill was 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 would also provide a legislative basis for the introduction of a baby loss scheme and would address differences in registration processes for births and stillbirths between some same-sex female couples and opposite-sex couples.

The Council's draft response was in Appendix 2

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the draft consultation response as detailed in Appendix 2.

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

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Councillor Kendall believed that the response very adequately reflected the feelings expressed at the Council meeting and was happy to propose. Councillor McKimm agreed as seconder and understood it was a very sensitive matter.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: - On the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Graham

THAT the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burial: Nos D40847, D40886 – D40927
- (b) Lease of Foreshore and Bed of the Sea at Bangor Bay Council Down (Recreational Area) – His Majesty The King (1) The Crown Estate Commissioners (2) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (3)
- (c) Licence to Underlet (between The Crown Estate and Ards and North Down Borough Council and Bangor Marine Ltd.
- (d) Deed of Surrender (of the existing C E Lease)

14. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

Transfer/Assignment – Redburn 2052 Alice Lowry – John Mahood

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the transfer be noted.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive detailing that a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion was attached.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Kendall asked about a Motion in relation to Queen's Leisure Complex and it was informed that would be coming to the next Council meeting. She also referred

to the War Memorial at Conlig which appeared to have been removed from the list. The Chief Executive would look at that and come back to the Member directly.

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

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

16.1 Notice of Motion 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 this 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.

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

16.2. Notice of Motion from Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood

That this 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.

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

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16.3 Notice of Motion from 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

16.4 Notice of Motion from Councillor Morgan and Councillor Irwin

This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste that 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.

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

CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Undernoted items of information:

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the information be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

RECESS 9.00 pm

RECOMMENCED 9.14 pm

*****ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE*****

8.3.1 Arising from Item 11 – Revive High Streets

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

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Option : 4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

Summary: The report updated Members on the deadline for the competition, the maximum grant award and recommended the name of Supporting Thriving High Streets be adopted.

8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 14 May 2025

IN CONFIDENCE

In respect of Item 22 – Peninsula 3G Updated Costs Report

A member noted the origins of the idea for a 3G pitch in Portavogie

This was noted.

17. QUEENS PARADE UPDATE

IN CONFIDENCE

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

Summary: The Director of Place gave a verbal update on progress with Queen's Parade.

18. SWIM ULSTER AND SWIM IRELAND REQUEST TO HOST 2026 IRISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS AT BANGOR AURORA

IN CONFIDENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that during a meeting in early May 2025, Swim Ulster/Swim Ireland informed Council Leisure Officers and Serco/NCLT management there was an opportunity for Swim Ulster/Swim Ireland to host the 2026 Irish Open Championships at Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex (AALC) in April 2026. As the event was not a usual part of the Swim Ireland/Swim Ulster (SI/SU) calendar at Aurora, they requested confirmation from Serco/NCLT that the booking would be accepted for the dates in question.

RECOMMENDED that Council consider and agree Council support in principle for the application made by Swim Ireland/Swim Ulster to host the 2026 Irish Open Championships at Bangor Aurora Aquatics and Leisure Complex and undertake to engage in joint promotion of this prestigious swimming event with Swim Ireland, Swim Ulster and Serco/NCLT.

RESOLVED: on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the recommendation be adopted.

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19. REQUEST TO RETURN BLAIR MAYNE MEDALS

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

3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person
Council was asked to agree to the request to return the medals to the Blair Mayne Family.

The recommendation was AGREED.

20. ORGANISATIONAL REDESIGN (Appendices X & XI)

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

3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person
Council was asked to approve the Voluntary Severance Business Case for three officers and approve the new Directorate Structure as outlined in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

RECESS 11.14 pm

(Councillors Kerr, McBurney and McCollum left the meeting at 11.14 pm)

MEETING RECOMMENCED 11.24 pm

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 11.31 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid Annual Meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Bangor and via Zoom on Wednesday, 4 June 2025 commencing at 11.00 am.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)

Aldermen:	Adair (Zoom)	McAlpine
	Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell (Zoom)
	Brooks	McIlveen
	Cummings	Smith
	Graham	

Councillors:	Ashe	Irwin
	Blaney	Kendall
	Boyle	Kerr
	Chambers	McClellan
	Cochrane	McCollum
	Douglas	McCracken
	Edmund	McKee
	Gilmour	Moore
	Harbinson	Morgan
	Hennessy	Thompson
	S Irvine	Smart
	W Irvine	Wray

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

1. PRAYER

The meeting commenced with the Chief Executive reading the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Hollywood and McLaren.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S REVIEW

At this stage the Mayor undertook his Mayoral review of his year.

Councillor Cathcart commented that being Mayor of Ards and North Down had been the privilege of a lifetime and something that he would never forget. The Borough was a fantastic place to live and work in, and he had loved being its ambassador, having been in every town, village and city, in mucky farmer's fields, out on the waters and meeting the amazing people who made the place what it was. He had found it easy to promote the Borough given his belief in it and despite many challenges he was now more optimistic for future it. He recalled the many people he had met, community groups, church groups, charities and volunteers that we were all blessed to have in the Borough. People motivated either through their faith and/or community spirit to improve the Borough on a daily basis, and as a result of their actions, there were so many positive things happening in the Borough, including wonderful community events, action to boost civic pride and support for those in need.

During his term as Mayor, Councillor Cathcart stated that he had wanted to focus on recognition of those community champions who deserved so much recognition for what they did for their local communities. During his term, the Borough's Civic Awards had been reinstated and he had introduced his Mayor's recognition certificate to say thank you to those often silent warriors whose 'can do attitude' was improving the Borough for the better. He added that he had also held a number of Mayoral receptions for organisations, community groups and individuals who did so much for others. Civic recognition he believed was an important aspect of a Mayor's role, and as such he would encourage the incoming Mayor and all futures Mayors to continue to highlight and say thank you to those who were playing their role in building a better Borough.

Continuing he stated that his other determination as Mayor had been the same determination he had had since joining Council, to see the regeneration of his hometown and to finally get Queen's Parade over the line. Of course, he acknowledged that life was never that easy, Queen's Parade had never been that easy and like all good dramas, he had thought it would be good to leave it to the final moments. Joking aside he stated that yesterday had been a positive day for Bangor and he thanked all those involved, adding that the Minister had been terrific in pushing this, as was the Chief Executive and the Director of Place. He was grateful for all of the work which had been done, although added that he would not be satisfied until work commenced on the ground, that work was then completed, the

city deal funding and investment for Bangor was delivered and that the civic headquarters was delivered. As such he intended to use his seat to continue to fight for his hometown. Continuing he also expressed his delight to see investment elsewhere, having opened fantastic new play parks in Kircubbin, Portavogie, Ward Park and Londonderry Park. Work had also started on the new greenway from Bangor to Ards to name just a few projects.

In terms of highlights from his Mayoral year, Councillor Cathcart stated that he would have to be very careful because he had of course got married during his term and as such he was legally obliged to say that getting married to Ashley was the highlight of the year. The highlight of all his years, of course. However, he wished to mention a few as he along with the Mayoress had had a real blast and would have memories that would last a lifetime. In no particular order:

- The Olympic homecoming and the celebrations in Ards and at Bangor Aurora.
- Scaling the City Hall building in an aerial appliance during Freedom of the Borough for the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
- He and the Mayoress had been in every shape of a boat but having dolphins alongside their sailing boat in Groomsport was special.
- Everything involving primary school children was fun and unpredictable
- Great fun was had at events, he and the Mayoress had decorated a chocolate cake made with potatoes in Comber, cooked a squid in Portavogie and an omelette at Sea Bangor. All of which had received the high compliment of being edible.
- There was also the occasion when they had accidentally had Afternoon Tea with the First and Deputy First Minister and Chinese Consul at the Culloden.
- Of course, the other famous incident was where he had been kissed and taken advantage of by a pony.

There were of course memories that he would not forget as they were an incredible honour. The Somme trip, leaving wreaths on behalf of the Borough at Menin Gate, Ulster Tower and the Somme Memorial, as well as the Council's Remembrance Day events, the sunrise service at Cloughey to Ward Park and the beacon lightings and VE80 commemorations were special and would forever live with me.

At this stage Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to say a few words of thanks. Firstly, to his friends and family for their support, especially to his mum and dad who had become busy dog sitters over past year. He also thanked the Deputy Mayor for being available to step in for him when there was a clash in the diary and also importantly during his honeymoon. He expressed his thanks to Steve McCrea, Democratic Services, Gary Fryer and all of the kitchen staff, the central hub for Council gossip, his drivers and all Council staff who had been excellent support to me. Continuing Councillor Cathcart thanked his charities, St John Ambulance, Action Cancer and the Sea Cadets, who had helped raised a lot of money for fantastic causes in the Borough. He also thanked members for the respect they had shown him and for not causing too much trouble in the Chamber, adding that he had in fact only really been challenged by his own party. As such he did not want the incoming Mayor, to complain about that, as they had challenged him too. At this stage Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to say a few words about the Chief Executive. Working so closely with Susie, he had seen first-hand what a terrific asset

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she was for the Council. She worked her socks off, was unfazed, on top of her brief and a determined champion for the Borough. This he added was all whilst someone she loved so dearly was so very unwell and he did not know how she did it but thank her for all that she does. Lastly, Councillor Cathcart stated that he wished to say a big thank you to the Mayoress, who had been thrown into the Mayoral term and left to plan the wedding and done an incredible job. She had also had to deal a lot with an absent husband due to having Mayoral duties most evenings and weekends. However, few jobs allowed you to bring your wife with you to work and Ashley had been fantastic, supporting him at events. He added that while they had had great fun doing it they were looking forward to spending some quality time together and having the luxury of actually organising their own weekend activities. Obviously, he added there were a lot of jobs around the house that needed doing as Ashley continued the important job of de-bachelor padding the house. She was also in need for a handyman and now that he was less busy, he had no excuse not to phone his dad to get him do those jobs.

After the thanks Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to turn to the good lucks for the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor and congratulated both Councillor McCollum and Councillor Moore. He recalled how when he had just become Mayor, a few had asked him how he wished to be addressed as a male Mayor as they had become used to saying 'Madam Mayor' over the last number of years, and now we had a Madam Mayor again. He congratulated her adding that he was sure she would be an excellent Mayor. He would now join the club of former Mayors in the Chamber in rooting for her as they all knew what it was like and how challenging it could be, but that aside they also knew how much you would enjoy it and he wished her every success.

As well as spending more time with his wife, Councillor Cathcart stated that he would enjoy no longer being responsible for the chain and would be so glad that he was able to safely hand it over. Before his term, he had never worn jewellery in his life, then he had this chain and the wedding ring. The wedding ring was simple, as it was put on and had not been taken off. The Mayoral chain was very expensive and the amount of times, he misplaced it would give Jeanette Wilson a heart attack, however he had not lost it and was glad to be no longer responsible for it.

By way of summing up Councillor Cathcart stated that he was optimistic for the future, believed in public service, and that this Council had the capacity at a local level to enable positive change. He also believed that most people were in public service whether elected representatives or civil servants were in it for the right reason. Yes, like all he too got frustrated sometimes regarding the pace of progress and while the Council would not always get things right, nobody did. Honest conversations needed to take place about the challenges and limitations of the Council, and it needed to get better at explaining decisions, listening to feedback and finding the best way forward in making this Borough a better place to work, live and visit. In his view that was the job of this Council and he looked forward to continuing working with everyone in this room as we continued to work to achieve this collective aim. He thanked everyone for listening.

Alderman McIlveen expressed his thanks to Councillor Cathcart and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, for their service throughout the year. A year which had

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provided an eye-opening insight into what happened throughout the Borough. He paid tribute to Councillor Cathcart particularly for his recognition of Council staff through a number of events and volunteers out in the local community with the reinstatement of the Council's Civic Awards. He acknowledged that it had been a very positive year with many highlights, the most significant one being the signing off of the Queen's Parade project. Alderman McIlveen commented that he and his party colleagues were looking forward to welcoming him back to the benches.

Concurring with those comments, Alderman McRandal congratulated both Councillors Cathcart and Chambers on a job well done after a very successful year, particularly with the highlight of Bangor Football Club winning the league. On behalf of the Alliance Party, he expressed his thanks to them both.

Alderman Smith also congratulated Councillor Cathcart on a very successful year, adding that the high spot would undoubtedly have been the signing off of Queen's Parade. He added that he looked forward to seeing work commence on site. Continuing Alderman Smith thanked the outgoing Mayor for his support at a variety of events held in the Comber area. He also thanked him for the opportunities provided to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, who had also enjoyed a very successful year. He was aware that some of his highlights had included the Lighting of Beacons for VE Day, meeting the Duke & Duchess of Gloucester and the hosting of a reception for his former BB company from Ballygrainey.

Following on from those comments Councillor Boyle added his congratulations to Councillor Cathcart on what had been a very successful year, adding that he very much been a Mayor for all right across the Borough. He added that the Mayoress had been a wonderful asset to him and knew that they had enjoyed many boat trips on Strangford Lough and tribute acts in Portaferry. Councillor Boyle also expressed his thanks to the Deputy Mayor on his successful term in office.

Councillor S Irvine added his congratulations to both Councillors Cathcart and Chambers on a memorable and successful term particularly with the reinstatement of the Council's Civic Awards and Bangor FC winning the league. He also took the opportunity to offer his sincere best wishes to both Councillors McCollum and Moore in their forthcoming year.

At this stage Councillor Chambers stated that it had been an honour to hold the Deputy Mayor position, adding that it had been a wonderful experience. He stated that he had the greatest of respect for anyone taking on the role of Mayor having been given an insight into what it entailed. He thanked Councillor Cathcart for the generosity he had shown towards him, particularly in allowing him to host his former BB, Ballygrainey in the City Hall as well as switching on Groomsport Christmas lights. Continuing Councillor Chambers stated that it had been a pleasure to undertake so many engagements throughout the Borough where he had always been given such a warm welcome. At this stage he expressed his thanks to the Democratic Services Team and the Mayor's Office all of whom who had made life a little easier. Councillor Chambers also thanked all of the officers who had accompanied him to engagements. He expressed thanks to his Party colleagues for the opportunity and for all of their support, adding that he must also not forget his family for all of their support throughout the year. In summing up he expressed his

best wishes to both Councillors McCollum and Moore and encouraged them both to embrace the role.

Councillor Cathcart thanked everyone for their kind comments.

NOTED.

5. APPOINTMENTS TO POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY (FILE CX210) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that appointments to Positions of Responsibility were governed by Part 3 and Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. In accordance with the Act, the Council agreed at its Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023 a list of 91 positions to be appointed as Positions of Responsibility, and that such appointments would be made using the d'Hondt method. Party Nominating Officers and Independent Members thereafter proceeded to select Positions of Responsibility in the order determined by the d'Hondt calculation.

Where Positions of Responsibility were not for the full four-year term of the Council, Party Nominating Officers were only required to specify the individual Party Members taking Year 1 (2023/24) Positions. Year 2 – Year 4 Positions were allocated on a Party basis and individual Party Members were appointed to these by the Nominating Officers at the Annual Meeting in the relevant year.

Year 3 Positions of Responsibility to be appointed

Party Nominating Officers should identify the Members to be appointed to the year 3 (2025/26) Positions of Responsibility as follows:

Position	Year 3
Mayor	Alliance
Deputy Mayor	Alliance
Corporate Services Committee – Chair	DUP
Corporate Services Committee – Vice Chair	Alliance
Place and Prosperity Committee – Chair	Alliance
Place and Prosperity Committee - Vice Chair	DUP
Planning Committee – Chair	DUP
Planning Committee - Vice Chair	UUP
Environment Committee – Chair	Green
Environment Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance
Community and Wellbeing Committee – Chair	Alliance
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Vice Chair	Councillor W Irvine
Audit Committee – Chair	DUP
Audit Committee - Vice Chair	Councillor S Irvine

Please note, Members of the Audit Committee shall not hold the position of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of Committee or Chair of Sub Committee, with the exception of the Audit Committee.

The allocations made at the Annual Meeting did not account for the seats of the Audit Committee appointed by d'hondt as Positions of Responsibility and of which Councillor S Irvine was not a member. Therefore, this did not account for the appointment to the Position of Responsibility of Vice Chair of the Audit Committee in Year 3, Councillor S Irvine. In order to correct this anomaly, it was recommended to increase the membership of the Audit Committee by one seat, for one year only - Year 3, 2025/26 to enable Councillor S Irvine to sit on Audit Committee as Vice Chair.

Should any Party or Independent not wish to avail of a Position of Responsibility to which they were entitled, the Position would be allocated using d'Hondt to the next Party in line for making a choice, which at present was the UUP (see list attached at Appendix).

RECOMMENDED that the following Party Nominating Officers confirm the Members to be appointed to the Positions of Responsibility as outlined in the table above:

- Alderman McIlveen (DUP)
- Alderman McRandal (Alliance)
- Alderman Smith (UUP)
- Councillor McKee (Green)

It is further recommended that Council agree to increase the membership of the Audit Committee by one seat for one year, Year 3, 2025-26.

At this stage the Chief Executive explained that there was a report which had been circulated to members outlining the process of appointing to Positions of Responsibility which was set out in legislation. The process of nominating to the position of Mayor fell to the Nominating Officer of the Alliance Party, Alderman Martin McRandal.

At this stage, Alderman McRandal rose to nominate Councillor McCollum to the office of Mayor for the incoming year. He stated that it was his pleasure to nominate his Party and Holywood & Clondeboyne colleague Councillor Gillian McCollum as Mayor.

He stated that Councillor McCollum brought with her a wealth of experience particularly in her professional life having worked in public relations, practiced as a solicitor and as a mediator. She also had many years of voluntary service in the community including being on the PTA at St Patricks Primary School in Holywood and on Sullivan Upper Parents Association, spending years Chairing both. She also had over 20 years' experience of serving as a school governor at St Comgalls Primary School, Bangor and St Annes Primary School, Donaghadee, having years of experience chairing both.

Continuing Alderman McRandal advised that Councillor McCollum was elected as Councillor for Bangor East & Donaghadee DEA in May 2023 and within the past year she had moved to work alongside him in Holywood & Clondeboyne. He added that the

last Holywood & Clondeboy Mayor had been Andrew Muir, in 2013/14 and therefore it was high time there was another.

Working closely with Councillor McCollum he was struck by her energy and her drive to get things done adding that while she was results focused, she was also a people person. Continuing Alderman McRandal stated that she was a very good networker and relationship builder bringing people together to achieve common goals. She also liked to collaborate and he was sure that Alderman Brooks and others would attest to that. Those he felt were all qualities that would serve her well in her year as Mayor.

By way of summing up, Alderman McRandal on behalf of the Party group wished her well for the year ahead adding that everyone looked forward to seeing what she would achieve in the year, adding that everyone would be there to support her in that cause.

At this stage the Mayor, Councillor McCollum indicated that she wished to make a few remarks.

She began by stating that she had spent a great deal of her former career aspiring to go to the bench and now it would appear that she had finally made it. Albeit she added that it was not the bench she had originally envisaged but indeed, she felt she may prefer it.

Continuing she commented that the outgoing Mayor was a man with whom she found she shared many qualities. He was an ardent Liverpool fan, like herself and her family. He was partial to an Ulster fry, and she knew this because she witnessed him in action at last year's World Ulster Fry championship in Donaghadee. However she mainly felt an affinity with Councillor Cathcart because he was, like herself, somewhat talkative. He had never been known to say one word where twenty would do and that she believed was a seriously underrated quality, particularly for a Mayor.

More seriously though she acknowledged that Councillor Cathcart took on all aspects of his role conscientiously, diligently and maximised every opportunity to showcase the best of the Borough. He also took on not only Mayorship but marriage during the past year, and it was lovely to see the Lady Mayoress embrace her role with such grace and enthusiasm. She wished them both a good rest now with everyone's thanks. Equally Councillor McCollum offered her congratulations to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers who shone in his supporting role and took every opportunity to fix a spotlight on causes close to his heart.

Continuing Councillor McCollum stated that brought her to her own incoming year and she had found herself asking what could possibly go wrong. This was a job which transcended politics and put people and place above all else and that for her represented the very best aspects of being a Councillor. It was not a ceremonial role but one which required consistent action from a high energy person who could be a cheerleader for this Borough and she was confident she would be that person.

Councillor McCollum stated that she had arrived as a blow in to the Borough 32 years ago, newly married and still a student. Having settled in Bangor West for almost 20 years before moving 13 years ago to Holywood, the best place in the

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world. The Borough had always put its arms around newcomers, like herself, who arrived with those most basic human of needs to connect and to belong. That she stated was why she had chosen a very simple theme for her Mayoral year and that was one of belonging. For her that meant that everyone was worthy of belonging to this wonderful place simply because they lived here. People did not have to earn the right to belong and as such Ards and North Down belonged to everyone equally. As with anything, that ownership came with responsibility and that meant looking after our precious landscape, cleaning our beaches and parks, recycling responsibly and behaving respectfully in our communities, regardless of differences. Councillor McCollum added that while the causes of isolation, fear, poverty and despair were complex and went far beyond the capacity of the Chamber to remedy, they could still be partners and advocates in the conversation.

At this stage Councillor McCollum stated that the families that she was particularly thinking of now were those living in poverty, those living with adult learning disabilities and those living with domestic abuse. As such she proudly stated that her charities for the year would be St Vincent de Paul Society, Women's Aid and Orchardville. Each of those had been chosen to ensure maximum reach across the Borough, into homes in each DEA. She added that she was aware that everyone was familiar and supportive of their incredible work and as such she looked forward to much support for the fundraising efforts this year. In the words of Liam Neeson she stated that "I will find you!".

While belonging did not stop with community, it also touched our spiritual expression which was incredibly important to so many of us. Therefore this year there would be a joint chaplaincy, and she had invited two fantastic individuals whose ministries truly inspired her. Father Stephen McBrearty MBE, parish priest of my home church in St Colmcille's in Holywood and Rev Mairisine Stanfield of First Presbyterian Bangor, both of whom had been fearless in breaking down barriers to belonging. Councillor McCollum stated that she looked forward to their spiritual guidance throughout the year.

At this stage Councillor McCollum expressed the view that she believed strongly in business as a force for positive change in society. At a local, high-street level, the Council could support the brilliant Chambers of Commerce, model shopping local and encourage engagement with Council's excellent Go Succeed scheme. But at a macro level, this Borough was bursting with enterprise and creativity, so everyone needed to shout louder that if you wanted to start a business, do it in Ards and North Down, if you want to expand your operation, do it in Ards and North Down and to do that incentives must be offered, space created which was sustainable. Yesterday's welcome news about the Queen's Parade development heralded a bright new era for the city, offering incredible commercial opportunities for inward investment and local economic growth. She stated that she was confident that growth would sow seeds of prosperity throughout the Borough.

For her own part, Councillor McCollum's primary sense of belonging was fulfilled by being with the five people she loved the most in the world, her children who had touched her greatly by taking planes, trains and automobiles to be with her this morning. Catherine, Anna, Oliver, Benedict and Genevieve, you are all currently my favourite children.

She added that she also belonged to a wonderful bunch of people who made up the Alliance party group here. They were she stated so much more than colleagues to her and she thanked them all for their support and their friendship, in particular her fellow Holywood & Clandeboyne Councillor and group leader, the Boss Alderman Martin McRandal whose wisdom and decency everyone looked to for guidance. In anticipation of her most humble servitude this coming year, Councillor McCollum also thanked her dear pal Councillor Vicky Moore who would join her as Deputy Mayor and she was delighted that an Ards Councillor was taking up the position. She was aware that Vicky shared her goals for the year and would bring her own significant third sector experience and skills to the job, not to mention her wit and considerable flair. Buckle up Vicky.

By way of summing up Councillor McCollum commented that she felt that she belonged by being a member of the Chamber, something she was enormously proud of. She believed that it was a privilege to do the job all members did adding that she felt a strong connection to everyone and their common goals. While it had been said so often it would continue to be repeated, "We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided". Like everyone else she wanted a strong united Ards and North Down Borough which was the standard by which all other others were judged. She encouraged everyone to join her in making sure everyone who lived there belonged to it.

Alderman McIlveen took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor McCollum on behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party adding that it gave him much pleasure to see her in this role and he wished her well for the incoming year.

Alderman Smith also congratulated Councillor McCollum adding that he was sure she would hit the ground running with a number of large events already on the horizon including Armed Forces Day, closely followed by the Comber Earlies Food Festival and a Tina Turner tribute act also playing in Comber in June 2025. He also took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Moore on her nomination as Deputy Mayor and wished them both well on their year ahead.

At this stage Councillor Boyle indicated that he wished to congratulate Councillor McCollum on behalf of the SDLP Group adding that he would be happy to help her in any way he could throughout the year. Councillor Boyle stated that he also looked forward to welcoming her to Portaferry and the Ards Peninsula. At this stage he also offered his congratulation to the Councillor Moore on her appointment as Deputy Mayor.

Alderman McRandal then proceeded to make his nomination for the position of Deputy Mayor. He commented that as their nominee for Mayor was from North Down it was only right to balance it up by nominating a Newtownards Councillor as Deputy. Therefore he was nominating Councillor Moore, who was an Ards woman through and through.

Councillor Moore had been on Council since May 2022, having originally been co-opted to replace Nick Mathison, now MLA. Her professional background was working in the voluntary community sector on community development. She was a committed

Councillor who never shirked responsibility and in this Council term she had chaired Corporate Services Committee and PCSP. In addition to her knowledge, experience and dedication he referred to her caring personality combined with a rapier like dry wit and as such he had no doubt that she would do an excellent job as Deputy Mayor. On behalf of your Party group, Deputy Mayor, he stated that they wished her all the best for a successful and enjoyable year and looked forward to supporting her and to see what she along with the Mayor would achieve together.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, congratulated Councillor Moore on her appointment and invited her to wear the chain of office and to address the Council.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, commented that the focus should not be on her but rather Councillor McCollum as this was her year and as such she was very proud to be able to support her. Councillor Moore took the opportunity to thank her colleagues for entrusting her with this role adding that she looked forward to working with Councillor McCollum. She added that she was looking forward to all that the year would bring and thanked everyone for the opportunity.

The Mayor invited Party Nominating Officers to make their nominations to the positions of Chair and Vice Chairs of the Committees as per the report.

- Alderman McIlveen (DUP)
- Councillor McRandal (Alliance)
- Alderman P Smith (UUP)
- Councillor McKee (Green Party)

Position	Year 3	Member
Mayor	Alliance	Councillor G McCollum
Deputy Mayor	Alliance	Councillor V Moore
Corporate Services Committee – Chair	DUP	Councillor J Cochrane
Corporate Services Committee – Vice Chair	Alliance	Councillor H Irwin
Place and Prosperity Committee – Chair	Alliance	Councillor C McCracken
Place and Prosperity Committee - Vice Chair	DUP	Alderman R Adair
Planning Committee - Chair	DUP	Councillor C McClean
Planning Committee - Vice Chair	UUP	Councillor P Wray
Environment Committee – Chair	Green	Councillor L Kendall
Environment Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance	Councillor A Harbinson
Community and Wellbeing Committee – Chair	Alliance	Councillor R Ashe
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Vice Chair	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor W Irvine
Audit Committee – Chair	DUP	Councillor E Thompson

Audit Committee - Vice Chair	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Hollywood
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It was noted that Councillor Irvine decided not to take up the Vice Chair of Audit Committee and thus the size of the Committee did not need to change.

RESOLVED, that the nominations be noted.

6.APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-GROUPS, WORKING GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that at the Council's Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023, appointments were made to Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies by way of nomination. Some of those appointments were for a one-year term only. Those one-year appointments are outlined in the tables attached at the Appendix , including any further changes to the composition of the groups since then.

Nominations were now sought to fill the one-year appointments as outlined in Appendix 1 for the year 2025/26. It had been normal practice to fill those positions using single transferrable vote where the number of nominations exceeded the number of places available.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to appoint Members to the Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies listed in Appendix 1 by way of nomination.

The Mayor sought proposals and the following nominations were made:

CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Body: Diversity Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McBurney
2	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Hollywood
3	- (No nominations made to replace Councillor McKimm February 2025)	

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Body: Arts and Heritage Advisory Panel – 5 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
4	Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Harbinson
5	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

Body: Billiard Room Trustees – 7 Places (1 Year Appointment) (Newtownards Town DEA Members)

Although nominations were initially for a one-year period, as these places are for Newtownards DEA Members, therefore the current membership should be retained for the Council term.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Moore	Councillor Moore
4	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
5	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
6	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
7	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

Body: Community Development Grants Working Group – 5 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
2	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings
3	Councillor L Douglas	Councillor Douglas
4	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
5	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee

Body: Age Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Thompson
2	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine
3	-	Councillor Wray

Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment) (First Meeting 23 January 2024)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Alderman Graham	Alderman Graham
2	Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Cochrane
3	Councillor McBurney	Councillor McBurney
4	Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Harbinson
5	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Hollywood
6	Councillor Irwin	Councillor Irwin
7	Councillor McClean	Councillor McClean
8	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor W Irvine
9	Councillor McCracken	Councillor McCracken
10	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
11	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee
12	Councillor McKimm	Councillor Brady
13	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McLaren
14	Alderman McRandal	Alderman McRandal
15	Councillor Hennessy <i>(replaced Councillor Rossiter October 2024)</i>	Councillor Hennessy

Body: Aurora Pool Joint Management Committee – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Blaney	Councillor Blaney

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Kerbside Working Group – 11 Places (1 Year Appointment – members are elected by D’hont)

It should be noted that this is a Task and Finish Group, and although nominations were initially for one-year period, it is recommended that the current membership is retained for the lifetime of the working group.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Alderman Adair	Alderman Adair
2	Alderman Graham	Alderman Graham
3	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine
4	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
5	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart
6	Councillor Irwin	Councillor Irwin
7	Councillor McKee (<i>replaced Councillor McKimm February 2025</i>)	Councillor McKee
8	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Morgan
9	Councillor Harbinson (<i>replaced Councillor Rossiter October 2024</i>)	Councillor Harbinson
10	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
11	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS

Body: North Down and Ards Road Safety Committee – 7 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Alderman McRandal	Alderman McRandal
2	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Thompson
3	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Morgan
4	Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Cochrane
5	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray
6	-	-
7	-	-

Body: Northern Ireland Amenity Council – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Alderman Adair	Alderman Adair
2	Councillor Ashe	Councillor Ashe

Body: Percy French Management Committee – 4 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Hennessy	Councillor Hennessy
2	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
3	-	-
4	-	-

Body: Bangor Alternatives Advisory Committee – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor W Irvine

Body: Portaferry Regeneration Ltd – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Boyle	Alderman McAlpine

Body: Northern Ireland Drainage Council – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	<i>Vacant - Cllr Thompson was nominated to apply as non-executive member at November 2024 Council but was unsuccessful.</i>	Councillor Wray
2	Councillor Wray	-

Body: All Party Group on Climate Action – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Moore (<i>Replaced Councillor Rossiter October 2024</i>)	Councillor Moore
2	Councillor Kendall	Councillor Kendall

Body: Ards Community Hospital – Multi Agency Forum – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
2	Councillor Moore (<i>replaced Councillor Creighton 30.10.24</i>)	Councillor Moore

Body: Community Advice Ards and North Down – 4 places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Moore	Councillor Moore
2	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
4	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum

Body: Somme Heritage Centre Management Committee – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was to appoint 4 places.

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Thompson <i>(replaced Councillor MacArthur April 2024)</i>	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
4	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings

Body: Community Resuscitation Group – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Harbinson <i>(replaced Councillor Creighton October 2024)</i>	Councillor Harbinson
2	Councillor Thompson <i>(Replaced Councillor McKimm February 2025)</i>	Councillor Thompson
3	Councillor McKee <i>(Replaced Councillor McKimm February 2025)</i>	Councillor McKee

Body: Kilcooley Neighbourhood Partnership – 1 Place + 1 Substitute (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Gilmour
Sub	-	Councillor McClean

7.COUNCIL GOVERNANCE

7a. UPDDATE TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION (FIN58) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Chief Executive stating that last year the Council revised its scheme of delegation for the first time in a number of years. Part of this review included the undertaking to review this each year.

Proposed Changes

The main changes were in:

- Section 3 Council Reserved Matters
Previous list of 21 items had been combined and rationalised down to 12 with no substantive change powers retained by Council
- Section 4
 - Revised 4.1 to explicitly include contract extensions and joint committee awards
 - Revised 4.2 to clarify which land transactions are delegated
 - Added 4.4 to delegate approval of charging schedules when needing Council approval
 - Added 4.5 to delegate approval of grant schemes made under the new grants policy
 - Revised 4.6 expanded the list of licenses which may be awarded under delegation and restricted these to only the ones where objections are received. Other applications which have no objections will be approved by officers under delegation Op5 below.
 - Added 4.7 to allow the speedy action for the writing letters to government departments etc on matters of interest to Council.
- Section5 and Appendix 8 included the updated planning delegations (approved in December 2024).
- Section 12

- Generally tried to reduce the wordiness of the delegations to improve readability.
- Arranged the financial delegations in logical groups and revised numbering.
- Fin 6 and Fin7 expanded expenditure and grant authorisation thresholds, based on analysis from the interim electronic purchase ordering system which demonstrates there are not enough bands to allow efficient operations.

These were set out below and would only apply to electronic systems as they were rolled out across Council.

Current Thresholds		Proposed Thresholds	
Minimum Grade	Maximum Authorisation	Minimum Grade	Maximum Authorisation
6	£1,000	6	£1,000
PO1	£3,000	SO2	£3,000
		PO2	£5,000
PO4	£10,000	PO4	£15,000
		PO6	£25,000
PO11	£30,000	PO11	£100,000
DO1	No limit	DO1	No limit

- Added new Fin12 to formalise the system regarding budget transfers
- Added Fin13 to formalise the system regarding unbudgeted expenditure which will require retrospective approval.
- Added HR16 to delegate severance payments not explicitly covered by an approved business case, but which facilitate its objectives.
- Added Op5 to delegate non-contentious licence applications to officers
- Deleted Pr1 which was in conflict with 3.14
- Appendix 1 Updated to committee terms of reference to reflect above changes, expand the membership for one year only to account for over allocated positions of responsibility and other minor tweaks
- Appendices 2– 6 Updated to committee terms of reference to reflect above changes and other minor tweaks.

Members would note recent guidance on good practice for Audit Committees which was issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and presented to the Audit Committee in May 2025. Due consideration would be given by officers in collaboration with the Audit Committee to the good practice suggestions made by the Northern Ireland Audit Office with a view to having an impact on the scheme of delegation review next year, or as part of the new Council mandate in 2027/28.

The next formal review of the scheme would be for the annual meeting in June 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves version 4 of the Scheme of Delegation and authorises the updating of all policies, procedures, plans, strategies etc with changes contained in this scheme.

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

7b. UPDATE TO THE COUNCIL CONSTITUTION (FILE CX210) (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that the Council was required under Section 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to prepare and maintain an up-to-date Constitution. The current Constitution was developed in 2015 when Ards and North Down Borough Council was formed. It could be found on the Council website here: [Council Constitution - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#).

Most parts of the Constitution such as the Standing Orders, Finance Policies, Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference had since been amended and approved by Council, as well as the new Corporate Plan for 2024/28 'Towards a Sustainable Borough'. As such, some parts of the Constitution were out of date. This had been addressed in the new version.

The structure and layout of the Constitution had been reviewed and consolidated to move all parts into one document. Some articles and Annexes would be accessed via a hyperlink to redirect the user to the appropriate page on the Council's website where this information was held. They were highlighted with an underline. Some text had been removed or redrafted in order to remove superfluous information and keep the detail at an appropriate level.

Initial discussions had taken place with the Communications team on the design and further discussions would take place following Council approval. Changes to the text could be found at the following sections (and were highlighted in yellow in the Constitution (Appendix 1):

- Part 1, Article 1.3 - Purpose of the Constitution
Updated the Council's strategic priorities to reflect the current 2024/28 Corporate Plan.
- Part 1, Article 2 – Members of the Council
Article 2.1 - Additional information has been added to explain the process following the resignation or other circumstances of an independent Councillor.

The previous version of the Constitution listed the individual Members name and party as per DEA. The inclusion of this level of detail becomes quickly out of date even if the Constitution was updated after every election cycle, due to the potential of co-options in seats. This section was redrafted to reflect the DEAs and the number of seats, referring to the Council website for further details of the political composition.

Article 2.2 - Additional information has been added to explain the position of Alderman for clarity.

Article 2.3 (a)(i) – section was reworded to make more precise and concise.

- Part 1, Article 3.1 – Citizens and the Council

Under the point 'Citizens have the right to', point (ii), removal of wording 'and the Executive' after 'decisions made by the Council', as the Council do not operate an Executive system.

Further information was added to direct the user to the section on the Council's website on Information management.

Section (b)(ii) was updated to reflect the correct name and contact information of the complaints body, from former title of, 'Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints' to, 'Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards'.

- Part 1, Article 4.1 – Plans and Strategies

To keep the Constitution high-level, this section was redrafted to remove the lists of strategies and plans, both required by legislation or as a matter of choice, as the list is not exhaustive and can quickly become outdated.

Budget – language was simplified from 'virements' to 'budget transfer'.

- Part 1, Article 4.2 – Functions of the Council

The roles and responsibilities list was simplified, and language was made more generic, with a redirect to the Council's website for the most up to date and more detailed list of specific services.

The long list of functions was reviewed by senior management and updated to make the list more precise and concise.

- Part 1, Article 6 – Decision-making structures

This was updated to reflect that the Audit Committee is a main Committee of the Council and included in the list of standing Committees, bringing the number of standing Committees to 6.

Reference to the appointment of a Vice-Chair was added, which was detail previously omitted.

The full Terms of Reference for each Committee was removed out of this section and incorporated into the Scheme of Delegation located in Part 2, Annex 4 as previously agreed by Council.

- Part 1, Article 9 – Policy and other Committees

This word was updated to add 'Scheme of Delegation' alongside 'Responsibility for Council Functions'.

- Part 1, Article 11 - Officers
Article 11.2 - Functions of the Clerk to the Council (and subsequent referrals) was reworded to clarify that the Chief Executive is the Clerk to the Council and undertakes the responsibilities of the Clerk. The word 'or' was removed to avoid confusion that this is two roles. Subsequent referrals to the Chief Executive (bar under article 11.3) were changed to 'Clerk' for consistency.
- Part 1, Removal of Articles
12.6 – 'Decision-making under executive arrangements' and 12.7 – 'Decision making by overview and scrutiny committees' as they are not relevant to the governance structure of this Council. As such, the subsequent points under article 12 were renumbered accordingly.
- Part 1, Article 13.5 – Common Seal of the Council
Additional wording added to this section, 'and in accordance with Council Standing Orders' to reflect the wording of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 which states: "Every council shall provide for the safe custody of its common seal, which shall be used only— (a) under the authority of a resolution of the council, or (b) in accordance with standing orders of the council."
- Part 1, Article 14 – Review and Revision of the Constitution
Job title updated to reflect current Directorate structure from 'Director of Administration' to 'Director of Corporate Services'.
- Part 1, Article 15 – Publication of the Constitution
A change was made to the wording under 15.1(c) Procedure Rules Capable of Suspension to clarify that it refers to the Standing Orders.

An addition was added under 15.3 to update wording from 'printed' to 'electronic' and a referral to the correct page on the Council's website added.
- Part 2, Annex 2 – Joint Arrangements
Previous version of the Constitution listed each working group, sub-committee and outside body. The inclusion of this level of detail becomes quickly out of date. To address this, this section was redrafted to refer to the frequency of appointments and redirects the user to the Council website for the most up-to-date details of the groups.
- Part 2, Annex 3 – Contracted Out
This list was updated to reflect current services that have been contracted out.
- Part 2, Annex 4 – updated to include the Scheme of Delegation and the Committee Terms of Reference as the appropriate Council responsibilities.
- Part 3, Annex 5 – Sections updated throughout reflect current practices.

Text added to reflect that Council will consider on a 'case-by-case' basis the supply of hard copies of the agenda and connected reports. Additional text on

accessibility added throughout where required: "alternative formats are available on request".

Reference added to the appropriate section on the website where Council papers can be found.

- Removal of all references to 'designated officer' and 'proper officer' as these are not defined in legislation and are unclear as to who this would be. Sections updated to reflect that either it is 'the Council' who would action, or 'the Clerk'.

Section on supply of agendas and connected reports reworded to reflect the above and make it more concise. Removal of sentence 'any further statements or particulars necessary to indicate the nature of the items on the agenda'.

- Part 3, Annex 7 – The list of policies was updated and referral added to the appropriate section on the Council website.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the updated Constitution.

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

8. CLOSE OF MEETING AND PLAYING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, thanked members for attending, officers for supporting the meeting and to all of those who had been watching the livestream. She advised that the meeting would now be closed with the playing of the National Anthem. Members were asked to stand if able.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 12.11 pm.

ITEM 8.1.

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Tuesday, 27 May 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor McCollum

Councillors: Harbinson McLaren
McKee (Zoom) Wray

Independent Member: P Cummings

In Attendance: NIAO – Brian O'Neill
Deloitte – Camille McDermott (Zoom)

Officers: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

The Vice Chairman (Councillor McCollum) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ashe, Cochrane, Hollywood, Thompson and the Chief Executive.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Vice Chairman commented that this was her first time in the Chair and she welcomed Deloitte representative Camile McDermott, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) representative Brian O'Neill as well as Independent Member, Paul Cummings.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

No Declarations of Interest were declared. Members were reminded that they could declare throughout the meeting.

NOTED.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from 24 March 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

(b) Follow-Up Actions

(File ref: AUD02)

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

Item	Title	Action	Officer	Status
Dec 23 6b	Audit and Assessment Report	Drafting of formal consultation strategy	Head of Comms & Marketing	In draft Sept 25
Jun 24 12	Private Meeting with Auditors	Earlier circulation of draft financial statements	Head of Finance	June 25
Mar 25 6a	Internal Audit Progress Report	Discuss interim arrangements for systems officer	Head of Finance	May 25
6f		Remind Service Unit Managers to keep income procedures up to date	Head of Finance	Sep 25

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

5. **EXTERNAL AUDIT**

- a. **Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees – A Good Practice Guide** (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services which stated that a letter was received by the Chief Executive on 10 April 2025 from the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The letter related to Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and contained links to the appendices to this report.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this letter and the appendices.

Brian O'Neill (NIAO) referred to Appendix 2, The Good Practice Guide, which had been published in March 2025, drawing members attention to Section 7 which provided guidance specifically for Local Government. He highlighted Section 7.2 which recommended that the Chair of Audit Committees were held by the Independent member of the Committee for a wide variety of reasons. Continuing he also referred the Committee to the Self-Assessment Checklist included as an Appendix with a number of other useful appendices.

Questions were sought from members at this stage and the following comments were made.

Councillor McLaren noted the recommendation for the Independent member to adopt the role of Chairman and expressed the view that the Committee could potentially miss out on their viewpoint. As such she wondered if it would be beneficial to have more than one Independent member on the Committee.

Mr O'Neill commented that opinion was that Independent members often brought a wider breadth of experience to the Committee.

Councillor Wray agreed that if the Independent member assumed the position of Chairman the Committee could lose that experience which they brought to the Committee. He asked if this approach had been adopted in any other Councils to date.

Mr O'Neill confirmed that one other Council currently had an Independent member as Chairman of the Audit Committee.

Mr Cummings added that in his experience there were a smaller number of elected members on other Audit Committees.

At this stage the Vice Chairman agreed that the inquisitiveness of the Independent member could be lost from the Chamber floor if they were to assume the role of Chairman.

Mr O'Neill reiterated that the Independent member would have a different skillset to elected members and would also steer members into more challenging questions.

Referring to the Self-Assessment Checklist, the Vice Chairman noted that while it was very rigorous and worthwhile, members would need to be in position for a few months prior to its completion. Mr O'Neill suggested that it was something that should be considered going forwards.

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

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

a. ANDBC Audit Committee Progress Report (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above report from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Chairman invited Camille McDermott, Deloitte to present her report.

Ms McDermott advised that this was the Progress Report for the Quarter and that two reviews of fieldwork had been completed. Matters were progressing well and there was nothing of any concern at this stage. Turning to the Overall Outstanding Recommendations it was noted that to date 43 remained Open, 11 had been Closed since the last Committee meeting. Page 13 of the Report detailed the risks accepted by Priority 3 recommendations. Ms McDermott sought questions from members at this stage.

Councillor Wray noted the finding and recommendations made on Page 13 and expressed the view that the length of meetings was a real issue for members. Frequently they were finding themselves making important decisions at a very late hour which was far from ideal and he added that he had never been asked for his opinion on this.

Ms McDermott indicated that such consultation would not be part of any Internal Audit remit and instead suggested that members should be raising matters such as this with Council Management.

In respect of the Meeting Packs, Councillor Wray indicated that he believed there should be more information provided in the packs to enable members to deal with any issues in advance of the meeting.

At this stage Councillor McKee also expressed concern about any proposal to condense Meeting Packs particularly as quite often members asked for further information to be provided in order to be able to make an informed decision.

In response to a query from the Vice Chairman around the thought behind condensing the Meeting Packs, Ms McDermott agreed that members did need good and sufficient information. However it was felt that packs of over 400 pages could see important information becoming lost and suggested that consideration was given to a Dashboard style of reporting. She acknowledged that members time was valuable and engaging with officers prior to any meeting could prove useful.

The Director took the opportunity to remind members that a review had been undertaken of the Scheme of Delegation which now saw a shift in focus to only those 'big ticket' items going forward to Council for consideration.

The Vice Chairman referred to a recent Planning Committee which had started at 6.00pm and had not finished until six hours later with only one 15 minute break taking place. She added that she was aware that other Committees had been lengthy with many important items appearing later in the agenda for consideration late at night when everyone was tired. As such she believed the structure of agendas needed to be reconsidered and members should be consulted on those matters.

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

b. Administration Service Audit

The Vice Chairman informed members that the item had been withdrawn.

NOTED.

7. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

a. Statement of Assurance Summary Report

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, Heads of Service were required to provide Statements of Assurance. Assurance Statements comprised four main sections to be completed by each Head of Service following consultation with each of their Service Units. Period of this report, 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025.

Findings

General – Identification of Risk, Monitoring and Control measures

No key issues had been declared as not having appropriate internal controls in place. All Services had confirmed that any risks identified had appropriate internal controls and any further actions taken, or to be taken, to adequately mitigate or resolve the risk had been identified.

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed by the Heads of Service Team and Corporate Leadership Team, assigning owners for each of the Risks.

Section 1 – Strategic and Operational Risk Management

Services report appropriate controls were currently in place and had identified satisfactory actions to review, monitor, control, mitigate and resolve issues, where appropriate.

The Parks and Cemeteries Service had reported that the transformation process was ongoing with phases one and two complete and phase three being started in June 2025.

Administration had reported that the Governance audit had identified actions which would be dealt with in the near future. The Data Protection audit had identified that a Record of Processing Activities was required to be produced, this was already underway and would be completed as part of the EDRMS project.

The Economic Development service had reported that the Risk Assessment on the Signal Building had been completed with some outcomes relating to the small office built for Community and Wellbeing use being forwarded to the Assets and Property Service for review.

Human Resources and Organisational Development had reported that it was more difficult to attract new staff into the organisation in some service areas. To counter this new policies around apprenticeships and talent management had been approved by Council.

Section 2 – Internal Control

Generally, there were no key issues arising to cause significant concern or requiring immediate action.

Parks and Cemeteries had reported that they had a trial underway of the PSS Ultimate system which would allow them to more easily report and rectify faults in parks and open spaces.

Finance Service had reported that they were due to complete the implantation of the new Business to Business interim electronic purchase ordering system and hoped to also complete the Finance Handbook.

Administration Service had reported that the Land policy was now under review and unintended consequences of some aspects were identified, prompting a rethink. There was success in cataloguing the public rights of way, and now as a result the PROW policy was under review.

Regulatory Services had reported that there remained a Facebook page outside of Council control but action had been taken to address this.

Section 3 – Governance

Regulatory Services had reported that they had decided to limit the acceptance of unwanted dogs of certain dogs in order to reduce the need to hold as many dogs overall. They were also seeking further training for staff in handling dogs due to the XL Bully regulations. Further to their previous statement of assurance the budgetary pressures remained from a reduction in car parking income.

The Planning service had reported on the longest running enforcement case, they had decided on a multiyear plan to resolve this involving future enforcement action and they obtained agreement from the planning committee to proceed with a court injunction.

The Administration service had reported again regarding a contentious PROW case for which they were obtaining advice from counsel, and also that the Council had approved the extinction of a PROW which may generate a public enquiry. They further reported that an equality impact assessment was being carried out currently which may result in challenge.

Community and Culture had reported three direct award contracts which related to a memorandum of understanding in relation to refugee funding, and a single tender action for the procurement of Halloween beacons from the sole supplier of those.

The Tourism service had reported that they made three direct award contracts during this period in relation to a food and drink take over day being run by the sole supplier in this sector, an appointment of a celebrity chef for events and contributions to Tourism NI procured service, the Tourism Space for the delivery of a business training course.

Waste and Cleansing had reported that the whistleblowing complaint which was being investigated in the last period was externally investigated by the Local Government Staff Commission and the allegations were not upheld.

Parks and Cemeteries had reported that due to a communication issue, an order for flower seed was split which avoided the quotation process. This had led to procedures being changed to make only one officer responsible in future to avoid re-occurrence.

Economic Development had reported three deviations from procurement policy in the appointment of Beauhurst, the Labour Market Partnership use of Clearchannel for a marketing campaign and the appointment of a contractor to work on the innovation hub project. In each case a deviation from procurement form was completed detailing the reason behind each.

Assets and Property Services had reported two deviations from procurement which were previously reported on, being the supply of genuine Dennis Eagle parts and the sale of electricity from the wind turbine in Balloo. They had further reported two new deviations from policy, the first was the emergency appointment of contractors following Storm Eowyn to assess and make repairs to the roof of Bangor Aurora. The second related to the purchase of trailers from a lone supplier. This single tender action was approved by Council in June 2023 for the supply of two trailers. However, when the order was placed some 15 months later, in September 2024 (delay due to review of detailed specification), a purchase order was raised for five rather than two trailers. This was a human error, due mainly due to the passage of time since the STA report had been approved. The additional three trailers that were ordered in September 2024 were not surplus to requirement but were in fact required to meet operational service delivery demands at that time. By the time the error was realised, it was not possible to amend or cancel the order. To prevent a mistake such as this from reoccurring, a new online purchase order system currently being trialled would allow for the implementation of appropriate systemic checks to ensure that POs were only being raised and authorised for goods that had been procured in compliance with Council Procurement Policy. Officers had drawn up a protocol

which must be followed by all involved in the raising and authorising POs and authorising of associated invoices.

The Regeneration service had reported one deviation from procurement policy in the appointment of Aecom to complete a revision of their previous works regarding environmental improvement schemes at Helens Bay and Ballywalter in 2019. Procurement were advised and were content with the appointment given the context.

Members would recall that the previous report contained details of a single tender action to repair the moveable pool floor in Aurora leisure centre, the contract for the repair was awarded to the company which originally installed the pool without contest due to their intimate knowledge of the workings of it. Following this the repairs had now been completed and were very successful and cost effective compared to the alternative of replacing the floors entirely, likely leading to a significant saving to Council in comparison.

Section 4 – Miscellaneous

Parks and Cemeteries Service had again reported that the impacts of changing weather patterns and the lessening 'seasonal' variation was affecting service delivery. This had resulted in criticism of the service regarding grass cutting and sports pitch availability across the Service. They had reported that they planned to increase investment in drainage projects and split work between in-house staff and contractors in order to improve service delivery.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

8. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

a. Revised Risk Management Policy & Strategy 2025-29 (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that Risk management arrangements were both a legal requirement and an integral part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements. The Risk Management Strategy (attached) set out the Council's approach to the management of risk at a strategic and operational level, within projects, partnerships and by its suppliers. This version, for the period 2025-2029, replaced the previous document, incorporating Internal Audit recommendations and improved arrangements that had evolved over the life of the previous strategy, ensuring it aligned with the current Corporate Plan.

The next full review would commence in 2028 for implementation in 2029 and would be brought to Committee for approval. Minor amendments, including audit recommendations, and any additional appendices providing guidance would not be reported during this period.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Risk Management Strategy.

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

Referring to Appendix I the proposer Councillor Wray noted that the Council did on occasions take risks but he asked why it was the case that it was much more risk averse than other private sector companies.

In response the Director advised that the Council undertook a different approach to risk than that adopted by the private sector. He added that there was the ability for the Council to influence that by adjusting its appetite but that direction would need to come from elected members.

At this stage Mr O'Neill referred to a NIAO publication "Innovation and Risk Management" which basically acknowledged the level of appetite risk that every organisation had and how those risks could be managed. He added that it was a useful document which included a number of good practice examples within it.

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

b. Risk Appetite Framework (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that Risk Appetite was defined as the amount and type of risk that an organisation was willing to take in order to meet their strategic objectives. It was not a single, fixed concept and as a result it could be complex.

The Risk Appetite Framework was initially developed by the Corporate Leadership Team through a workshop facilitated by Deloitte and was implemented in 2024 following adoption. The Framework had been reviewed by the Director of Corporate Services. There were no proposed changes; the document aligned with the Corporate Plan and reflected a meaningful and measured approach to risk taking. It was proposed that the Framework was reviewed in April 2026, or at an earlier time if a review was indicated, to ensure the Framework remained robust and relevant.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Risk Appetite Framework 2025.

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

9. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

10. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE

(File Ref: 231329)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was asked to note that there have been no Single Tender Actions reported since the previous update that was given to the Audit Committee.

The recommendation was adopted.

11. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA PROTECTION MATTERS

*****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 Director of Corporate Services raised any new incidences of fraud, whistleblowing and data protection.

12. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE AND INTERNAL AUDIT OFFICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

A meeting was held in the absence of management.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.27pm.

ITEM 8.2

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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 10 June 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine
McIlveen
Smith

Councillors:	Cathcart	Hennessy
	Harbinson	McCollum
	Kendall	McKee (zoom)
	Kerr (7.02 pm)	Morgan

Officers: Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd), Service Unit Manager – Planning Enforcement and Trees (C Barker) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman McDowell, Councillor Smart and Councillor Wray.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED 6 MAY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the minutes be noted.

(Councillor Kerr entered the meeting – 7.02 pm)

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2023/2005/F – Spar, 102-104 Moat Street, Donaghadee (Appendices I – II)

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

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: The application had been brought before Planning Committee for consideration as it is a local application which has received six or more separate objections contrary to the case officer's recommendation.

Proposal: New lobby and extensions to retail unit (side and rear), alterations to façade, new fuel pump, alterations to parking layout including extension of site, ground works, canopy extension

Site Location: Spar, 102-104 Moat Street, Donaghadee

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (C Barker) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located within the settlement limits of Donaghadee as designated within Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The site comprised the EUROSPAR, Petrol Filling Station (PFS) with two pump islands, associated parking provision, the former Moat Inn public house and restaurant and associated parking provision. The EUROSPAR and PFS was served by a separate entrance / exit arrangement whilst the Moat Inn site was served by a two-way access. The wider context of the site was residential in nature. Another Petrol Filling Station and small scale shop were located to the east of the site whilst the town centre was approx. 250m to the south east.

The Officer displayed visuals of the existing and proposed site layout plans.

The proposal included -

- Extensions to retail unit to provide a new food preparation area to the west of the building, a small additional retail floorspace area in the location of the existing ATM and extension to enable storage on the first floor,
- A new entrance lobby at the north-east corner of the building,
- Refurbishment and alterations to existing elevations with a new canopy extension,
- Alterations to parking layout and creation of a single access to serve both the Eurospar and adjacent premises (former Moat Inn) including provision of four EV charging spaces.

The SPPS provided the policy context against which retail and other main town centre uses must be assessed.

The application site was located within the settlement of Donaghadee but outside the designated town centre. The existing retail building currently comprised two separate units – a Eurospar and an off-licence. A Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed Use or Development had been granted for the amalgamation of the two retail units and associated internal alterations therefore establishing that the use of the floorspace for a single retail unit was lawful.

The application site also included the former Moat Inn premises and parking area located at No.102 Moat Street. A certificate of lawfulness had established that the change of use from the public house/restaurant to retail use was lawful.

(Councillor Harbinson withdrew from the meeting – 7.05 pm)

The current application proposed only a minor increase in retail floorspace, of 20sqm approximately, beyond that which had already been certified as lawful under the recent Certificates. That was not considered major retail development that would warrant a full assessment of retail impact under the SPPS. The proposal would enable the modernisation of the proposed retail unit to meet local needs.

The proposal would involve extensions to the front, side and rear of the building. The front extension would provide a new lobby and all extensions to the building would be lower than the ridge of the existing building and in keeping with the scale and massing of the existing building. The building as a whole was to be finished in stone cladding, white render and the roof slates would match those of the existing building. There was also to be an extension of the existing canopy to the front which was located over the fuel pumps plus the addition of an extra fuel pump.

The application proposed a new parking layout and creation of a single access to serve both the Eurospar and Moat Inn resulting in a reduction of access points on to the protected route.

The existing site provided 37 car parking spaces serving the EuroSpar and adjacent off license and 27 spaces to the rear of 102 Moat Street which totaled 64 spaces. The proposed layout on this application provided a total of 76 spaces for the retail premises at No.104 Moat Street and the premises at No.102 Moat Street.

The additional Gross Floorspace Area (GFA) equated to approximately 192sqm. Based on the GFA, an additional 14 parking spaces would be required to serve this extension. The proposed site layout plan showed an additional 12 spaces. Although that was slightly below the published standards it was considered acceptable given the site was well served by public transport and within easy walking distance of various residential developments. Lighting was proposed within the car park and Environmental Health were content that a condition would ensure that there was no harm to residential amenity.

In addition, DfI Roads was consulted, and it had no objection to the proposal in terms of access, parking and road safety.

In terms of impact on Character, 10 letters of objection from 9 separate addresses had been received in relation to the proposal. The specific concerns raised were set out and considered in detail in the case officer's report. The main concerns related to the impact of the development on the character of the area the loss of screening by the removal of trees and the impact on residential amenity.

In relation to the loss of trees the proposed development required the removal of a line of trees which ran between the car parking at the rear of no.102 and the Euro

Spar, one tree from the rear car park of no.102 and three trees from the corner of the car park of the petrol station/Euro Spar.

The trees proposed to be removed were all located within the site with limited views, they were not protected by a TPO and did not provide any screening or integration to any of the surrounding residential developments. The trees located along the rear boundary of no.102 were to be retained and it was recommended that a condition ensured their retention.

There were trees to the rear of the site protected by virtue of a TPO and the Council's Tree officer had been consulted. The agent had submitted detailed drawings identifying the TPO trees along with details of geocell to be used. A condition had been recommended to protect these trees.

As set out in the case officer's report, the Planning Department was also satisfied that the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents.

There were dwellings to the east, south and west of the site which had been considered with regards to overlooking, overshadowing and any dominant outlook.

The properties to the south (No.5 Manor Wood & No.9 Manor Wood) would share a boundary with the proposed parking area, located towards the rear of the site. The boundary consisted of mature vegetation which was to be retained and that would provide a visual buffer between the site and neighbouring properties. The lighting to be used within the car park would not result in obstruction to residential properties.

Whilst the proposal would extend the building by 6m to the west, the building would be located 22m from the closest neighbouring property in this direction (No.1 Manor Wood). and would be separated by a car parking area. Taking the separation distance and scale of the development into account, the proposal would not be detrimental to neighbouring amenity by way of dominance, overshadowing or overlooking.

Residential amenity also related to matters such as unpleasant odours, noise and general disturbance caused by new developments. It should be noted that there was an existing business operating on the site which was within an urban area. Notwithstanding this, the Council undertook extensive consultation with the Environmental Health Department in relation to odours, noise, contamination & light, and they had recommended conditions.

In summary, the proposal was considered to be acceptable taking account of the relevant policy requirements and guidance contained within the SPPS. The extensions and development of the site would provide an enhanced and modernised retail use for the use of the local community. The redevelopment of the building was a contemporary design in keeping with the character of the local area. There would be no unacceptable undue impact on the adjacent residential properties. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted subject to the stated planning conditions.

The Chair invited questions for Members.

Councillor McCollum highlighted the ongoing concerns from residents regarding the necessity for a pedestrian crossing in the area.

(Councillor Harbinson re-entered the meeting – 7.12 pm)

Following correspondence with DfI, they had visited the site to undertake a pedestrian vehicle survey and concluded that a pedestrian crossing was merited. DfI had felt it would be prudent to await the outcome of the planning application before making a decision as to how and where it could be accommodated. It was recognised that given the area it would not be straightforward to locate a pedestrian crossing. Referring to the access points, Councillor McCollum noted that the Planning Officer had referred to one single access point, and she sought clarity in its location.

The Planning Officer (C Barker) explained that the planning application contained two addresses, 102 Moat Street (The former Moat Inn) and 104 Moat Street (Eurospar). 102 Moat Street currently had its own access. The proposal brought a reduction in the accesses onto the protected route. The Officer highlighted the entry and exit points on the visuals.

Councillor McCollum asked if it was possible to condition an approval on the basis of a pedestrian crossing being provided. The Planning Officer stated that was not possible.

To add further clarity, the Head of Planning stated that for safety reasons for such developments, one entrance and one exit was required. Planning needed to consider the development within the red line. She was fully aware of the case for a pedestrian crossing however that was a separate issue and for DfI to progress.

Councillor McCollum hoped the development would bring the long awaited pedestrian crossing. In relation to the noise pollution, she believed the residents would welcome the conditioning in that regard. She referred to the objection in relation to trees and that some of the trees would act as a noise buffer.

Referring to the visual, the Planning Officer highlighted the trees along the boundary that were to be retained and were protected by a TPO. She referred to the trees that were being removed that were within the site.

The Mayor noted the concerns from residents in relation to the removal of trees from the residents of Manor Wood. The Planning Officer confirmed that those were the trees that were to be retained.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the former Moat Inn and raised a question regarding the redevelopment of the site and the change of use. The Planning Officer explained that the former Moat Inn would be redevelopment into an office licence as part of the application. The change of use was included.

The Head of Planning referred to page 8 of the case officer's report, which confirmed that the application site included the former Moat Inn. A certificate of lawfulness was established that the change of use from the public house/restaurant to retail use was lawful under the provisions of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order.

Councillor Cathcart noted that terms of car parking there would be less car parking spaces than what would be ideally required, and he wondered if the land surrounding the former Moat Inn building was considered in that assessment. The Planning Officer confirmed that was considered as part of the parking assessment. The GFA was reviewed and two less spaces were deemed acceptable.

The Chair invited David Mounstephen (Agent), William Adams (Henderson Group), Mark Collins (Collins Rolston Architects) and Tim Cousins (Lisbane Consultants) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Mounstephen thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak, on behalf of the Henderson Group, in support of the recommendation to approve. The proposed development was part of a £3M approx. investment in the Moat Street site. The proposal would create some 10 additional jobs, with some £125,000 of additional salaries and some £10,000 of additional rates income.

Mr Mounstephen highlighted that the nature of the proposal was set out in the case officer's report – it was an investment in and improvement of that well established and important local shop and forecourt. There had been some third-party objections dating back to September 2023 and he hoped those concerns had been allayed. As alluded to there were no objections from statutory consultees. The application had been subject to a range of assessments, including odour, lighting, trees, access and would operate safely and without adverse impacts on surrounding properties or the character of the area. Mr Mounstephen agreed with the content of the case officer's report, subject to planning conditions and, as such, he commended the recommendation to the Committee.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman McAlpine noted the EV charging points and wondered if the site was big enough to accommodate future provision of alternative fuels.

Mr Mounstephen stated that currently the proposal was for a standard fuels and EV charging points.

Mr Adams (Henderson Group) confirmed that currently the proposal was for standard fuels and EV charging. New fuels were starting to come to the market however there was no mass demand. The Henderson Group prided themselves on being adjustable and agile.

Councillor Hennessy asked the representatives if they could provide an indication of timescales, the length of time the development would take and if it would remain open. Mr Adams stated that on the basis of permission being granted, some procurement would be required. Extensive work would be undertaken to the former Moat Inn site and detailed surveys would be required. In terms of sequencing, it

would be important for the store to remain open for the customers. Step One would involve alterations to the former Moat Inn site to allow for the Off-licence to move. Followed by construction moving towards the current off-licence finishing by bringing the development together. For the scale of the proposal, it was envisaged that would take 36-40 weeks.

Councillor McKee referred to the size of the former Moat Inn building and asked if the off-licence would occupy the whole building or was there any other future aspirations for the building. Mr Mounstephen stated that some demolition may occur to the rear of the building to make in more in keeping. He stated that if Councillor McKee's concerns were there would be other uses for that building making an intensification of the site, then he reassured the Member that was not what was planned. The proposal would move the existing off-licence into a bigger space.

Alderman Graham referred to the condition in relation to the abatement of odours and asked how that would be managed. Mr Mounstephen stated the Henderson Group were experienced in relation to that matter. The current Eurospar had odour abatement undertaken at present. There would be a high level of odour abatement used with carbon filtration and extraction. An odour specialist had undertaken an assessment and made recommendations on the type of equipment that was required. The Council's Environmental Health department had also undertaken an assessment and were content. Henderson Group were very conscious of any concerns, and they wished to be good neighbours. Mr Mounstephen reassured that the concern in relation of odours had been addressed as part of the proposal.

In relation to lighting and residential amenity, Councillor Cathcart questioned if the lights could be switched off at nighttime and what type of lighting would be used overnight. Mr Adams explained that all the lighting would be turned off at night when the shop was closed. There may be a small security lighting which was fairly normal in any commercial setting. There would no light intrusion into the nearby residential properties. Quite often during works, the light could be shielded to ensure there was no glare or unwanted light.

Mr Mounstephen referred to the condition No 12 which stated 'The net retail floor space of the retail store as extended shall not exceed 574.7sqm and shall be restricted to the areas shaded blue on drawing No.07'. He felt that should instead read drawing No.06.

As there were no further questions, the representatives returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited further questions from Members.

Alderman Graham referred to the condition regarding odours and stated that he was quite confident Henderson Group would be considerate to their neighbours. He questioned how that condition could be enforced.

The Planning Officer explained that as with any condition it would be the Planning Enforcement team that would look at such a complaint. They would liaise with the Environmental Health department with regards to odours as they were in the experts in that field.

The Head of Planning stated that there was already cooking undertaken within the garage and odour abatement currently took place. Henderson Group were well used to managing such odours and if there was a complaint that would be looked at by Planning.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the application which was good asset for Donaghadee. He believed the concerns had been fully considered and assessed.

The Mayor agreed, the objections had been comprehensively addressed. The EuroSpar was well used. She was hopeful that the ongoing serious issue of the pedestrian crossing would be looked at.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be approved.

4.2 LA06/2022/0563/F - Lands approx. 15m NE of 5 Creighton's Green Road Hollywood
(Appendix III)

DEA: Hollywood & Clandeboye

Committee Interest: The application had been brought before Planning Committee for consideration as it is a local application which had received six or more separate objections contrary to the case officer's recommendation.

Proposal: Detached garage and associated site works

Site Location: Lands approx. 15m NE of 5 Creighton's Green Road, Hollywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (C Barker) outlined the detail of the application. The site comprised of an area of hardstanding with 2 steel containers and a portacabin. The south, east and western boundaries were defined by trees and hedgerows. The northern boundary was adjacent to a public pedestrian right of way path. A steel gate and 1m high post wire and fencing enclosed the site.

The site lay within the countryside just outside of Hollywood, with the immediate area containing a mixture of detached residential dwellings with agricultural fields to the north and east.

The proposal sought to replace the existing containers (one had the benefit of a CLEUD) and portacabin on site which were both immune from enforcement action, with a new single-storey garage. It was important to note that the original application proposed a storey-and-a-half garage with a higher ridge height. However, due to concerns regarding its visual prominence and integration into the rural landscape, the ridge height was subsequently reduced by over 1m.

Planning Policy Statement 21 set out planning policies for development in the countryside. As the domestic use of the site had already been established through the approval of the CLEUD, the principle of a building for domestic purposes on the site was acceptable under policy CTY1 of PPS21 and policy EXT1 of PPS7 Addendum.

The proposed garage would be sited in the southern portion of the site, in place of the two existing containers on site. The garage would measure 8.9m x 5m, creating approximately 50sqm of floorspace. The garage would have a pitched roof design with a ridge height of 5m and would be finished in painted render, with roof tiles to match those of the existing dwelling at No. 5.

Although separated from the established domestic curtilage of No. 5 by the road the Council were content that the garage was sympathetic to the main dwelling in relation to scale, massing and design. It was considered that the proposed garage would result in a betterment as the existing containers and portacabin were not considered to be sympathetic to the rural character of the area.

As the garage would be located on the bend of Creighton's Green Road, there would be some public views when approaching from the eastern side of the road. The location of the proposed garage would be sited in a similar position to the existing container and portacabin. There would only be a very brief view of the garage from the existing access when approaching from the East however it would otherwise be extremely well screened by the existing mature roadside hedgerows to either side of this access. Views from further along the road approaching from the West would also be limited due to the intervening boundary vegetation and the topography of the land. A condition was recommended to retain the boundary treatment.

The nearest third-party property was over 35m away from the site (No. 3 Creighton Green Road); therefore, the proposal will have no impact on the privacy or amenity of neighbours.

In terms of impact on character, 22 letters of objections were received from 8 different addresses in relation to the proposal. The specific concerns raised were set out and considered in detail in the case officer's report. The concerns raised include related to the impact on the character of the area, road safety, the loss of screening by the removal of trees and the impact on residential amenity.

In relation to the impact on the character of the area the ridge height had been reduced from 6m to 5m to reduce any undue prominence of the building on the site. The site was currently accessed from Creighton's Green Road which was not a protected route. This access had been in situ for over 5 years and was therefore immune from enforcement action. However as a result of concerns raised through objection DfI Roads were consulted and no concerns were raised.

In connection with this, concerns were also raised in that the access interfered with a frequently used footpath and its retention was vital for pedestrian safety. A public right of way was indicated on the Council's GIS maps and it was noted that the path/right of way remained unobstructed. While the existing access to the site came

out onto the right of way that was close to the public road and the right of way itself was unaffected. As detailed the vehicular access had been used since at least 2010.

In summary, the proposal was considered to be acceptable. The development of the site would result in a betterment/planning gain as the existing containers and portacabin were not considered to be sympathetic to the rural character of the area. There would be no unacceptable undue impact on the adjacent residential properties. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted subject to the stated planning conditions.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum felt there was undoubtedly a blind corner which could be seen clearly in the visuals. She referred to the proposal being immune from enforcement due to the five year rule and questioned was that due to the proposal not being objected to within the 5 year period.

The Planning Officer explained that the site had been in use for a considerable period of time. If a building or use was there for 5 years or greater it was immune from enforcement action. It was therefore a lawful use of site and it was considered that the application was a betterment. With regards the access, that also had been used for a period greater than 5 years.

The Mayor found it staggering that DfI did not have concerns. She questioned if they had of provided comments would that have overridden the reasoning.

The Planning Officer explained due to the site being immune, it was a lawful access. DfI had been consulted and had been commented that on the basis that there was existing established use on the site with no intensification, they had no concerns.

The Chair invited Mr Andy Stephens (Agent – Matrix Planning) to come forward who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr Stephens stated that the application had been in the system since 6th June 2022, and following discussion and deliberation with officers, amendments were made to reduce the proposal to a single storey. The case officer's report provided an excellent chronology of process history of this case, including consideration of the status of the existing structures on the subject site. He believed it was a fair and balanced consideration, and he thanked officers for their time and effort to conclude this application.

There were no objections from the statutory Roads Authority to the proposal in respect of access, movement and parking and in respect of road safety. There had been no evidence presented to the contrary of this expert opinion, which remained a material consideration to this determination. Likewise, there was no history of any road traffic accidents, at this location.

Whilst there have been 22 objections submitted on the application, many of those were duplications, repeating the same concerns. Those had been thoroughly examined in the case officer's report.

It was noted that since the scheme was amended and reduced to a single storey garage that 5 objections were received, which reiterated the earlier points of concern. Mr Stephens noted that there was a lack of evidence to substantiate the concerns, and they did not pay regard the existing structures and there was a fall-back position.

The proposal amounted to a rationalisation and consolidation of the existing 3no structures on site, with a single storey garage, resulting in planning gain and betterment as the existing structures were not sympathetic to character of the area, and were not high quality in design and finish. The proposed permanent garage was sympathetic to the existing built and natural environment and was of an appropriate scale, massing, and design, which would blend unobtrusively into this rural landscape setting.

In conclusion, Mr Stephens stated that the case officer's report confirmed that the proposal was compliant with all aspects of the local development plan, draft plan, regional prevailing policy, and that all material considerations had been considered. The Planning system did not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another, it was there for consistent decision making. Planning decisions could only be taken in an evidential context and all the evidence including the response from DfI Roads would indicate there was a lack of sustainable objection to this proposal or demonstrable harm.

Mr Stephens fully supported the positive recommendation before members, and asked that the Committee endorsed the grant of planning permission.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Cathcart was curious as to the history of the site. Mr Stephens explained that he was initially instructed to the case in 2019. From his understanding, the applicant originally had a business in Hamilton Road, Bangor beside Wilson Nesbitt Solicitors. The applicant retired, he had a number of items from his business and had put the containers on the site for storage. As alluded to, as long as the development was in plain site, a certificate of lawfulness could be applied. Mr Stephens stated that the proposal provided a rationalisation of what was currently on the site and considered that to be a betterment.

Councillor Cathcart questioned if the application site had always been associated with the property. Mr Stephens was of the understanding that was the case. He was aware in the objections that reference had been made to a Chancery case as regards to the right of way however that was a civil matter. The application did not impact the right of way and therefore was not relevant in the determination of the application.

Councillor Cathcart asked where the vehicular access would be. Mr Stephens explained the access and the vehicular movements whilst referring to the visual. The CLUED established the use and the access. DfI had not objections and there was no history of traffic accidents. The bend slowed the traffic down due to the physicality and curvature of the bend.

Alderman Graham asked if there were any plans to tidy the boundary of the site. Mr Stephens that two of the conditions related to the landscaping. The boundary vegetation was to be retained to 3m in height. In terms of the right of way, landscaping had not been included and he was happy to feed that back to the applicant. In terms of the visual impact, Mr Stephens stated that the proposal was a betterment and an enhancement.

The Mayor was curious as to the purpose of the huge garage. Mr Stephens advised that the garage would be used for domestic storage. He did not believe it to be huge, he viewed it as modest in size and in keeping with garages in the area. The conditions would ensure that the proposal was ancillary to No 5, removed the permitted development rights and dealt with the concerns.

Mr Stephens referred to condition 2 and believed container should be plural and therefore should read 'Prior to the commencement of development, the existing **containers** and portacabin as indicated in Green on drawing No. 01A shall be permanently removed from the site'.

As there were no further questions, Mr Stephens returned to the public gallery.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Cathcart stated that there was lawful use on the site and the proposal would tidy up the area.

Councillor Kendall wished to be recorded as against.

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

4.3 LA06/2024/0384/F - Lands 100m south of 29E Carrowdore Road, Greyabbey
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: The application was being presented to Planning Committee as 6 or more objections had been received contrary to the officer's recommendation to approve.

Proposal: Proposed glamping site comprising 7No glamping pods, parking, open space and associated landscaping

Site Location: Lands 100m south of 29E Carrowdore Road, Greyabbey

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application, the site was in the countryside accessed via a private lane off the Carrowdore Road. The area was

characterised by agricultural land interspersed with dwellings and farm holdings. The site occupied the western corner of a larger agricultural field which was on relatively flat ground and set back approximately 250m from the road.

The Officer displayed some photos of the site taken from the existing private lane. As could be seen the topography was relatively flat and the field boundaries were defined by mature hedgerows.

The proposal was for 7 individual glamping pods with associated parking, landscaping and communal open space. The slide showed the proposed layout with the pods located around the edges of the site close to the existing hedgerows and facing onto the central area of open space.

Policy CTY1 of PPS21 identified a range of types of development which in principle were considered acceptable in the countryside. It identified that tourism proposals may be considered against the relevant tourism policies contained in PPS16. Specifically in this instance, policy TSM6 'New and Extended Holiday Parks in the Countryside' was applicable. As confirmed by the Council's Environmental Health Department, the proposed Glamping Pods fall under the definition of a caravan under Section 15 of the Caravans Act (NI) and the site would require a Caravan site licence. Therefore, the proposal falls to be considered under policy TSM6. The principle of holiday parks including small groups of glamping pods was acceptable in the countryside under PPS16. Policy TSM6 showed advised that planning permission would be granted for a new holiday park where it was demonstrated that the proposal would create a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development. The siting and design of the holiday park must also respect the surrounding landscape and rural character of the area.

In terms of the potential impact on the character of the area, as already mentioned, the site itself was set back a considerable distance from the road at approximately 250m. Given this significant setback and the small scale of the proposed pods, it was considered that the overall development would integrate very well into its surrounding landscape. The slide showed the long-distance view towards the site from 21 Carrowdore Road and the views towards the site from 17 Carrowdore Road demonstrating that the development would not be prominent or visible from those public viewpoints. The pods themselves were of timber construction and were small in scale with a height of just over 3m. Each pod would be constructed off site and transported to the site therefore construction works on site would be minimal. The pods were not intended for self-catering with no kitchen facilities incorporated enabling visitors to support local food and beverage businesses.

A landscaping scheme was proposed which would include the planting of 18 heavy standard native species trees to help further integrate the development into its rural setting.

Policy TSM7 of PPS16 also listed general criteria for tourism development including the requirement that developments must not harm the amenity of nearby residents. A number of representations had been received from nearby residents in relation to the potential for the development to cause an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance from both the use of the site and traffic on the existing lane. It was

considered that the proposed glamping pods would be located a sufficient distance away from the closest residential properties which would ensure there would be no unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance. As demonstrated on the slide, the separation distances would be generous between 119m and 208m. The Planning Department was satisfied that these distances along with intervening mature hedgerows would be sufficient to mitigate against any noise associated with the use of the pods. However, it was not anticipated that the level of noise would be significantly greater than that associated with existing nearby dwellings and farm holdings.

The development would include some lighting for safety. The location and type of lighting was shown which included low 1m high bollard lighting around the car park and to the front of each pod and lights positioned above the front door of each pod. All of those lights would be hooded to direct light and avoid spillage and would comply with the recommended lux levels.

Concerns had also been raised by nearby residents regarding the increase in traffic using the existing lane as a result of the proposed development. While the development would result in an increase in vehicle movements, it was not considered that increase in itself would be significant or result in any unacceptable impact by way of additional noise or disturbance. It was also considered that each of the existing dwellings were set back off the lane to a sufficient degree to mitigate against any potential noise from additional traffic. Environmental Health had also been consulted on the application and had raised no concerns with regard to potential noise or disturbance.

In terms of road safety, DfI Roads had been consulted and was content with the proposal, raising no objections. The existing access onto the Carrowdore Road was shown on slide 13. Sight splays of 4.4 x 70m were already in place here and met with the standards. Some concerns had been raised by objectors in terms of the width of the existing lane and its capacity to accommodate the additional traffic generated by the proposal.

The width of the lane does vary along its extent from just under 4.5 m to around 7m. The visual showed a few measurements taken off the Council's GIS map for reference. While it was acknowledged that the lane narrows at certain points, it was also considered that there were a sufficient number of wider sections along the lane where vehicles would be able to pass safely.

In summary, the Planning Department was satisfied that the proposed glamping pod development meets all of the requirements of policies TSM6 and TSM7 of PPS16. Policy TSM6 operated a presumption in favour of this type of tourist accommodation in the countryside. As already outlined, the site could comfortably accommodate the proposed development without any adverse visual impact on the character of the surrounding countryside. Adequate communal amenity space, landscaping and car parking were all provided for the pods and for the reasons outlined in this presentation the Planning Department was content that the development would not cause any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of existing residents. All of the statutory consultees had also advised that they had no objections to the proposal and therefore on this basis it was recommended that full planning should be granted.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman Graham noted that the development would require a caravan licence and would come under those regulations. The pods were not intended to be self-catering however he viewed a barbeque as self-catering outside. He referred to incidences of concerns in connection with such facilities in other parts of the Country and presumed they would have been of the control of the caravan licence.

The Planning Officer (A Todd) stated that Environmental Health would deal with such licencing matters. Planning were satisfied that there were sufficient mitigation measures in place. There were significant distances between the development and the nearby houses. There were mature hedges that acted a buffer and further planting was proposed.

Alderman McIlveen noted that access to the site was a long and existing laneway and he questioned how many properties used the laneway. The Planning Officer stated that the access was of the Carrowdore Road and before the turn off to the site there were three properties. There were further houses beyond and at least one farm holding.

Alderman McIlveen stated that there were 7 pods and asked if camping pitches were proposed. The Planning Officer stated that there was nothing proposed in that regard. There was a communal space in the middle of the proposal, but she believed that would not lend itself to a camping area.

Alderman McIlveen wondered if that was the only site that was owned by the applicant. The Planning Officer reminded the Committee what was being considered was the site within the red line.

Alderman McIlveen expressed concerns that due to the pods not being self-catering that would increase traffic movements for visitors exiting to get meals. He was mindful of previous applications which had been approved for houses and then a further access had subsequently been required. He questioned if those considerations had been taken on board. The Planning Officer stated that DfI Roads had been consulted. She felt that generally with tourist pods people were out during day. The width of lane had been looked at. There was guidance within Creating Places which stated that minimum widths of 5.5m. The lane allowed for two service vehicles to pass each and there were significant stretches of sufficient width.

The Chair invited Mr Colin McAuley (Agent - via zoom) to be admitted to the meeting, who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr McAuley stated that the application was before the Committee that as a result of there being a total of 6 objections from different postal addresses. Following consideration of those objections, planning policy and all other material considerations, officers had justifiably recommended the application for approval. He welcomed this recommendation for the undernoted reasoning.

From a planning policy perspective, rural policy was presently framed to facilitate development in appropriate locations where that would maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to both live and work.

In respect of tourism proposals, the SPPS aimed to manage the provision of sustainable and high-quality tourism developments in appropriate locations. The SPPS and the RDS both recognise that tourism proposals were a key element underpinning sustainable economic growth in Northern Ireland.

One of the stated regional strategic objectives was to sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas.

The SPPS stated that a positive approach should be adopted in determining applications for sustainable tourism development which were of a high quality, of an appropriate scale and design, and which respond positively to the site context. The application was well supported from the outset with a preliminary ecological appraisal, supporting design & access statement, detailed planning policy consideration and a high-quality landscaping scheme.

PPS 16 Policy TSM 6 is the appropriate policy context in this instance and it stated that planning permission *'...will be granted for a new holiday park where it is demonstrated that it will create a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development.'*

The modest glamping site proposed respected the surrounding landscape character by keeping the glamping pods small in scale thereby enhancing integration. They were designed to respect their rural context, reflecting the form and profile of the traditional vernacular barrel-vaulted farm sheds commonplace in the Northern Irish rural landscape.

Each pod was set into its own generous landscaped plot, set into the landscape with a light touch, respecting the site contours, further enhanced with informal gravel pathways, layered landscaping and informal tree planting and mounding enclosing the site to the east.

During the course of the application a total of 6 objection letters were received. The issues raised by objectors had already been comprehensively summarised and addressed in the case officers report, as such he did intend to repeat those issues. However, he wished to address concerns raised over the proposed use of the existing laneway. As demonstrated in the case officers report, the laneway was of sufficient width along the vast majority of its length to facilitate the passing of vehicles at numerous locations. Visibility splays were also already in place to the required standard at the junction with Carrowdore Road. As such, DfI Roads raised no road safety concerns and had responded with no objections. Objections concerning use of the existing laneway were civil matters which were not to be presided over in the context of determining a planning application. Notice had been served on the owners of the laneway informing them of the proposed development. Notwithstanding this, the applicant enjoyed a full and unencumbered right of way

over the existing laneway leading to the site which could be lawfully utilised for any purpose, including access to the glamping site proposed.

In conclusion, Mr McCauley stated that the proposed glamping site represented a sustainable form of tourism development and enhances the rural tourism offer in the Borough Council area. As endorsed in the officer's report, the development proposals are compliant with the general policy requirements set out in the Ards & Down Area Plan, the SPPS, traffic & transportation issues covered by PPS 3, and Tourism policies contained within PPS 16. Mr McCauley was pleased to endorse the officers' recommendation to approve this application and commended the development proposals for positive consideration by committee members.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman McAlpine was of the understanding that the pod would not include self-catering facilities and asked if that was correct. Mr McCauley stated that there was no specific kitchen in the pods, they may have a convenient microwave or something similar along with a barbeque area.

Alderman McAlpine asked if any concerns had been expressed regarding the nuisance values around barbeques. Mr McCauley stated that not been raised by third parties. There was a central communal area in the proposal where people could also barbeque.

Alderman Graham asked about the surface of laneway. Mr McCauley stated that it was a concrete laneway along the majority of its length with some small areas of compacted gravel. There was sufficient width for cars to pass along the majority of its length.

As there were no further questions, Mr McCauley was returned to the virtual public gallery.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Kendall referred to the bio-diversity checklist and noted that there was a condition in relation to badgers. She was unsure how that could be conditioned. The Planning Officer stated that NIEA had been consulted with the bio-diversity checklist and the accompanying ecological statement which was comprehensive in reviewing the potential protected species. NIEA were content with the findings and had not recommended conditions. There was a need to ensure that there were no badger sets on the site and what was found was a badger latrine and was at a good distance away.

Alderman Smith asked where the applicants was from a management perspective. The Planning Officer highlighted the applicants house on the visuals from her understanding.

The Head of Planning highlighted that page 3 of the case officer's report displayed the land ownership and the applicants dwelling.

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

Councillor Morgan was content that the proposal met policy and was needed for tourism within the area. It was for 7 pods, which was not extensive and believed the facility could be appropriately managed.

Alderman Graham stated that he had no objection to the principal of the development which he believed had been designed very well. However, he expressed his concerns regarding the access. The neighbouring properties had decided to live in a rural location and the proposal would generate extra traffic leading to disruption to the rural environment.

Councillor Kerr was in agreement with Alderman Graham. He was also concerned about the laneway. He was supportive of the principal of the development and he felt it would benefit tourism.

The proposal put to the meeting and declared CARRIED, with 8 voting For, 2 Against, 3 Abstentions and 2 Absent. The vote resulted as follows:-

<u>FOR (8)</u>	<u>AGAINST (2)</u>	<u>ABSTAINED (3)</u>	<u>ABSENT (3)</u>
Aldermen	Aldermen		Alderman
McAlpine	McIlveen		McDowell
Smith	Graham		
Councillors		Councillors	Councillors
Cathcart		McClean	Smart
Harbinson		Kendall	Wray
Hennessy		Kerr	
McKee			
McCollum			
Morgan			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

4.4 LA06/2023/2476/F - Lands 93m east of 47-55 Firmount Crescent, Holywood
(Appendix V)

DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Application on land in which the Council has an interest.

Proposal: Community growing space with shed, polytunnel, fencing and associated works

Site Location: Lands 93m east of 47-55 Firmount Crescent, Holywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the application. Members should note that there was no planning history associated with the site and there were no

objections to the proposal wither from statutory consultees or the public. The application had been submitted by Holywood Shared Town which was a charity with its purpose being to forge and grow relationships between organisations and individuals in the Holywood Area. The project would follow their community development principles and already had a sizeable number of interested volunteers/participants eager to get involved.

The area would be used to grow vegetables, along with some fruit with possibly some decorative flowering plants. The principle of the community growing space was that the produce would be distributed to those local volunteers who were involved in its production. They intended to have sufficient produce to enable other members of the community to enjoy healthy, organic fruit and vegetables that are grown on site. To ensure that the area would remain as open space for community use, it had been sited to avoid any disruption of access to the forest park and to ensure that the existing paths and dog walking routes remain fully accessible.

Referring to the visual, the Head of Planning explained that the application site was located within the development limits of Holywood on the eastern edge of Redburn Country Park adjacent to the existing Council Depot and dwellings at Firmount Crescent.

The area was currently open ground made up of open grassland and scrub. The site was also located within an Area of Existing Recreation and Open Space (OS/HW/0023), Redburn Country Park (ND/CP02), Redburn Local Landscape Policy Area (HD 19), Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) (HD 13/05) and Area of Constraint on Mineral Developments (ND 08/12).

In the wider area there was residential development to the west, trees and a cemetery to the north and Redburn Country Park to the east. To provide some context, the Head of Planning displayed a series of images of the site and area. It was proposed to use an area of existing open space as a community garden, and the proposed lay out could be seen from the image.

Proposed structures included a shed and a polytunnel to be erected to the east of the existing Council Depot. A 2m high mesh fence was also proposed around the boundary of the community garden. The Head of Planning highlighted that the application was a good example of how Planning projects could enable community projects work together to achieve a worthwhile project.

The Chair invited questions from Members

Councillor Morgan felt the project was great and wondered why it had taken so long to get to this stage with the application having been received in February 2024.

The Head of Planning highlighted that Officers within Planning had left and the application had been reallocated. Even though the application was a good worthwhile project, the statutory consultees still needed to be notified, and the responses received. Furthermore, the community group had needed guidance in respect of the drawings.

Councillor Morgan viewed the processing time as excessive.

Proposed by The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

The Mayor advised that Holywood Shared Town had worked on the application diligently and the proposal had universal support in the area. She viewed it as a splendid project, and it was policy compliant.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching 5a - PAC decision 2023/A0018. The report detailed the undernoted:-

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal decision was received on 8 May 2025.

PAC Ref	2023/A0018
Council Ref	LA06/2019/0891/F
Appellant	Mrs M Mounce
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of single dwelling
Location	50m North of 43 Newtownards Road, Donaghadee

The Council refused this application on the 15 March 2023 for the following reason:

The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Planning Policy Statement 3 – Access, Movement & Parking (Policy AMP2 and AMP 3) in that it has not been demonstrated that a safe and satisfactory access arrangement to the site can be provided.

The main issue in this appeal is whether or not the proposed development would prejudice road safety.

The appeal proposal sought full planning permission for 1No. detached dwelling which would be two storeys in height. The proposed dwelling would be served by an individual driveway which would provide for a minimum 3No. in-curtilage parking spaces. This driveway leads from the existing shared drive serving the appeal site and No. 43 Newtownards Road which was accessed directly from the Newtownards Road. The Council considered that the appeal development would prejudice road safety due to insufficient visibility splays.

Policy AMP2 of PPS 3 stated that planning permission would only be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access, onto a public road where two criteria were met; firstly that such

access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic and secondly, that the proposal does not conflict with Policy AMP 3 'Access to Protected Routes'.

Given that the A48 Newtownards Road was designated as a protected route, the second criterion of Policy AMP 2 of PPS 3 was engaged. The consequential 2023/A0018 amendment to Policy AMP 3 of PPS 3 states that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal involving access onto a Protected Route in four instances, one of which is criterion (d) of the policy which states that approval may be justified in particular cases for other developments which would meet the criteria for development in the countryside and access cannot be reasonably obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved, proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the Protected Route. Similar to Policy AMP 2, Policy AMP 3 goes on to state that access arrangements must be in accordance with the Department's published guidance.

Dfl required (x) by (y) distances of 2.4m by 120m in both directions to ensure adequate site splays to facilitate drivers emerging from the shared access. Dfl state that on the ground visibility splays of 2.4m x 40m would be achievable on the nearside of the road (towards Six Road Ends) and 2.4m by 55m would be achievable on the offside of the road (towards Donaghadee). On this basis, Dfl conclude that given that the required visibility splays cannot be achieved, and as the appeal proposal would intensify an existing sub-standard access, the proposal would increase the potential of collisions and therefore would not provide a safe access at this location. The Commissioner noted that Drawing No. 05 'Sightlines' date stamped by the Council on 24th June 2020, show that sightlines to the east measuring some 2.6m x 54m and some 2.7m x 36.5m to the west are achievable. Regardless of the minor differences in measurements between the parties, both these sets of measurements confirm that the existing access is substandard.

The Commissioner concluded that the current access is substandard and requires careful driver caution on exit. Given the extent to which a vehicle has to emerge before the driver gains visibility, the intensification of the access, as proposed, would prejudice road safety for emerging vehicles, pedestrians on the footpath and drivers on the priority road. Whilst the access currently serves the existing dwelling at No.43, that is a longstanding arrangement and would not, in itself, justify the addition of a second dwelling and its associated vehicle movements.

The Commissioner considered that the existing access was substandard and it was not demonstrated that the required sightlines are achievable. He concluded that the appeal development as proposed would prejudice road safety because it would not provide a safe and satisfactory access arrangement to the site in accordance with the published guidance. For these reasons, the appeal proposal was found to be contrary to Policy AMP2 of PPS 3 when read as a whole and the related provisions of the SPPS. The Council's sole reason for refusal and the related concerns of the third party were sustained to the extent specified above.

New Appeals Lodged

2. The following three appeals were lodged between 16th April and 14th May:

PAC Ref	2025/E0006 – 29th April
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0296/CA
Appellant	Andrew Lawther
Subject of Appeal	Alleged I. Unauthorised laying of hardcore to form a level surfaced area; II. Unauthorised erection of one wooden building and eco composting facility; III. Unauthorised erection of one yurt with pier foundations; IV. Unauthorised laying of hardcore stone laneway
Location	Lands opposite 49 Holly Park Road, Killinchy, Down within forested area (wet woodlands) on eastern side of Holly Park Road, approx. 140m back from Holly Park Road and approx. 520m north of Derryboy Road

PAC Ref	2025/E0009 – 28th April
Council Ref	LA06/2023/0470/CA
Appellant	Jonathan Martin
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised laying of raised hardstanding laneway
Location	Land immediately south of 102 Comber Road, Killinchy

PAC Ref	2025/A0016 – 29th April
Council Ref	LA06/2023/2363/O
Appellant	June Butler
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of 2 dwellings
Location	Between 47 & 47A Ballyvester Road, Donaghadee

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.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report highlighting the salient information.

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

6. **Q4 SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE UPDATE** (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching report for October 2024 – March 2025.

The report detailed that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in

place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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

Reporting Approach

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

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

Key achievements:

- Further to achieving the 15- week processing time for Quarter 4 (13.8 weeks), in respect of applications in the local category of development, YTD is recorded as 16.4 weeks
- Three major applications processed between 1 October 2024 and 31 March 2025 of which one (Queen's Parade – LA06/2024/0559/F) was processed within the statutory target time of 30 weeks (33 weeks). The other 2 applications were the Comber Greenway (LA06/2019/0308/F) and Beverley Walk (LA06/2023/2248/F) This marks an improvement from the same reporting period from last year.
- The Unit processed 153 applications in the householder category of development of which 58 (38%) were processed within the internal processing target of 8 weeks, whilst 94 (61%) were issued within the statutory processing target of 15 weeks for local applications.
- Appeals – there were 5 appeals against refusal of planning permission of which 4 were dismissed and 1 was upheld. For the one upheld, (PAC ref: 2024/A0055 - 7 Glenburn Park Bangor) the site had an approval for a Certificate of Lawful Development which was a material consideration in determining whether further development was acceptable.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- Delay in publication of draft Plan Strategy – whether by outcomes of parallel Sustainability Appraisal, DFI consideration and referral for Independent

Examination (IE) and lack of resources within the Planning Appeals Commission for IE

- Managing statutory performance targets in context of stretched resources and fiscal challenges
- Work continues to be undertaken in respect of undertaking health and condition surveys on TPOs alongside appointed arboriculturist support.

Action to be taken:

- Implementation of the NI Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) – stemming from recommendations made by Public Accounts Committee in March 2022 with regard to development plan, development management and enforcement functions – working on various workstreams to address processes and legislative change

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
EC 01 PL 04 (major applications)	Lack of resource within DM Team	Active recruitment for Service area – backfilling of posts	DM Principal Officer	6 months
EC 01 PL 05 (local applications)	Delay in consultee responses	Collaborative working with statutory consultees to identify blockages in processing and how can be addressed		
	Lack of quality submissions both in consultee responses and information submitted by applicants	Implementation of validation checklist in legislation to ensure frontloading of applications		

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cathcart felt it was important to highlight the achievement of an under 15 weeks processing time for quarter 4. There was an incorrect perception that every planning application took along time to process and the inaccuracy of that information needed to be communicated to the public. A quick planning system helped grow the local economy and noted that there would be some exceptions. He viewed the figures encouraging and hoped that could continue.

The Head of Planning advised the Committee that she had recently hosted an event with the Royal Society of Ulster Architects . She had received favourable feedback from an agent as their application had been processed within 5 weeks. That was encouraging news. The categorisation for local planning applications was far too wide with a house extension in the same category as a small housing development.

Alderman McIlveen asked when the processing time commenced for applications. The Head of Planning stated that was from when the application was received and validated.

Alderman McIlveen noted the delays in getting responses from statutory consultees and therefore the figures could have been improved if those responses were received more efficiently. The Head of Planning stated that as Members were aware was an ongoing issue .

In relation to a monthly meeting being held with DfI Roads, Alderman McIlveen asked if that was streamlining the process. The Head of Planning stated that there were still issues. However, Officers could now get an informal view before a formal submission, feedback could then be given to agents before a formal submission.

Alderman McIlveen asked if DfI Roads were attending Pre-application discussions (PADs). The Head of Planning advised that DfI have stated that they had limited resources.

(Councillor Kendall withdrew from the meeting – 8.39 pm)

The Head of Planning stated that the informal approach had assisted. It was difficult to get all statutory consultees on board.

Alderman McIlveen was encouraged that once the application was received it was processed quickly however noted there was further work to be done to improve processing times.

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

7. DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE (DFI) - PUBLIC CONSULTATION- DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE
(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching draft

response from Ards and North Down Borough Council. The purpose of this report was to seek Members' agreement on the draft response (Item 7b) to the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) public consultation Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had launched a consultation on Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure seeking views on whether and, if so, how DfI should introduce developer contributions to help fund necessary improvements to our wastewater infrastructure.

When a developer in Northern Ireland wanted to build housing and wished to connect to the Northern Ireland Water network, they contacted NI Water to enquire if there was capacity in its network to cope with any new demands that the proposed development may create. NI Water could then apply their pre-planning and pre-development enquiry process to advise on any constraints or capacity issues in the area.

If there was a wastewater capacity issue in relation to a housing development, NI Water would then work with the developer to identify what works would be required to enable a wastewater connection to be made. It may be possible in certain circumstances for those works to be completed and paid for by the developer. NI Water was, however, currently precluded by law from accepting direct payments from developers for connections to the NI Water network for the provision of sewerage services for a dwelling where the required improvement involved the upgrading of an existing NI Water asset.

The consultation was seeking views on whether this position should change and, specifically, on options for DfI to introduce arrangements for developer contributions to help fund the wastewater infrastructure improvements that would release capacity in the wastewater system, thereby enabling more wastewater connections.

The consultation proposed two potential options:

- Voluntary Developer Contributions for Wastewater Infrastructure – developers could voluntarily pay to offset the costs of upgrading or replacing the wastewater infrastructure preventing new connections in the specific areas where they are unable to build.
- Compulsory Developer Wastewater Contribution Levy – introduction of a compulsory wastewater levy, requiring a financial contribution from developers which would be used on prioritised needs basis across the whole of the North of Ireland, not just in the areas where they would directly benefit.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the content of this report, consider and approve the draft response to the DfI consultation, and that the response be issued to DfI before closing date of 27 June 2025.

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the suggested response.

(Councillor Kendall re-entered the meeting – 8.42 pm)

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cathcart advised that he had held a meeting that day with a representative from NI Water and an Agent following a planning application which had which had been passed by Council. The agent had already gone to considerable expense and was no further forward regarding the matter. NIW had been unable to find capacity. At one stage, they had looked a nearby school to see if it discharged all of its wastewater into the combined network however it had been found to be discharged into a stream. Councillor Cathcart could not understand why money had been spent undertaking such investigations when such detail should be available on plans. In well-established residential areas, capacity was very limited. In terms of planning conditions, Councillor Cathcart noted this Council did not allow development to progress until approvals were received from NI Water. Belfast City Council and other Council areas allowed for construction to begin but could not be operated. In terms of discussions with developers, Councillor Cathcart asked what was preferred.

The Head of Planning stated that the issue had been recently debated at a Head of Planning meeting. Last year the Council had started to apply negative conditions and she had advised NIW that was occurring. Planning approval was only one part of the jigsaw and depending on the development other approvals were required. The negative condition was prior to commencement. Other Council's allowed to build to first floor level and that was being explored. Talks had been occurring with a representative from NI Water. Planning was also encouraging applicants to speak with NI Water before they submitted their planning application and NI Water were open to that.

Alderman McIlveen agreed in principal that something needed to be done. It could be seen from the applications coming through, that it was a crisis point. There were capacity issues across the Borough. He agreed with the response and felt it was of the right tone.

The Mayor cautiously welcomed the response however there was so little detail in the consultation itself. She was concerned how long the matter would be consulted on, there was sufficient demand and already information that could have progressed the matter.

Alderman Graham raised a question in respect of reimbursement. Referring to the suggested response, the Head of Planning stated that it had to be fair and proportional and further clarity was welcomed.

Alderman Graham wondered where the money would come for the reimbursement. The wastewater was a big problem, it was at crisis point and needed tackled by Central Government.

Councillor McKee was in favour of wider developer contributions. He referred to such applications like Item 4.1 which was considered, where it was acknowledged a pedestrian crossing was required. In such examples, if DfI had requested a pedestrian crossing could a developer contribution be asked for as part of the

application. The Head of Planning noted that Councillor McKee's question was beyond the scope of the consultation response. However, she explained that developer contributions were associated with very large-scale developments. Item 4.1 was a small example, and a private agreement may be a better approach in such examples. Planning had to consider what was in the red line along with the information in the supporting statement.

Councillor McKee asked if there was any opportunity for the Council to bring such discussions into the conversation for the betterment of an area. The Head of Planning stated that Members needed to be mindful of the limits of the Committee. With regards to future charges the appropriate legislation was required.

The Chair was sceptical of transferring too much of the burden.

Councillor Morgan referred to question 3 which referred to an upfront payment and noted for small builder that could be a big expense. She worried about such consultations and because they were so vague the detail and the consequences could not be fully understood.

Councillor Kendall referred to question 5 and welcomed the exceptions for charges being recommended around social and specialist housing to meet the need and homelessness issue. She appreciated the response and thanked the Officer's for that. A blanket scheme would not be wise. In terms of the conditions, she asked if there would be risk amending conditions to build to the first floor as that could result in houses only being half built.

The Head of Planning explained that currently an applicant had five years to commence development however there was no time set on when that was required to be finished by.

Alderman Smith was happy with the response and felt the guarded response was wise. The voluntary contribution was welcome, and developers were keen to progress that to remove barriers.

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

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9 pm and resumed at 9.11 pm.

8. DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE (DFI) - 'TRANSFORMING PLANNING - APPOINTED PERSONS, INDEPENDENT INSPECTORS PROJECT' (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching letter from DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport , Interim Director of Projects, (Planning). The report detailed that following a successful bid by DfI Planning to the Executive's Transformation Fund, the Interim Director of Projects had written to

Council Chief Executives and Heads of Planning to give an update on the project which was envisaged to have the potential to facilitate the progress of Local Development Plans, in addition to speeding up consideration of any regionally significant and called-in planning applications.

The letter highlighted how the project team for the Transforming Planning Project, itself sits out with DfI Planning directorates and would be responsible to the DfI Climate, Planning and Public Transport Group's Deputy Secretary, Judith Andrews.

The initial work of this Project Team was outlined as detailing the project plan and to establish the appropriate administrative protocols, guidance, procedures and monitoring arrangements. DfI had also sought independent experts - experienced senior persons in the fields of planning and appeal work - to act as critical friends in this Project.

The letter advised that to assist project oversight the interim Public Sector Transformation Board would also be regularly briefed and engaged with on progress.

DfI officials were reviewing project timelines and hope to be able to have the process ready before the end of this financial year.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the Council take note the report and writes to the Minister for Infrastructure to request that she undertakes an immediate review of the Local Development Plan (LDP) process as recommended by the NIAO Report 'Planning in Northern Ireland' (2022) to reduce the timescale and cost to Councils of producing their LDP to ensure that a more proportionate and effective approach is adopted. Furthermore, that we also write to all other councils seeking their support.

Alderman Smith stated that the frustrations from both Members and Officer's in relation to the LDP process had been talked about on many occasions. There was frustrations and concerns, and he felt that it was time those be put on record. He thanked Officers for their sterling work on the LDP process. As alluded to in the report a letter had been received from DfI detailing 'transforming planning'. He was concerned the letter was another incremental approach and a more fundamental review was required. There was 11 Council's trying to progress their LDPs using the same bank of bodies required for responses and Alderman Smith alluded to some of those. He recognised that a letter would be not transformational but would allow for the Council to articulate its concerns on the long, complicated, expensive process and it was time to do something about it. Progress had been glacial with the goal posts having been changed. The process and strategy from the department needed to change.

Councillor Morgan expressed her extreme frustration regarding the LDP process. The latest correspondence did not provide her with any confidence. Planning should be an enabler for new housing, industrial areas and for all the things that would like to be seen within the Borough. But with the delay and excessive process was

stopped progression and that was unsatisfactory. The issues were well known, and the Council would like its LDP progressed in a timely manner.

Alderman McIlveen expressed his frustrations regarding the matter. He noted that when the LDP's were first suggested there was target of 40 months and now 10 years had gone by, and the draft plan strategy had not even been passed. DfI had been changing the goal posts, and it was such a failure from the Department, not looking how such was run in other areas. Not one Council in Northern Ireland had fully adopted their plans.

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

9. UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS AND WORKS (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching table setting out the figures from the date of the last report to Committee.

This report presented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. This update provided information from 14 November 2024 (date of previous report) to 13 May 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

The Planning Officer (C Barker) outlined the detail of the report.

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

Alderman McIlveen referred to the report that had identified that some of the TPO's were not legal and he questioned if the Council were now at a stage where those had been reviewed, and Officers were satisfied the requirements had been met. He noted the situation along the Belfast Road, where a lot of trees had been lost, and he did want a situation like that occurring again.

The Planning Officer stated that as work was progressing, it was not just about identifying those TPO's that were not legal. In respect of the 6 TPO's that had been served those were in relation to sites which had been determined not legal. Sites had to be reviewed and assessments carried out. Officers were aware of the majority of the TPO's that were not legal and were trying to work through those to have worthy sites, that were well protected and updated health and condition surveys.

In response to a further question from Alderman McIlveen, the Planning Officer explained due to an issue with its legislation, the Council could not revoke TPO's and had to go through the Department. Some of the Council's TPO's were outdated with the oldest being from 1979. There was the aim to have updated records, that were tree specific and exclude trees that were not worthy or too close to a house.

Councillor McKee referred to works to trees at 23 Downshire Lane, for the fallen there was no mention of damage. Those TPO trees dated from before the houses were built.

The Planning Officer stated that there were detailed reports for each of the TPO's and he was happy to furnish that to Councillor McKee. She reassured the member, that when it was stated that works were required for safety reasons that decision was not taken lightly.

Councillor McKee stated that the particular trees had a local significance. He conveyed the disappointment of the residents and even with the justification he could not understand why that occurred.

The Chair agreed it was awful shame to see those trees lost and welcomed the additional detail.

Alderman McAlpine asked if there was a way of collating the information on the trees within the Borough including their species, age, lifespan etc.

The Planning Officer believed that would be a difficult task and she was unsure if it would be feasible. There were approximately 160 TPO's. Officers were hoping to get to stage where they have updated assessment for each of the sites however some of those sites may have in excess of 400 trees. Site specific there would be a health and condition survey however she noted the majority of those would be individually owned by landowners.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

10. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS (Appendix XI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:6 (a) – INFORMATION WHICH REVEALS THAT THE COUNCIL PROPOSES TO GIVE A STATUTORY PROVISION A NOTICE BY VIRTUE OF WHICH REQUIREMENTS ARE IMPOSED ON A PERSON.

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by

PC.10.06.25 PM

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virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person. It relates to the status of current Planning Enforcement cases or Summons in respect of proposed actions.

It provides updates for Members in respect of the status of live enforcement notices, court proceedings and proposed summons action.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.43 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Kendall

Alderman: Armstrong-Cotter (7.26pm)
Cummings (Zoom)
McAlpine

Councillors:	Ashe (7.03pm)	Edmund
	Blaney (Zoom, 7.05pm)	Harbinson
	Brady	Kerr (Zoom, 7.06pm)
	Cathcart (Zoom)	McLaren (Zoom)
	Douglas	Wray

Officers in Attendance: Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Assets and Property Services (P Caldwell), Interim Head of Regulatory Services (R McCracken), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

Other Officers in Attendance: Kristopher Calder (RPS) and Catherine Ferguson (RPS)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Councillor Kendall) sought apologies at this stage and noted that an apology for lateness had been received from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

NOTED.

3. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION - DONAGHADEE SEA DEFENSES (FILE 62704 / NOM 616)**

(Appendix I - II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in April 2024, the Council agreed the following Notice of Motion:

"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.

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."

An update report was presented to the Council in September 2024 providing information on works completed to date.

"Officers met with representatives from the Sailing Club and other relevant groups on 9 May and discussed a number of potential small-scale operational improvements to the harbour. Officers felt the meeting was productive and a number of low or no-cost improvements have been implemented."

To address the second part of the NoM concerning the review of the RPS report, the September update report also proposed some questions that would be put to the Consultants and form the scope of a subsequent technical report.

In November 2024 it was reported to Members that The Council had received confirmation from the Secretary of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, that the Council had been allocated the funding (£21,100) required to undertake the 'Phase 1' further investigation work as set out in the September report to Committee, from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

This report aimed to update Members on the findings of the RPS Phase 1 report and outline potential next steps.

Key Points from the RPS Report

The full report was attached at Appendix 1 for Members information; however, the key points were summarised below.

2.1. The efficacy of the offshore breakwater at protecting the town's shoreline

Given the content of the report by Donaghadee Community Development Association (DCDA) that prompted the Notice of Motion, and the nature some of the comments made at Environment Committee in relation to the need to protect homes and businesses, it was clear to officers there was a belief that the offshore breakwater (fig1) would protect the shoreline of Donaghadee. However, this was not the original design intent. Rather, its sole focus was improving tidal conditions within the Harbour itself. Therefore, it was essential that the primary focus of the review should have been in characterising the coastal flood risk to Donaghadee with a view of developing effective flood relief measures rather than be limited to refining the plan for an offshore breakwater.



Fig. 1

When considering which specific areas of shoreline that were “at risk” the RPS report referred to the “inner parade/East of Lemon’s Wharf” and “outer parade/West of Lemons wharf” so these areas were identified below and referred to throughout this report, for consistency.

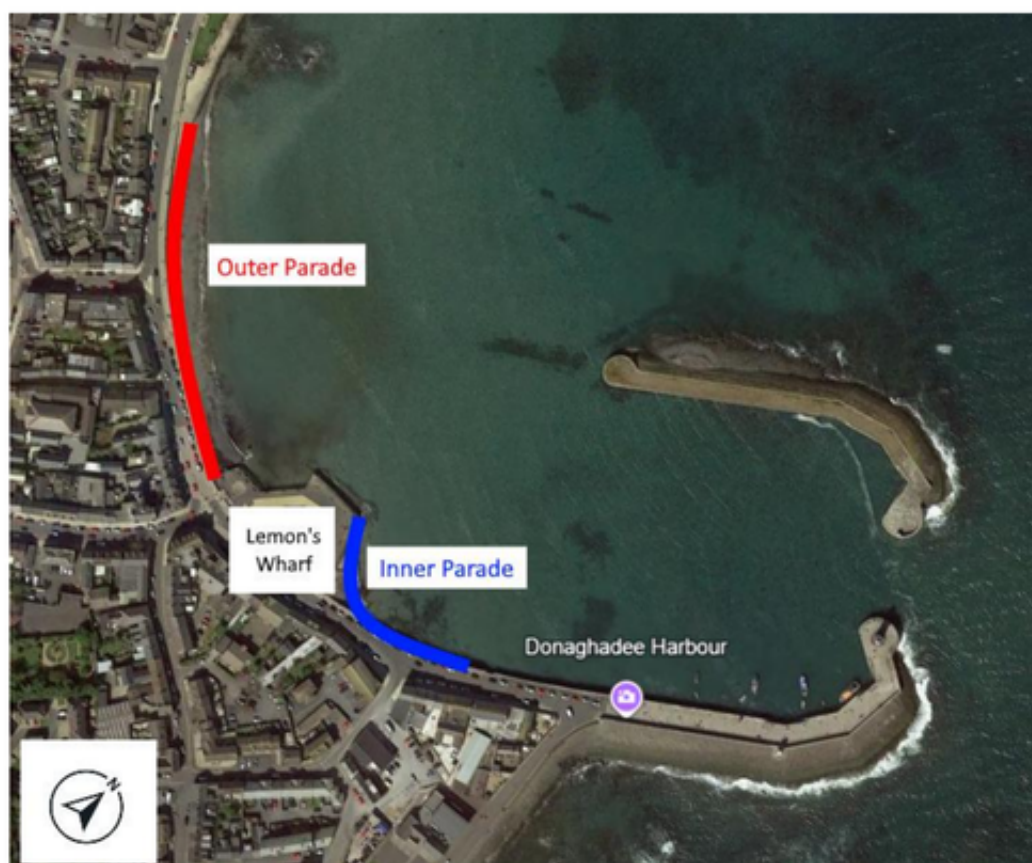


Fig 2

The limited effects of the offshore breakwater in protecting homes and businesses within the Inner and Outer parade was described on page 40 of the report, within table 5.1, excerpt below.

Element	"Inner Parade", East of Lemon's Wharf	"Outer" Parade, West of Lemon's Wharf
Offshore Breakwater only	Reduction in wave climate would likely reduce wave overtopping to within tolerable limits. No reduction in tidal inundation without modification to the coastline.	No change
Jetty Extension only	Increase in wave climate would increase wave overtopping	Slight increase in wave climate would marginally increase wave overtopping
Offshore Breakwater and Jetty Extension (Full 2015 Masterplan Scheme)	Reduction in wave climate would likely reduce wave overtopping to within tolerable limits. No reduction in tidal inundation without modification to the coastline.	

2.2 Characterising the coastal flood risk to Donaghadee

Page 59 of the report summarised the flood risk and indicates that:

- Whilst the initial harbour plan developed as part of the initial Donaghadee Harbour study (RPS, 2020) and illustrated in Figure 1 improves wave conditions within the harbour as per the study objectives, **the scheme did not reduce coastal**

flooding from tidal inundation and only partially reduced the potential of flooding caused by wave overtopping.

- **Under existing conditions, coastal flooding from tidal inundation was unlikely to be a significant issue**, with only Lemon's wharf being at risk. However, given the lack of built assets at risk here or in the surrounding area, **there was unlikely to be an economic justification for extensive flood relief measures.**
- Under **future climate conditions**, sea level rise increased the risk of coastal flooding with **many commercial and residential premises along the "Inner" Parade and half of the "Outer" Parade becoming vulnerable to tidal inundation.**
- Based on present day conditions, the risk of mean wave overtopping across all examined sections was considered "tolerable" for all sections examined during a 1 in 1 year return period event. **During a 1 in 50-year return period event, only the overtopping at some sections was considered tolerable, whilst overtopping discharge rates exceeded tolerable conditions across all sections during a 1 in 200-year return period scenario.**
- Advanced Computational Fluid Dynamic (CFD) modelling demonstrated that the maximum wave overtopping rates exceeded tolerable conditions by up to a factor of x4 across examined sections during a 1 in 200-year return period event.

Thus, whilst there was not a significant risk of coastal flooding across the study area based on present day conditions, wave overtopping during extreme events result in discharge rates which were considered unacceptable in context of pedestrians, vehicles and structures.

Having identified this risk, the next section of the report examined options to reduce wave overtopping rates during an extreme 1 in 200 return period storm event based on present day conditions, to within acceptable thresholds.

2.3 Developing effective flood relief measures

Having identified the risk associated with wave overtopping, RPS considered various coastal management measures to reduce overtopping rates to within tolerable limits. Options considered and the supporting rational for the areas to the west and east of Lemon's Wharf were summarised below:

West of Lemon's Wharf (Outer Parade):

- **Rock Armour Revetment:** The revetment structure could effectively dissipate wave energy and momentum to reduce overtopping.
- **Recurve Seawall:** Could deflect up-rushing water seawards as waves impacted the seawall. A recurve already provided effective protection for a Section of the coast further west; thus a recurve option here would effectively continue this existing defence.

East of Lemon's Wharf (Inner Parade):

- **Rock Armour Revetment:** Similar to the west, aimed at mitigating wave impacts.

- Recurve Seawall: As with the west, this could deflect waves on impact. This option required less space on the foreshore, which may have been important as the land in this area was privately owned.
- New Promenade: Proposed to enhance public access, with an additional area for public amenity, while increasing the distance from the waterfront to sensitive receptors, thereby providing additional flood protection.

Potential Solutions

Advanced modelling was again undertaken to test the effectiveness of these options at both locations for relevant conditions.

This “proof of concept” analysis found that:

- To the west of Lemon’s Wharf, both options were found to significantly reduce wave overtopping, with the rock armour solution providing a better reduction in overtopping rates. The initial design of the recurve seawall could be refined to achieve a similar level of performance. A recurve seawall would be the preferred option for this area given that it would tie in with the recently constructed scheme further west and occupy less space on the foreshore than a rock armour revetment option.



Image of existing recurve seawall at the outer Parade, west of lemons wharf, under construction in 2015, photo by Moore Concrete

- To the east of Lemon’s Wharf, both a rock revetment and recurve seawall were found to significantly reduce wave overtopping. Whilst the recurve seawall was found to be more effective, RPS identified limitations of the modelling approach which effectively assessed overtopping on a one-dimensional basis whereas the processes in this area were highly two dimensional (i.e., waves could approach from different oblique angles and result in wave focusing).

Recognising this limitation, it was RPS’s view that aside from significantly increasing the dimensions of a rock armour revetment option, the most effective solution would be to increase the extent of the existing promenade by reclaiming a localised section of the foreshore which would extend from Kelly’s Steps to Lemon’s Wharf.

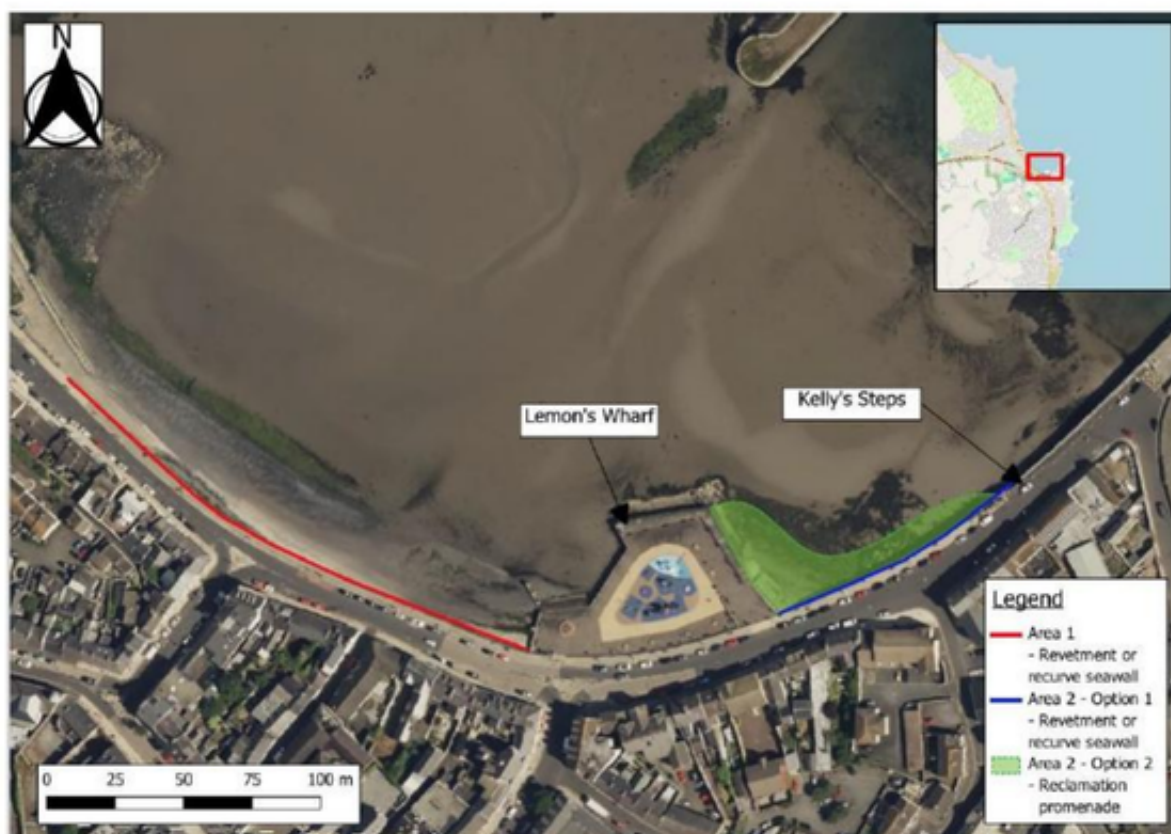
This option would increase the distance between the point of wave overtopping to vulnerable receptors, including the footpath, road and nearby buildings.



Example of oblique waves becoming “focused” and running along the existing sea defence at the inner parade, east of lemons wharf.

This area would provide enhanced recreational benefits during normal conditions and be allowed to overtop and partially flood during extreme conditions, similar to Lemon’s Wharf. In doing so, the reclaimed area / promenade feature would provide important flood mitigation to the surrounding area.

Given that this parcel of land was understood to be under private ownership, it would be critical to engage with local landowners and other relevant parties to reach an agreement on the extent of reclamation. Whilst this was beyond the scope of this study, an indicative area that could be reclaimed to achieve these objectives was illustrated in green, below.



It was noted that additional modelling would be required to refine the preferred option and to inform the engineering design and associated capital costs estimates. Preliminary estimates indicated that subject to detailed design and additional modelling, the capital costs associated with the recurve wall option to the west and the new promenade option to the east of Lemon's Wharf would equate to c. £0.5 mil and £3.5 mil respectively. Any development in either location would require consultation with relevant statutory authorities as well as marine and planning consent.

Conclusion

Officers would conclude the following points from this report:

1. The outer breakwater originally suggested in the 2020 report was intended to improve the tidal conditions within the Harbour only and would "not reduce coastal flooding from tidal inundation and only partially reduce the potential of flooding caused by wave overtopping". Therefore, with cognisance of the limited wider benefits in protecting the town's homes and businesses, there was unlikely to be an economic justification for this project.
2. There would appear to be a need arising to provide some protection to the inner parade, east of Lemons Wharf, however this would require the acquisition of land from a third party.
3. There would also appear to be a need arising to provide some protection to the outer parade, west of Lemons Wharf.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had overall responsibility for flood risk management and policy in Northern Ireland, with the Department's Rivers Agency having the following amongst its key objectives:

- reduce the number of properties currently at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea
- maintain flood defence and drainage infrastructure in a satisfactory condition

Given the conclusions of the AECOM report, of the not insignificant risk of flooding caused by wave overtopping at both the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee, it was proposed that the Council should now proceed to share these findings with the Department and lobby for the progression of enhanced coastal protection schemes along the lines of those outlined in the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure Rivers Agency, sharing the findings of the study undertaken by AECOM, and asking that enhanced coastal defence schemes be progressed for the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee. An update report to be brought back to Council within 6 months.

Mr Kristopher Calder and Ms Catherine Ferguson, of RPS, outlined the attached report to Members. Following the presentation, the Chair invited questions from the Committee.

(Councillor Ashe entered the Council Chamber (7.03pm) and Councillor Blaney and Councillor Kerr joined the meeting remotely (7.05pm))

Councillor Edmund appreciated that rock armour was the only suitable solution in some places to protect property, but he was wary that it could be detrimental to the seabed. He provided an example of the long-term impacts of that at what used to be a white sandy beach in Ballyhalbert Bay and he feared the same issue would occur at Warren Road. He wondered if the curved wall option could also go in front of the potentially reclaimed greenbelt area or if rock armour would still be required.

Mr Calder explained that in this particular location while there would be no interference with a dune system, he referred to a coastal process called beach-drawdown where the beach dropped and drew water in, so he agreed that the Member had a valid point. This was also an environmentally designated area so the detrimental effects of rock armour would need to be fully considered.

The consultant agreed that the neatest solution would be a curved sea wall to the east of Lemon's Warf. There was no need for rock armour because there would be no assets in terms of buildings or infrastructure other than the park, at risk above that sea wall.

Councillor Edmund wondered if it would be an option to extend the north breakwater to the beach and the consultant explained that whilst that would reduce wave overtopping in certain conditions it would not provide protection to the harbour itself from those storms which approached from the east and northeast. In response to a final query from Councillor Edmund, the consultant advised that the extension would make the harbour more sheltered and accessible to larger vessels but there were

environmental considerations to take into account and it had potential for disrupting the sediment transportation regime, a key factor in the area's designation.

Councillor Harbinson noted references to the Masterplan regarding the outer breakwater. He further highlighted reference to comments in the report, that 'if there was no motivation to improve wave climate in the harbour then construction of an offshore breakwater may not be the preferred solution'. Councillor Harbinson sought clarity on what was behind that motivation and if it was financial for example.

Mr Calder explained that there was an aspiration in the Masterplan to restore the harbour in terms of recreational and tourist appeal. He warned that whilst the breakwater would tick those boxes it would still not prevent the risk of coastal flooding which would continue regardless of the breakwater. He explained that that harbour configuration could also create a phenomenon known as wave resonance. Closing the harbour off would cause all of the water to move up and down without appropriate mitigation measures in place.

Councillor Harbinson sought clarity on the costs presented on pages 71 and 72 and the consultant explained that the costs on page 71 included those in relation to the initial scheme presented in 2020 in terms of harbour improvements. The costs on page 72 were exclusively for the flood protection options. He further clarified that the costs for construction of the breakwater extension alone were between £16m to £27m, also presented on page 71.

Councillor Blaney queried the projected ongoing maintenance costs and longevity for the different options and Mr Calder advised that both options could have a design life of 50 or 100 years. Maintenance of rock armour was advised to be undertaken once every ten years to re-situate stones that may have slipped or fallen. The seawall may have required maintenance due to potential damage from boulders being thrown at it from large waves, for example, which could result in cracking. Both however were relatively low maintenance options. In response to a further query around future proofing and providing a solution that was multi-generational, the consultant added that rock armour was very adaptable to climate change and further layers could be added in the future. He warned that there was never a maintenance free option however, due to the nature of what was a high energy coastal environment.

(Alderman Armstrong-Cotter entered the Council Chamber – 7.26pm)

The Chair thanked Mr Calder and Ms Ferguson for their presentation and had found it interesting but also worrying in terms of the costs required.

(Councillor Hennessy, as a non-Committee member had been granted speaking rights and was invited forward by the Chair).

Councillor Hennessy explained that having worked in Donaghadee for more than 20 years, he had a great interest in its development which was why he had requested speaking rights on this item.

He thanked officers for the work that had gone into this project to date which had included accessing £21,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which had enabled

Phase 1 investigative work to proceed, thus addressing the second part of the motion.

Thanking RPS for its work in producing a detailed study, he explained that it had however caused a great deal of frustration and some disappointment for stakeholders in Donaghadee.

He referred to Donaghadee Harbour and the aims to improve its amenities and birthing facilities and making it a generally better used asset for the town and the Borough. The second part of this was to protect Donaghadee's homes and businesses from the high tides and strong waves smashing over the harbour wall and flooding the road nearest the sea known as the Parade.

In various reports dating back to 2015, all had pointed to the construction of an outer breakwater and the creation of a pontoon birthing facility to increase the economic viability of the harbour. The protective barrier was always intended to protect the worst of the storm waves and had never been intended to protect tidal inundation.

Page 45 of the recent RPS study stated whilst the breakwater option would reduce wave overtopping it would not prevent tidal inundation. He had heard it likened to saying the Thames flood barrier in London was a great thing but it did not stop tidal inundation on the northeast coast of England. Of course that was not the intention of what it was supposed to do and neither was the intention of the offshore breakwater in Donaghadee. In June and September 2024 and January 2025, officers agreed to move away from the harbour development plan to flood relief management.

This had been to the disappointment of stakeholders in Donaghadee who had rightly felt that the goal posts had changed. They had been taken unawares that this report sidelined harbour improvements and shifted focus to effective flood measures. This was an essential government responsibility, and while it was welcomed, he felt this created a red herring by shifting people's attention away from essential harbour improvements.

In that respect he looked forward to the rest of the Council officer's report which would address the first half of the Notice of Motion. He hoped that the Committee would consider including stakeholders of Donaghadee and allow them more time to give their feedback to this report.

The Director advised that the report from several years ago had focused primarily on the conditions in Donaghadee Harbour and the proposed solution of a breakwater.

He recalled that around 18 months ago, the community had produced a report and he had also attended a public meeting where very significant concern had been raised by the community at that time in relation to the flooding along the Parade during storm events. The point made at the time was that this breakwater may not have any impact on such very loudly voiced concerns by the community. That had led to the commissioning of this study and the brief for this was to look at the issue. He did not want Members to feel that there had been any attempt to introduce a red herring and deflect from any information in the original report because there were two very distinct issues of concern in Donaghadee. Officers had been very

concerned that there had been a lobby to find ways of progressing with a breakwater when there was expert evidence that showed that progressing with that would have little or no effect in terms of the conditions along the Parade in Donaghadee. He felt that from the first report to this one, there was now a much fuller picture of the different problems in Donaghadee in relation to the Harbour and the conditions along the Parade. The report also included revised costings for the originally identified breakwater works.

The Chair sought a proposer for the officer's recommendation and Councillor Harbinson rose to make the following alternative proposal:

That the Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure Rivers Agency, sharing the findings of the study undertaken by AECOM, and asking that enhanced coastal defence schemes be progressed for the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee. Further, it is recommended that Council officers make meaningful engagement with local stakeholders and incorporate their responses in an update report to be brought back to Council within 6 months.

It was seconded by Councillor Edmund.

The proposer acknowledged that this was not the old switcheroo and that there were legitimate concerns around storm surges and overtopping. He appreciated the outreach so far to local stakeholders and he believed that should continue earnestly to improve the asset for locals and the Borough and was beneficial to all, and ensuring it had buy-in would mean this amenity was there for decades to come.

The seconder, Councillor Edmund asked if a health and safety assessment had been undertaken and the Head of Assets and Property Services explained that there had not been one undertaken to date and at this stage it was only a concept design.

Councillor Wray was happy with the proposal and said it was something he felt strongly about as a member of the Northern Ireland Drainage Council and the Ards Peninsula Coastal Erosion Group. He had shared Councillor Edmund's concerns in terms of the rock armour option and if that simply moved the problem on.

In addition to what was being proposed, he felt that when Council was talking to the DfI Rivers Agency it should ask for the reestablishment of the NI Coastal Forum. He understood that this Forum would potentially be meeting but it was not yet decided on which Government Department was going to lead on that. That would not be decided in this mandate. He could not understand why that could not be decided before then and he would be discussing bringing this to the full Council after discussions with his colleagues.

The Director clarified that the DfI was the statutory body in relation to flooding both from sea and rivers. Coastal erosion was a separate albeit related issue, and the long running issue was that there was no statutorily designated lead Department for that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Council writes to the Department for

Infrastructure Rivers Agency, sharing the findings of the study undertaken by AECOM, and asking that enhanced coastal defence schemes be progressed for the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee. Further, it is recommended that Council officers make meaningful engagement with local stakeholders and incorporate their responses in an update report to be brought back to Council within 6 months.

4. STREET NAMING – QUARRY MEWS (FILE Fp/2025/0677/MAST / 91200)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a development comprising 22 dwellings was currently under construction on lands at North Road and Quarry Heights, Newtownards.

The developer had requested the name Quarry Mews, which was in keeping with the general neighbourhood and the new development would be accessed off the existing street, Quarry Heights. Three of the houses were accessed directly off North Road, and would be allocated North Road addresses, with the remaining 19 houses accessed from the new street, Quarry Mews.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the street name of Quarry Mews for this development.

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

5. STREET NAMING – PRIORY GATE, HOLYWOOD (FILE FP/2022/1807/MAST / 91200)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a development comprising 11 apartments and 4 townhouses was currently under construction on lands at 2 Priory Park, Hollywood

The developer had requested the name Priory Gate, which was in keeping with the general neighbourhood due to the new development being accessed from the existing street, Priory Park, and the neighbouring street serving existing apartments was named Priory Manor.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the street name of Priory Gate for this development.

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

6. **FLY-TIPPING STATUTORY ENFORCEMENT PROVISION** **(FILE 92016)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that further to a report to Council on 16 January 2023 regarding the revision of fly-tipping statutory enforcement provisions.

Officers had powers under Article 4 of Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 to enforce against Unauthorised or Harmful Deposit, Treatment or Disposal, of Waste Offences with a fixed penalty fine of £400 and it had been approved for a discounted fee for payment within 14 days to be set at £300 (discounted). This was approved in January 2023.

Officers also had powers under Article 5 of Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 to enforce offences relating to 'Duty of Care' with a fixed penalty fine of £300. To promote the payment of fixed penalty fines, without recourse to court proceedings for relevant offences, it was recommended that the discounted fee for payment within 14 days be set at £225 (a 25% reduction in line with other fixed penalty discounts).

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Fixed Penalty amount for Article 5 offences 'Duty of Care' to be set at £300 (full) and £225 (discounted) in line with other fixed penalty discounts.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted.

Through a line of questioning to the Interim Head of Regulatory Services, Councillor Cathcart was able to establish that the current fixed penalty was set at £300 but there had been a change to the legislation which allowed a discounting to £225. That was in line with other fixed penalty notices which encouraged the payment of a higher number of penalties, avoiding the necessity for court proceedings.

The offence of littering was generally deemed to involve a handful of waste whereas fly-tipping was a larger amount such as the content of a boot of a car. Larger amounts of fly-tipped waste such a lorry load would be something that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency would be involved with in terms of investigation and enforcement. There was no variation in the fixed penalty fine that could be issued in relation to the scale of fly-tipped waste.

The Director referred to the relevant legislation and the protocol between Council and NIEA in terms of enforcement depending upon the scale of fly-tipping and explained how that was used to determine which agency proceeded with enforcement. Previously the Council could only issue littering fixed penalties of £80 even in situations where the scale of waste illegally deposited was larger, but the legislation now enabled a higher more proportionate penalty for fly-tipping offences as an alternative to prosecutions through the Court system.

The seconder, Councillor Ashe, praised the Council's Neighbourhood Environment Team which had responded efficiently to fly-tipping incidents in Comber which she had reported, and she felt it right that there were provisions and deterrents in place to prevent the offence.

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

7. GRANT/VARIATION OF AN ENTERTAINMENTS LICENCE (FILE 90101)

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

1. Picnic in the Park, Ward Park Bandstand, Hamilton Road, Bangor

Applicant: Keiran Gilmore, Open House Festival, 16 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED

Days and Hours: Sunday afternoons 3pm – 5pm from Sunday 6th July until Sunday 31st August 2025 inclusive

Type of entertainment: Outdoor musical entertainment

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

Applications had been received for the Variation of an Entertainments Licence as follows:

1. The Ranch, 95 Green Road, Bangor, BT19 7QA

Change of Licensee to: John Hamilton, 523 Ballycrochan Road, Bangor, BT19 7PY

There had been no other changes to the licence proposed.

2. Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club, Seafront Road, Holywood, BT18 0BB

Change of Licensee to: Alanna Thallon, 5 Broomhill Park, Bangor, BT20 5QZ

There had been no other changes to the licence proposed.

3. Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club Marquee, Seafront Road, Holywood, BT18 0BB

Change of Licensee to: Alanna Thallon, 5 Broomhill Park, Bangor, BT20 5QZ

There had been no other changes to the licence proposed.

4. Donaghadee Golf Club, 84 Warren Road, Donaghadee, BT21 0PQ

Change of Licensee to: Barry Davison, 6 Seahill, Donaghadee, BT21 0SH

There had been no other changes to the licence proposed.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants an Entertainments Licence to Picnic in the Park, subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services, and grants variations of Entertainments Licences as per this report.

The Chair advised that under the Council's Scheme of Delegation this item was delegated to this Committee for approval.

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

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the recommendation for what was a lovely event and he hoped that it would be able to enjoy good weather.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, Q3 OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024 (FILE 53042)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the official waste management statistics for the third quarter of 2024/2025 (October to December 2024) had been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The aim of this report was to:

1. Report key quarterly waste management performance statistics relative to the same period last year (found in part 1 of the report) and to our baseline comparator year of 2021-22 (found in the KPI section of part 2 of the report), and
2. Provide some detail around operational waste service management activities/actions that had been implemented during the quarter with the aim of improving performance.

In summary, key indicators had remained positive for this reporting period. However, whilst our HRC recycling performance had steadily improved year on year, the same pattern had not occurred with kerbside services – which, unlike our HRC service, had not been subject to service model reform over the past few years.

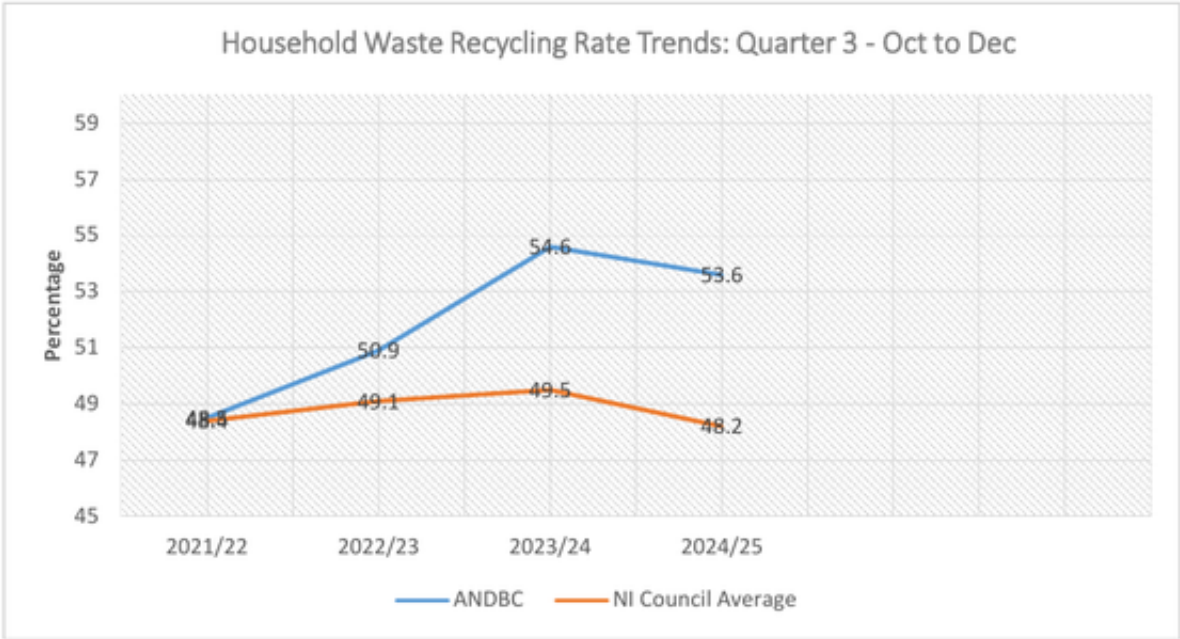
1.0 Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics – October to December 2024

Summary Table of Key Changes Q3 2024-25 v Q3 2023-24

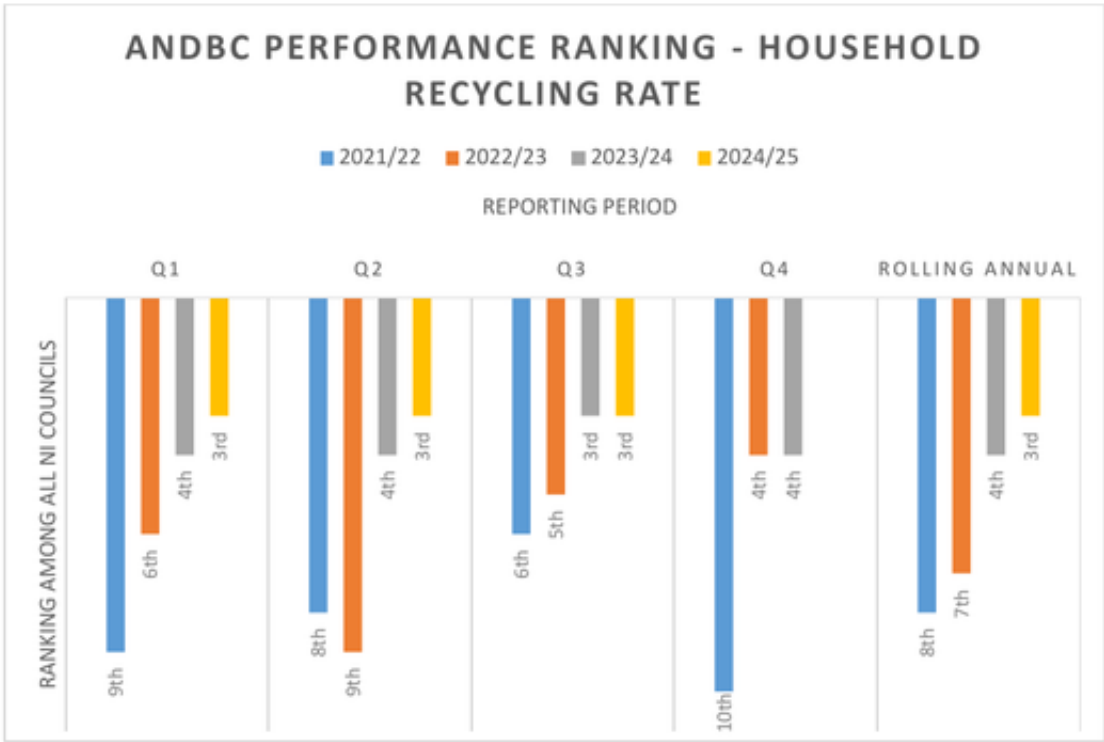
	2023-24	2024-25	Change
Household Waste Recycling Rate	54.6%	53.6%	↓ 1%
Recycling Rate Ranking	3rd	3rd	→ Same
Composting Rate	30.9%	30%	↓ 0.9%
Dry Recycling Rate	23.3%	23.3%	→ Same
Total HRC Waste	4509T	4555T	↑ 1%
HRC Residual/Landfill Waste Received	1376T	1245T	↓ 9.5%
HRC Recycling Waste Received	3133T	3310T	↑ 5.6%
Proportion of HRC Waste Received for Recycling	69.5%	72.7%	↑ 3.2%
Total Kerbside Waste	12940T	13571T	↑ 4.9%
Kerbside Residual Waste Received	5346T	5762T	↑ 7.8%
Kerbside Recycling Waste Received	7594T	7809T	↑ 2.8%
Proportion of Kerbside Waste Received for Recycling	59%	57.5%	↓ 1.5%

The significant headlines contained within the latest DAERA report showed that:

- i. Our household waste recycling rate **decreased** slightly by 1% compared to Q3 last year, from 54.6% to 53.6%, although this was less than the average fall across all Councils of 1.3%.

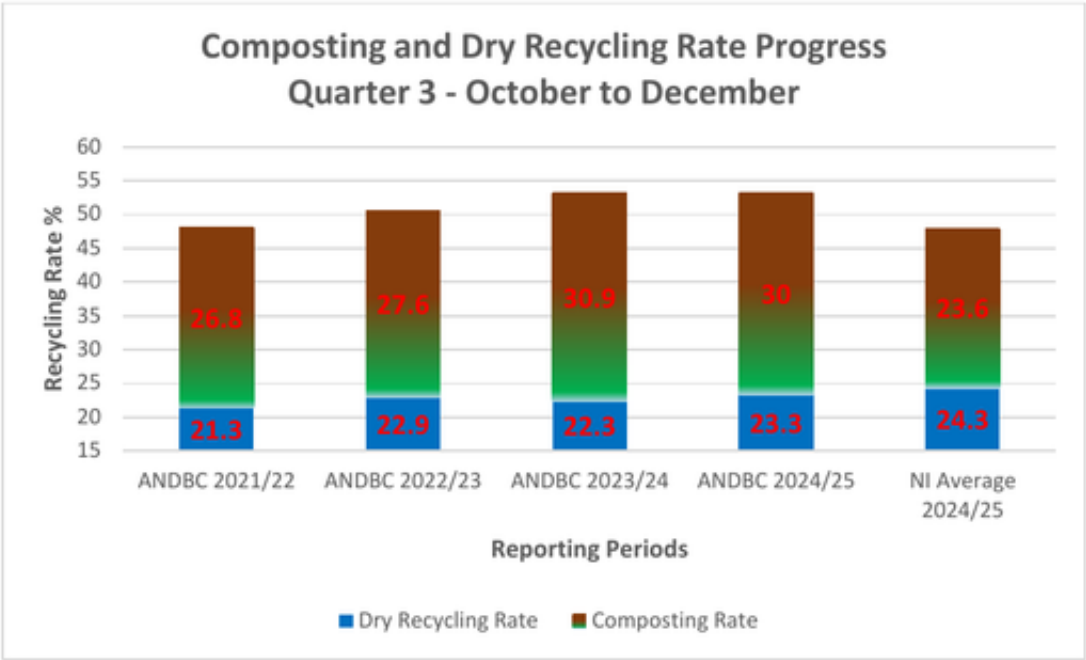


- ii. Our household waste recycling rate of 53.6%, was 5.4% **higher** than the NI average of 48.2%.
- iii. We were ranked **third** out of the eleven NI Councils for our household waste recycling rate, the same ranking as the previous year.



- iv. Our household waste composting rate **fell** slightly by 0.9% - from 30.9% to 30. Our household waste dry recycling rate remained the **same**, at 23.3%.

- v. Our household waste composting rate of 30% was 6.4% **higher** than the NI average of 23.6%.
- vi. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 23.3% was 1% **lower** than the N.I. average of 24.3%.

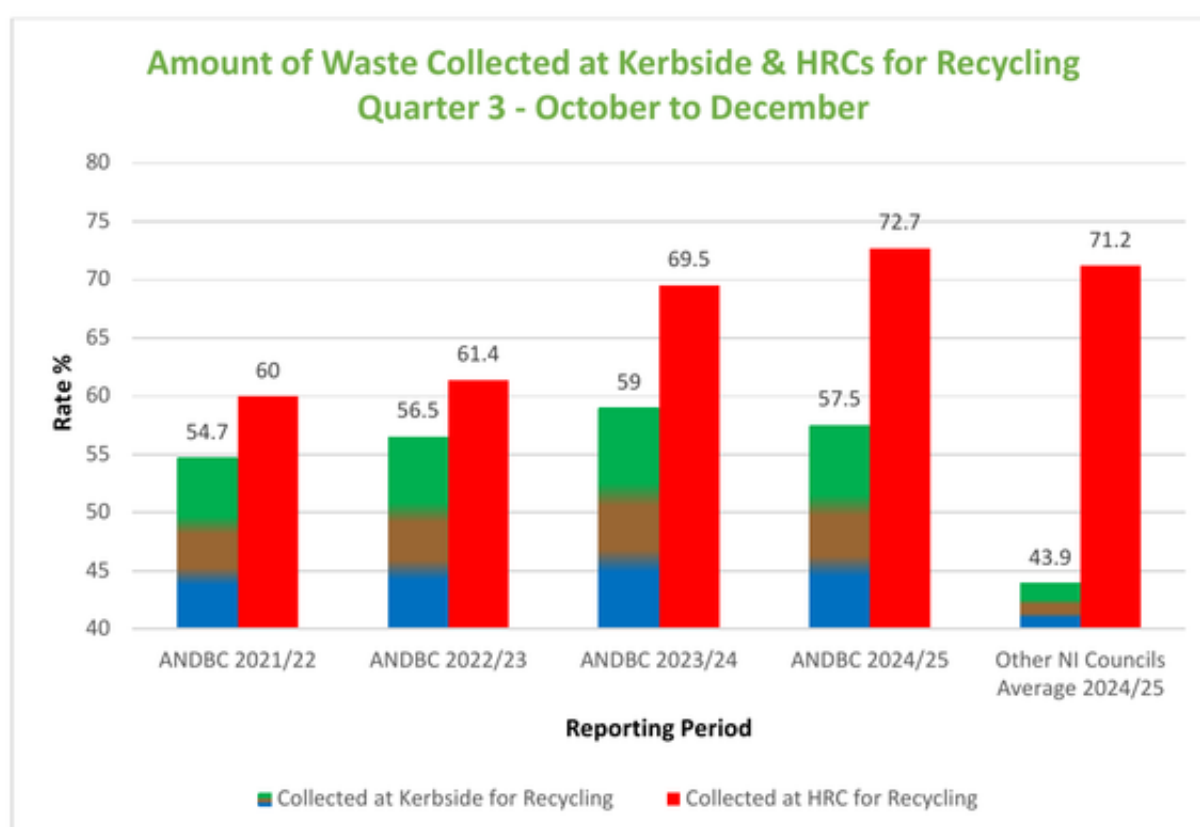


- vii. Our kerbside recycling capture rate of 73.3% for household compostable waste materials compared to a NI Council average of 62%.
- viii. Our **lowest** kerbside capture rate for recyclable materials was for mixed plastics, at 24.6%.

Kerbside Capture Rate for Recyclable Waste Types – October to December		
Recyclable Material	Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %	NI Average Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %
Glass	63.7	48.8
Paper & Card	63.8	52.8
Mixed Metals	37	31.6
Mixed Plastics	24.6	23
Organic/Compostables	73.7	62

- ix. We ranked 8th in the Council performance table for 'dry' recycling rate and 3rd for composting rate.

- x. We received 10.6% **less** total waste per capita at our HRCs compared to the average for other NI Councils.
- xi. We received 15.6% **less** residual/landfill waste per capita at our HRCs compared to the average for other Councils.
- xii. The proportion of waste collected at our HRC sites for recycling was **higher** than the average for other Councils – 72.7%, compared to an average rate of 71.2% for other Councils.
- xiii. We collected 7.3% **more** waste per capita from homes through our kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils.
- xiv. The proportion of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside bin collection system was significantly **higher** than the average for other Councils – 57.5%, compared to an average of 43.9% for other Councils.



2.0 Operational Performance Improvement Measures

2.1 Marketing and Communications Indicators

MC1 – 53 social media posts were issued, with associated engagement/management of feedback across Waste and Recycling on ANDBC corporate channels. Topics included Recycling Week, International E-Waste Day, Holiday Bin Collection dates, Christmas Recycling, Service messages and competitions.

EC 11.06.2025 PM

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1 x press release issued (22/10/24) [Council Accepts Used Vapes at all Household Recycling Centres - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)



MC2 – 9 Bin-Ovation 'News and Info' articles were published, 10 Bin-ovation 'Push Notifications' issued and 2781 Bin-ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered 13 community and engagement events, talking to over 580 people.

- 5 x Schools/Nursery's
- 1 x Positive Ageing Roadshow
- 1 x Information stall
- 3 x Scout/Brownie groups
- 3 x Other

2.2 Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC1 – Volume of blue bin recyclable materials separated from mixed waste by residents on-site: 800,300 litres.



This equated to approximately 33 tons of blue bin waste; whilst this was a relatively modest weight of material, it represented a very large/visible volume of recyclable waste extracted from bags of mixed waste which was initially intended to be placed landfill skips at HRCs. A collateral benefit of this practice of requiring removal of blue bin recyclables from black bags of mixed waste before using the landfill skip was that it should help to 'educate' householders - promoting more efficient separation of waste in the home and greater use of blue bins at the kerbside.

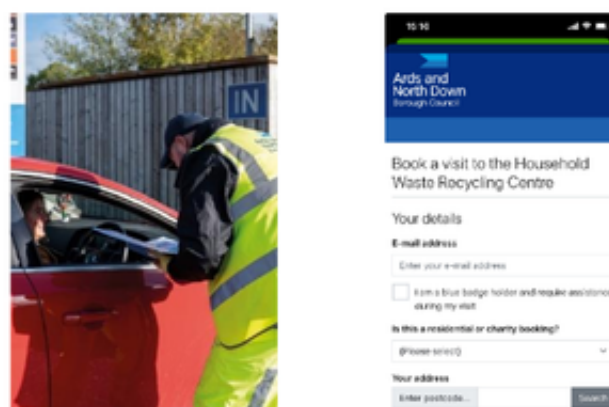
This represented just one type of recyclable waste category which was prevented from entering landfill skips at HRCs as a consequence of our more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access; many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips as reflected in KPI, HRC3.

HRC2 – Number of visitors turned away from site: 800

This was a significant number in itself, but it was likely to be the case that a significant number of out of Borough residents would have avoided coming to our sites because of the widely publicised focus upon checking ID for everyone entering and those turned away would in all probability avoid further attempts to enter and use our HRCs; the impact of this will also be reflected in HRC3 and other KPIs.

HRC2a – Number of HRC bookings: 70,843

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 0.99 (averaged across the 71,907 households in the Borough)



HRC3 – % change in tonnage of total waste received at HRCs (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **33.7% decrease** in the total amount of waste received at HRCs, from 6875T to 4555T.

HRC4 - % change in tonnage of waste received for landfill at HRCs (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **54.3% decrease** in the amount of waste received for landfill at our HRCs, down from 2727T to 1245T.

HRC5 - % change in tonnage of waste received for recycling at HRCs (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **20.2% decrease** in the amount of waste received for recycling at our HRCs, down from 4148T to 3310T.

HRC6 - % change in proportion of HRC waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **12.7% increase** in the proportion of all waste received at HRCs which was collected for recycling, up from 60% to 72.7%.

2.3 Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators



KS1 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 2187

KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 154

KS3 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 76

KS4 – % change in tonnage of total waste collected at kerbside (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **3.7% increase** in the total amount collected at the kerbside, up from 13,085T to 13,571T.

KS5 - % change in tonnage of grey bin waste collected at kerbside for landfill (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **2.9% decrease** in the amount of grey bin waste collected, down from 5934T to 5762T.

KS6 - % change in tonnage of waste collected at kerbside for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **9.2% increase** in the amount of waste collected at kerbside for recycling, up from 7151T to 7809T.

KS7 – % change in proportion of kerbside waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **2.8% increase** in the proportion of kerbside waste that was collected for recycling, up from 54.7% to 57.5%.

2.4 Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 7 (July 2024 – September 2024)	Monitoring Period 8 (October 2024 – December 2024)
MC1 Social media posts	20	
MC2 Print press and online articles	3	
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	12	13
HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres)	640,660	800,300
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	844	800
HRC2a No. of bookings	85,381	70,843
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	1.19	0.99
HRC3 Total HRC waste compared to same period 2021/22	31% Decrease	
HRC4 Landfill skip waste compared to same period 2021/22	52% Decrease	
HRC5 Recycling skip waste compared to same period 2021/22	19% Decrease	

HRC6 Proportion of HRC waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	10.8% Increase	
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	2837	2187
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	224	154
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	112	76
KS4 Total kerbside waste compared to 2021/22	No change	
KS5 Grey bin waste compared to 2021/22	12% Decrease	
KS6 Kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	10% Increase	
KS7 Proportion of kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	4.8% Increase	

2.5 Summary Analysis of Indicators

This report confirmed continued improvement in our sustainable waste resource management performance. Following the changes to our waste service model design and the associated education and engagement campaigns, we were experiencing sustained falls in the amount of landfilled waste as well as improved recycling rates relative to the position in our 2021/22 baseline year. During this reporting period, we experienced:

1. Sustained falls in the total amount of landfill waste both at HRCs and kerbside. In total, we received/collected 1,654 tons less of landfill waste at kerbside and HRCs over the 3-month reporting period compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22; at prevailing residual waste disposal cost, **this represented a £191,748 landfill saving (plus other handling and transport cost savings).**

2. Falls in the total amount of waste collected at both HRCs and kerbside. In total our municipal waste arisings **fell by 9.6%** compared to the same period in 2021/22; across other Councils waste arisings fell by just **3.8%**.
3. A significant further rise in our recycling rate at HRCs; the percentage of materials collected for recycling at our HRCs rose by **12.7%** compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22. **Our overall Borough household waste recycling rate was 5.1% higher than the same period in 2021/22.**

Whilst the information set out in this report was very encouraging indeed and reflected a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of our waste and recycling teams, we undoubtedly had much further progress to make if we were to have any chance of ultimately reaching the 70% recycling target for 2030 that was laid down in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Continued bedding in and ongoing careful management of the new booking system for HRC access, the ongoing review of our kerbside collections model and a future strategic review of our HRC capital assets, would be critical.

It was important to reiterate that further 'step change', sustained improvements in both our HRC and kerbside recycling rates would be required to move us towards the new 70% target.

The graphic at the top of page 3 (Household Waste Recycling Rate Trends) of this report illustrated that whilst we had achieved a significant and steadily growing improvement in our HRC recycling rate over the past 3 years, we had not seen the same pattern in relation to our kerbside recycling rate. This was indicative of the fact that whilst we had developed and implemented a service transformation programme for our HRCs, we had not yet progressed with the implementation of a new kerbside waste collections model.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Wray welcomed an encouraging report which showed that recycling was higher and the amount of waste going to landfill was reducing which had financial benefits for the ratepayer. While HRC trends were positive, kerbside recycling had not had the same success and he felt that education was important in order to bring improvement along with the kerbside waste collections model progressing.

Despite the upward trend, Councillor Wray was always aware of the 70% target deriving from the Climate Act, so it was important for Council to remember that goal.

He recognised that improvements had been made by Council and residents, who had made sacrifices and acted responsibly when it came to their waste management. He asked the Director how he felt, from his own feedback from other Boroughs in Northern Ireland, how realistic achievement of the 70% recycling target by 2030 was.

The Director noted the provisional 2024/25 year end figure was likely to be around 56%, and the Council had set sustainable waste resource management as a strategic priority back in 2015. Over the years a range of changes had been agreed for its kerbside collections and at HRCs.

The public had engaged really well and in relative terms this Borough had seen the largest improvement in recycling rates across Northern Ireland since 2015. He believed that it was possible to improve by another 14% towards the 70% target, pointing to the awaited publication of DAERA's response to the consultation on kerbside recycling collection models. Council had remodelled its kerbside recycling to a degree over past years, and that had yielded good returns well above the Northern Ireland average for kerbside recycling rates. However, he referred to estimates that the grey bin on average still contained 60% of recyclable materials and if that tonnage was transferred across to recycling containers instead, that would have a massive impact on our Borough recycling rate. The kerbside system still required further redesign, as the current allocation of different types of bin space to residents was not proportionate to the scale of recyclable material now generated in homes. That had been the thrust of the DAERA consultation which aligned with the findings of the Council's own recent review. He hoped that the Department's consultation response would be published soon, to allow Council to recommence and finalise its own kerbside waste collections review.

Councillor Harbinson welcomed the year-on-year progress and looked forward to seeing the next set of statistics.

The Chair, Councillor Kendall, felt that the report showed that residents were doing well at recycling but she felt a significant difference could be made if producers were more responsible in the packaging they used. She wondered if there was any way the Council could hold them to account and asked them to be more responsible.

The Director referred to the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme and recalled that for many years those involved in waste management had called for producers to take a more responsible approach. There were now financial incentives in place for producers because the more landfill waste they produced the more they were required to remunerate Councils for treating it. This was to help compensate the ratepayer for the cost of having to deal with that waste. He felt this mechanism should help the end user and would ultimately lead to less and more recyclable packaging being placed on the market.

Councillor Cathcart felt it was clear that DAERA needed to provide direction on this, to allow Council to make an informed decision on separation of materials. He also noted the 70% recycling rate imposed by Stormont and it now needed to provide Councils with the correct resources to achieve that. He wondered if the Director had received any indication of a timeframe in relation to a decision from DAERA and any likely funding.

The Director explained that a response had been expected from DAERA for eight months and now officers were lobbying DAERA for a decision. He explained it would have been preferable to have a response from DAERA before the Council further progressed its own kerbside waste collections review. He noted that other Councils'

current kerbside waste collections models were in some cases very different to the proposals set out in the DAERA consultation, and any required change would therefore cause great upheaval compared to the case for Ards and North Down.

(Councillor Kerr left the meeting – 8pm)

There was a fund administered by DAERA to improve recycling rates and it was understood that there was still money available in this to apply for, but it was unclear on what the future of that scheme would be or if the funding would be increased in the event of DAERA requiring remodelled collections systems. Council would be lobbying for that increase however, to support any changes that were required.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services explained that an announcement by the Chancellor referred to the funding that Councils would receive from the packaging waste producers and suggested that the money would be used to improve recycling rates. That could affect future DAERA funding.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had initially welcomed that announcement but had found the officer's interpretation of the potential impacts concerning. In terms of businesses, she noted that there were local companies taking strides in relation to packaging and she pointed to the use of biodegradable peanuts as a good example. There were small companies taking that approach at their own greater expense and Council needed to be aware and recognise that.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also pointed to the benefits of engagement and education and recalled a positive experience when recycling officers engaged with young people at her church. That education though needed to be in tandem with the suppliers to encourage them to avoid using non sustainable packaging. She wondered if there could be a way Council could reach out to those businesses using a sensitive approach to engagement, but she appreciated that was a huge though worthwhile piece of work.

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

9. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING 2025 (FILE 65281)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware of a number of proposals in relation to Christmas lighting/trees in 2025, and this report provided a brief progress update to Members on these.

Bangor Lighting

As per the NoM agreed in April 2025, officers had been tasked with investigating the feasibility of festoon lighting, crossing the road at high level, along Main Street, Bangor. Officers had been liaising with DfI representatives and were currently working through the requirements to apply for necessary DfI approval. Once these set of requirements had been confirmed, officers would prepare a short list of potential lighting options and present them to the City Advisory Group for a decision

based on their preference. At this stage however, it was important to note that final approval of an application to DfI was not guaranteed.

Newtownards Artificial Tree

A sum of £20k for an artificial tree for Conway Square was included in budgets as part of the rates setting process. Officers had approached our tendered supplier for a quote and a visual representation of the selected tree was included below. The Newtownards Chamber of Trade had been consulted on this proposal and was very supportive of it.



Costs/Specification for this tree are:

- 9.3m Artificial Christmas Tree (Dressed); came built in sections with lights and baubles pre-installed: £13,950
- Tree topper: £600
- Installation & Removal: £2,000

Total cost £16,550*.

* Note that the installation and removal cost was an annual cost that needed to be budgeted for in future years.

It should also have been noted that the same budget had been included in the 2026 capital plan for a replacement artificial tree for Bangor.

Other Borough Towns

Officers had already begun planning trips to a number of forests in the hope of securing better quality trees for this year. Each year it became more difficult to source trees of appropriate size and quality, but by booking early the chances were maximised.

Furthermore, as part of the agreed Notice of Motion relating to lighting enhancements for High Street, Bangor, officers would be working to establish any learning points from the Bangor pilot scheme and would meet with the various Town Advisory Groups (TAGS) to establish potential for improvements in their locations in time for Christmas 2026. Budgets to cater for such enhanced schemes would be proposed as part of the 2026/27 estimates process.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above proposals in relation to the Christmas Lighting planning process.

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

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the progress in relation to the Notice of Motion regarding Bangor lighting.

He asked when the discussions with DfI were expected to conclude, noting that Bangor City Advisory Group was due to meet the following week and the matter was not included on its agenda for that meeting.

The Head of Assets and Property Services advised that officers had met with DfI representatives the previous week to gain an understanding of what information was required for the Department to process an application. The next step was to get a structural engineer to provide calculations on wind load and weight. Once that was completed then officers would produce a shortlist of options which would be brought to the City Advisory Group.

Councillor Cathcart raised a further query around the quality of Christmas trees and asked how confident officers were in obtaining a better standard of tree this year. The Head of Assets and Property Services advised that officers would be looking to reserve trees within the next month and hoped that they would be of an improved standard this year.

Councillor Edmund asked for further details on the appearance of the artificial tree proposed for Conway Square, Newtownards, and how that compared with the artificial tree that had been used in Bangor for many years. The officer understood it would be similar to the tree used in Bangor with some improvements to the design to aid better transport, installation and storage.

He clarified that officers had consulted only with the Chamber of Trade but had not felt it necessary or practical, given the timescale, to consult with the wider public.

Alderman Cummings queried the timeframe for consultation with the TAG's around replacement lighting planned for 2026, querying if officers would need to take the forthcoming year's rate setting process into account. The officer advised that an amount based on previous costs of replacement lights plus inflationary increases, would be included in the estimates process for 2026/27.

In a further comment, Alderman Cummings hoped that officers could at least put a concept design forward at this stage.

Particularly in relation to Comber, Councillor Douglas welcomed that officers planned to acquire trees at this early stage in order to maximise a more positive outcome for the other towns in the Borough.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had consulted some retailers over the proposal for an artificial tree and reported that there was a preference for a real tree. She understood the challenges of sourcing quality large trees though and recalled the negative public response to the real tree that was used last year. She was therefore torn on the issue but warned that if the artificial tree did not meet expectations this year, then she would call for the return of a real tree.

Alderman McAlpine queried the lifespan, durability and value for money of the artificial tree used in Bangor. She also asked if artificial trees could be recycled at the end of their life. The officer understood that the Bangor tree had been purchased eight years ago and was now approaching the end of its life having undergone repairs when it was used last year. He said that there were lessons that had been learned in terms of storage, installation and dismantling challenges of the tree. That learning would be taken forward in future procurement processes. The artificial tree was largely constructed from metal and the majority would be recycled.

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

10. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE, Q4 2024-25 (FILE 50002)

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in June 2024 the Council agreed the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan. One of the actions within the Plan was to "Improve governance arrangements to ensure that energy management has effective oversight and accountability within the Council."

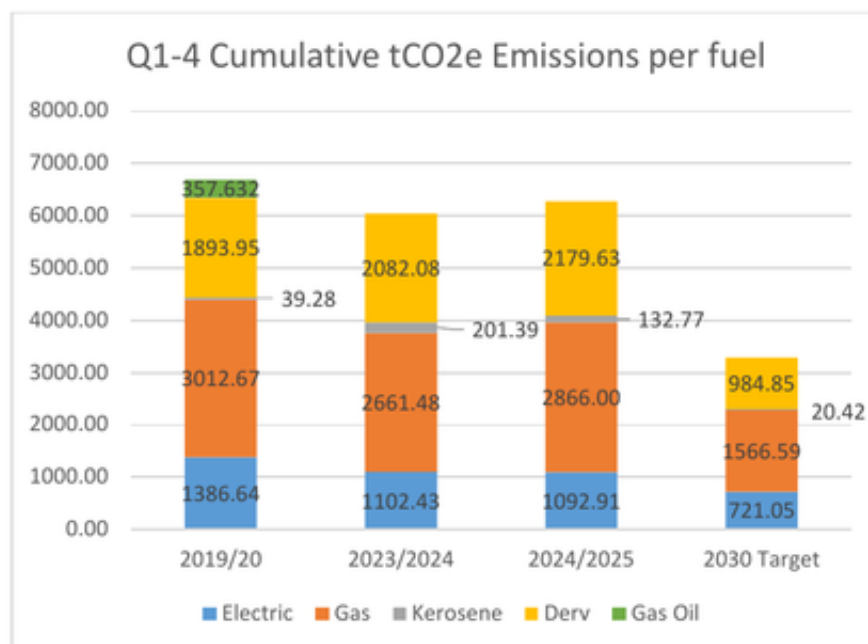
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management would ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan would be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance would improve energy performance by ensuring actions were effectively implemented and consumption trends routinely monitored, which should have resulted in reduced consumption, costs, and emissions.

Reporting Periods

This report was part of our ongoing quarterly series, tracking energy consumption against our 2019/20 baseline and highlighting current and upcoming energy-saving initiatives.

Period:	Reported in:
Quarter 1: April to June	September
Quarter 2: July to September	December
Quarter 3: October to December	March
Quarter 4: January to March	June

Energy Consumption for this Period



Electricity

As shown in the graph above, electricity consumption has continued to trend downwards, with a cumulative reduction of 21.2% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 293.72 tCO₂ emissions reduction compared to our 2019/2020 baseline year.

This progress reflected our ongoing efforts to improve energy efficiency, including the phased replacement of older equipment with modern, energy-efficient alternatives and promoting energy-conscious behaviours among staff.

Q4 also showed a notable reduction compared to the baseline year. We aimed to build on this momentum by implementing further energy-saving measures and continuing to raise awareness among both new and existing staff about the importance of energy conservation in helping us meet our 2030 emissions reduction target.

Natural Gas

Natural gas consumption had seen a cumulative reduction of 5% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 146.67 tCO₂ emissions reduction compared to our 2019/2020 baseline year.

This improvement was largely due to ongoing optimisation efforts, including the review and adjustment of boiler time controls and temperature settings. Additionally, we had been assessing and fine-tuning the Building Management System (BMS) controls and parameters in selected buildings to enhance efficiency.

Kerosene

Kerosene oil stocks were typically procured at the end of Q4 each year in preparation for increased demand during the spring season. This advance stocking ensured adequate supply when usage rose. However, we suspected that kerosene oil stocks ahead of the 2019/20 spring season were not procured as usual, likely due to disruptions caused by the pandemic. These may have included supply chain issues, reduced operational capacity, or shifts in demand forecasting, leading to a shortfall in expected inventories.

Our analysis showed that kerosene consumption had seen a cumulative reduction of 41% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 68.62 tCO₂ emissions reduction compared to 2023/24. This improvement followed the installation of more efficient boilers and upgraded heating controls.

Our kerosene stock data however showed an apparent increase in kerosene purchased during the past year, compared to the baseline 2019/20 year, for the reasons outlined above.

Diesel

Carbon emissions figures for gas oil (red diesel) used in small plant and Derv (diesel) used in the road fleet have been combined to provide a cumulative total for 2019/20 diesel emission, in line with the 2022 reform on red diesel usage.

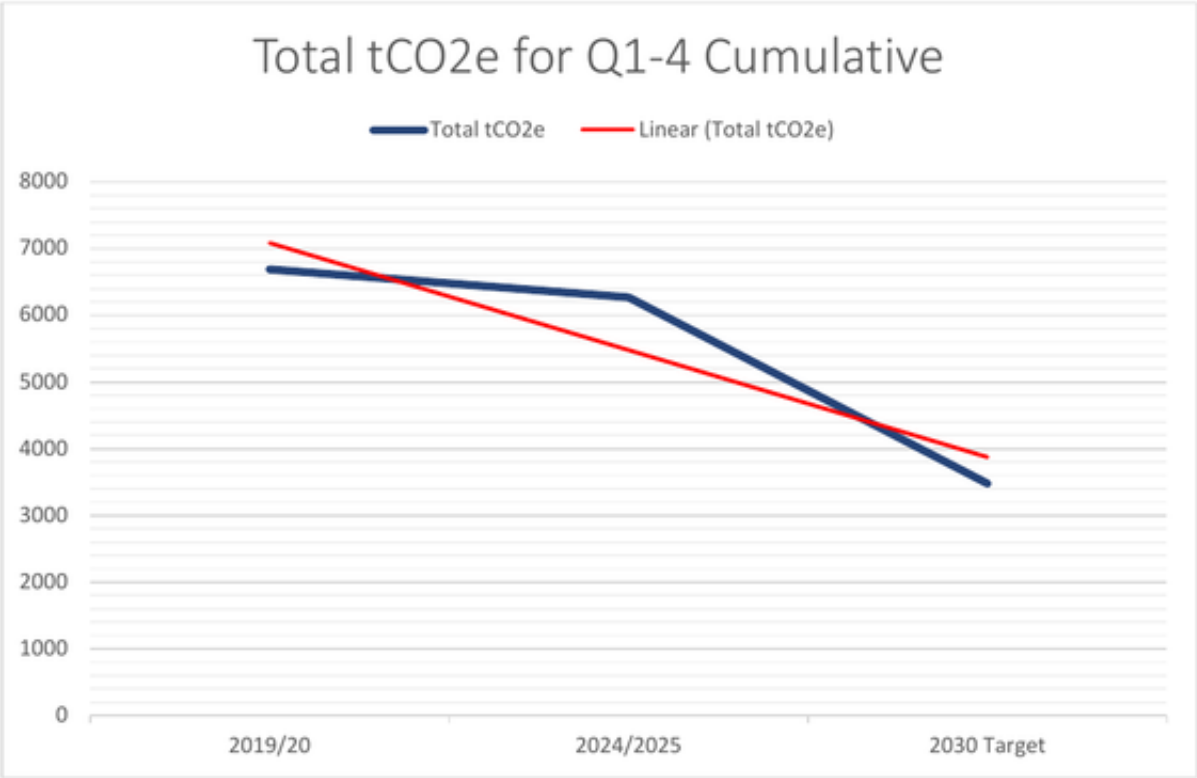
Considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage had decreased by 3.2% across Q1–Q4, leading to a reduction of 71.95 tCO₂ emissions compared to the 2019/20 baseline year.

Notwithstanding the above situation regarding comparison of 2024/25 with the baseline year of 2019/20, diesel usage has increased over the past year compared to 2023/24. This was primarily due to an additional 38,069 miles travelled by the waste collections service fleet – equating to an additional 26593 litres consumed and 70.87 tCO₂ emitted. Fleet operational efficiency measures had been implemented to help offset fuel usage; however, this rise in mileage had directly contributed to the higher fuel consumption identified during 2024/25 compared to the previous year.

Targets and Trends

The graph below illustrated our overall fuel emissions for each reporting period, set against the 2030 target. The linear trendline represented the trajectory required to achieve our 48% emission reduction target by 2030. A modest level of overall progress had been made towards achieving our emissions reduction goals. While we were currently behind the linear trendline target, with continued efforts particularly

regarding transition to a greener fleet, officers believed that we would achieve our long-term targets.

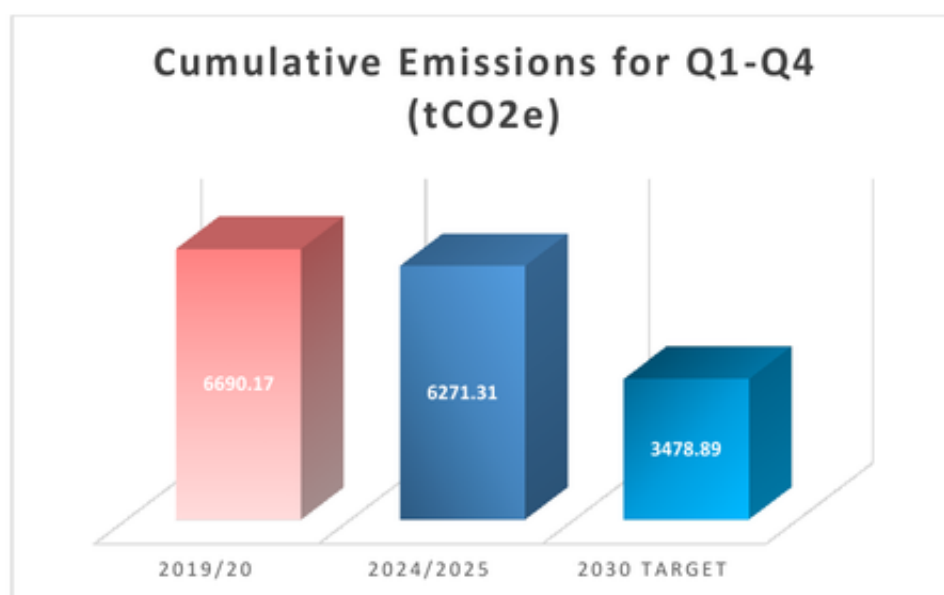


Consumption Costs

The table below presented fuel consumption costs for each year, along with the corresponding unit prices. This allowed for a comparison of both usage and changes in market rates over time.

Quarter 4	2019/20	£/unit	2024/2025	£/unit
Utility				
Electric	£223,294	£0.16	£417,662	£0.30
Gas	£412,515	£0.09	£318,444	£0.07
Kerosene	£1,539	£0.42	£14,046	£0.55
Derv	£168416	£1.00	£228,031	£1.15
Gasoil	£14,283	£0.52	N/A	N/A
Total Cost	£820,047		£978,183	

Cumulative and Historic Combined Target for 2024/2025



The chart above illustrated the cumulative emissions totals for Q1–Q4 in our baseline year (2019/20), the current reporting year (2024/25), and our projected target for Q1–Q4 in 2030. To date, we had achieved a 6.2% reduction in emissions compared to the 2019/20 baseline. To meet our goal of a 48% reduction by 2030, a further decrease of approximately 41.74% would be required over the next five years.

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Taken in This Reporting Period

- Controls Maintenance at Londonderry Park and Hamilton Hub.
- LED Lighting Replacement schemes at Community Centres.
- High efficiency boiler replacements to a number of communities properties.
- Early stages of pre-planning for Data Centre at ABMWLC and Aurora for heat recovery to provided free pool water heating.
- Installation of EV charging points for small and medium vans in fleet at NRD now complete.
- Installation of Solar PV panels at both Walled Garden Depot and North Road Depot Portacabin
- Progress started on the project to install 100kWp Solar PV at North Road Depot main building.

Members could refer to the attached updated Sustainable Energy Action Plan for comprehensive updates on all noted actions.

Future Measures Currently Under Consideration/Planning

- Use the Council's monthly newsletter to share energy-saving best practices with staff, encouraging their active participation in further reducing energy consumption.
- Replacement of boilers at various Council properties and upgrade of control systems.

- Lighting control and LED replacement projects at numerous Council properties.
- Solar PV Installation at chosen Council properties.
- Park lighting LED installation.
- Walk-round surveys of properties to examine and review existing controls and settings.
- Surveys of existing buildings for insulation installation to be carried out and implemented.
- Energy targets and KPI's for service unit managers to be agreed for 2025/2026.
- Possible introduction of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) systems in highest energy consuming buildings.
- Installation of double-glazed windows at Church Street Offices.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the latest quarterly sustainable energy management strategy update.

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

11. Q4 NET ACTIVITY REPORT (1 JANUARY 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2025 (FILE 92009)


(Appendix IV – VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in this report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 January to 31 March 2025. The aim of the report was to provide members with details of some of the key activities of the Team, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance.

Applications to the Neighbourhood Environment Team

Dog Licences - The Dogs (NI) Order 1983

It should be noted that these figures included block licences where one licence could be issued for multiple dogs in specific circumstances.

	Period of Report Jan – Mar 2025	Same 3 months Jan – Mar 2024	Comparison
Dog licences issued during the three months	4798	4825	

Concessionary licences remained at 83% of dog licences issued over the period. This included the categories of neutering (£5) / over 65 (Free – 1st dog) / over 65 subsequent dog (£5) and income related benefits (£5). Standard dog licence £12.50 and block licence £32. The application fees were set by statute.

DOG CONTROL – Dog Licences	2025	2024
Full Cost	793	890

Reduced - Neutered	2449	2449
Reduced - Benefits	500	483
Free – Over 65	915	877
Reduced – Over 65 Subsequent Dogs	117	112
Block Licence	11	14
Exemption (XL Bully - £12.50)	13	0
TOTAL	4798	4825

Investigations

The Neighbourhood Environment Team responded to a range of service requests. In terms of time spent, some types of service requests would be completed immediately whilst others required a longer-term strategy to find a resolution. The breakdown within the categories for the types of service requests received had been detailed in Appendix 1.

SERVICE REQUESTS			
	Period of Report Jan – Mar 2025	Same 3 months Jan – Mar 2024	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	238	371	↓
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	447	441	↑

Fixed Penalty Notices

The Neighbourhood Environment Team issued 64 Fixed Penalty Notices for various environmental offences in the Borough.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES			
	Period of Report Jan - Mar 2025	Same 3 months Jan – Mar 2024	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	39	71	↓
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	25	36	↓

Prosecutions

Breakdown of cases being prosecuted through the Court.

PROSECUTIONS			
	Period of Report Jan – Mar 2025	Same 3 months Jan – Mar 2024	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	10	2	↑
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	6	3	↑

Educational Programme

Project E.L.L.A. (Environment, Learning, Lifestyle, Action) was designed to improve and protect our local environment by way of education and community engagement. This in turn would help tackle many of the issues facing us today both locally and globally.

During the first quarter of 2025 the following activities were delivered:

1. Plastic Oceans – this presentation and hands on activity explored the importance of our oceans to the planet's health and the threats posed by plastic pollution and littering.
 - Ballyholme Primary School – 3 x Primary 5 classes (90 pupils approx.)
 - Elim Church (Ards) Explorers
 - Bloomfield Primary School – 2 x Primary 5 classes (60 pupils approx.)
 - STRIDES (a group for young adults with learning issues)

2. Atlantic Salmon Conservation Project – this initiative saw a fish egg hatchery set up in the classroom and the pupils recorded the changes as the eggs hatched into small fry. This allowed the pupils to understand the importance of lifecycles and why conservation of this threatened and important native species.

An informative introductory talk was given to each group and at the end of the project the small fry were taken back to the River Bush Salmon Research Station where they would eventually be released back into the wild. A video of this return was made so that the groups could follow the young salmon on this part of their journey.

 - Bloomfield Primary School – 2 x Primary 5 classes (60 pupils approx.)
 - Donaghadee Primary School – 2 x Primary 4 classes (60 pupils approx.)
 - STRIDES group (a group for young adults with learning issues)

3. Rock Pooling and Beach Clean – this activity which allowed pupils to collect and identify the vast array of marine mini-beasts that we had on our shores as well as beach litter pick was organised and delivered to the STRIDES group at a location in Donaghadee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Wray noted an increase in the number of fly tipping incidents and appreciated the enforcement challenges in terms of catching the offender. He wondered if it would be possible for Members to be provided with geographical information on where those offences were occurring to enable them to keep an eye on those areas which he assumed were more likely to be rural than urban locations.

The Interim Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that the majority of offences took place in rural and non-residential locations. He referred to the new legislation discussed earlier and how that had helped in terms of enforcement. He advised that it should be possible to include a geographical tag on reports and it may be a timely exercise in terms of considering how to present that information.

The Chair referred to a complex case of fly-tipping in her own DEA and appreciated the work of the team as it had been a significant issue.

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

12. RESPONSE FROM MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REGARDING OFF STREET PARKING ORDER (FILE 90303)

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the delay in revoking the Off-Street Parking Order 2000, as this was preventing the Council from creating our own Order.

The Minister's response was attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the response.

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

The proposer was disappointed by the short response and was extremely frustrated by how the Department for Infrastructure had passed over the responsibility of car parks to Council without any support or approved legislation. He dismissed the response as another excuse and he would continue to keep raising the matter.

The Director of Environment explained that the Chief Executive had written to her counterparts in other local Councils and had noted that some other local authorities had confirmed the making of their own orders was imminent or complete. It was hoped that through SOLACE this could be progressed.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the Chief Executive's action on this and expressed concern that the Council was being held to ransom by those who did not see this as a priority. This Borough was missing out necessary changes to provide a function adequately. She requested an update at the Committee meeting in September and wondered if the Chief Executive could officially take the matter to SOLACE at that stage if there was no progress.

The Chair shared her disappointment on the matter as another example of being passed on responsibilities without any thought or action.

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

13. EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE LICENSING OF PAVEMENT CAFÉS ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2014 (FILE 90101)

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Department for Communities had published a report on the findings of an Evaluation of the Impact of the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, which it carried out in 2023.

A copy of the report was attached.

As could be seen in the report, in Ards and North Down Borough, we had the highest number of Pavement Cafés behind Belfast and well above average across the 11 Council areas.

As part of the ongoing engagement and support for businesses, Licensing Officers recently surveyed the Pavement Cafés operating in the Borough and continue to liaise with business owners to ensure compliance. During 25/26, it was intended that stakeholder engagement sessions would take place to offer further support to those wishing to operate a Pavement Café.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and the attached appendix.

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

The Chair, while happy with the report and the Council's performance, highlighted an ongoing issue that was the source of frustration for the hospitality sector because any other type of retailer was not equally made to comply and consider accessibility issues. She felt that the process was unfair.

The Director of Environment referred to general enforcement powers of DfI Roads that applied to all, so there was a mechanism there for anyone to report an obstruction on the footpath.

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

14. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION - LETTER FROM DAERA MINISTER ON XL BULLY DOGS (FILE 92000 / NOM 653)

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a letter of response was received from DAERA Minister following a letter sent by Council as requested in Notice of Motion 653 on XL Bully Dogs.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes response.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Ashe felt that the Minister had provided a fulsome response and had addressed the concerns particularly around ownership. She agreed that the Council having knowledge of a dog's location would help alleviate concerns around any future attacks and be able to hold owners accountable.

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

15. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MORGAN AND COUNCILLOR IRWIN

This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste that 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.

(Councillor Morgan joined the meeting remotely – 8.30pm)

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Councillor Morgan knew that the Committee would be familiar with the mantra 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and went on to express concern that this Council did not provide street recycling for litter while other Councils such as Belfast City Council did. The current recycling rate was around 50% in this Borough and there was still a lot to do to meet the 70% target by 2030.

Continuing, the proposer highlighted the importance of education in terms of recycling but she also pointed out that many people wanted to recycle but there were barriers in terms of factors that were difficult to influence such as inadequate processing facilities and demand for recycling materials. Education and good habits needed to be encouraged all the time and the Council's work to date should not be underestimated.

Councillor Morgan suspected that among the most common sources of street litter were glass and plastic bottles, tin cans and takeaway trays which were all recyclable. All this was currently been sent to landfill due to contamination which was a real pity.

The proposer also felt that the lack of recycling bins sent out a poor message to residents and visitors and she felt it did not reflect the care that this Borough had for its recycling rates.

The proposer referred to educational literature within the Borough and its messaging of 'Recycle Today, Recycle Everyday'. In Ards and North Down, you could not recycle every day because appropriate recycle bins were not provided around town centre streets. This motion was therefore about walking the talk and she felt that the use of on-street recycling bins could be used to reinforce the message about what materials could be recycled. She wondered if there could be some new painted boxes with imaginative messaging.

Councillor Morgan appreciated there would be costs involved, so she felt it important to start the journey by looking at how Council could do this.

In closing, Councillor Morgan added that this motion was about expanding the Council's recycling service and sending out a positive message about recycling to residents and visitors and she hoped that Members could support it.

The seconder, Councillor Ashe added that the proposer had raised an excellent point that residents were working hard to meet ambitious targets and this motion acknowledged the number of visitors to the Borough and the importance that they were seeing the hard work that this Borough was doing in terms of recycling.

Rising to support the motion, Councillor Douglas was aware this was an issue raised in the past and she pointed to large events where recycling teams directed people to the correct bins to avoid contamination which could be an issue. She appreciated that the cost of this would be a further challenge but she looked forward to the report coming back to the Committee.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter was also supportive and recalled a previous report in relation to the potential for an on-street recycle bin and it highlighted challenges in being able to provide it, noting difficulties faced by other Councils which operated the service. She hoped that the report would take that information into account and advise whether it was still relevant for what was being proposed here and how Council could better encourage on-street recycling.

Supportive of the motion, Councillor Wray felt it provided an opportunity for the Council to review where it located its bins, highlighting a complaint of a limited or possibly zero number of bins on the boardwalk in Cloughey but yet there were around 14 bins located in the car park area.

Alderman McAlpine also recalled previous discussions around on-street recycling and suspected that the level of knowledge had increased significantly since then, which could allow for a more successful service now. She went on to emphasise the importance of education, recalling a visit to the eco-school awards as the outgoing

Chair where she had encouraged children to go home and educate their parents, wider family and friends. She gave her support to the motion, adding that it was important to take every opportunity to recycle given the targets.

The Chair felt that there was no harm in revisiting the possibility for on-street recycling bins and pointed to the success of this at events where officers had been in attendance to offer guidance.

In summing up, Councillor Morgan thanked Members for their support and the valid points which she hoped would be incorporated into the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the notice of motion be adopted.

(Councillor Morgan left the meeting – 8.43pm)

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

17. ACTION BY COUNCIL – HIGH HEDGES ACT (NI) 2011 (FILE 90505)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO AN INDIVIDUAL

A report in relation to a High Hedges enforcement issue was considered, and it was agreed to proceed as recommended by officers.

18. EXTENSION OF CURRENT CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TREATMENT AND RECYCLING OF STREET SWEEPINGS (FILE 77060)

****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)**

A report in relation to extension of a contract for the treatment and recycling of street sweepings was considered, and it was agreed to extend the existing contract with R Heatrick Ltd. for a further period of 12 months under the existing contractual arrangements.

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.02pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8.3.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Assets & Property Services
Date of Report	18 June 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	Matters Arising from item 9 - Notice of Motion Update on Bangor Christmas Lighting
Attachments	Appendix I

Background

An update report on the Notice of Motion agreed in April 2025 went to Environment Committee in June 2025, however further developments have since given rise to the need for a further update to Council.

The report to Environment Committee stated: *“Officers have been tasked with investigating the feasibility of festoon lighting [in Bangor], crossing the road at high level, down Main Street. Officers have had conversations with DfI representatives and are currently working through the requirements to apply for DfI approval. Once these set of requirements have been confirmed, officers will prepare a short list of potential lighting options and present them to the City Advisory Group for a decision based on their preference. It should however be noted that DfI may not approve the application.”*

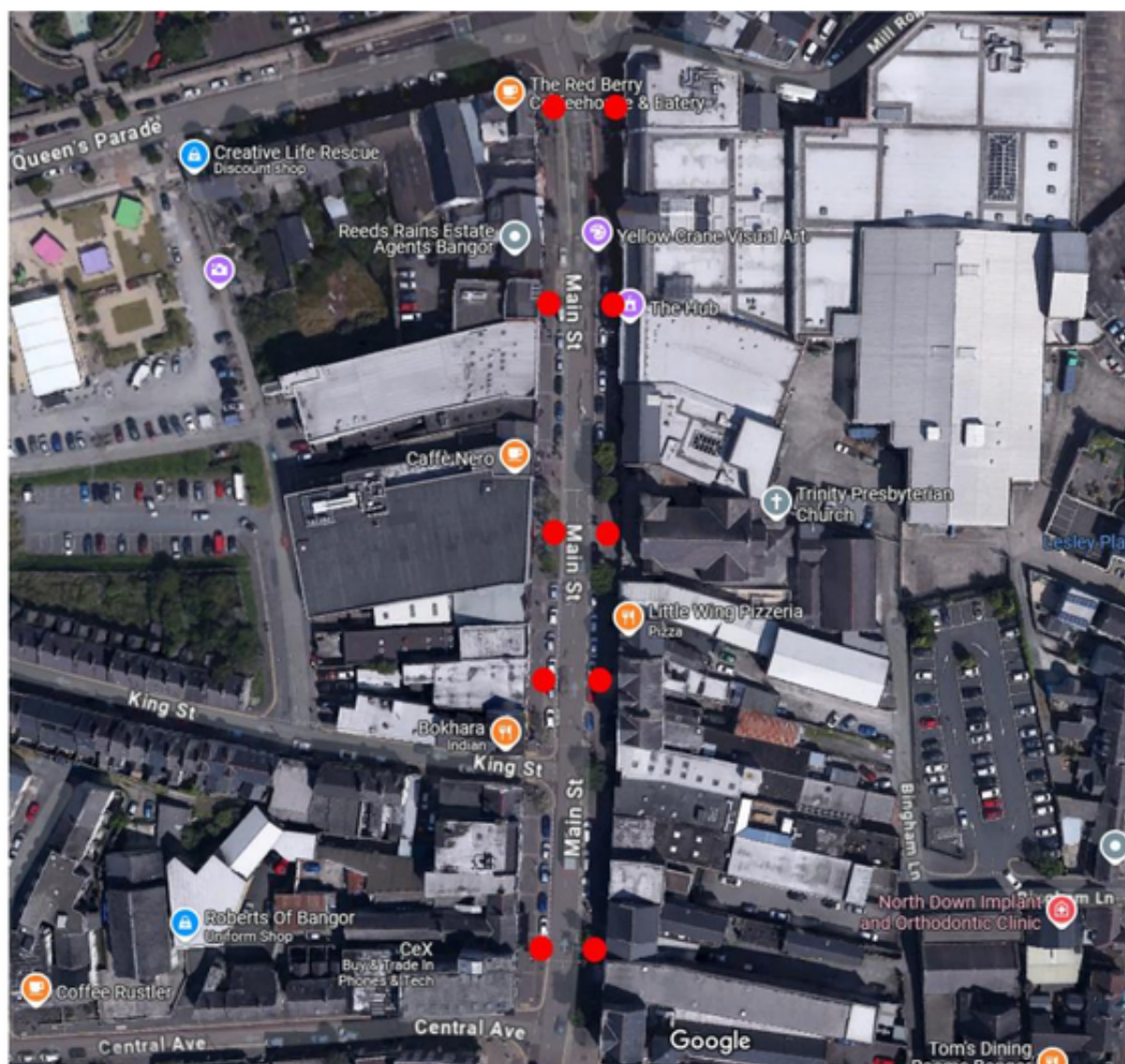
Not Applicable

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However, soon after the Environment Committee meeting, officers were advised that the road crossing lights have a long lead-in time and must be ordered by the end of June.

Therefore, a number of potential options were presented to a special meeting of the City Advisory Group (CAG) on 17th June and the preferred lights are attached for members information at Appendix 1. It should be noted that members of the CAG were highly supportive of the proposed lighting features, recognising its benefits in creating a welcoming and vibrant city atmosphere, fostering increased civic pride and promoting economic activity during the festive period.

The columns proposed for installation of the road-crossing frames are on lower Main Street, highlighted in red below.



Additional Works & Budget

Members will be aware that Officers have secured £19,800 from Department for Communities (DfC) for this project under the Urban Regeneration Programme, which

Not Applicable**141**

includes a required 10% contribution from Council, bringing the overall budget to £22,000.

The purchase cost for the 5 road-crossings will be approximately £7,000.

There is an opportunity to use the remainder of the DfC funding to purchase new frames for the remainder of the city centre (defined by the public realm footpaths). The replacement festive lighting frames could be selected to compliment the new road crossings. This idea was also discussed with the City Advisory Group, and the group's preferred frames are also included at Appendix 1.

The total cost for the 85no. frames required for the remainder of the town centre is approximately £22,000, bringing the project total to £29,000 and meaning there is a £7,000 shortfall in funding under the Urban Regeneration Programme.

It is worth noting that as the existing frames are approaching the end of their usable life, maintenance costs are increasing year-on-year. Last year the repair costs for Bangor Christmas decorations were in the region of £5,000. Naturally, these costs would not be incurred if we were to purchase new frames this year so the additional money required could potentially be sourced from the Christmas lighting maintenance budget. Alternately, there are other live DfC projects under the Urban Regeneration Programme that Officers believe may come in under budget and therefore a possibility to utilise any surplus to make up the shortfall in funding for this project.

Approvals

Members should note that the road crossings are still subject to DfI approval. Officers are working through the various requirements, including a structural engineers assessment of the columns and road-crossings. Council is therefore progressing the purchase of the road-crossing features "at-risk". Officers are fairly confident that the structural engineers report will be positive however, in the event that approval is not obtained, there would likely be alternative suitable sites for their use elsewhere within the estate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council agrees the above proposals in relation to Christmas Lighting in Bangor, utilising DfC funding wherever possible, with any shortfall coming from existing Christmas Lighting maintenance budgets.



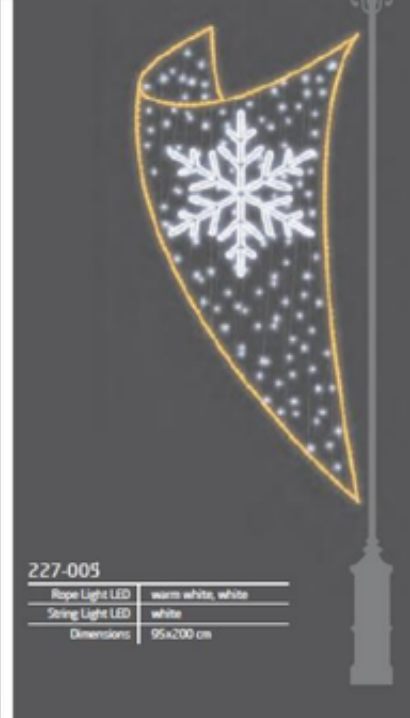
Top of lower main st, at Central Ave.

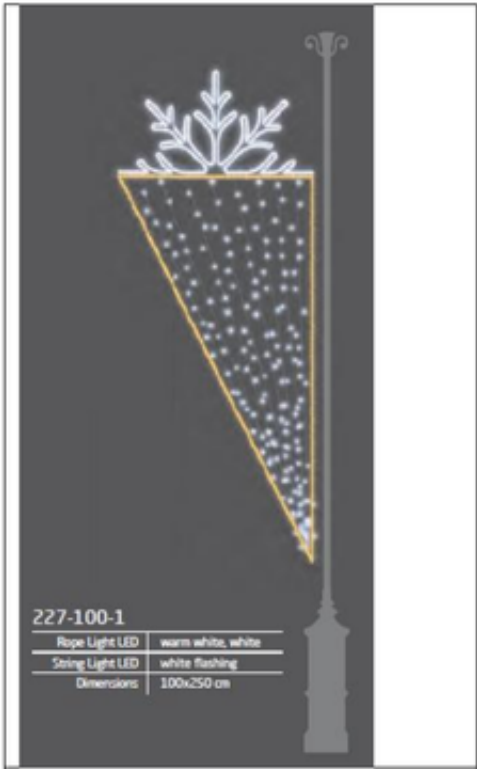


4no. on remaining pairs of lampposts running down the hill toward mckee clock:



Other columns throughout city centre:

 <table><tr><th colspan="2">227-079</th></tr><tr><td>Rope Light LED</td><td>warm white, white</td></tr><tr><td>String Light LED</td><td>white</td></tr><tr><td>Dimensions</td><td>95x190 cm</td></tr></table>	227-079		Rope Light LED	warm white, white	String Light LED	white	Dimensions	95x190 cm	 <table><tr><th colspan="2">227-001</th></tr><tr><td>Rope Light LED</td><td>warm white</td></tr><tr><td>String Light LED</td><td>white</td></tr><tr><td>Dimensions</td><td>65x250 cm</td></tr></table>	227-001		Rope Light LED	warm white	String Light LED	white	Dimensions	65x250 cm	 <table><tr><th colspan="2">227-005</th></tr><tr><td>Rope Light LED</td><td>warm white, white</td></tr><tr><td>String Light LED</td><td>white</td></tr><tr><td>Dimensions</td><td>95x200 cm</td></tr></table>	227-005		Rope Light LED	warm white, white	String Light LED	white	Dimensions	95x200 cm
227-079																										
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String Light LED	white																									
Dimensions	65x250 cm																									
227-005																										
Rope Light LED	warm white, white																									
String Light LED	white																									
Dimensions	95x200 cm																									
Dufferin Ave (6no)/Market st/ (2no.) Castle st/Hamilton road (4no.).	Abbey st. 36no.	High st. 12no Quay St/Bridge st. 8no.																								



227-100-1

Rope Light LED	warm white, white
String Light LED	white flashing
Dimensions	100x250 cm

16no. Upper Main st

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 12 June 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor McCracken	
Alderman:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
Councillors:	Blaney Brady Edmund Gilmour	Hennessy Hollywood McCollum Morgan

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Economic Development Manager (K McGuckin) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted for the Director of Prosperity, Head of Economic Development and Councillors Smart and Thompson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made though Members were reminded that a declaration could be made at any point during the meeting.

3. BANGOR MARINE AND HARBOUR PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE AUDIT PRESENTATION BY ALEXANDRA THOMSON FROM ORCADES MARINE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS (FILE DEVP)

(Appendices I – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching details of the findings of the audit. The report detailed that as previously agreed by the Council, following a Harbours Safety Update report, a new 'Designated Person' had been appointed to provide oversight and audit of the Council's compliance with its duties under the Port Marine Safety Code.

Orcades Marine conducted an independent Port Marine Safety Code Audit in February 2025 at the five Council run harbours including Bangor Harbour which was operated on behalf of Council by Boatfolk Ltd.

The Bangor Harbour Master was in attendance to assist the auditor on 13 February 2025 and provided a tour of the facilities and allowed access to relevant documentation.

Summary of Findings

Good practices were observed across the operations during the auditor's visit and a comprehensive Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) was in place with records meeting the requirements of the PMSC, with some sections requiring updating as detailed following recommendations:

- The MSMS should be updated to include the correct committee, update the organogram accordingly and include details of the Duty Holder.
- Section 3.3.1 should include a statement that the duty holder cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the grounds that they do not have particular skills.
- It was recommended that the Key Performance indicators and objective performance were noted on the Boatfolk website.
- Minutes were taken for at the internal safety meetings for reference purpose.
- A section included in the MSMS summarising the legislative framework for general/special directions.
- The various methods which the Harbour Master promulgates information such as such as harbour assist, text message, email, social media, this should be documented in MSMS.
- The importance of the review of relevant MAIB reports when conducting risk assessments should be documented in the risk assessment section of the MSMS.
- The responsibility of ANDBC to report defects of Aids to Navigation should be documented in the MSMS.
- All Harbour craft should be coded to the relevant MCA Commercial Vessel Code.
- The Marine Safety Policy should be reviewed to ensure relevance.

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

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the Designated Person Audit findings.

The Chair welcomed and introduced Alexandra Thomson to the meeting.

Alexandra Thomson, Managing Director of Orcades Marine Management Consultants Ltd attended the meeting via Zoom to guide Members through the Port Marine Safety Code Audit presentation.

Alexandra Thomson explained that Orcades had been contracted to act as designated person on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council for Bangor Marina that was operated by the private company, Boatfolk.

The Orcades company was based in Orkney and covered marine consultancy across different sectors, ports, renewable energy, and the offshore sector. Boatfolk were a relatively small company with 5-6 employees whilst Orcades had approximately 20 to 30 consultants who worked around the UK and worldwide. Orcades was now established as the designated organisation for Bangor Marina with Alexandra having visited and carried out an audit of Bangor Marina on Orcades' behalf.

(Councillor Gilmour left the Chamber at 19:11)

This year, the Port Safety Code this year had updated having been renamed to the, "*Ports and Marine Facilities Code*," which was still abbreviated to E-N-S-C. There was more emphasis on the smaller ports and terminals within harbours for compliance. The purpose of the code was to ensure that ports, harbours and marinas were compliant with the code and to ensure they had a safety management system. The Marine Safety Management System would be evaluated for effectiveness whilst also identifying any gaps or improvements and also ensured legal and regulatory compliance.

It also improved accountability and oversight which provided assurance to the duty holder by ensuring risk was managed effectively and continuously. The order was carried out in February 2025 over a two-day period at Bangor Marina with the Harbour Master, Kevin Baird in attendance

(Councillor Blaney left the Chamber at 19:15)

(Councillor Gilmour returned to the Chamber at 19:16)

The Harbourmaster provided a tour of facilities and granted access to a raft of relevant documentation for the audit. This resulted in a closed meeting with the Harbour Master to discuss any potential findings.

The results of those findings were included in the slide presentation. For clarity, this was summarised below.

1. The duty-holder for Bangor Marina is the Place & Prosperity Committee. This was not documented in the safety management system with the Environment Committee having been referenced instead. A request for rectification has been made in the audit.

2. There was not statement of accountability – this was a requirement as per the Port and Safety Code. The duty-holder could not assign or delegate their accountability or compliance to the code on the grounds of not having a particular set of skills. The audit advises to update section 3.3.3.1 to include this statement.
3. There was no record of publicly reporting performance. Best practice would be for these statistics to be posted on the website which would ensure transparency.
4. Though there were many internal safety meetings, no minutes have been taken. The audit advised that minutes of meetings were required for monitoring of performance and KPIs.
5. There was no summary of legislative framework for general and specific directions in the Marine Safety Management System. The Audit recommended a summary section for legislative frameworks for general and special directions that was specific for Bangor. This would reinforce the Marina's role in enforcing navigational safety, managing traffic and protect the environment whilst documenting that decisions were made in a recognised legal and regulated field.
6. Stakeholder communications were not documented in the Safety Management System. The Harbourmaster did use a number of tools such as Harbour Assist, text message, email and social media. This should all be documented.
7. There was no reference to the reviewing of the MAIB report. The Audit recommended this be documented.
8. ENDUCB Harbours was responsible for reporting defects in navigation data, not Boatfolk. This was not documented within the Safety Management System and should be rectified.
9. There is a small vessel used within the Marina for small works. This was not coded to the relevant MC commercial vessel code and should be rectified as soon as possible
10. There is a Marine Safety Policy that is signed and included in the Management System. It is recommended that these policies are reviewed at least every three years, or when regulation change or operational risk management updates/ organisational changes that may affect the policies.

In summary, it was noted that there were some good practices observed by the Harbourmaster who remained transparent throughout the process. The Marina was effectively utilised with various software tools used to enhance safety and performance. Bangor Harbour had demonstrated a strong commitment to the Port & Marina Safety Code. Implementing the recommended improvements would strengthen the Marine Safety Management System and its processes.

Orcades' consultants would continue to be available to the Harbourmaster if there was any assistance required regarding safe marine operations and would conduct another Port Marine Safety Code for Bangor Marina as per the agreed schedule, in six months' time.

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

4. PILOT NEIGHBOURHOOD TOURISM FUND 2025/26 (FILE TO/TD188)
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Application Form and Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Guidance Notes. The report detailed that the Council's Tourism Service recognised the importance of assisting residents to become ambassadors for their local area. That could be achieved through the promotion of their city, towns and villages by sharing knowledge and telling local stories to visitors. Tourism NI, through its Embrace a Giant Spirit campaign believed that what makes NI stand out is the people – it lies in the warmth of the welcome and passion that locals offer visitors. The introduction of the pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund aimed to support communities to develop capacity to deliver on this requirement.

Neighbourhood Tourism Grant Fund 2025

A business case seeking £20,000 was submitted during the rates setting process for 2025/26 to develop Neighbourhood Tourism through the implementation of a small pilot grant fund and training programme. Ten thousand pounds was approved with an additional £10,000 to make up the shortfall of the original budget requested being reallocated from another budget within Tourism to enable the pilot to proceed.

The fund would allow eligible groups and associations, based in Ards and North Down area, with an interest in developing the tourism offering to apply for small grants to provide an enhanced Neighbourhood Tourism initiative or offering. An award of up to £2,000 at 100% grant aid, for eligible items per application, would be available. Should the fund not be fully expended, officers would arrange and deliver training within this sector.

The Application Form and Guidance for Applicants were attached for Council approval in line with the Grants Policy approved by Council in September 2024.

It was anticipated applications would open in late summer 2025 and would be open for a period of one month.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the introduction of the pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund and further that it approves the:

1. The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Scheme Application Form; and
2. The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Scheme Guidance.

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

Alderman Adair referenced, 'Your Place and Mine,' and the growth of the tourism sector within the Borough, explaining that people were one of the best assets whose stories could only encourage interest and visits to the area. Councillor McCollum agreed but was curious how grants were used and what consultation had taken place with the numerous groups.

The Head of Tourism explained that a number of conversations had taken place with groups operating in the area. Indications had been taken from those groups as to their activities with any guidance on the use of grants being based upon that information. As this was a pilot scheme, it was open to feedback and if any of the fund had not been spent, the rest of the budget could be used for training interested groups.

(Alderman Adair left the Chamber at 19:20, returning at 19:22)

The Head of Tourism continued, explaining that the consultation was reasonably wide but did not believe it had gone to all community groups, which she would clarify.

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

5. TOURISM HALF YEARLY UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORT H2 2024-25 (FILE TO/MAR4/160127)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attached quarter report. The report detailed that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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

Reporting Approach

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

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

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to two outcomes as follows:

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Development and training activities have been provided by officers through an independent facilitator to assist progress the Sustainable Giants Tourism Network. Membership has grown by 100% from inception to 18 members and the network was currently developing its own governance arrangements.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Delivery of Taste @ Clandeboye food and drink festival held at Clandeboye Estate, c.9000 attendees showcasing 32 local businesses with an average spend of £31-£60 per attendee.
- The above event hosted a group from the Irish Guild of Food Writers on a two-day familiarisation trip visiting a number of food and drink producers. This received positive social media and press coverage in ROI.
- Attendance at eight trade/consumer shows outside the borough to promote tourism and food and drink businesses and provide 'award entry' support.
- Four familiarisation trips were hosted in the borough for tour operators and local hotel staff. Two companies had indicated that they would now include the area as an option to groups in future itineraries.
- Successful delivery of the pilot Shorelife Celebration event. Positive partnership working with Mount Stewart and Castle Espie, c 4,000 attendees and 88% customer satisfaction. Plans for the event in 2025 are underway.
- Both Tourism Events Food Festivals received grant funding – totalling £20,380 from DAERA.
- Marketing focus on digital content is growing an engaged audience for Visit Ards and North Down as an appealing visitor destination with over 15k followers on social media, annual web traffic of 730k (up 50% on prior year), and sign-ups to receive direct emails increased by 35%, with an average open rate of 36% (versus a tourism industry average of 15%).

- In 2024/25 targeted PR activity has generated 33 pieces of editorial increasing the profile for AND in NI ROI and GB including TV coverage on Ireland AM and features in numerous travel publications.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

Staffing for outreach/VIC staffing purposes became stretched due to reduced numbers. Further staffing was required for the new additional service at the Moat.

Bangor Switch On main programme element was cancelled on the day of the event due to the weather. The team had put as much weather proofing in place as foreseen. This one event cancellation had impacted on meeting related KPIs

- Number of attendees at Tourism Events,
- percentage customer satisfaction at tourism events

Action to be taken:

- Recruitment for increased numbers of casual VIC staff undertaken for all visitor servicing aspects. All new staff are due to start during Q1 2025/26.
- Continual review of weather mitigations and lessons learned specific to Bangor Castle site.
- An additional event in the planning cycle for 2025 in this quarter has led to the Events team and other colleagues operating at maximum capacity. Additional support within the service has been implemented to address this temporarily.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Number of sessions delivered for event capacity building.	The ability to schedule two additional sessions in last quarter.	Implement planning schedule at the start of the year.	Events Manager	July 25
% of OoB ticket sales (experiences and walks and tours).	The correct most successful method of evaluation has not been identified.	Review implementation of data gathering by guides.	Tourism Manager	June 25
% of OoB ticket sales	Data collection from third	Remove from service plan as KPI is no	Tourism Manager	March 25

(food and drink).	party delivery has not been possible.	longer attainable.		
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RECOMMENDED that this report is noted.

Proposed by Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor McCollum that the recommendations be adopted.

(Councillor Blaney returned to the Chamber at 19:24)

Councillor Morgan asked for some clarification on the percentage of out-of-borough ticket sales being lower than expected. The Head of Tourism advised that it had been noted as a KPI that had not been reached. With walks and tours, some customers had not completed data which showed the current gathering method was not robust enough. It was believed there was a good influx of out-of-borough visitors. The experience program with walks and tours was under review as there was likely higher local interest.

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

6. AND EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 24/25 SUMMARY AND AND TOURISM EVENTS AND FESTIVAL FUN UPDATE REPORT 2025/26 (FILE TO/EG58)
(Appendices V-VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching AND Events and Festivals Fund Tranche 1 24/25 outcomes and AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 25/26 Grant Awards. The report detailed the undernoted:-

ND Events and Festivals Fund 2024/25

In January 2024 the Council approved the awards to the AND Events and Festivals Fund. The AND Events and Festivals Fund was a joint event grants fund for Tourism and Community events with two tranches. As part of the application, organisers were asked to indicate whether the primary aim for their event/festival was:

1. To encourage attendees to the event/festival and enhance local economic benefit or
2. To promote community cohesion/social inclusion.

The events that indicated the first aim were administered by Tourism Events and those that indicated the second option were administered by Community Development. The following information refers to the grants administered by Tourism. Tranche 2 was reported to Community and Wellbeing Committee and to the Department for Communities in line with the required monitoring and evaluation process.

AND Events and Festivals Fund Summary 24/25 – Tranche 1

Awards of £81,076.75 were made to 12 events in 24/25. All 12 events were successfully delivered and a total of £78,672.61 was drawn down by the applicants. 73,220 attendees and participants were recorded over the 12 events. Five events did not draw down the full grant awarded due to grant being surplus to requirement. A summary of the outcomes of the 12 successful events was attached at Appendix 1.

AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 2025/26

In September 2024, following an update report by officers, the Council agreed to return to administering events grants via the Tourism Service and the Community Development Service separately. That was to more closely meet each service's primary objectives and to ensure application forms are proportionate to the type of applicant. Further to this, the Council also approved the AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 25/26 (TEFF) application form and guidance notes in line with the new Grants Policy approved by the Council in September 2024.

The Application Process

The AND TEFF 2025/26 opened on 1 November 2024 following 2 information sessions provided by officers held on 30 October 2024. The information sessions were held jointly with Community Development team to ensure all applicants or potential applicants were made aware of the separation of the funds and to enable questions to be answered by relevant officers from the two services. The AND TEFF closed on Monday 25 November 2024. There were 21 applications received by the closing date, applying for a total of £169,326.92.

The Assessment Panel

A minimum pass mark of 60% was agreed prior to the opening of the TEFF.

The applications were assessed by a panel of three officers comprising the Events Manager and two officers from Sports Development using an agreed scoring matrix as per guidance issued.

Seven applications out of the 21 submitted were unsuccessful as the standard of the application was not sufficient to meet the agreed pass mark. Each unsuccessful applicant received a notification email with feedback on 16 January 2025.

The unsuccessful applicants were offered further feedback if they felt this was beneficial. Two applicants took up the offer and were given further written or verbal feedback. They were also informed about the Festivals Forum and invited to attend. One has expressed interest in attending and is now on the attendee list.

The remaining 14 events proceeded in the grant process and were successful in receiving an award approved by the Panel as per AND Grants Policy.

Budget

The allocation of budget available to the TEFF was £80,000 per annum, however, the successful application grant requests exceeded this by £42,317. To enable support of all events that met or exceeded the pass mark, the assessment panel agreed that by applying a 5% reduction on each eligible requested grant, 95% of the requested grant would be viable by transferring underspend from the Growth Events Fund (GEF) in 25/26 to the TEFF to a total of £106,701.15. As previously reported

to the Council in January 2025, no applications were received to the GEF when this grant was advertised in November 2024, which presented some underspend in 2025/26 across the total events grants budget.

The 14 successful events were detailed in Appendix 2. All successful applicants are in receipt of their Letters of Offer and there were no appeals submitted.

Evaluation of AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund

Officers within the Tourism Events Team are preparing a survey to go out to successful and unsuccessful applicants to gauge opinion on the process for this year's TEFF. The feedback provided through this survey would inform any changes or improvements for the application form, guidance or support available for the TEFF in 2026/27 in line with the Council Grants Policy.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the above report.

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

Councillor Edmund thanked officers for the report. Councillor McCollum welcomed comments from officers who had prepared the survey on feedback from applicants, citing the importance of grants policies as working documents with continual reflective opportunities. She had noted that some of the successful applicants had only just scored above the pass mark. Some of these were very successful groups such as the Holywood and District Community Council who were responsible for the organising of May Day in Holywood, a huge event that attracted many. The Head of Tourism advised that there were information sessions that organisations and groups could attend pre-application. There were a number of grants that could be applied for and scoring was dependent on which grant was chosen. Once a group was successful though, officers would be heavily engaged to help improve any areas where marks had been lower in the application.

Alderman Adair cited several figures of recent, successful events such as the Kite Festival and congratulated them all for their hard work.

Councillor Morgan recalled stark differences in variation between event grants versus tourism yield such as Portaferry Plein Air, Clondeboy Festival and Bangor Regatta. In some instances, the grant money per visitor did not appear to balance well. The Head of Tourism explained that the level of funding for each group was based on eligible spend and budget to deliver and what was seen as checking off against eligible expenditure which defined the final grant sum.

Councillor Gilmour understood elements such as overnight-stays, targeted audience and engagement would factor into grants. However, some groups that had received larger funding had fallen well below the expected tourism yield and the same existed vice versa. She was curious if any mechanism existed in instances where not enough visitors were expected to merit funding and if those who had been unsuccessful in receiving grants could be listed to Members in case any questions were asked outside of the Council forum. The Head of Tourism hoped to take back these comments to officers to investigate application versus output. At the moment,

there was no penalty applied if visitor yield was not as expected. There could be many factors in play, some of which were completely outside of a groups' control such as weather.

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

7. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES ANNUAL REPORT (FILE TO/VIC4) (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching VIC Summary 2024/25. The report detailed that the Tourism unit manages two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in Bangor City centre and Newtownards town centre. Open daily, Monday to Saturday, servicing visitors (pre and during visit) and locals, by facilitating enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time and spend in the Borough, alongside providing a retail offering and ticketing service.

The service also operated a seasonal centre at Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport and facilitates a local information provision, through an SLA, at Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry.

This report provided an overview of the activity at Bangor and Newtownards Visitor Information Centres from April 2024 – March 2025 along with detail on both Cockle Row Cottages and Exploris sites.

Visitors and Enquiries

Within the VICs, the profile of visitors continued to be dominated by the 'Staycation' and 'Day trip' market.

The VIC's were a primary point of contact for tourist information on the region and NI, as well as offering local ticket sales both for internal ANDBC activity and 3rd parties.

90% of VIC customers were in person centre visits, highlighting the continued value of a face-to-face provision and the associated ambassadorial function.

Excluding self-service visitors or "browsers", a total of 21,098 customers were serviced via direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post and email. These enquiries cover a wide range of local topics from what's on in the area, where to stay or eat, directions, local history, activities, attractions and ticket sales across the Borough and NI.

Bangor and Newtownards VIC's	April 24 - March 25
Total footfall to the Centres*	21,530
ENQUIRY TYPE	
Face to face enquiries	18,861
Self-service visitors/browsers	2,669
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	403

ENQUIRIES Phone	1,834
TOTAL SERVICED	23,767

**Combination of face to face and self-service visitors/browsers.*

That was an increase of 7.2% from last year demonstrating a positive growth of visitors in the region using the service.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	April 24 – March 25% of total
NI	84%
GB and ROI	9%
Rest of the World	7%
TOTAL	100%

Origin of visitor remains largely on par with the previous year. NI increased by 2%, GB and ROI and the Rest of the World saw a small drop of 1% each.

Income

Whilst visitor information provision was the core function of the VICs, both permanent centres provide a retail space comprising mainly of locally produced/sourced gifts, souvenirs and books, as per customer demand. Both VICs encourage sales via special promotions for residents which would be advertised in local press, for example Christmas, Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, with themed displays, and regular "merchandising" to attract both new and repeat customers.

The VICs actively advertise a box office service allowing third parties e.g. drama/musical productions to be bookable online and via the VisitAND website. In 24/25 new promoters had made use of this service following positive feedback from others who have previously used the service. The Box Office service generated an income in excess of £1,700 commission, an increase of 27% from last year.

Retail sales proved challenging, with higher costs of living a likely factor on "non-essential" purchases. Ards VIC, with a larger gift shop, was less impacted with a marginal drop of -1%. Bangor VIC, whilst seeing footfall increase, did not see this reflected in customer spend which was down -17%, likely indicating that visitors came for other service needs. However, those that did spend, spent more per visitor, than those visiting Ards with an average spend per customer of £1.79 in Ards and £2.07 in Bangor.

Income type	April 24 - March 25
Retail sales	£33,664
Ticket sales commission	£1,777
Total income	£35,434 (ex VAT £28,786)

VIC Performance Summary

This year saw a welcomed increase of 5% in level of enquiries which translates to over 1,000 enquiries - broken down there was an increase of 10% at Ards VIC and 2% at Bangor VIC. Aligning with visitor behavioural changes, telephone calls and correspondence continue to slowly drop, serviced by the increasing traffic on the

VisitAND website and social channels, but positively in person visits with face-to-face interaction increased by 8% in both centres.

The VIC team continued to engage with local tourism businesses developing effective 'client' relationships through trade ezine, telephone calls and when staffing allows site visits.

The team actively support the wider Tourism section with 'call outs' to trade for campaigns, experiences and food and events programming, and the ticketing of the walks, tours, and experiences.

The centres also participated in seasonal activity with both Ards Chamber of Trade at Halloween and Bangor Chamber of Commerce at Christmas.

Sadly, the Visitor Servicing team had a bereavement in December with the passing of a longtime member of Council staff and a much-loved colleague.

Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO) – Exploris Aquarium

Located in reception it offers visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Christmas closure). In summer 24 and again in spring an advertisement was installed on the slipway bus shelter highlighting the LVIO. With a high footfall of visitors to Exploris throughout the year, the exposure to visitors is significant.

The provision consists of visitor literature, alongside an interactive touch screen highlighting what there was to explore in the Borough. Exploris staff were trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to address visitor enquiries directly.

Council provides additional visitor servicing support at peak periods during July, August and Bank/Public Holidays (11 days outreach).

Exploris LVIO	
ENQUIRY TYPE:	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	6,758
Exploris Phone Enquiries	4
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (14 Peak Days)	2,006
TOTAL SERVICED	8,768

Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport

The Cottages reopened for season 2024 with two visitor servicing staff facilitating information provision, a small gift shop and heritage centre. It opened in June through to August (Thursday–Sunday, 11am–5pm) with a family entertainment programme on Sunday afternoons, 2–4pm. Additional key dates of activity included Easter, May Day and Halloween. Unfortunately, poor weather forced cancellation at Christmas.

The VIC team worked with Discover Groomsport and the Ulster-Scots Association for support activity across the season. Educational visits also returned with three

visits (96 pupils) and one private group tour. The Cottages participated in the Council 'Leid and Learn' week with a poetry workshop and soda bread demonstration and became a filming location, transformed into a "Cornish chip shop" for 'Art Detectives' a new original TV crime series.

The Cottages attracted over 7,600 visitors, an increase of almost 2,000 on last year and generated over £2,000 income.

Outreach Activity

An additional 2,307 visitor enquiries were serviced at manned pop-up information stands throughout the season over 22 dates. These ranging from Council tourism events to trade shows and "honeypot" sites such as Castle Espie.

Literature

The service continued to produce and distribute VisitAND literature to external sites e.g. visitor guide and map. Outlets include Visit Belfast, Bangor Translink Station, Pickie Fun Park, Aurora, Pier 36 and other key tourism sites. Within AND almost 20,000 pieces of literature were distributed, highlighting the continued demand. The VIC's also provide bedroom packs for the accommodation sector.

Online Activity

Digital communication continues to grow as a source of information for the visitor. This was a trend that was likely to continue and therefore a crucial part of visitor messaging. In relation to "visit" channels (visitardsandnorthdown.com, Facebook and Instagram), the VIC team works with the Corporate Communications and Marketing service to support these channels. For example, provide content for blogs, a regular rolling review of the site for quality assurance purposes and engagement with tourism businesses to ensure they complete the relevant upload procedure for their business profile.

NB Figures in relation to user stats are currently reported to Place and Prosperity Committee as part of Service Unit KPI's*

Independently, Ards VIC continues to manage the Visit Strangford Lough Facebook page daily. Through engaging posts, the page has a strong following of 10,704 (an organic increase with no paid promotion of +13%, on the previous year) with regular positive interactions from users.

Summary

While new technology has improved accessibility to information consumers still cite the value of face-to-face interaction with 'welcome and hospitality' rated highly among all aspects of a trip by consumers who had recently visited (Tourism NI, Consumer Sentiment research). The quality of service provision at the VIC and other sites providing the personal experience sought by visitors. The VIC statistics demonstrate that visitors seek the 'trusted' and 'personalised' service offered at VICs with face-to-face enquiries dominant at the centres.

The Council's VICs continually engage with visitors promoting the Ards and North Down offering and has engaged with almost 40,000 customers, via its permanent

VICs, Cockle Row, Outreach and LVIO, and showcasing the region's tourism offering for holidays, short breaks, day trips and events.

Activity - 2025/26

In addition to the service's business-as-usual activity, the coming year would see:

- A four-month pilot location for Bangor Visitor Information Centre, from 1 May – 30 August. The VIC was currently operating from The Old Market House on Main Street, Bangor.
- The management of the visitor offering at The Moat and its Camera Obscura is transferring from Regeneration to Tourism.
- Outreach provision at both Bangor Castle Walled Garden and Pickie Fun Park would be trialled during the summer.
- A TasteAND retail offering in Ards VIC for those local producers who offer nonperishable goods was being piloted as a showcase for members of the food and drink network.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Hollywood queried if there were any plans for a new Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in the Queen's Parade Development. The Director of Place explained that, as with all projects in Bangor, everything served in the area would be looked at and changes may be made, but it was too early to make any determinations at the time of writing.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had noted the Regency Gift House was still for sale and was curious if the Council may revisit the possibility of purchasing the property which could be of greater use to the Newtownards VIC with enhanced space. In mentioning Newtownards VIC, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter recalled that there had been loss of a family member by staff who worked in the centre and extended her sympathies as did the Chair (Councillor McCracken).

The Head of Tourism advised that in the VIC report, there was a digital channel the VIC could interact with that showed web traffic was up to 730k visitors. With such online engagement, there were plans for growing digital presence with a promotional plan in place for the rest of the year. There were also significant generic tourist campaigns such as Visit Belfast and Tourism NI which assisted in digital presence. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter suggested Council also investigate other digital avenues such as TikTok.

The Director of Place, in regard to comments made on Regency Gift House, advised that it was part of the Community & Wellbeing's remit. With OBCs having been prepared, consultants pricing the site and NI Libraries' OBC nearly complete, bringing in a new building purchase option would put the plan and process back somewhat. However, the Director of Place would pass on the suggestion to the Director of Community & Wellbeing.

Councillor Gilmour noted some of the recent, positive occurrences in the Borough such as Bangor VIC moving to the Old Market House which had increased visibility and the poetry workshops and soda bread demonstrations that had gone well at Cocklerow Cottages, which had also been used as a filming location that had assisted in visitors. There was also the Camera Obscura in Donaghadee which had proved to be very successful which she congratulated all teams and the VICs for.

Councillor Hollywood queried online traffic on the area compared to other Councils. This information was not available, but the Head of Tourism would investigate.

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

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HALF YEARLY UNIT PLAN REPORT (FILE 160127)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching quarter 3 and 4 report. The report detailed that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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

Reporting Approach

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

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

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to the outcome as follows:

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- The target for job creation through the Go Succeed Service was 123 and has been exceeded.
- The market research function is performing well and the number of research assignments exceeded target.
- The Labour Market Partnership has managed delivered a full suite of interventions that have had an immediate and positive impact on individuals needing support to get into employment.
- Despite the challenging economic climate and steep rises in utility costs, the Operators of our facilities have managed their performance to continue to deliver across all contractual elements, continue to attract visitors and deliver value for Council.
- Successful delivery of DAERA allocated funding for the Seal Sanctuary.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed monthly. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- The Department for Communities had only just confirmed an annual budget allocation for the Labour Market Partnership for 2025-26. The letter of offer was received on 21.05.2025. However, the 2025-26 and 2026-27 action plans have been presented to the Regional LMP and approved. This presented issues in terms of planning and delivery of support.
- The Go Succeed Service requires intensive input and resources to deliver and funding has only been confirmed to March 2026. This presented issues in the planning and delivery of all the service elements. It was imperative that the service could continue as envisaged for an additional 2-year period.

Action to be taken:

- Collective action by all the 11 Councils, led by Belfast City Council continue with UKSPF to ensure future funding for Go Succeed.
- The pressure from all 11 Councils must be maintained to secure future funding for the Labour Market Partnership from DfC.
- The DTFF programme to be kept under review, however with ongoing interventions it was anticipated that the total programme target would be met.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Number of businesses supported through DTFF programme	Digital transformation landscape is complex and communication methods have been adapted	Ongoing monitoring of upcoming calls.	Head of Economic Development	Sept 2025

	throughout the programme.			
% spend against budget	Staff retirement and subsequent staff changes	Ongoing monitoring of budgets	Head of Economic Development	Sept 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

9. GO SUCCEED UPDATE (FILE ED135)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing Members would be aware that Go Succeed went live on 1 November 2023 with combined 18-month targets for Engage and Foundation. The delivery agent was Enterprise NI (ENI) and associated Local Enterprise Agency network and Growth and Scaling delivered by Full Circle consortia partners. All aspects of the service were up and running, with the first 18-month cycle now complete.

A one-year extension was granted through the Shared Prosperity Fund from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026 to continue the delivery of Go Succeed in a similar manner.

This report highlighted the achievements and position of the service as of 31 March 2025 (18 month cycle) as well as the differences between the first 18 months of the service and the year 3 extension.

1. Update of activities as of 31 March 2025

For the Engage and Foundation Pillar the figures were stated below, provided by ENI and the PMO, were the actual number of individuals who received mentoring up to the end of March 2025. Both the engage and foundation actual figures allowed the Council to meet its statutory targets.

Go Succeed Participation

Go Succeed Pillar	18 Month Target	YTD Actual
Engage	429	662
Foundation	147	175
Growth	280	339
Scaling	2	2

Go Succeed Grants

The Go Succeed Grant provided funding of up to 70% of costs for capital and/or revenue items up to a maximum grant of £4,000 and minimum of £1,000. Grants were available under the Foundation and Growth pillars and clients were eligible when they had completed at least 50% of their mentoring.

The grants were allocated as follows between the eligible pillars of the support;

Go Succeed Pillar	18 Month Target	Total Awarded
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Engage	N/A	-
Foundation	34	15
Growth	63	84
Scaling	N/A	-

Outputs at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target 97)	
Clients invited to apply	163
Letters of Offer issued	99
Amount Awarded to date	£296,170*
Ineligible/Unsuccessful	27
To be assessed	0

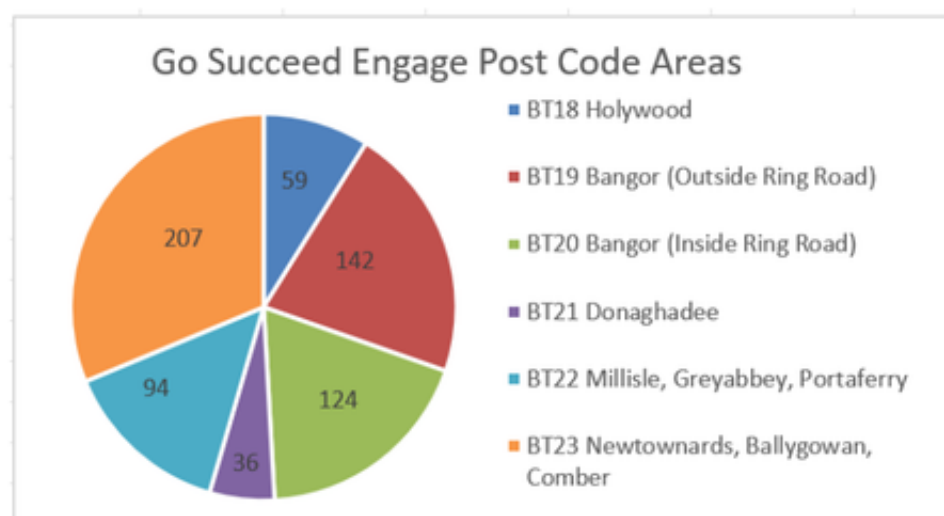
*The amount awarded is an estimate as accruals are still being processed.

Update on ongoing activities to deliver the service:

Engage

As at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 429)	
Go Succeed clients assigned on Engage Pillar at point of registration	662
Project Sign Off carried out by LEA's *	235
Jobs Created	104

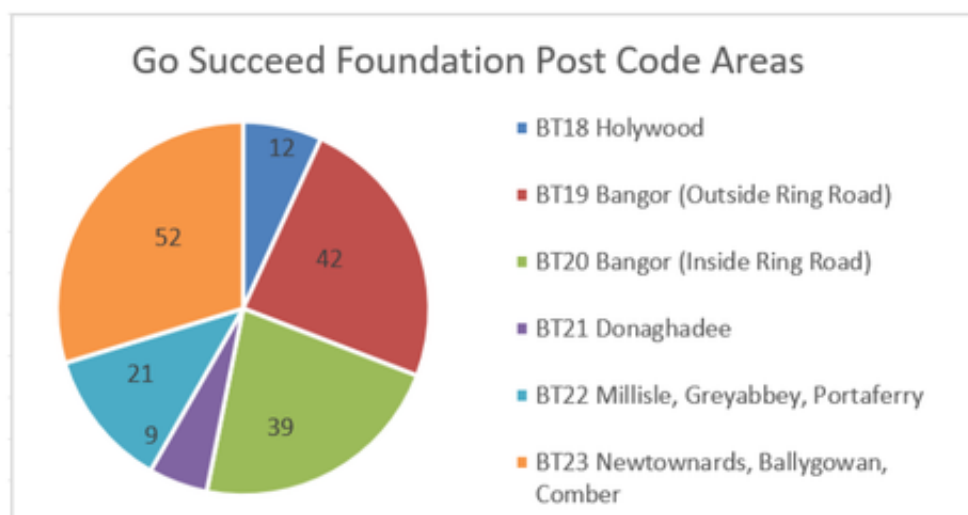
Note: sign-off include Business Plans and Enterprise Action Plans to determine Job Creation



Foundation

As of 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 147)	
Go Succeed clients assigned on Foundation Pillar at point of registration	175
Project Sign Off carried out by LEA's *	41
Jobs Created	25

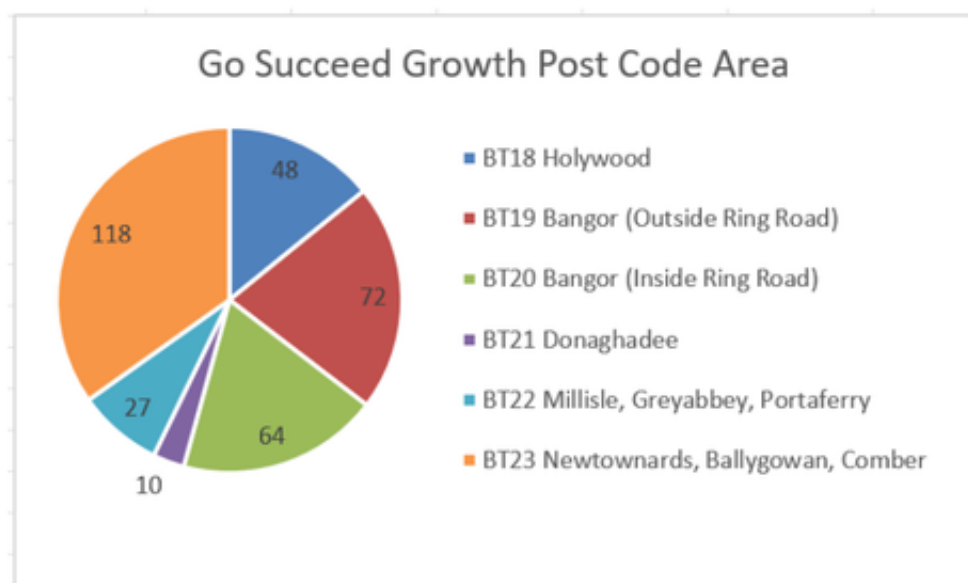
Note: sign-off include Business Plans and Enterprise Action Plans to determine Job Creation



Growth

As at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 280)	
Go Succeed companies registered on Growth Pillar (estimate)	339
ANDBC Officer Diagnostic Approved	334
Mentor Hours Allocated	4,899
Average Mentor Hrs per company	14.60
Jobs created	49.50

Note: budget allows for average of 15hrs support per company



Scaling:

The overall target for the scaling pillar is 25 businesses for all 11 Councils, with an average target of 2 scaling companies per individual Council area.

To date, 2 organisations have been signposted to Invest NI as a potential Scaling client from ANDBC.

2. Target Comparison between the first 18 months and Year 3 (2025-2026)

Go Succeed Engage	18 Month Target	Actual	Target 2025-26
Participants	429	662	286
Community Outreach	1469	2198	980
Jobs Created	89	104.4	59
Business Plans created	276	174	183
Masterclasses	429	511	86*

*for the first 18 months, the target was based on the number of participants. In year 3, it is based on the number of masterclasses and is for a period of 12 months.

Go Succeed Foundation	18 Month Target	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Participants	147	175	53
Job Created	55	25	32
Business Plans created	85	41	50
Masterclasses	147	269	16
Peer Support Networks	5	5	1

Go Succeed Growth	18 Month Target 2024-25	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Participants	280	339	140
Jobs Created	63	49.5	50
Masterclasses attendees	280	563	42*
Peer Support Networks	5	5	1

*for the first 18 months, the target was based on the number of participants. In year 3, it is based on the number of masterclasses and is for a period of 12 months.

Go Succeed Grants	18 Month Target	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Grant participants	94	99	42
Value of LoO issued	£320,000	£296,170	£124,914.53

Key differences between the Grants in Year 2 and 3

DIFFERENCES	2024-2025	2025-2026
Maximum grant allowance	£4,000	£3,000
Match funding from Go Succeed	70%	50%
Payment structure	80% advance payment and 20% second payment on receipt of evidence	100% retrospective payment
Funding eligibility	Revenue and capital	Capital only

Level of mentoring required before applying	50%	60%
Type of process	Rolling application process	Open and closed call for applications

Additional element to the Go Succeed Service in Year 3:

In the 2025-2026 period Councils have made a commitment to engaging individuals who are economically inactive and providing them with support to start a business. The purpose of this support is to create a pathway for participants that increases the visibility and accessibility of early enterprise activity and support progression onto Go Succeed Start activity. These services must align and add value to other UKSPF funded activity.

The targets for Ards and North Down Borough Council are as follows:

Number of individuals engaged	Number of businesses started	Average number of mentoring hours	Average grant per business started
24	4	10 hours pp	£750

Conclusion

Go Succeed Year 3 was now fully operational and was available to support our enterprise starts and the local business community. Members would have noticed the very prominent marketing campaign on television, radio, social media and through individual Councils which had resulted in a high interest in the service. Business could be signposted to <https://go-succeed.com> to access the support they need to develop their business.

The budget for Go Succeed in 2025-2026 was reduced by the funders with the total programme funding decreased by £800,000. Therefore, some aspects of the service were amended to reflect this reduction in funding. For example, the number of masterclasses and the grants were reduced to stay within budget. However, an additional element relating to Economic Inactivity, as highlight above, had been added to secure the funding.

The Council contribution for 2025-2026 of £118,921 remained unchanged from the 2024-2025 contribution and would be settled as detailed in the signed Collaboration Agreement.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Councillor McCollum proposed an alternative recommendation, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that this Council writes to the Department of Economy highlighting the success of the Go Succeed programme across this Borough, whilst expressing regret at the reduction in funding, the delays in grants being approved and to request these issues be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Speaking on the alternative recommendation, Councillor McCollum praised her experiences of Go Succeed, including the efforts and enthusiasm of officers. It was

disappointing that, not only was more funding not available, but it was being reduced as well.

Councillor Gilmour shared Councillor McCollum's sentiments, adding that so much momentum and excitement had been created only for the budget to be cut which made it even harder to target those who would benefit. Though the Minister may have seen it as a saving in the short term, it would be a loss in the long term.

Councillor Morgan supported the alternative recommendation and asked if there was any way to separate Newtownards, Ballygowan and Comber in the statistics rather than base it purely upon postcode. The Director of Place advised that he would talk to officers to see whether it was possible whilst Alderman Armstrong-Cotter recalled BT23 covered so many areas but would also like to see the separate statistics.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the alternative recommendation be adopted and that this Council writes to the Department of Economy highlighting the success of the Go Succeed programme across this Borough, whilst expressing regret at the reduction in funding, the delays in grants being approved and to request these issues be addressed as a matter of urgency.

10. REGENERATION HALF YEARLY UNIT PLAN REPORT (FILE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching quarter update report. The report detailed that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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

Reporting Approach

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

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

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to 4 outcomes as follows.

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Stages One and Two of Village Plans 2025 – 2035

The previous development of the Village Plans was led by an external consultant, however based on resident feedback and officer's aspirations to create new working relationships in addition to enhance existing working relationships with rural communities the decision was taken for officers to lead on the development of the new Village Plans 2025 – 2035. This understandably presented operational challenges, however the feedback received from residents, Rural Partnership groups, Council officers, and Elected Members has been extremely positive.

Stage One – engagement methods provided for residents and businesses by officers included:

- Primary School Engagement Workshops and Competition
- Public Engagement Workshops
- Community Group Engagement
- Attendance at Public Events
- On-street Surveys
- Online Public Survey

Over 1,800 responses were received which evidences a positive impact of the traditional and more innovative engagement methods implemented by officers.

Stage Two

An additional opportunity to engage with residents was identified and actioned after officers had collated all the data and drafted emerging themes and priorities for each village. This engagement was provided by in person workshops and online, encouragingly the majority of drafted themes and priorities were endorsed by residents of each village. Those that did ask for amendments had been discussed and agreed and would be reflected in the final Village Plans.

- C/TAG Stakeholder Mapping exercise

As part of the process to reform the existing City and Town Advisory Groups officers were eager to expand the representation on each of the Advisory Groups in terms of demographics and sectors. Extensive engagement has taken place with existing members and the next steps were being considered as to how best engage with those new demographics and sectors.

These expansive engagement methods had proactively increased the opportunities for residents and businesses to influence the delivery of services, plans, and investment within the Borough and would foster positive collaboration between the Council and several of our key stakeholders.

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

The completion of various Regeneration projects in Q3 and Q4 had positively contributed to a thriving and sustainable economy in urban and rural areas of the Borough.

For example:

- Chamber of Commerce Grants 2024/25

Officers had assisted the 5 Chambers of Commerce during the 2024/25 Chamber Grants process to deliver up to £15,000 of grant funding to each Chamber of Commerce to deliver projects under the three following themes:

1. Capacity Building – Initiatives aimed at growing the Chamber of Commerce
2. City/Town Development – Aimed at increasing the city/town profile
3. Administration support for Chamber of Commerce activities

- Rural Business Development Grant Scheme

This scheme, the first since 2022/23, was delivered collaboratively by Regeneration officers and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The objective of the scheme was to support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses through the provision of a capital grant for up to 50% of the cost of capital items.

Following submission of the 28 grant claims, the total amount of grant approved for payment in Ards and North Down was £90,085.60. over 50% of the rural businesses had not applied for rural grant funding previously which demonstrated new positive working relationships between officers, DAERA, and rural businesses in the Borough.

- Urban Regeneration Programme

£335,700 funding secured from the Department for Communities to deliver an Urban Regeneration Programme in 2024-2026. The programme was divided into three distinct strands of regeneration initiatives focused on animation, placemaking and connectivity. Projects include car parking enhancements, lamp post banners,

animation in town / city centres, signage, and environmental improvement schemes etc. The delivery of this programme commenced Summer 2024 and would complete in March 2026.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

- Kircubbin Coastal Path – planning approval obtained, and additional funding secured to deliver this project in the 2025/26 period, creating a safe space for residents and visitors with improved lighting and resting points.
- Greyabbey Community Park – adjustments to the project specification to meet the needs of the community including the addition of drainage to the green space to make this a functioning area during periods of wet weather. An extension to the completion date secured, with delivery scheduled 2025/26 period.
- Ballygowan Walking Trail – enhancements to the walking trail through collaborative working with our colleagues in Parks, the project would now include a youth play facility, providing a multi-use space for wellbeing, leisure and social purposes. Public engagement complete, extension to completion date secured, with delivery scheduled 2025/26 period.

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Restructure of the Regeneration Service

A business case was approved by CLT that enabled a progressive restructure to be implemented in response to internal and external challenges and opportunities.

Most notably, a new Service Unit, Strategic Development, was established to enable timely progression on strategic Regeneration projects that would not have been feasible within the existing structure due to the resource requirements. This Service Unit has made progress on projects such as Empty to Energised, BID, Bangor Waterfront Commercial Development and the Estates Development Project Board. This additional resource would positively contribute towards the Council's Economic Priority by increasing the non-domestic rate base.

Included in the restructure was also a streamlining of the previous urban and rural service units within Regeneration. The rationale of those changes had been proven with several operational and strategic benefits.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- The support from external funding providers is hugely beneficial in the delivery of projects across the Borough. However, the uncertainty of funding opportunities and single year budgets presents difficulties in the forward work planning of projects. Equally, 'shovel ready' projects can often need revised costs obtained due to a lack of funding causing significant delays from the design to the delivery phase.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work collaboratively with Departmental officials to explore opportunities to secure multi year funding. Additionally, continue to use Council 'working up' budget to have projects 'shovel ready' in order to avail of funding opportunities at short notice.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
To oversee the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena	Negotiations on a small number of significant aspects of the agreement require officer and legal representation consideration to ensure good governance of the project to date	Continue the regular communications between partners to secure an agreement	Director, HoS	Ongoing
To develop a master plan and OBC for the former NIE site	Procurement process initiated on schedule however no responses were received	Feedback from potential respondents cited lack of available budget to complete the project as the main barrier. Additional budget will be sought from the Council to enable progression on this strategic project	HoS	*31.8.25 *An opportunity to include recently purchased land on the Comber Road Newtownards as part of this project has been identified. Next steps are to be agreed internally and are dependent on approval of additional budget to include the Comber Road site.

To create new C/TAG Advisory Groups	The stakeholder mapping exercise led by a consultant was not completed on time	Final draft of consultants report received, details and proposals being collated by officers	Sum, HoS	31.9.2025
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RECOMMENDED that this report is noted.

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

Alderman Adair asked for updates on three projects; the start date on Kircubbin's promenade that had received full planning, Greyabbey Parklands commencement works and Millisle's ability to make use of the public realm scheme given there had been underspend in the Portaferry public realm fund. The Head of Regeneration hoped that start dates for both Kircubbin and Greyabbey would be on or before the 31st March 2026. Work was continuing with the DfI and DfC in identifying underspend and potential progression on the public realm scheme.

Councillor Hennessy was curious if there may be any plans for Bingham Lane in Bangor. The Head of Regeneration advised that the same suggestion had been raised at the Bangor CAG and though there was a keenness to progress, it was subject to funding and opportunities. There may be a possibility of aesthetic work through joint ventures with Arts, Heritage and Culture but the DfI owned the area. From a planning perspective, the Head of Regeneration would be keen to consult further with other parties.

Councillor Morgan praised the storyboards that had been used during engagement opportunities in village halls.

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

11. FEASIBILITY STUDY COMBER ENTERPRISE HUB (FILE RDP152)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailed that Members may recall a report presented to the Committee on 13 June 2024, which outlined proposed Regeneration Working Up Projects for 2024/2025. One of the approved projects was a Feasibility Study for a Community Enterprise Hub in Comber.

The project was selected to be initiated as a result of the review process of the Comber Masterplan in 2022/23, which reaffirmed the interest in a potential Enterprise Hub. Additionally, the project aligned with Priority B 'Making the Most of Valuable Space' in the Masterplan.

The Study

In December 2024, Regeneration officers appointed a consultant to conduct the feasibility study for a potential Enterprise Hub.

The design of the study aimed to ascertain the following information:

- Market Demand and Community Support
- Existing provision
- Potential suitable locations

The consultants carried out desktop research, in person analysis, and in person and online stakeholder engagement in collaboration with the Comber Town Advisory Group (TAG). Regeneration officers had received the report, and the key points were summarised below. Regeneration Officers had circulated the report to the Comber TAG.

Summary of Findings

Market demand and Community Support

The report noted that although only 17% of the Northern Ireland workforce works remotely, the lowest percentage in the United Kingdom, certain areas of the province have seen an increased demand for flexible working spaces, or Enterprise Hubs, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These Hubs were managed by an operator and usually comprise of office and meeting rooms of various sizes, layouts, and are equipped with extensive office and computer equipment.

Community support for an Enterprise Hub was high, however survey feedback indicated an anticipated low usage percentage of Hubs of various sizes. The number of respondents received to the consultant's survey was very low (16) which might speak to the low interest for a potential Enterprise Hub in Comber. Responses included:

- 8% of respondents said they would consider using a small sized office space on a weekly basis
- 9% of respondents said they would consider using a 'hot desk' on a weekly basis
- 42% of respondents said they would consider using a medium sized office space on a full-time basis
- 36% of respondents said they would consider using a small sized meeting room a few times a year
- 38% of respondents stated they would consider using a medium sized meeting room a few times a year

Existing Provision

There were five Hubs within a ten-minute drive from Comber town centre, three of which are in Newtownards. Office and meeting room spaces range from 100 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft.

24-hour access was available at some of the Hubs and all have access to ample parking, kitchen facilities, high speed internet, computer equipment, and operate on a contract basis.

Potential suitable locations

Four commercial premises in Comber town centre were available at the time of the study ranging from 315 sq. ft. to 12,300 sq. ft.

A number of these potential sites were located on upper floors and therefore presented potential access and other issues. Some were vacant properties requiring modernisation and the smaller premises would limit their suitability and financial return. Each premises had very limited parking provision given their location close to the town centre.

Two potential options outside the town centre were identified. Comber Community Centre is owned and managed by the Council and currently facilities bookings from various community groups and sectors, those bookings were relatively low in frequency. The Centre was due to receive over £500,000 from external funding for a conversion to a 'Mini Digi Hub' with modern meeting facilities, this project is being led by Economic Development. This conversion would convert a small 5m x 8m room into a high-tech business space for meetings, hybrid events, mentoring and co working space. The Centre was within walking distance of the town square, had a large car park, and would be equipped with the latest technology.

The second location identified was Enler Mill. This commercial opportunity was limited to the establishment of Class B1 (Call Centre) or B1 (Research and Development) building with car parking. The building has recently been completed to a shell and core specification stage and therefore required a full fit out. Units are available from 2,646 sq. ft. to 7,938 sq. ft. and were therefore significantly larger than other office spaces in existing Hubs and therefore may not be suitable as an Enterprise Hub in addition to its existing planning permission constraints.

Conclusion

The findings of the Feasibility Study have detailed a lack of market demand and has not identified a need for an Enterprise Hub in Comber. An absence of suitable site locations was an additional identified challenge. If a Hub was to be established, subject to satisfactory Business Case, consideration should be given to the operating model and fit out costs of the facility.

Council, through the Mini Digi Hub, was establishing a space within Comber Community Centre which would host workshops and offer co working space. Should there be any tangible future demand for a Hub in Comber following the roll out of the Comber Digi Hub, consideration could be given further to the potential establishment of larger Enterprise Hub, subject to Business Case. Enler Mill could potentially provide SMEs in industrial style units dependent of existing or revised planning permissions.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the findings of the study.

Councillor Morgan proposed an alternative recommendation, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the decision be deferred and the report re-presented with the study attached.

Councillor Morgan felt Members should see the report for completeness and was concerned that there had only been sixteen respondents which could either mean poor demand or a poor effort in consulting. Alderman McDowell was also surprised at the low numbers and felt that there were perhaps many entrepreneurs in Comber awaiting the right opportunity. He referenced an un-named site that had opportunity in the area and that a Notice of Motion due to be heard later in the Committee would also make reference to this issue.

The Director of Place advised Members that if they were so minded to defer, the report would be brought back in September due to the summer break in committees by which time the LEP would hopefully be in place.

Councillor Gilmour agreed the number of respondents was low which could be due to a lack of demand. If the report was to be deferred and brought back, she suggested it would be useful to see the methodology of the group who had carried out the work as well as what that work had cost. The Director of Place advised that the Council did carry out testing to ensure any works carried out by external groups were compliant with the brief that had been set out but would accept the request by Members.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the alternative recommendation be adopted and the decision be deferred and report re-presented with the study attached.

12. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION - VACANCY AND DERELICTION STUDIES (FILE RDP14)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that Members may recall a report presented to the Committee on 13th June 2024, which outlined proposed Regeneration Working Up Projects for 2024/2025. One of the approved projects was a Vacancy and Dereliction study.

Members may recall a report presented to Committee in February 2025 providing an update on Notice of Motion 568 and detailing a vacancy and dereliction study in progress in Bangor and Newtownards. In this report it was detailed that an 'Empty to Energised' grant scheme was being developed by the Regeneration Strategic Development Service Unit. The scheme would provide potential financial assistance by a grant funding scheme to property owners who participate in the scheme to renovate vacant properties and reintroduce commercial use to the premises under stipulated terms and conditions.

It was discussed that to ensure an evidence-based approach to the pilot schemes Officers deemed it necessary to acquire the most recent vacancy and dereliction figures in the urban areas of the Borough. The latest DfC vacancy survey (31 October 2024) shows that:

- Bangor City Centre 21.0% of commercial premises were vacant
- Newtownards 21.1% of commercial premises were vacant, the highest number since April 2016
- Comber 12.6% of commercial premises were vacant

- Donaghadee 17.4% of commercial premises were vacant
- Holywood 9.2% of commercial premises were vacant

Based on these percentages and other considered factors, McGarry Consulting was commissioned, in partnership with Queen's University Belfast (QUB). Their remit was to undertake a study into vacancy and dereliction in Bangor and Newtownards given that they have the highest vacancy rate and to support the development of a pilot grant scheme.

Each study was required to meet the following objectives:

1. Identification and mapping of derelict and vacant commercial properties
2. Analysis of patterns of vacancy using historic data
3. Exploration into cases of decline and recommendations of strategies for redevelopment (short, medium, and long-term)
4. Interventions to tackle vacancy and dereliction and ways to increase property values and attract new businesses

Regeneration officers had received the report that details key findings and proposed short, medium, and long-term interventions. The final report would be presented to the Bangor and Newtownards Advisory Groups (C/TAG).

Methodology and Findings

McGarry Consulting conducted analysis into the land uses of all ground floor units within the city centre boundary of Bangor and the Town boundary of Newtownards. Buildings were surveyed as part of this exercise in early 2025. The survey implemented a visual field survey approach, which involved Masters students in Planning from QUB visiting Bangor and Newtownards and identifying all ground floor commercial units that were in use and all ground floor that were vacant.



Building condition

The condition of all vacant buildings identified, were measured on a three-point scale:

1. Good condition - properties where all elements, including paintwork, signage, and window frames appear well-maintained.
2. Minor Façade Improvements - properties showing noticeable wear, needing repairs like repainting window frames, updating signage, or fixing cracked tiles and windows. Moderate intervention was needed.
3. Major Works Required - properties in considerable disrepair, potentially boarded up or with extensive visible damage including structural damage. Major repairs or renovation are expected. These ratings were then peer-

reviewed for consistency of interpretation purposes when the premises were noted in the Vacant Buildings Glossary.

Upper Floors

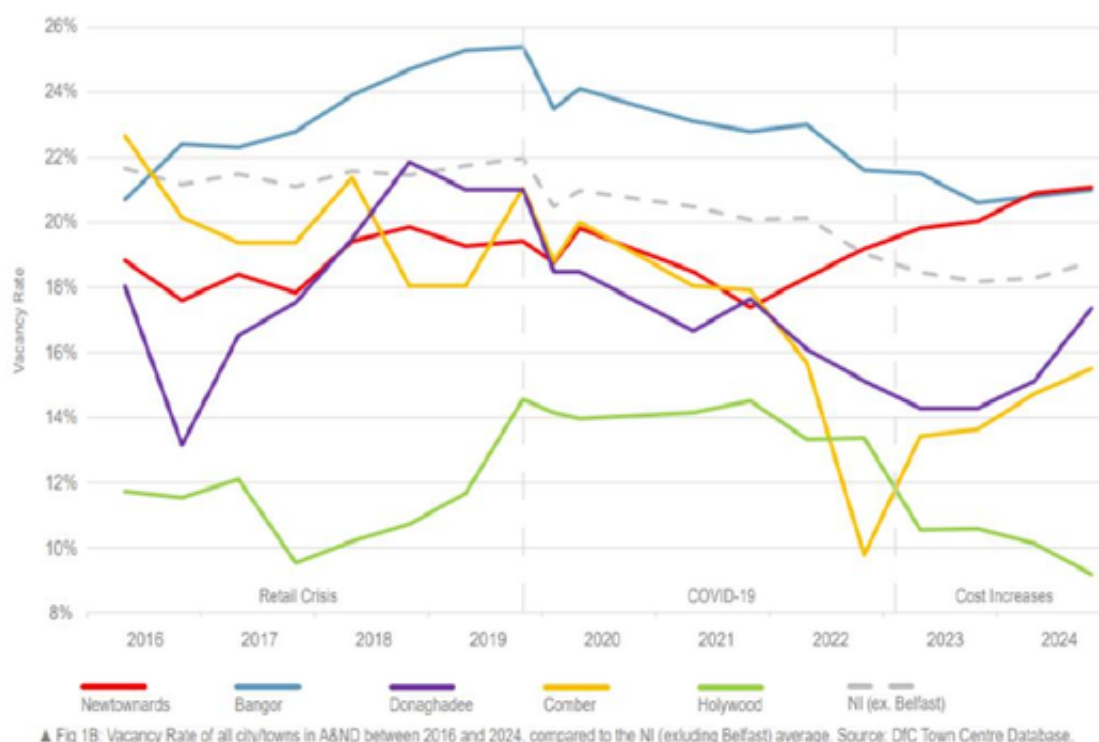
When vacant ground floors were noted during the field work, the surveyors noted the number of storeys of the building and sought to identify if the upper floors were in use. In some instances, evidence of upper floor occupation was clear through signage associated with different businesses and signs of residential accommodation such as buzzers for flats and other signs of occupation. The use of the upper floors has been noted in the Vacant Buildings Glossary.

Vacancy terms

Once vacant ground floor commercial units were identified and added to the Vacant Buildings Glossary, desk-based research was completed to determine the last usage of the building. This research relied upon the use of Google Streetview to determine when the building was last in use. The photographic records for Bangor were detailed with eleven dates photographed from October 2008 to June 2023. Additional online searches of the business were then used to help estimate when the building became vacant. Based on the findings of this research, the vacant premises were classified as either vacant for more than 10 years or less than 10 years.

As part of the report, officers have been provided with a Vacant Buildings Glossary for both Bangor and Newtownards that would provide useful information for the development of the Empty to Energised Grant Scheme and any other interventions that are progressed as a result of the report.

A&NDBC Town/City Centre Vacancy Rates



The findings of the Bangor and Newtownards Vacancy and Dereliction Study reinforces the DfC data that these two urban areas have the highest vacancy rates in the Borough, and furthermore are the only urban areas above the NI average vacancy rates (excluding Belfast).

Bangor

The study showed that the overall vacancy rate for Bangor was 20.0% (Jan 2025) against the latest DfC vacancy survey (Oct 2024) which showed the vacancy rate as 21.0%. The findings showed that vacancies are often concentrated in clusters, rather than dispersed evenly across areas. 11 of the 12 vacant properties on Queens Parade were due to be developed as part of the regeneration of the Queens Parade area. If the vacant properties within the Queens Parade development were excluded, the city centre vacancy rate would decrease from 20.0% to 16.5%.

High Street has almost 100 commercial properties, mostly small units, of which 24 are vacant (30.3% of all vacant units). There was a cluster of 8-10 units at the upper end of the street. Gray's Hill has a high vacancy rate of 40.9%. There was a cluster of vacant and derelict units at the junction with Primrose Avenue. These units have laid derelict for over a decade but were animated several years ago which may have, or still does, reduce public consciousness of them as being derelict properties.

Newtownards

In Newtownards the vacancy rate was 21.3% against the latest DfC vacancy survey (Oct 2024) which showed the vacancy rate as 21.1%. The largest areas for vacancy

in Newtownards are on Movilla Street, Greenwell Street and Castle Street, with vacancy rates of 42.9%, 42.9%, and 40.0% respectively. These areas are on the periphery of the commercial town centre and the residential areas beyond each point. An example of this was demonstrated by the derelict carpet shop, a large building which sat prominently at the end of High Street. High Street had the second highest number of units (58) but the lowest vacancy rate (5.2%) with only 3 units vacant. That was unusual and indicates the strength of High Street as a core shopping area. The report noted that there are some vacant units, just off High St (on Mill St). Additionally, there were many social enterprises, which occupy units on the High Street.

Most of the ground floor vacant units are spread out with the biggest clusters comprising of between 3 and 6 properties, for example Regent Street and Frances Street. The majority of the properties are in good condition – with some needing minor works – and have been vacant for under 10 years. The report noted the importance of targeting these smaller clusters to reduce vacancy whilst yielding the biggest visual impact.

Findings Support the Review of the City and Town Masterplans

The review of the Masterplans in 2022/23 for Bangor and Newtownards identified that tackling vacancy and dereliction was a key priority for each area.

The study has provided a detailed glossary of vacant buildings and recommended that the Empty to Energised pilot grant scheme should focus initially on empty small ground floor units in an evidenced based and systematic manner.

The vacancy and dereliction study further evidences the need to tackle hotspots of dereliction and has identified those potential areas that can be supported through the Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme.

Proposed Interventions

The study details small scale, medium scale, and large-scale interventions. The interventions that have been proposed would be explored by Regeneration officers and considered as part of urban regeneration projects, subject to funding opportunities and/or available budget. A summary of the proposals was provided below.

Small-scale Interventions

- Town/City Centre Business Led Organisations

The existing businesses, community, and creative organisations within the urban centres provide a wealth of knowledge, ideas and awareness of what was positively impacting shopping districts and the streetscape. With administrative support and small budgets, they could collaborate with various Council departments to reduce vacancy and dereliction, enhancing the city or town centres appeal.

- Cultural Plan & Upper Floor Studios

In Bangor, events like Open House and Late Night Art Bangor, along with activities by Boom Studios and Seacourt Print Workshop demonstrate that festivals and

immersive events can transform perceptions and attract visitors to city and town centres. Supporting creative organisations to develop more studios, programmes, and events, by the Council's Arts and Tourism departments for example could further enhance this appeal and realise positive impacts for Bangor and Newtownards.

- Empty to Energised pilot scheme

Empty to Energised type schemes have proved successful in various Council districts in Northern Ireland. This study has evidenced a clear requirement for a similar type of intervention in Bangor and Newtownards. The project should focus initially on empty small ground floor units – in targeted areas - that can be brought back to life relatively inexpensively. This would help ensure that the allocated Council budget for this project would create maximum value. The pilot should be targeted on projects that can be enabled with up to circa £25,000 of funding. The pilot, if successful, could enable a future expansion of the scheme albeit previous examples illustrate an approximate two-year timeframe for project design, delivery, and completion.

Medium-scale Interventions

- Pop-up Shops (on an individual or multi-unit basis)

Project 24 in Bangor successfully cultivated local artists, leading to the creation of Boom Studios and other enterprises. Similarly, Belfast's Trade Market fostered many successful businesses. After its closure, Bodega Bagels moved into a vacant unit on Royal Avenue, supported by Belfast City Council's Vacant to Vibrant scheme.

- Shop Front Revitalisation Scheme

A shop front revitalisation could complement a potential Empty to Energised type scheme. This could provide funding for shop owners to improve their shop fronts, façades and the immediate streetscape in order to improve the visual appeal of the urban centres.

- Creative Characters & Urban Trail Pilot

The success of the Paddington statue in Newtownards and the artistic murals in both Bangor and Newtownards could be developed further. Urban trails could be used to guide people around the urban centres to visit these landmarks. Family-friendly trails featuring characters like the Gruffalo or Paddington should be created. These trails, combined with seating for photo opportunities, could be sponsored by local businesses, enhancing business, community, and creative engagement.

- Heritage Buildings

Heritage Buildings could offer links to the area's past, but their maintenance or required funding was often outside the scope of a Council led initiative or remit. The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) was currently seeking to extend their village catalyst scheme to larger market towns in Northern Ireland. Along with National Lottery Heritage Funding (NLHF) schemes, the AHF fund appear the most appropriate first call for heritage preservation projects.

- Meanwhile Use

Underused spaces can be utilised temporarily while awaiting development. Belfast's Vacant to Vibrant scheme and Vault Studios show the potential for short-term artistic studios. Collaboration between Council, BID/Business Groups, and local creatives can identify interest and locations for meanwhile use.

- Tourism Animation and Visitor Plan

Quality cultural programmes like Open House, Portaferry Gala, and food festivals attract large crowds and transform perceptions, the International Guitar Festival in Newtownards was a successful example. Developing an animation and events programme, leveraging venues like the new Citizen's Hub in Newtownards or Queens Parade in Bangor could create a year-round schedule with a signature festival in each urban area.

- Growth Units

A survey could be initiated by the Council amongst businesses in urban areas to assess how many may be looking larger premises over the next five years. Based on the results a pilot programme could be set up to map out existing larger units or those units (individually or collectively) that could be reprofiled to meet the business need.

Large-scale Interventions

- Rates Review

A new approach to rates was noted in the report, where commercial premises creating jobs do not pay more than owners of vacant units. Examples from UK Councils show that a sliding scale of rates linked to vacancy, dereliction, or energy efficiency can effectively encourage open units and discourage vacant ones. However that was not in the gift of the Council.

- Co-ordinating & Complementing Investment

Co-ordinated development of Queen's Parade, Bangor Marina, Pickie Park, Bangor Castle, and a potential Council Office building would transform the city centre.

The proposed Ards Citizen's Hub and reprofiled City Hall would attract more visitors to the urban centres. Planned programmes and promotions over the first 2-3 years should ensure they were established and become well used.

- Upper Floors

92.4% of upper floors above vacant units in Bangor were also vacant. With 66% of households being 1-2 person, these spaces could be used for residential accommodation or artists' studios. Addressing upper floor vacancy was a much larger scale project which would be dependent on stakeholder collaboration from within and external from the Council. This intervention was beyond the scope of a Vacant to Vibrant scheme in isolation.

85.7% of upper floors above vacant units in Newtownards are also vacant. With two-thirds of households being 1-2 person, these spaces could be used for residential accommodation or creative studios. Addressing upper floor underuse should be a larger scale project.

Conclusion

Regeneration Officers would use the findings from this report to further design and develop the Empty to Energised pilot scheme. Additionally, the findings would be used to design and develop other potential short, medium, and long-term interventions to tackle the issue of vacancy and dereliction in urban areas of the Borough. Further studies could be commissioned for the remaining towns, Comber, Holywood and Donaghadee. In the interim however, Regeneration officers have worked collaboratively with Planning officers to establish baseline data to support a potential expansion of the Empty to Energised scheme in the other three urban areas of the Borough, subject to budget and the successful implementation of the pilot Empty to Energised scheme.

Officers were mindful of the requirement to tackle vacancy and dereliction in rural areas of the Borough, and as such would seek to source potential funding opportunities to be used for similar interventions in rural areas.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and findings of the vacancy and dereliction study.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted the many Newtownards vacancies on the edges of the town. Though the Council may determine the town-centre, the DfC did not recognise these areas as such which was why they were bereft of many regenerative supports for town centres. She hoped there could be a way to encourage the DfC to include these areas to benefit from town centre regeneration projects.

Councillor McCollum agreed, citing the likes of Gray's Hill in Bangor which was once vibrant but had over the years declined. With the Dilapidation Bill receiving Executive approval to bring to the Assembly and the powers it confers on Councils for enforcement would bring Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the U.K which was urgently needed. She asked if the Council were preparing for the bill coming law and what areas may be prioritised. The Director of Place advised that it had been mentioned at the Corporate Leadership Team. Further details were required such as what department would have the powers to act and whether finance accompanied enforcement or if it would instead be an additional financial burden on the Council.

The Chief Executive Officer had also been discussing the subject at SOLACE, but all questions would need clarified before a report would be presented to Members.

Councillor Hollywood was curious if vacant properties in the report would benefit from the Queen's Parade Development. The Director of Place advised that premises not within the red line for development could apply whilst those within the red line would be demolished and become part of the overall development.

Councillor Gilmour noted 92.4% of upper floors above vacant premises were also vacant which could be used for residential or artist studios. The Living Over the Shops Scheme (LOTS) could potentially be extended to upper floors therefore increasing living in the town centre. It may not be directly related to regeneration for business but could be very beneficial.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter was interested in the dilapidation scheme and where it may prove useful for those homes that were not allowed to make structural changes due to partial historic architecture that no longer served any purpose but was protected.

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

13. COMPLETION OF RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME 2024 - 2025 (FILE)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that as members would be aware the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme opened for applications in October 2024. That was a capital grant scheme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), which provided funding support for rural micro businesses from £500 up to a maximum of £4,999, at a 50% grant rate. The grants helped businesses to remain sustainable and, in many cases, grow, innovate, and create rural jobs.

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/2025 Update

Following eligibility checks and an assessment panel 31 Letters of Offer were issued to successful applicants in Ards and North Down on the 10th January 2025. The total value of grant awarded was £101,736.

Of the 31 businesses awarded a Letter of Offer, 28 completed their projects and three withdrew due to various factors. The three businesses that withdrew from the process were content with the scheme and were keen to apply again in the future.

Following submission of the 28 grant claims, the total amount of grant approved for payment in Ards and North Down was £90,085.60.

Businesses were asked to provide an end of project report submitted alongside their claim and of the 28 submissions, 25 businesses advised that they were 'Very Satisfied' with the support provided, and the other 3 businesses stated they were 'Satisfied'. An example of positive feedback can be evidenced by a rural business noting that as a result of the capital item purchased through the grant scheme they have experienced greater efficiencies, greater ability to become more adaptable, and provide cleaner and safer working environments for their customers. Additionally, it had increased their capacity to undertake more work resulting in business growth and the potential to expand their workforce.

The positive feedback from the businesses who received grant demonstrates the significant impact the scheme has provided. Of the 28 recipients, 16 had not applied for rural grant funding in the past and it was therefore encouraging that businesses

are seeking to avail of rural funding opportunities in addition to those who have successfully applied before.

A post project evaluation would be completed within 12 months of completion of the scheme and part of this process would determine if the scheme had led to job creation.

On Thursday 1st May 2025, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir, and the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, visited one of the successful applicant businesses in Ards and North Down (Strangford Lough Activity Centre) to celebrate the completion of the Scheme.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the above report.

Alderman Adair proposed an alternative recommendation, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council write to DEARA thanking them for the delivery of the Rural Business Development scheme and request that funding be allocated annually to the scheme going forward to support opportunities for local rural business and the development of rural main streets in our Borough.

Speaking on the alternative recommendation, Alderman Adair advised that the scheme had come at a time when it was most needed with many businesses describing it as a lifeline. Councillor Edmund agreed, explaining of how £101k had gone into 31 rural businesses across the borough.

Councillor McCollum commended Alderman Adair's championing of the scheme.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the alternative recommendation be adopted and Council write to DEARA thanking them for the delivery of the Rural Business Development scheme and request that funding be allocated annually to the scheme going forward to support opportunities for local rural business and the development of rural main streets in our Borough.

14. BALLYGOWAN PLAY AND EXPLORE PARK (SMALL SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME) (FILE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that as members would be aware under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme a Walking Path at Moss Road Park was proposed and agreed for Ballygowan.

Since the previous update on this project, there had been several progressions and enhancements made.

It was previously agreed that a new older children's play provision for Ballygowan at the same site of the Walking and Running Path. Officers from both departments (Regeneration and Parks) had been working together to create a project that integrates both schemes, aiming to achieve greater outcomes for the residents and visitors of Ballygowan.

Play AND Explore Park

The Play AND Explore Park was an exciting project at Moss Road Park, located directly behind the Recycling Centre in Ballygowan.

The Play AND Explore Park would include a walking and running path, and an older children's play provision.

The project would be delivered in two phases:

- Phase 1 - the development of a 1km walking and running path (Regeneration led)
- Phase 2 – the installation of an older children's play provision (Parks led)

Phase 1 – Walking and Running Path

The new walking and running path would surround the football pitches and would weave through existing trees and regain access through areas which were currently overgrown. The new path would create a loop that welcomes users of all ages to enjoy, encouraging outdoor activity, promoting health and wellbeing, whilst promoting an active lifestyle for all.

The path would provide the opportunity for parkrun, inviting individuals and families to engage in regular outdoor exercise and enjoy the benefits of community fitness.



Phase 2 – Older Children's Play Provision

Ards and North Down Play Strategy 2021- 2032 highlighted the need for older children provision in Ballygowan, that was proposed at Moss Road.

There were a range of options to be considered for the older children's play provision such as a MUGA, Skate Park, Pump Track or Parkour.

The Older Children's Play Provision would be managed and delivered by officers in the Parks Department.

In addition to the Walking and Running Path, and the older children's play provision, the site would also include the creation of a car park, which would facilitate 15 car parking spaces, wildflower planting, seating, signage and picnic benches.

Public Engagement

A public engagement event took place on Monday 28th April in Ballygowan Community Centre from 4pm-7pm. Members of the public were invited to come along and review the design for the Walking Trail and have their say on the preferred choice of Older Children's Play Provision. The closing date for responses was Monday 19th May 2025.

22 members of the public attended the engagement event, all the responses received were very positive and complimentary of the proposed projects. A minor change to the design of the Walking Trail was implemented following the public engagement, this included the relocation of some of the seating benches to locations with improved views.

Next Steps

The works package for Phase 1 of the project was nearing completion and would be issued to the Council's appointed Minor Works Contractors for cost submission, it was estimated that would take approximately 3-4 weeks. Following appointment, a start date onsite would be agreed with the successful contractor.

It should be noted that the Habitat Regulations Assessment did not include any time limit conditions.

It was envisaged works would commence onsite Summer 2025 for Phase 1 and 2.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this information.

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

Alderman Adair spoke of the many great benefits to the scheme, stating that small settlement funds made a difference in rural communities who oftentimes had to wait longer for funding opportunities than cities and towns. He gave thanks to Michelle McIlveen MLA and Councillor Libby Douglas for all their efforts.

Councillor Morgan agreed and commended the work of all involved in the programme, as did the Chair (Councillor McCracken).

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

15. CHAMBER GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (FILE RDP60)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing as members would be aware the Council agreed an annual grant assistance programme to support each of the City and Town Centre Chambers of Commerce/Trade (the chamber).

The programme offers financial support to the chambers to help them develop in three key areas:

1. Capacity Building – initiatives aimed at growing the chamber

2. City/Town Development – initiatives aimed at increasing the town/ city profile.
3. Administration Support – for chamber activity.

The grant assistance programme funds 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £15,000. The Chamber must cover any further costs exceeding £15,000.

Grant Assistance Programme 2024-2025

Each of the chambers were required to submit a monitoring report to detail the outcomes of the grant assistance programme, please see below:

Bangor

The grant assistance programme had assisted Bangor Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	Membership has continued to grow, and is helped and promoted via the Business Awards, coffee mornings, events, and being seen to promote the businesses. Promoting Bangor as a place to do business along with representing the businesses. The increase in membership is a testament to the value placed on the chamber especially when businesses are cross-cutting.
City Development	Representing and being a voice for Bangor is delivered via events, meeting with statutory agents and promoting Bangor. Various initiatives and events delivered including sponsoring the ambassadors from SERC at popular events, Christmas activity, Business Awards and marketing. The Business Awards are pivotal to recognising the hard work and dedication of the business community.
Administration Support	A City Centre office which creates a hub for the chamber and offers a drop-in business support service.

Comber

The grant assistance programme had assisted Comber Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	Comber Chamber had static growth in membership but continued to provide support to active participating members. Skills and training events such Networking Skills, Social Media training, Digital Marketing Masterclasses. Engagement with Comber Regeneration Group with Chamber representatives attending monthly meetings. Chamber supporting Comber Regeneration Group in its bid to win Ulster in Bloom.
Town Development	Promotion of key events such as Comber Earlies Festival (engagement in Passport Scheme). Advertising hoarding contract secured to promote the town and promote 'Love Local Comber', this was also utilised in the lead up to Christmas events. Engaged in wider national promotion, running articles in the Belfast Telegraph, focusing features on local traders.

	Inclusion in the Ards Business Awards – engagement with the Newtownards Chamber led to the extension of the boundary to include Comber, providing Comber businesses an opportunity to be recognised and allowing the Chamber to support the awards. This should encourage entrants from Comber, and help to showcase the town, and promote the local businesses.
Administration Support	Administrative support including data analysis, monthly chamber board meetings, social media account management etc. This support has allowed the chamber to explore funding opportunities such as Go Succeed; it has also allowed the chamber to engage with Newry BID team to discuss the possibility of becoming a BID district.

Donaghadee

The grant assistance programme had assisted Donaghadee Community Development Association to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	Meet with new businesses and signpost to support agencies (three new businesses opened within the town). Conducting surveys with existing businesses to understand their training and support needs. Up-to-date website and social media platforms. Public Meeting held regarding car parking for business community, very well attended.
Town Development	Events – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop Local • Christmas Activity • Summer Festival (over 20,000 attendees) Engaged in a programme of environmental improvements with Donaghadee winning Ulster in Bloom for the fourth year. Ongoing promotion of the town via local newspaper advertising. Engagement with local government and central government officers for town centre development support. Attendance at Town Advisory Group meetings. Response to public consultations such as Active Travel.
Administration Support	Ongoing membership records. Weekly information reel released on website and social media. Introduced a quarterly newsletter distributed to every home. Established a new group 'Creative Donaghadee' to promote creative arts in the town. Administrative support such as attending meetings, financial reporting, etc.

Hollywood

The grant assistance programme had assisted Hollywood Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	<p>The President's Awards have greatly increased Chamber recognition and public interaction. Membership has steadily grown.</p> <p>Monthly meetings with speakers have fostered inclusivity, allowing members to participate as their schedule permits.</p> <p>Updated website which features a current business directory, serving as a valuable resource for potential members.</p>
Town Development	<p>Animation – during December entertainment is provided on Saturdays leading up to Christmas and on Christmas Eve to enhance the festive atmosphere of the town. Feedback from retail and hospitality members has indicated that this initiative encourages more shopping outside city centres.</p> <p>A social media brief was issued to all members to ensure correct branding and promotion of businesses through the chamber's platforms.</p> <p>Support for activities organised by other groups that aim to increase foot traffic in the town.</p>
Administration Support	<p>Social media engagement through videos, interviews etc.</p> <p>Administrative support to ensure clear communication, information dissemination, meetings, networking events.</p> <p>Newsletter template for further promotion of the chamber.</p>

Newtownards

The grant assistance programme had assisted Newtownards Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	<p>There has been an increase in membership, the board setup recruitment task forces and actively encourages board members to take it in turns to visit local businesses and spread awareness of the chamber.</p> <p>More proactive engagement with businesses with less focus on social media output.</p> <p>Meetings and networking events with local businesses to deliver training and social events, which was very well received from attendees.</p> <p>The chamber also targeted larger producers in the area, notably Mash Direct and Rich Sauces. The relationship has started to build, and the chamber would like to think that they can get more support in the upcoming year.</p>
Town Development	<p>The main areas of progress for the chamber in 2024/25 was the Christmas market which was held on Main Street in Newtownards. This brought a variety of businesses into the town and provided an excellent family fun day for all. It was noted from traders that this was a very busy day for trading, with members in the hospitality end commenting that they were benefiting from the increase in footfall in the town.</p> <p>The Halloween and Christmas passport scheme was again a hit and helped spread the word about the chamber and encouraged businesses to get involved.</p>

	Social media posts were a hot topic, and the chamber continued to have a good following on Facebook and Instagram. The other focus for the chamber was the business awards which were the first to be held since 2019. The chamber worked very hard to put on an amazing event.
Administration Support	Administration support to deliver the various chamber functions.

The information above clearly demonstrates the support this grant programme offers each chamber and highlights the ongoing need for this continued support.

Grant Assistance Programme 2025-2027

As members may be aware the five chambers have recently united to form Ards and North Down Business Forum.

This new Forum was set to provide a unified and powerful voice for businesses across the Borough, promoting action, collaboration, and representation on key issues impacting the local economy.

The creation of the Forum reflects the shared commitment of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Donaghadee, and Comber Chambers to champion the interests of their members and the wider business community. By leveraging their collective influence, the Forum would ensure that the needs and contributions of businesses are recognised and prioritised in decisions that shape the borough's future.

Following discussions with members of the Forum and Council Officers, it was hoped that the grant assistance programme would not only support the individual chamber but also support and facilitate initiatives led by the Forum.

Considering this, it was recommended that the grant assistance programme and submitted Business Plan was extended to a two-year period instead of one whilst maintaining the annual grant claim of £15,000, subject to the normal rate setting process.

A two-year Business Plan submitted by each chamber should encompass larger outcomes and achievements, whilst providing sufficient time to achieve these objectives. It would provide the Forum with sufficient time to establish itself and foster collaboration on shared outcomes. Streamlining the process would promote efficiency and a focus on long-term success.

The grant assistance award of £15,000 per annum would remain the same.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to proceed with a 2-Year Grant Assistance Programme, subject to the rate setting process, whereby the Business Plan expands over a two-year period, but the level of grant drawn down annually remains the same (£15,000).

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

Councillor Gilmour spoke of the good work carried out by Chambers of Commerce across towns and cities, explaining that she would not have been so aware of all their efforts until her time as Mayor in 2023-24 and was happy to propose given their work in betterment for the borough.

Councillor McCollum was very positive about the various Chambers of Commerce and the community of traders that collaborated together on shared projects, having had experience in working with Donaghadee. The ability to have one voice across these different Chambers would be advantageous for cohesion. Initially, Councillor McCollum believed that there may have been some extra funding born from the establishment of a forum though this was not the case which may mean less money for each of the Chambers.

The Head of Regeneration welcomed approval of the programme, explaining that it would give the various Chambers a strategic opportunity and he would been keen, if possible to do collaborate with them to look at any possibility of additional budgets. Councillor Hennessy gave thanks on behalf of the Donaghadee Development Community Association, advising that funding had been crucial for growth whilst allowing for the creation of a varied program of events and initiatives.

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

16. CAPITAL PROJECTS HALF YEARLY UNIT PLAN REPORT **(FILE 160127)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching quarter report. The report detailed Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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

Reporting Approach

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

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

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service contributes to all outcomes outlined in our Service & Delivery Framework.

Service Delivery Framework	Outcome Contributed to
Project Prioritisation: Contribute to the achievement of the economic, environmental and social corporate priorities through the prioritisation of capital projects, creating placemaking opportunities to support and attract new businesses increasing footfall in the Borough and secure Best Value for Money (BVfM) for stakeholders.	1,2,3,4,5,6
Structured Project Delivery: Utilising best practice tools and techniques recognised by Central Government, HM Treasury and Project Delivery Professionals, such as the Five Case Model, NEC Contracts, PRINCE 2, the Capital Handbook, MAG Design Reviews, Stakeholder Engagement, Community Participation, Equality and Sustainability Screening, and lessons learned from post project evaluations.	1,2,4,5,6,7
Funding Partnerships: Actively provide support and guidance to Council Directorates and Service Units during and or directly the application process to secure funding from various public sector departments and external sources to deliver our strategic capital projects to drive the economy and attract new visitors, businesses, and residents.	1,2,3,4,7
Innovation & Technology: Strive to become a high-performing organisation by embracing technology, implementing innovative solutions, and ensuring officers are well trained and supplied with the necessary resources to deliver exceptional service.	1,2,3,4,7
Robust Governance: Implementing and promoting robust governance procedures across Council Directorates, emphasising the importance of risk management to effectively manage the complex and challenging situations that arise in the delivery of capital projects within Local Government and the Public Sector.	1,2,3,4,5,7

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- **Ward Park:** Contractor procurement for this phase was progressing schedule for release next quarter. Stakeholder engagement remained an integral part of the programme, fostering co-design elements that ensure the community had

a meaningful voice in shaping the redevelopment. In-person consultations had been complemented by the use of Citizen Lab allowing ongoing engagement, feedback, and collaboration with the public. This approach ensured transparency, inclusivity, and a shared vision for the future of Ward Park.

- **Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment:** Significant progress was being made on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment following the appointment of Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for the BYC Watersports Centre and Pickie Fun Park. Stakeholder engagement has been integral to every aspect of the project, involving key stakeholder groups, community organisations, businesses, and environmental advocates to ensure their input shapes a shared vision for the redevelopment. In addition to targeted consultations, we have engaged with residents and the wider community through public information sessions, providing updates on proposals, the project vision, and progress in transforming the waterfront.
- **Bangor Castle:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, fostering co-design elements that ensure the community has a meaningful voice in shaping the redevelopment. In-person consultations are in the process of being planned for the next quarter and likely to take place June/July 2025.
- **Newtownards Citizen Hub:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, with targeted events planned for week commencing 9 June 2025 as the design progresses through to stage 2.
- **Whitespots:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, with targeted events under developed related to pre planning and planning stages.

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- **Capital Sustainability Policy Draft:** Recognising Council's objective to become more environmentally sustainable and resilient, the Head of Strategic Capital Development had drafted a Capital Sustainability Policy. This policy promoted sustainable practices in project delivery and was set to be adopted by all directorates. By embedding sustainable initiatives such as Passivhaus, PAS2080 and BREEAM standards into capital projects from the early design and tender stages, we align with Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.
- **Newtownards Citizens Hub:** The design team had been appointed and the project has achieved Stage 1 sign off. Council has issued the tender to appoint directly Passivhaus certifier to ensure and sign off the design teams and contractors delivery to ensure Passivhaus compliance.
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** This remained a significantly important project with Passivhaus and net zero carbon targets written in to the established brief specification agreed with our partners DoF

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- **Bangor Waterfront:** Following the appointment of the Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for both BYC Watersports Centre and Pickie Fun Park, momentum was building on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment. We are currently out to tender for an ICT to deliver the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm which would transform five-character areas along the 2 mile stretch of coastline. This project would play a pivotal role in advancing the strategic objectives of the broader redevelopment programme, aligning with Council and Belfast Region City Deal's goal "to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the whole region and deliver more and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities".
- **Bangor Castle:** This project OBC development has established a preferred option to be developed to convert the castle into a hotel providing significant economic benefits to the borough
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** With our partner organisation DoF this remain a major and significant economic regeneration project bring two organising and its combined 800 administration staff into the heart of Bangor City.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and has begun onsite.
- **Whitespots Country Park –** Successful transition to RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:

- **Social Value:** As part of the procurement process, we are integrating social initiatives in our public tenders for construction and design services. These initiatives can help to promote community well-being, enhance social value, and support local development by:
 - Promoting & Creating Local Employment Opportunities
 - Supporting Skills Development through training & apprenticeship programmes
 - Encourage Social Inclusion
 - Enhance Community Benefits by delivering additional benefits such as improved public spaces, community facilities, and services.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and has begun onsite.
- **Greenway Comber to Newtownards:** The majority of the route has achieved planning permission
- **Portavogie 3G Pitch:** Planning approval progressing.
- **Multi Use 3G Pitch Ards Peninsula:** Design Team appointed.

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- **Cross Directorate Collaboration:** The successful ongoing initiative of the Capital Projects Advisory Group (CPAG), chaired by the Head of Strategic Capital Development, continues to enable comprehensive engagement, sharing best practice and synergy across all Council Services. CPAG facilitates the sharing of information about work at hand, and lessons learned on all current and planned Capital Works.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

1. **Significant delays in project delivery due to challenges posed by the Procurement, Planning, Land Acquisition and Stakeholder Engagement processes e.g. legal challenges and statutory consultee responses.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Preparation of appropriate project information / documentation based on a clearly defined brief and business case in line with the Structured Project Delivery as detailed in our Service Objectives and Delivery Framework.
- Applying lessons learnt to ensure the planning application prepared by the ICT contains sufficient information to satisfy potential queries posed by Statutory Consultees.
- Actively contribute to stakeholder engagement, transparent communication and community participation at an early stage.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements, processes, and procedures

2. **Budget: Significant additional costs (forecast or incurred) above allocated budget with potential impact on project delivery, benefits realisation, and Value for Money.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Apply internal governance procedures to monitor and report on identified issues.
- Regularly review and maintain Individual Project Risk Registers and Cost Report with regular reporting to the Project Board.
- Test investment decisions via business cases (OBC & FBC) & Implement 5 case model.
- Appropriately test Strategic Need and Economic Viability at an early stage.
- Regularly monitoring budgetary forecasts in conjunction with appointed design teams.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements and incorporate lessons learnt.

3. Unplanned need to support delivery of non-strategic capital projects impacting on delivery of strategic capital programme of works.

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Increase awareness by participating at forums such as CPAG. Adopt consistent approach to capital delivery across the organisation by implementing best practice and sharing lessons learned.
- Develop and maintain collaborative relationships across all Directorates to review and confirm anticipated pipeline of capital works (irrespective of scale / scope / complexity).

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
No KPI's considered at risk within 2024 - 2025				

RECOMMENDED that this report is noted.

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

17. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL 28 MAY 2025

17.1 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”

Alderman McDowell, in speaking on the Notice Of Motion, advised Members that since 2015, the Council had a greater role in creating jobs and economic development and they must be a leader and facilitator in the creation of jobs. He had raised the lack of business accommodation and the lack of opportunity for locating or relocating businesses. Due to this, non-domestic rates space was declining which was a misfortune, especially given the fact that the Ards and North Down Borough had been ranked second amongst NI Local Government areas for the percentage of residents with higher level skills.

Most indicators showed the Borough was the worst performing Council area with regard to economic development, lowest productivity, lowest Gross Value Added (GVA – good and services minus the costs of raw materials). It was the only Council area where GVA was decreasing with medium wages in the area being 44% lower than Belfast. It also housed the lowest manufacturing jobs, Invest NI companies with a low business start-up rate and low export activity. These issues were compounded by the fact that there was a lack of accommodation for new businesses or those expanding.

Over 57% of residents were employed outside of the borough which added to commuting and congestion issues. There was a marked increase on the number of young people leaving for University and not returning home due to the lack of quality jobs in the area. All these issues amalgamated into what Alderman McDowell described as a need for urgent action. This Notice of Motion was an opportunity to fix problems and those highlighted in the DfE Minister's report. It set the stage for a new local economic partnership with £4.2m for funding with Council over the next four years with aims of increased productivity, better jobs, regional balance as well as local balance and assisted in decarbonisation with the reduction of commuting with the Green Economy helping fund Councils to reach CO2 targets. The Motion sought not to forget smaller towns where many businesses were also located. Whilst retail and hospitality were important, high-tech jobs should be given priority given that each one created two to five jobs in local services and retail.

Alderman McDowell implored the Council to consider these issues as a top priority, explaining that failure to do so would result in the loss of more jobs with non-domestic rate spacing decreasing further and future generations continuing the trend to leave the Borough and not return.

Councillor McCollum as seconder, commended Alderman McDowell for the Notice of Motion which encapsulated the problems faced in the Borough whilst seeking a collective, sustained and focused effort. Given the nature of the indicators Alderman McDowell described, it was depressing to think of such a beautiful Borough having such issues. With an aging population, there was certainly a need for younger families to have a reason to stay close and contribute to the local economy. As the new Mayor for 2025-26, Councillor McCollum had a theme of belonging that she wanted to see embedded as a whole with local children in local schools and shops filled by local neighbours. The Notice of Motion was not about raising non-domestic rates but creating prosperity.

Alderman Adair commended both Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCollum on the Notice of Motion.

Councillor Gilmour, whilst agreeing that there had been some very valid points, spoke of some of the inspiring businesses and sectors in the Borough such as Agri-food and Lakeland Dairies, the various distilleries, Clandeboye Yoghurts and Mash Direct. There were also innovating businesses such as Vikela, Film & TV opportunities and SERCs provision of training programs. Council Officers had tried to be proactive where they could, such as with the plot of land along the Comber Road. Peter Martin MLA had raised issues regarding, 'locked land,' such as that which was tied with Invest NI. Some of it had been held for over ten years and should be freed for use. That said, Councillor Gilmour was mindful of the burden already on officers with regard to an ever-growing to-do list.

Councillor Blaney shared the same sentiments, that he agreed there was a need for space but was concerned of the looming workload and hoped the LEP might alleviate some of the cumbrance.

Alderman Armstrong Cotter was also aware of land in Newtownards held by Invest NI that had not been released and explained that although there was a need to protect green fields, there was also a priority to develop and grow. There had been an instance where a company that was expanding could not source land in the area and had since become a global success.

Alderman McDowell thanked Members for their contributions and regarded Councillor Gilmour's comments as positive and truthful whilst adding that his gloomy representation in the Notice of Motion was not in any way a reflection on such fantastic companies but instead a way to facilitate further growth and opportunities in the future. It was a strategic vision that included towns and settlements who he wished to bring along on the journey.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

18. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

[The meeting entered into recess at 21:02, recommencing at 21:15. Councillor McCollum left the meeting during the recess]

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

19. TENDER EXTENSION FOR ACADEMY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (FILE RDP47)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was asked to approve the contract extension for provision of the Academy for People with Disabilities. Following satisfactory service it is recommending a period of extension is awarded from June 2025 to June 2026 to the NOW Group.

20. TENDER EXTENSION FOR TRANSPORT ACADEMY (FILE RDP47)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was asked to approve the contract extension for provision of the Transport Academy. Following satisfactory service it is recommending a period of extension is awarded from June 2025 to June 2026 to DFPP Ltd Trading as People 1st.

21. LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP – SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN (FILE ED136) (Appendices VIII-IX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was asked to consider and approve the minutes from the LEP Pre Working group meeting held on 16 May 2025. They include an update on financial elements of the LEP and also company details of the membership which have not yet been approved. It is recommended that Council approve the minutes.

22. BANGOR MARINA Q4 2024-2025 (FILE 141671)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was presented with an update on the performance of Bangor Marina and Harbour which contains sensitive financial information. The recommendation that the report is noted.

23. PICKIE FUN PARK PERIOD 2 2024-2025 (FILE DEVP1)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was presented with an update on the performance of Pickie Funpark for Period 2 of the 2024-2025 year which contains sensitive financial information. The recommendation that the report is noted.

24. EXPLORIS PERIOD 2 2024-2025 (FILE DEVP3)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was presented with an update on the performance of Exploris for Period 2 of the 2024-2025 year which contains sensitive financial information. The recommendation that the report is noted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 21:24.

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 17 June 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cochrane

Alderman: Brooks McIlveen
McRandal Smith

Councillors: Chambers Kennedy
Gilmour (Zoom) McBurney
Irvine, S McCracken
Irvine, W Moore

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Alderman Graham, Councillor Irwin and Councillor Thompson.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Alderman McIlveen – Item 17 - Whitespots Country Park – Land Acquisition.

NOTED.

3. YEAR END OUTTURN REPORT 2024/25 (FILE FIN45) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that this was the final 2024/25 strategic budget report and set out the major variances for expenditure and income for the entire financial year. The report showed a surplus of £1,332k for the year which would ensure the Council's General Fund was above the minimum threshold of 7.5% of gross expenditure as required by the Reserves Policy.

In addition, for Members' information, the report detailed the transfers to and from the major fund categories in the Earmarked Fund (EMF). This showed that the strategic funds now represented 82% of the total EMF.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the strategic budget report and approves the fund transfers outlined in it.

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

The proposer queried the insurance costs which appeared to indicate that a figure of £538,000 for claims paid was above budget but the Head of Finance would check those details and report back.

Alderman Smith queried the reported £499,000 statutory interest and the Head of Finance advised that this related to land disposals and the VAT reclaim. In response to a further query, the officer explained that current level of Council's reserves funds would be reported to the Audit Committee next week.

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

4. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT (Appendix II – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that in March 2023 Council agreed to adopt the NIPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for the Local Government sector.

The purpose of the MCHP was to provide a standardised approach to dealing with customer complaints across the public sector in NI. In particular, the aim was to implement a standardised and consistent process for customers to follow which made it simpler to complain, ensured staff and customer confidence in complaints handling and encouraged public bodies to make best use of lessons learned from complaints.

As part of the new process organisations required clear systems to be in place to act on issues identified in complaints.

As a minimum, organisations had to:

- seek to identify the root cause of complaints
- take action to reduce the risk of recurrence
- systematically review complaints performance reports to improve service delivery

As part of the new MCHP, the Council was required to provide an annual report to NIPSO and publish on its website for customers to view. The report was required clearly document:

- the volume of complaints that had been received

- whether the council had dealt with the complaints in line with the new MCHP
- any lessons learned from the complain
- any actions taken to ensure the complaints did not recur.

In order to make the details more user friendly to read, officers had created a 'complaints dashboard' which showed key metrics like number of complaints, categories, resolution status and response times. Appendix 1 showed the dashboard for 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

It was important to learn from complaints and therefore officers had also documented the lessons learned. This was written in plain English and highlighted recurring issues, root causes, and actionable insights to improve processes and prevent future problems. Appendix 2 documented the complaint summaries, lessons learned and action plan for 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree to submit this report to NIPSO.

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

Councillor McCracken felt it was very good practice to learn from complaints and it was very credible to see how officers had identified those and the learning points over the course of the year. He praised what was an open and progressive approach.

Alderman McRandal sought clarity on Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and how they were defined and the Head of Administration explained that Stage 1 complaints were dealt with in a short timeframe but if the complainant was not satisfied with the outcome they could then escalate it to Stage 2 for further scrutiny by a more senior officer. If there was no resolution at that point, the complaint would be referred to NIPSO.

In a further query, Alderman McRandal asked why, on average, the 5 day target for dealing with Stage 1 complaints had not been met and the Officer explained that this was due to the complexity of those complaints and the level of investigation required. The complainant was informed at the time if the process was not going to meet the deadline but overall the response times were good.

In response to queries from Councillor Chambers, the officer clarified that complaints that came through elected representatives were also included in the figures. The officer provided further clarity in relation to complaints that were categorised as 'resolved'. This was in situations where an amicable resolution was found.

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

5. **DRAFT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26** (Appendix III – IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Council had a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) each year, by 30 June, that set out at least one of the main short-term issues (improvement objectives) it wanted to improve for people living and working in the Borough during the year ahead.

Our Performance Improvement Plan for 2025/26 (**Appendix 1**) set out four improvement objectives. Whilst the Performance Improvement Plan focused specifically on the key areas identified for improvement this year, we were still seeking to bring about improvement in other areas. The plan was not designed to describe all of the Council's day to day work.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2025/26

Improvement Objective 1	We will increase economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
Improvement Objective 2	We will reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
Improvement Objective 3	We will improve wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality
Improvement Objective 4	We will be a high-performing organisation

The selection of the improvement objectives was originally informed by:

- Priorities/ strategic actions identified in the recently developed Corporate Plan 2024-28, which was based on input and feedback from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders and in line with the Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017-2032).
- Areas of improvement identified during the Budget and Service Planning process and Residents Survey conducted late 2023.
- Feedback from PIP Survey and Focus Groups in 2024.

and had been further supplemented by information derived from:

- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2025
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2025.

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

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

Key Conclusions from Consultation

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

The findings from the focus groups showed that the majority of residents (94% or more in all cases) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objectives. These findings aligned with the view of consultees, with majority support for each of the objectives.

'Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses' was considered to be the most important of the Council's objectives, followed by 'We will improve wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality'. Even though focus group participants ranked improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality as the second most important objective, 100% were supportive of the Council implementing this objective. Again, consultees prioritised 'Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses' and 'improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality' in the same order as the focus group participants.

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

The consultation had also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of each objective and to identify other areas of focus within each of the performance improvement objectives. In further validation of the Council's improvement objectives, the findings from both consultation elements were closely aligned.

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

FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY CONSULTATION RESULTS				
		Very supportive/ Supportive	Not very supportive/ Not at all supportive	Not answered
Improvement Objective 1 We will increase economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses	Focus Group Online	94% 87%	6% 13%	- -
Improvement Objective 2 We will reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	Focus Group Online	94% 74%	6% 26%	- -
Improvement Objective 3 We will improve wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	Focus Group Online	100% 90%	0% 10%	- -
Improvement Objective 4 We will be a high-performing organisation	Focus Group Online	97% 79%	3% 21%	- -

A detailed Consultation Report was attached at Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 attached at Appendix 1 for publication.

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

Alderman Smith noted that the feedback was positive and had endorsed the four objectives very strongly. He felt that four was a fair number for the amount of focus groups included in that process but queried whether officers had felt that 39 responses to the Council survey provided a reasonable and fair representation.

The Head of Transformation and Performance explained that the Council followed the same process every year and this was undertaken by an external consultant which had expressed no concern over the sample size.

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

6. NI VETERANS AWARDS 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that as a proud signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Council had been invited to attend the Northern Irish Veterans Awards 2025. This was an initiative that recognised the outstanding achievements of our veterans, reservists, and cadets who were making a real difference in civilian life.

Now in its 4th year, the NI Veterans Awards was more than just a celebration – it was a brilliant opportunity to engage, connect and network with the wider Armed Forces community across Northern Ireland.

The event took place on Thursday 16th October 2025 at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Belfast

The evening brought together veterans, service leavers, reservists, cadet force adult volunteers, and Forces-friendly employers to share inspiring stories and celebrate success.

The cost for this event was £90 + VAT.

It was recommended that Councillor Cummings attend the event on behalf of the Council in his roles as Veteran Champion.

For more information, please visit www.veteransawardsireland.com.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the report, and that Councillor Cummings attends this event in his role as Veterans Champion.

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

7. **SECTION 75 OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT, 1998 AND SECTION 49A OF THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ORDER (DDO) 2006 - ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024 TO 2025 (FILE EQ4)**
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) had requested that all Councils complete a template to demonstrate progress on its implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties of The Northern Ireland Act 1998 and progress on implementation of positive duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006.

The completed report was to be returned electronically to the Commission by 31 August 2025. This report (Appendix 1) covered the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. There was a meeting on 18 June 2025 to detail the purpose and content of an Annual Progress Report. Should anything have arisen from this event that would cause the draft report to change, any revisions would be presented at June Council meeting for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the Annual Progress Report for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 as detailed and forwarded to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

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

8. **ANDBC UPDATED BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN AND POLICY (FILE 260506 – BUSINESS CONTINUITY)**
(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Business Continuity Management was a process that involved organisations identifying their vulnerabilities to business interruption and making arrangements to reduce risk and mitigate against the effects of any disruptions.

The Business Continuity Plan (BCP, the Plan) provided overall guidance to Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC, the Council) Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service Team and Service Unit Managers to build resilience to effectively carry out Business Continuity Management.

An independent external review of Council's BCP and training was completed with Officers in February and March 2025. Following review and training and advice from Audit, Council's BCP had been updated to reflect learnings and feedback received.

Updates Made

Following training and the independent review it was felt that the Business Continuity Plan was very focused on emergency planning and as Members were aware,

Council currently had a separate and diligent process for emergency planning, albeit both emergency planning and business continuity are interlinked.

On this occasion, as the Plan was completely restructured and updated to remove aspects of emergency planning, it was not appropriate to have changes tracked. However, for ease of reference for Members, the main changes had been detailed below:

- Previous Plan was broken down into four phases: Emergency Response, Emergency Management, Business Continuity and Recovery and Resumption. Updated Plan focuses on three phases: Prepare, Respond and Recover. This allowed the Plan to be more focused on business continuity.
- Key Leadership roles now detailed in new Plan specifically focused to business continuity.
- All emergency planning focused detail had been taken out of Plan as this was captured under Emergency Planning. Where appropriate, links had been made to Emergency Planning documentation.

The fundamental aspects of the Plan such as the aim, scope, plan ownership, role of Emergency Management Team, Plan governance, business impact analysis process, risk management, Plan activation and operational control all remained the same.

Any changes made to Business Continuity Policy had been highlighted in yellow for ease of reference for Members.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the attached updated Business Continuity Policy and Plan for Council.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith welcomed what he felt was a comprehensive report while Councillor McCracken noted that electronic communications was a main conduit for managing emergency responses. He asked if there was an alternative plan if electronic communications went down and the Head of Transformation and Performance advised that the Council's Disaster Recovery Plan would apply in that scenario and alternative means were detailed in that. She acknowledged that it should have been referenced within the document.

The Director advised that there was also means for backup in terms of electricity supply through the use of generators for example, again detailed within the Disaster Recovery Plan.

In a further query, Councillor McCracken referred to previous challenges in terms of a shortage of sandbags and grit. He sought reassurances that that had been addressed and the Director explained that while supplies had been replenished where possible it was the responsibility of the Department and not the Council, which could only call for further supplies.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, noted references to staff sickness in terms of impacts on business continuity. However she wondered if there was consideration for matters such as industrial action which could have more of a long term impact.

The Director referred to recent work by senior management in terms of the business continuity plan review and mitigations had been included taking in to account various scales of industrial action and the impacts on each department. He explained that each service had its own tailored response.

Councillor W Irvine appreciated response plans needed to be updated regularly. He asked if any learning had been considered following the responses to recent storms and the discovery of an unexploded WWII bomb in Newtownards.

The officer explained that the Business Continuity Plan had been updated on the back of an audit recommendation but that officers had taken the opportunity to make significant changes which included stripping out all of the duplication with Emergency Planning. The process had also included scenario training with Corporate Leadership, Heads of Service and Service Unit Management teams which had incorporated the events that Councillor W Irvine had referred to.

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

9. HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORTS (Appendix VII – XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Performance reports for the following:

- a) Community Planning (Report attached)
- b) Corporate Communications (Report attached)
- c) Finance (Report attached)
- d) Strategic Transformation and Performance (Report attached)
- e) Administration (Report attached)
- f) Human Resources (Report attached)

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

In relation to 9(d), Alderman Smith had noted the anticipated challenges in terms of recruiting a new Digital Services Manager and he asked what contingencies were in place if that was going to be an issue.

The Director explained an alternative plan had been identified but given it related to confidential staffing matters he would provide further details once the meeting had gone into committee.

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

10. **QUARTERLY REPORT ON EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS (SECTION 75 OF THE N.I. ACT 1998) 1 APRIL 2025- 31 JUNE 2025 (FILE EQ33)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that in accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme, a progress report was required to be submitted to the Council's Corporate Services Committee every quarter. This ensured the Council complied with its obligations to meet its equality and good relations duties and responsibilities, as identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Due to resourcing issues this report listed the actions of Council officers to meet the statutory duties since 1 June 2024 (1 year rather than quarterly update).

Consultative Panel

In this reporting period three meetings of the consultative panel took place, in August 2024, January 2025 and March 2025. The panel members reviewed a total of 49 Council policies, the suggestions and comments had been sent to Officers for consideration and had been added to the screening forms.

A further meeting was scheduled for 3rd June 2025 where the panel would discuss their views on the current EQIA. Members would be invited to meet the panel as per the constitution at the next meeting on 23rd September 2025.

Disability Forum

The Disability Forum met in September 2024, March 2025 and June 2025, where they discussed the ongoing issues with disability throughout the Borough. The forum had been asked to participate in carrying out disability audits with Open House festival. It was anticipated that the forum would be able to identify barriers and improve user experience for those attending the events with a disability.

Screening of Council policies

The Internal Screening Panel met in September and November 2024, January, March and May 2025. Officers from across the Council directorates screened 57 Council policies. This enabled comments to be received, considered, and addressed.

Quarterly Consultations

The Council had a requirement within the Equality Scheme to publish the outcome of screened policies quarterly. A quarterly report would be uploaded onto the Council's website on 30th June 2025.

At the time of writing the report an EQIA was underway in relation to a request to hold an Orange Victims Day event at Ward Park Cenotaph, Bangor, 7th September 2025. This was still out for consultation until 19th June 2025. The final draft report would be submitted to the Council in July 2025 for consideration.

Equality Action Plan

The draft Equality Action plan was currently out for consultation. Feedback on the consultation would be collated and the draft Equality Action Plan amended as

appropriate to reflect comments arising from the consultation. The final Equality Action Plan would be presented to the Corporate Services Committee in September 2025.

Disability Action Plan

The draft Disability Action plan was currently out for consultation. Feedback on the consultation would be collated and the draft Disability Action Plan amended as appropriate to reflect comments arising from the consultation. The final Disability Action Plan would be presented to the Corporate Services Committee in September 2025.

Equality Scheme

The Equality Scheme had been reviewed and updated to reflect the revised Council complaints procedure, aligning it with the development of the new Equality and Disability Action Plans. Additionally, the quarterly reporting of the Section 75 Duties would now be streamlined into the annual report submitted to the ECNI after Council approval rather than quarterly updates to Corporate Services committee. This adjustment aimed to provide a more comprehensive overview within a single reporting framework.

Complaints

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

AccessAble

The contract for AccessAble was recently renewed on the 1st of October 2024, securing its provision until the 30th of September 2027. In 2024, the platform hosted 214 live guides, attracting a substantial user base of 17,116 who collectively generated an impressive 37,655 views. This was due to promotion of AccessAble in the Stoma friendly toilets throughout the Borough. Among these views, the top ten most frequently viewed guides showcased a diverse range of local points of interest, including the Bangor Bus & Rail Centre, Ards & North Down Council Offices, the Balloo Household Recycling & Environmental Info Centre, The Alderman Green Community Centre, Donaghadee Community Centre, Crawfordsburn Country Park Visitor Centre, Redburn Cemetery, Bangor Aurora Aquatic & Leisure, the Bangor High Street Guide, and Bloomfield Shopping Centre.

Following a productive meeting between the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) and the Customer Project Manager from AccessAble, several key suggestions emerged. To enhance user experience, particularly for individuals requiring specific facilities, we propose prominently featuring a direct link to Changing Places on the site. Furthermore, AccessAble has expressed interest in presenting the benefits of their services to elected members, an opportunity that can be readily arranged should members wish to explore it.

Carers Event, supporting Carers Week.

Ards and North Down Borough Council would host the annual carers event in June 2025 as per the agreed Equality Action Plan (2020 – 2025). The event was organised by SEHSCT to mark carers week. The event allowed Council to celebrate and acknowledge the work of unpaid-paid carers in the Borough. The event was for

a maximum of forty carers to take tour of the new Dementia Garden and then enjoy a light lunch in Bangor Carnegie Library.

Diversity Ambassadors

The Compliance Officer, (Equality and Disability) attended the Diversity Ambassadors group on 14th May 2025 at Pomroy Forest Park. For noting, no elected members from Ards and North Down Borough Council participated in any events during 2024-2025.

The role of Diversity Ambassadors was to work within their councils and communities to support the delivery of the regional Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan. They helped drive behavioural and cultural change across the local government sector. This role was crucial as it aimed to create a fair, accepting, and inclusive culture, which could significantly reduce instances of discrimination.

Diversity Ambassadors were expected to attend three meetings a year, which were held in face-to-face formats, typically within a council area. It would be beneficial for those elected as Diversity Ambassadors to attend these events alongside the Compliance Officer.

Safeguarding

Members were aware that a comprehensive review of Safeguarding arrangements led to the recent implementation of a revised Council Safeguarding Policy. This updated policy adopted a more robust approach concerning Clubs, Organisations utilising Council Facilities (including private hire), External Service Providers, and the use of Council lands. To facilitate effective implementation, the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) provided officers directly involved in facility hire with a condensed, user-friendly version of the policy. This concise document emphasised the key safeguarding responsibilities of the public when hiring and using our facilities. By offering a less daunting resource, we aimed to foster a greater understanding and ultimately enhance Safeguarding practices across all Council services.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Alderman McIlveen raised a query in relation to the consultative panel, noting that on previous occasion Members had been invited to a meeting annually and the last occasion was now over a year ago. He asked when Members would next receive an invitation for this and the Head of Administration explained that Members would receive an invite for the next meeting in September. She clarified that aside from the standing arrangement, there was an open invitation for Members to attend any meeting.

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

11. YEAR END PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS REPORT (FIN161)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the Prudential and Treasury Codes issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), supported by guidance issued by the Department for Communities, require the Council to approve financial policies and strategies for its capital financing and treasury management activities. As a minimum, the Council was required to receive and approve annual capital and treasury management strategies at the commencement of each year, quarterly updates and an annual report after the close of each financial year.

This report met the last requirement of an annual report for the 2024/25 financial year. The purpose of this report was to highlight performance against the Prudential Indicators (PIs) which were set for capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activities set out in the Council's annual strategies, which were approved in February 2024.

1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The PIs for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to these PIs were set out below.

Table 1.11 below summarised the total amount of capital expenditure incurred during 2024/25 compared to the original estimate approved by Council.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.11	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure 2024/25	19.406	9.525	9.881
Add Leases onto Balance Sheet	4.515	5.928	(1.413)
Total Capital Expenditure (inc. Leases)	23.921	15.453	8.468

The variance showed that the actual expenditure for the year was below the estimate by £8.5m. This was primarily due to programme slippages in the planned major capital schemes, i.e., Ward Main Development delay in starting works due to late design amendments and also the preliminary proposal for a 3G pitch at Portavogie. There were also underspends in operational budgets, such as less outlay in replacement vehicles, ICT hardware and artificial pitches.

During 2024/25 IFRS16 accounting standard was introduced. Right of Use (leased) assets, along with the liabilities would have to be accounted for. This transition provided a clearer picture of the Council's financial health by ensuring all lease obligations were visible and the financing of this capital expenditure was accounted for.

Table 1.12 below summarised how the capital expenditure for 2024/25 of £15.453m had been financed.

	Actual 2024/25
Table 1.12	£m
Capital Expenditure	15.453
Financed by:	
Grants	(4.751)
Capital Receipts	(0.804)
Revenue/Reserves	(0.508)
Balance to be met from	9.390
Borrowings	3.462
Leases	5.928

The unfinanced balance of £9.39m required was to be met from borrowings and leases. This formed part of the Capital Financing Requirement (see 1.2 below) and was financed through an annual charge for minimum revenue provision (MRP).

1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure was termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). It was simply a measure of the total cumulative historic capital expenditure which had not yet been met from either revenue or capital resources.

The CFR increases as new debt-financed capital expenditure was incurred and reduced as MRP (minimum revenue provision) was charged to revenue. See section 1.4 for further information on MRP.

Statutory guidance was that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The actual positions on the CFR and Gross Borrowing at 31 March 25 compared to the estimates set were shown in table 1.21 below.

	Estimate 31/03/25	Actual 31/03/25
Table 1.21	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	83.926	77.865
External Gross Borrowing	65.367	62.735
Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement	18.559	15.130
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£15.1m March 2025) and indicated that historic capital expenditure had been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. This had been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in the current and previous years. The position had been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018.

In order to ensure that borrowing levels were prudent over the medium term, the Council's gross external borrowing should not have, except in the short term, exceeded the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and following two financial years. The forecast CFR for 31 March 2027 (based on the Council's latest approved capital investment plan) was £93.5m. In this regard, it was considered that the Council's borrowing level at 31 March 2025 of £62.7m was prudent.

When making borrowing decisions, management would continue to work with its treasury advisors, Arlingclose, to develop the most appropriate borrowing strategy. This was expected to consider the benefits, risks, and impacts of both short-term and long-term loans, with the aim of minimising long-term interest costs.

1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

Council was legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit each year, known as the 'Authorised Limit'. In line with statutory guidance, a lower 'operational boundary' was also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit. The maximum gross borrowings, which included leasing, at any point during the year was £65.6m. This meant that Council maintained its borrowings within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year, as shown in table 1.31 below.

Table 1.31	2024/25
Operational boundary – borrowing *	£ 83.926m
Authorised limit – borrowing ^	£ 89.926m
Maximum Gross Borrowing during 2024/25	£65.578m

* **The operational boundary** – the operational boundary was the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year and is based on expenditure and cash flow modelling. Periods where the actual position was either below or over the operational boundary were acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

^ **The authorised limit** - Section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 required the Council to set an authorised limit for borrowing at the beginning of each financial year. During the year, the Council did not have the power to borrow above this level.

1.4 Capital - Revenue Budget Implications

Capital expenditure was not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead, interest payable on borrowings and MRP (minimum revenue provision), together known as capital financing costs, were charged to revenue. These financing costs were compared to the net revenue stream, i.e., the amount funded from District Rates and general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which

was made up of capital financing costs. The final position against the budget set for the 2024/25 year was set out in table 1.41 below.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.41	2024/25	2024/25	2024/25
Capital financing cost (£m)	£8.781m	£8.849m	£ (0.068) m
Net Revenue Stream	£66.196m	£66.599m	£ (0.403) m
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	13.26%	13.28%	(0.02) %

2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

Long-Term Loans During 2024/25, no new long-term loans were taken out and loan principal repayments of £2.8m were made against existing loans. This resulted in a level of long-term borrowings at 31 March 2025 of £56.9m, as shown in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.11				
Lender	Balance 01/04/24	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 31/03/25
Dept of Finance	£ 53.376m	£ -	(£ 2.775m)	£ 50.601m
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 6.275m	£ -	£ -	£ 6.275m
Totals	£ 59.651m	£ -	(£ 2.775m)	£ 56.876m

Short-Term Loans Council did not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The table below showed the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2024/25	Actual at 31/03/25
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	2%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	98%

Table 2.22			
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2024/25	Upper Limit 2024/25	Actual 2024/25
Under 12 months	0%	15%	6.3%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	5.4%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	18.5%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	23.6%
10 years and above	30%	90%	46.2%

2.3 Treasury Management - Debt Rescheduling and Average Interest Rates

Officers were not able to avail of any debt rescheduling opportunities during the year as the differential of 1% between new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates on government loans did not create any viable options. At 31 March 2025, the average interest rate for the Council's total debt portfolio was 3.87%.

2.4 Treasury Management - Investment Activity

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy were safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its investments on time, with the investment return being a secondary objective. The current investment climate continues to be one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. In line with advice provided by treasury management consultants, officers continued to implement an operational investment strategy of placing short-term investments with approved high-quality counterparties.

For the year to 31 March 2025, Council earned interest of £632k on investment deals with approved financial institutions, comparing favourably to the budget set for the year of £496k. This was due to larger than budgeted surplus cash balances. The activity for the year is summarised in table 2.31 below.

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.93%	£149,329
State Street Global Advisors	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.93%	£148,566
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£2.9m	Call A/c	4.95%	£147,423
Bank of Scotland	£2.3m	Call A/c	4.81%	£103,132
Barclays Bank	£1.6m	Call A/c	4.70%	£72,600
Santander	£1.6m	Call A/c	3.01%	£10,823
Totals				£631,873

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement included controls regarding diversification of balances among financial institutions to mitigate security risk. These limits allowed for the higher of £3m or 30% of total investments to be held with one counterparty, except for periods of up to 4 days for administrative purposes. The Council did not breach this policy during 2024/25.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts on 31 March 2025 was £12.0m. The table below showed the risk and return metrics on these investments against other NI Councils.

Table 2.32	Counterparties	Investments	
	Credit Rating	Liquidity	Rate of Return (%)
ANDBC	A+	100%	4.46%
NI Council Average	A+	59%	4.53%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Mar-25

The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days was £500k. The Council had not entered into any such investments.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

12. ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE – JUNE 2025 (FILE SUS1)
(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Roadmap to Sustainability (the Roadmap) was agreed by Council in March 2021. It has been developed to formalise the Council's commitment to becoming more sustainable and to act as a key enabler in this regard.

The Roadmap runs from the period 2021 to 2028 to coincide with 2 Corporate Plan phases. It will be updated periodically, with the accompanying Action Plan reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The first update report summarising progress against the key actions agreed in the Roadmap was provided to Council in December 2021 with further updates provided every six months since. The latest six-monthly update against actions had been prepared for Members and was attached to this report at Appendix 1.

As reported in June 2023 Corporate Committee it was the intention to review the Roadmap in line with recommendations from Deloitte. That was ongoing. Members would be updated once complete

Environmental Management System

The Council underwent its full recertification of its Environmental Management System, ISO14001, in May 2024. The auditor was content and no findings identified. We have been approved for recertification. That would be for 3 years.

We also had recurring external audits on 4 sites in April & May 2025 and demonstrated full compliance with the standard's requirements.

Climate Action Plan

Officers are currently working on a draft Climate Action Plan, this will encompass the Action Plan for the Roadmap to Sustainability. This is currently at consultation stage and a draft will be presented to Council following this.

Carbon Emissions from travel to work

A survey has been carried out to ascertain emissions from employees commuting to the workplace. Officers are analysing this data and will report the findings in due course. The COREHR system has also been updated to gather fuel type for business mileage, this will assist in making our carbon emission reporting more accurate and inform future sustainability initiatives.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

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

13. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY 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 1,000lb 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 this Council supports the installation of a fitting and permanent tribute at the Newtownards cenotaph — either through an upgrade to the existing memorial or the addition of a dedicated memorial bench — in memory of these four brave young men.

Requests that this 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 – and asks Officers to bring a report back with options and costings.

Proposed by Councillor S Irvine, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor S Irvine said he had brought the motion with a heavy heart and deep sense of duty.

He had been 16 years old and a student at Movilla High School on the day of 9th April 1990, just weeks away from sitting his GCSEs. It was a day he would never forget.

The news had broken of an horrific and cowardly attack on the Ballydugan Road near Downpatrick of an IRA landmine attack which had taken the lives of four brave Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers. John Bradley, John Birch, Stephen Smart, and Michael Adams.

Up until this attack, Councillor S Irvine had heard about the Troubles on the news; the violence, bombings and tragic loss of life but that day it had become real, all of them local lads not much older than he was at that time. He knew others who were serving at Ballykinler at the time who he would go on to play football with.

He was approached before Christmas by North Down Football Club to help in honouring the memory of these fallen soldiers. He had no hesitation and recalled that they had already been approached by the UDR Benevolent Fund in relation to tidying up the Ballydugan memorial site. Through this, they had met a survivor of the attack ahead of Remembrance Sunday 2024, and the team got to work on improving the site which included the installation of a new paved entrance.

Downpatrick RBL stepped in and commissioned the installation of a fence and gate which was a beautiful example of community collaboration and shared remembrance.

North Down FC met with the families and survivors where they agreed to raise funds for a memorial bench, crafted by a local company, and the families wishes had been central to this effort and their support meant everything. The commitment was ongoing with four cleanups per year to ensure that the memorial was maintained with care, respect and dignity and this was not a one off gesture but a long term promise to honour the memory of John, John, Stephen and Michael.

It was now time for the Council to take the next step and provide a fitting and permanent tribute at Newtownards Cenotaph either through an upgrade to the existing memorial or the addition of a dedicated memorial bench — in memory of these four young men. He asked the Council to do this not just as elected members but as representatives of a community which still felt the weight of that loss.

He further asked Officers to bring a report back with options and costings for the best way forward, adding that it was not about politics but about remembrance and respect, and ensuring that these young men who paid the ultimate price while serving their country were never forgotten.

Rising to support the motion, the seconder, Alderman McIlveen said he had nothing to add, feeling that the proposer had covered it incredibly well.

Councillor W Irvine rose to support what was a worthwhile motion and it was incumbent on Council to remember these young men who were cut down in the throes of life protecting their country. He had got to know members of the Birch family over the years and they were very dedicated to the memory of their lost loved one.

Rising to support the motion, Councillor McCracken also recalled being a similar age to the proposer when the incident occurred and while he did not know the four men, he had carried them in his heart for over 30 years.

In the mid-1990s, Councillor McCracken had served in the same company as these men, based at Ballykinler, and some of the men he served with had been on active service alongside the four soldiers. Six years after the incident when he had joined the regiment, they still spoke of it with deep shock and hushed voices and sense of profound loss was evident in their demeanour.

Every day on patrol, they would drive past the memorial at the side of Ballydugan Road and pay silent respect to fallen comrades. Their families should know that their loved ones were remembered every day by those who had served beside them.

What had made it even more poignant for Councillor McCracken, was that he had nearly joined their names on that memorial. In March 1997 he had been part of a joint patrol with the RUC. The IRA had set up a twin MK 16 mortar on a slope overlooking the Ballydugan Road. He believed it was the first time such a device had been used. The armoured Land Rovers were designed to withstand the blast of one mortar but two would have been fatal. Everyone inside the Land Rover would have been killed including himself.

The police were ahead in the patrol and had been targeted first but fortunately the mortars had been set up to target the higher body of an Army Land Rover and had gone over the police car and had exploded on the other side of the bank. The force of the blast had instantly shattered the bullet proof glass of the car. If those faceless cowards had waited just one more minute for the Land Rover to appear, then four more soldiers would have died on that same stretch that claimed the lives of John Bradley, John Birch, Stephen Smart, and Michael Adams.

He often thought of the many things he had experienced and enjoyed since he had been involved in that incident and he thought about what these four courageous young men had lost – their partners, young children left behind along with wider family members, jobs that were never experienced, sports that were never played and holidays that were never enjoyed. This was the heavy price paid and the cost was still borne by the family and friends who loved these men.

He remembered what the men had achieved. They had fought and died for the defence of our democracy and way of life with a determination that terror would not win.

They fought to defend all of our communities from all traditions, very few of whom wanted violence in our streets. When you thought of other countries across the world, ripped apart by ethno-national violence, you realised what an outstanding job the British Army and RUC did to minimise bloodshed and contain the Troubles.

Thanks to those four men, many, many other lives were saved. So we would remember them, but the army patrols out of 'Kinler' were now thankfully few and far between and the soldiers who paid silent respect as they drove past had long since put down their rifles.

While he was touched to hear that the at memorial Ballydugan Road was being tended to and would not be a forgotten tribute, he spoke of the importance of bringing the four names back to the centre of Newtownards where many of their family and friends still lived.

A memorial would allow for future generations to remember them, and to thank them for ultimately making Northern Ireland a more peaceful place.

Giving his support on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, Councillor Chambers said there was not much he could add to the debate after hearing Councillor McCracken's very poignant and emotional contribution, along with Councillor S Irvine's introduction and explanation of the motion.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Committee for the respectful and dignified way it had conducted the debate of this notice of motion. The Council had a very proud record of supporting its armed forces and it was very poignant given that Armed Forces Day was taking place at the weekend.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor S Irvine, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the notice of motion be adopted.

14. 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 W Irvine, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

9. HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORTS (CONTINUED)

****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 Director responded to a query that related to staffing matters.

NOTED.

15. REQUEST BY ORIGINS GYM TO UPGRADE DOOR ENTRY SYSTEM

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

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

The Council was asked to approve a request from Origins Gym to upgrade the existing door system to their leased premises within Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex.

It was recommended that the Council accedes to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

16. REQUEST TO USE COUNCIL LAND – DONAGHADEE HORSE RELAY EVENT 2025

(Appendix XIV – XV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Council was asked to consider a request from Donaghadee Community Development Association to use Council Land for a Horse Relay event on 6th September 2025.

The recommendation was agreed.

17. WHITESPOTS COUNTRY PARK – LAND ACQUISITION

(Appendix XVI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

Council was asked to agree to acquire 3no. areas of land which had been declared surplus and to instruct LPS to negotiate the purchase of other lands to facilitate the development of Whitespots Country Park.

The recommendation was to acquire the lands which had been declared surplus and to instruct LPS to negotiate the acquisition of additional lands from 3no. landowners to facilitate the planned development of Whitespots Country Park.

The recommendation was agreed.

18. GREENWAY - ACQUISITION OF LAND - COMBER TO FLOODGATES

(Appendix XVII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

Council was asked to agree acceptance of the Heads of Terms negotiated by LPS for land required for the Comber to Floodgates section of the Greenway and the rental figure for the use of land as a Works Compound for a five-month period; and the acquisition of the remaining lands required to complete this section of the Greenway on the basis of terms to be negotiated by LPS.

The recommendation was to agree acceptance of the Heads of Terms negotiated by LPS for the acquisition of land and rental of land for a temporary Works Compound and to acquire the remaining lands required to complete the Comber to Floodgates section of the Greenway on the basis of terms to be negotiated by LPS.

The recommendation was agreed.

19. REQUEST FROM EDUCATION AUTHORITY - LAND BESIDE VICTORIA PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYHALBERT

(Appendix XVIII – XIX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Council was asked to approve a request from the Education Authority in relation to open space beside Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert.

The recommendation was agreed.

20. REQUEST FROM ABBEY VILLA FC TO LEASE ADDITIONAL LAND

(Appendix XX – XXI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Council was asked to approve a request from Abbey Villa FC to lease additional land adjacent to land already leased to them by the Council.

The recommendation was agreed.

21. SALE OF LAND AND PROPERTY AT HAMILTON ROAD, BANGOR

(Appendix XXII – XXIV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

Council was asked to agree to advertise land and property at Hamilton Road, Bangor, for sale in Lots by Public Tender.

The recommendation was to advertise the land and property for sale as Lots by way of Public Tender as and when confirmation of an issue pertaining to the property was confirmed, indicating a willingness to accept conditional offers, subject to certain conditions.

The recommendation was agreed.

22. ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EDRMS) BUSINESS CASE

(Appendix XXV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

Council has committed to developing a Digital Strategy (a plan that outlines how we will invest in digital technology to make a wide range of Council services work better for staff, residents and partners). In order to mobilise the Data Strategy, and to progress an audit recommendation, the next stage of the process requires the development of a new Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) and supporting Corporate File Plan (CFP). Council was asked to consider the development of the System and the associated spend.

The recommendation was agreed.

23. TAX BASE DEVELOPMENT GROUP UPDATE

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

Council was asked to consider an update from this group.

The recommendation was agreed.

24. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF A PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICE FOR COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

****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)

In line with an approved Business Case, a need was identified for the provision of a proactive and preventative mental health and wellbeing service for Council employees to be given the opportunity to undergo a mental health assessment conducted by qualified professionals, providing valuable insights and tailored signposting to support, where required. The service will be inclusive, ensuring support for all employees, not just those experiencing difficulties, to foster a culture of openness and early intervention.

The contract will be awarded for an initial period of 2 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 x 12-month periods, to be reviewed annually and subject to contract performance and 2028/29 funding being confirmed.

25. LAND AT NEW HARBOUR ROAD, PORTAVOGIE - HISTORIC CHARGE

(Appendix XXVI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Council was asked to consider the information relating to the release of a historic charge for Land at Harbour Road Portavogie.

It was recommended that the Council notes the information and accedes to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

26. REQUEST TO USE OUTDOOR SPACE AT MANOR COURT COMMUNITY CENTRE

(Appendix XXVII – XXVIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Council was asked to approve a request from a playgroup to use the outdoor space at Manor Court Community Centre, Newtownards.

It was recommended that the Council accedes to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

27. ANDBC ABSENCE REPORT: 1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2025

(Appendix XXIX – XXX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – 4: CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Council was provided with an update on absence and the Council's absence management action plan.

The recommendation was adopted.

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.13pm.

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	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	29 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 - Smartphone Free Childhood NI
Attachments	Appendix - Deputation Form

A deputation request has been received from representatives from Ards and North Down parents who are inspired by Smartphone Free Childhood movement

The request is in relation to Ards and North Down Children and Young People's Unfettered access to the Internet, Smartphone Ownership and Social Media Use.

- There is growing evidence linking the age of ownership of first smartphone and social media use to the mental health crisis facing our children and young people.
- Ofcom data shows 24% of 5–7-year-olds in the UK own their own smartphone.
- Parentkind data (including parents in Northern Ireland) show 94% of primary parents polled believe smartphones are harmful yet almost all children have one by the end of P7. Many parents feel in an impossible position that they either give their child a harmful device designed for adults or risk alienating them from their peer group at a crucial stage in their development.

Not Applicable**229**

- Parents are therefore coming together via the Smartphone Free Childhood movement to make a voluntary pact to delay giving their children smartphones until at least 14 and social media until at least 16 hoping that together we can remove the peer pressure, and no child can say 'I'm the only one without a smartphone'. Instead, these parents hope to give their child a basic phone which enables texts and calls when the time comes e.g. when they are getting a bus to school.

The grouping wished to raise the matter because:

- Hundreds of parents in Ards and North Down have got involved in the Smartphone Free Childhood movement but with the Council's support for parents to delay smartphones and social media this could have a much further reach.
- The Group have met with local political representatives, school leaders, government departments, social workers, pediatricians and the PSNI and the issues presenting themselves across these professions (due in part to children's unregulated access to the internet and social media often facilitated by smartphones) is having a huge impact on children and young people with knock on effects for society. By Council supporting parents and school leaders to endorse the principle of delay, this has the potential to be a very impactful preventative measure for our children and young people's health, wellbeing, education and in assisting to avoid involvement with the criminal justice system.

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

I/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:	Rosalind McClean
Date of request:	29 th May 2025
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Ards and North Down parents inspired by Smartphone Free Childhood movement
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Community and Wellbeing Committee

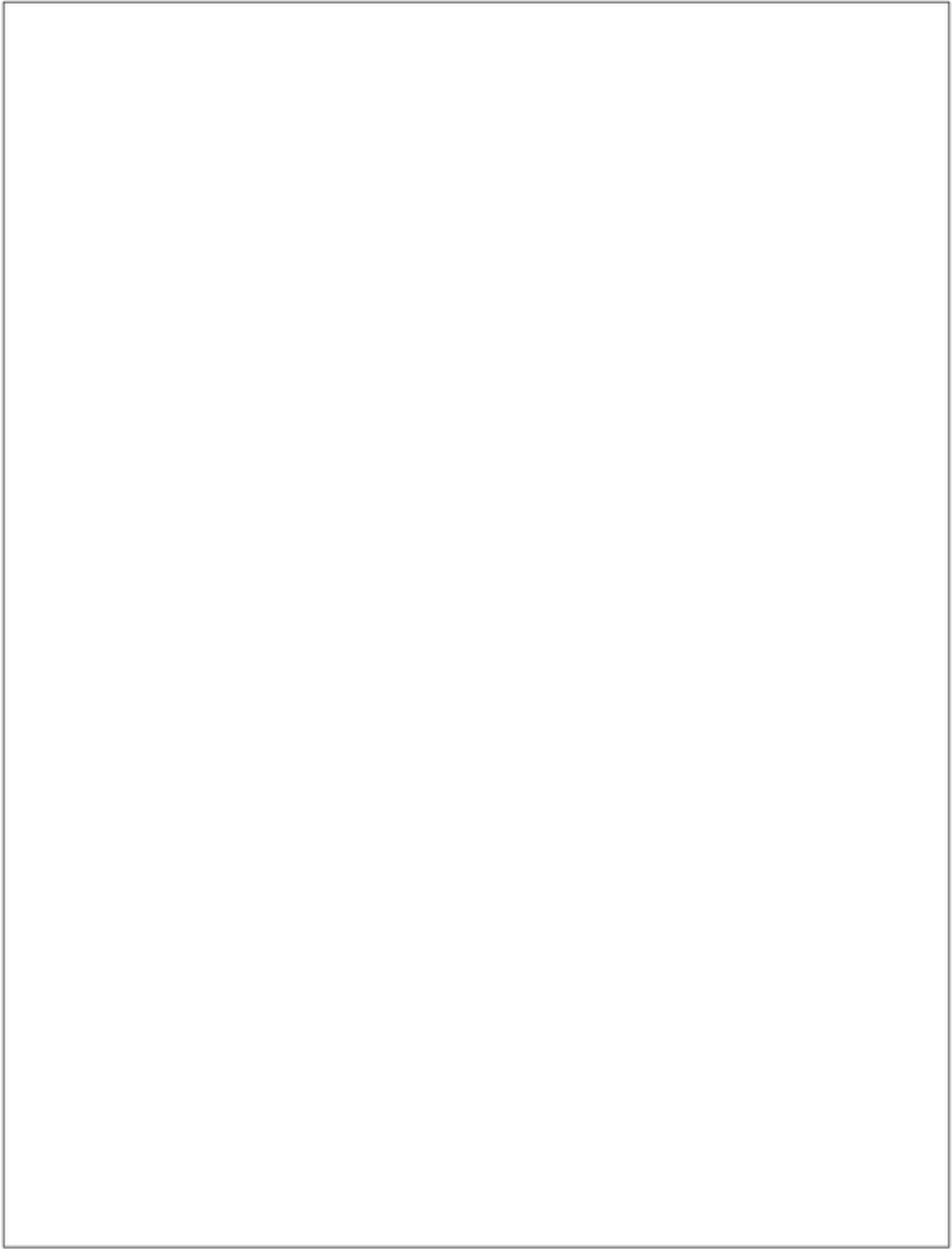
Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Subject Matter – Ards and North Down Children and Young People’s Unfettered access to the Internet, Smartphone Ownership and Social Media Use

- There is growing evidence linking the age of ownership of first smartphone and social media use to the mental health crisis facing our children and young people.
- Ofcom data shows 24% of 5-7 year olds in the UK own their own smartphone.
- Parentkind data (including parents in Northern Ireland) show 94% of primary parents polled believe smartphones are harmful yet almost all children have one by the end of P7. Many parents feel in an impossible position that they either give their child a harmful device designed for adults or risk alienating them from their peer group at a crucial stage in their development.
- Parents are therefore coming together via the Smartphone Free Childhood movement to make a voluntary pact to delay giving their children smartphones until at least 14 and social media until at least 16 hoping that together we can remove the peer pressure and no child can say ‘I’m the only one without a smartphone’. Instead, these parents hope to give their child a basic phone which enables texts and calls when the time comes e.g. when they are getting a bus to school.

Wish to raise the matter because:

- Hundreds of parents in Ards and North Down have got involved in the Smartphone Free Childhood movement but with the Council’s support for parents to delay smartphones and social media this could have a much further reach.
- In my capacity as Smartphone Free Childhood Regional Co-Leader for Northern Ireland I have met with local political representatives, school leaders, government departments, social workers, pediatricians and the PSNI and the issues presenting themselves across these professions (due in part to children’s unregulated access to the internet and social media often facilitated by smartphones) is having a huge impact on our children and young people with knock on effects for our society. By Council supporting parents and school leaders to endorse the principle of delay, this has the potential to be a very impactful preventative measure for our children and young people’s health, wellbeing, education and in assisting to avoid involvement with the criminal justice system.



Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024

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. 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
Town Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Email: dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

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ITEM 9.2**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	05 June 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 - U3A
Attachments	Appendix - Deputation Form

A deputation request has been received from North Down and Ards U3A.

U3A are a community organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, social engagement, and wellbeing for older/retired people. The organisation welcome from any age group who are no longer in full time employment. They are an inclusive organisation which has members with physical, learning and mental health issues. The group would like to share the significant contributions the U3A makes to the local community and explore how they could collaborate with the council to further enhance their impact.

U3A believe their work aligned closely with the council's priorities, such as supporting active ageing, enhancing community wellbeing, and promoting social inclusion. The group would welcome the opportunity to discuss how they could partner with the council to access resources, share facilities, or collaborate on initiatives.

Not Applicable

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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:	Valerie Dickson Mary Cromey Coralie Hanna
Date of request:	04/06/2025
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	North Down & Ards u3a
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.

We are North Down and Ards U3A, a community organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, social engagement, and wellbeing for older/retired people. We welcome members from any age group who are no longer in full time employment and we are an inclusive organisation which has members with physical, learning and mental health issues. We would like to share the significant contributions our u3a makes to the local community and explore how we can collaborate with the council to further enhance our impact.

Reasons to Support Our Work:

Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Loneliness: Our u3a brings together people through diverse interest groups, ranging from art and history to physical activities and languages. These groups foster meaningful connections, reducing social isolation among older residents, which aligns with the council's goals of supporting community cohesion and mental health.

Encouraging Lifelong Learning: We provide accessible, affordable opportunities for older adults to learn new skills and pursue their passions. Our workshops, talks, and classes empower members to stay mentally active, curious, and engaged, contributing to a more vibrant and knowledgeable community.

Supporting Physical and Mental Wellbeing: Through activities like walking groups, yoga, and creative pursuits, we promote healthy ageing. Our members report improved physical health, increased confidence, and a greater sense of purpose, which reduces pressure on local health and social care services.

Contributing to the Local Economy: Our events and activities, such as outings, guest lectures, and community projects, often involve local businesses and venues, boosting the local economy. We also encourage members to volunteer, sharing their skills and experience to benefit Ards and North Down.

Fostering Community Engagement: We organise public events, exhibitions, and talks that are open to the wider community, encouraging intergenerational connections and showcasing the talents and contributions of older residents. For example, some of our music groups entertain residents in Care Homes, sing in the Library at Christmas and perform in Lesley Bloomfield to raise money for worthy causes. In addition to reading with children in local schools (The Time to Read/Time to Count programme run by BITC) some members of our Intergenerational Group recently recorded short podcasts with members from the Over 50's Council, Age NI and Youth Voice which can now be listened to on Spotify – check out Gen2Gen Now and Then.

We believe our work aligns closely with the council's priorities, such as supporting active ageing, enhancing community wellbeing, and promoting social inclusion. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can partner with the council to access resources, share facilities, or collaborate on initiatives that benefit Ards and

North Down. By working together, we can continue to make a positive difference for older adults and the wider community.

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

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- 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.

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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	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Community Planning Manager
Date of Report	12 May 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government (NI) Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not a project that required screening
Subject	Reflection on a decade of Community Planning in Ards and North Down
Attachments	The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017-2032)

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of progress and impact made over the past decade through the community planning process within Ards and North Down Borough. It highlights key developments, including the Big Community Planning 10-Year Summit, the publication of an updated Community Plan, and the launch of a new suite of animations that communicate progress to a wider audience.

Background

Under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, Ards and North Down Borough Council assumed responsibility for leading the community planning process in April 2015. This collaborative, long-term planning approach has sought to improve the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our residents through partnership working with a wide range of statutory, community, and voluntary stakeholders.

Not Applicable

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The original Community Plan, "The Big Plan for Ards and North Down," was launched in 2017, with a 15-year vision. As we mark 10 years of the community planning duty, this milestone provides an opportunity to reflect on achievements, challenges, and future ambitions.

THE BIG COMMUNITY PLANNING 10-YEAR SUMMIT

To mark a decade of community planning, the Council hosted **The Big Community Planning 10-Year Summit** on 7 May 2025, bringing together over 100 delegates from partner organisations, community groups, and residents. The Summit was facilitated by members of Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership and focused on showcasing local impact projects that have emerged from the community planning process.

Themes explored at the event included:

- Participation across all ages, abilities and with the third sector
- The determinants of health and the role everyone can play
- How partnership helps create welcoming and inclusive spaces
- Why a person centred approach to economic growth is essential
- Integration of climate action and local sustainability

Participants shared their experiences and reflected on the role of local voices in shaping community planning priorities.

Feedback from the Summit has been overwhelmingly positive and will help inform the ongoing refinement of our approach. Participants welcomed seeing the full spectrum of activities that community planning is helping to link together and there was a sense of enthusiasm and a renewed commitment for the next 10 decades.



Not Applicable

244

An Updated Community Plan – A Mid-point Review

Building on the momentum of the past decade and the insights gathered via the community planning process, the Community Planning Partnership has now published a refreshed version of *The Big Plan*. This updated Plan continues to reflect the core vision of “*Vibrant & Connected; Healthy & Safe; and Sustainable & Prosperous Places*”.

The updated Big Plan includes:

- Revised outcomes and priorities, aligned with current socio-economic and environmental challenges
- A sharper focus on climate resilience, inclusive economic growth, and reducing inequalities
- Simplified language and a clearer description of the associated workstreams

The updated Plan (attached) reaffirms the Community Planning Partnership’s commitment to shared leadership, collective impact and connectivity between outcomes, priorities and workstreams to try to reduce siloed interventions. Priorities and workstreams, help the Partnership focus on what they can collectively do to create positive outcomes for everyone across Ards and North Down. The review of the Big Plan reduced the number of priorities from 10 to six. This was done to help improve communication with all stakeholders. Apart from outcome 1, each Big Plan outcome is now supported by a single (all be it complex) priority. The priorities and workstreams are outlined below.

1. **Participation** (Outcome 1)
 - Citizen engagement (Over 50s Council, Youth Voice, Community Support Steering Group, 3rd Sector CP HUB)
 - Community Resuscitation Group
 - Borough Reading Project
2. **Infrastructure** (Outcome 1)
 - Public Estate and Lands Group
3. **Determinants of Health** (Outcome 2)
 - Health and Wellbeing Group (Emotional Wellbeing and Social Isolation)
 - Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight
4. **Welcoming Spaces** (Outcome 3)
 - Age Friendly Alliance
 - Dementia Friendly (SE Area Partnership)
 - Multi-agency Support Hub
5. **Employment, Employability and Economic Inequalities** (Outcome 4)
 - Labour Market Partnership
 - Anti-poverty (via Social Supermarket and AND Poverty Forum)
6. **Environmentally Sustainable Communities** (Outcome 5)
 - Sustainable Tourism
 - Climate Resilient Communities (incorporating Sustainable Food)
 - Moved by Nature

Not Applicable

245

Communicating about the achievement of Community Planning

A revised series of six Community Planning animations reflecting progress made under "The Big Plan" (2017–2032) were launched at the Big Community Planning 10 Year Summit. These refreshed animations highlight achievements aligned with the Big Plan's five outcomes, strategic priorities and workstreams.

The content of each animation is outlined below.

1. **Introduction to The Big Plan:** Presents the overarching vision and collaborative approach of the Community Planning Partnership
2. **Outcome 1 – Participation:** Showcases initiatives that enable residents to help influence how services are delivered and how pro-active engagement improves relationships and decision making
3. **Outcome 2 – Health and Wellbeing:** Highlights support initiatives that have been implemented to empower residents to take control of their own wellbeing.
4. **Outcome 3 – Welcoming Spaces:** Focuses on how we have worked with partners to create services that support people through all ages and numerous health conditions (physical and mental).
5. **Outcome 4 – Prosperous Economy:** Details activities that have been delivered to help residents access the labour market and to support people out of poverty and hardship.
6. **Outcome 5 – Sustainable Environment:** Emphasizes the importance of the environment so that its value is recognised and that it is protected for enjoyment by current and future generations.

These animations serve as accessible tools to inform and engage the public about the Council's progress and ongoing commitments under The Big Plan. They illustrate how collaborative efforts across various sectors contribute to the Borough's sustainable development goals. The animations are available via the Council's website and over the next several months will be shared via Council, and community planning partners, social media platforms.

[The Big Plan Animations - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

An easy read version of the updated Big Plan is being produced

In October 2025, Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership will publish its fourth Statement of Progress. This statement will focus on achievements over the past 10 years and will be used to communicate impact and progress by showcasing projects and interventions.

Not Applicable

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Summary

A decade on from the introduction of the community planning legislation, Ards and North Down can reflect on a significant body of work that has improved lives and strengthened partnerships. The 10-Year Summit, refreshed the Big Plan, and the supporting animations reaffirm the impact of collaborative planning and partnership work. The Summit also reflected on the work needed over the next decade to elevate community planning and further embed it across all statutory partnerships as well as government departments.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report.

THE BIG PLAN

OUTCOMES, PRIORITIES & WORKSTREAMS

Creating positive outcomes for everyone
across Ards and North Down

Mid-way review
of the Big Plan
(2017-2032)
April 2025



Ards and North Down's
**Community
Planning
Partnership**



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Summary of the Big Plan and Our Big Priorities

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Creating positive outcomes for everyone across Ards and North Down 2017-2032.

Our vision:

“Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be”

The Big Plan aims to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities; to reduce inequality; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve accessibility of all public services. It is aspirational and sets out the future we want to achieve for people of Ards and North Down, explaining how we want to make life better for everyone over the next 15 years.

Outcome 1: Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential.

1. Participation

- Citizen Engagement* (includes Over 50s Council, Youth Voice, Community Support Steering Group, Third Sector HUB (Community and Voluntary Organisations))
- Community Resuscitation Group
- Borough Reading Project

2. Infrastructure

- Public Estate and Lands Group

Outcome 2: Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing.

3. Determinants of Health

- Health and Wellbeing Group (incorporates emotional wellbeing, social isolation and loneliness)
- Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight**

Outcome 3: Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.

4. Welcoming Spaces

- Age Friendly
- Dementia Friendly
- Multi-agency Support Hub



Outcome 4: Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous and inclusive economy.

5. Employment, Employability and Economic Inequality

- Labour Market Partnership
- Anti-poverty (via social supermarket, AND Poverty Forum)

Outcome 5: Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible.

6. Environmentally Sustainable Communities

- Sustainable Tourism
- Climate Resilient Communities (inc. Sustainable Food)
- Moved by Nature***

* Citizen Engagement – this is not a workstream but a combination of initiatives that help increase the public's influence on issues to be addressed and how public services are delivered.

** Name of workstream will evolve following engagement of people with lived experience.

*** Moved by Nature is a project that used to be a workstream but that helps deliver priorities 1,3,4,5 and 6



The Big Plan for Ards and North Down

The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 requires councils to facilitate the development of a Community Plan via a Community Planning Partnership. Members of the Partnership are drawn from across the public, private and third sectors in Ards and North Down.

In Ards and North Down the Community Plan is known as the Big Plan.

The Big Plan provides a commitment from the Strategic Community Planning Partnership (SCPP) to the people of Ards and North Down on what will be a collective initiative. It is the overarching 'umbrella' plan for Ards and North Down that other plans, and strategies, should look to for guidance and direction.

The SCPP oversaw the development of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down. In addition to reviewing performance of the Partnership, the SCPP considers the impact of actions and partnership activity on progress towards the five Big Plan outcomes.

The Big Plan outlines how public service providers in Ards and North Down work together to maintain and improve the wellbeing of citizens in line with the five outcomes. In 2022, following a review of the Big Plan, the Big Plan – Part II: Our Big Priorities was published. In 2024, the Big Plan and the Big Plan – Part II were further reviewed, and additional amendments made.

The outcomes and priorities have been updated to more accurately reflect the issues and workstreams the Community Planning Partnership has elected to focus on.

This document is an updated version of both previous publications.

The Big Plan Outcomes

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down is based on five outcomes.

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Outcome 1:**
Opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential.
- Outcome 2:**
Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- Outcome 3:**
Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
- Outcome 4:**
A prosperous and inclusive economy.
- Outcome 5:**
An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible.



The updated Big Plan is based on what is being done and the resources available to deliver workstreams.

The Big Plan Priorities

Priorities have been identified to help the Community Planning Partnership make progress towards achieving the outcomes. Priorities, and associated workstreams, help the Partnership to focus on what they can collectively do to create positive outcomes for everyone across Ards and North Down. The 2024 review refined the priorities from 10 to 6.

The six Big Plan priorities and their associated workstreams are:

1. Participation (Outcome 1)

- Citizen Engagement (includes Over 50s Council, Youth Voice, Community Support Steering Group, Third Sector HUB)
- Community Resuscitation Group
- Borough Reading Project

2. Infrastructure (Outcome 1)

- Public Estate and Lands Group

3. Determinants of Health (Outcome 2)

- Health and Wellbeing Group (incorporating emotional wellbeing, social isolation and loneliness)
- Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight

4. Welcoming Spaces (Outcome 3)

- Age Friendly Alliance
- Dementia Friendly (South Eastern Area Partnership)
- Multi-agency Support Hub

5. Employment, Employability and Economic Inequalities (Outcome 4)

- Labour Market Partnership
- Anti-poverty (via social supermarket, AND Poverty Forum)

6. Environmentally Sustainable Communities (Outcome 5)

- Sustainable Tourism
- Climate Resilient Communities (incorporating Sustainable Food)
- Moved by Nature

Priorities and workstreams are continually reviewed; and amendments are recommended to, and agreed by, the Strategic Partnership. Most workstreams operate via specific workstream groups. Some, like the Citizen Engagement Workstream, is a combination of initiatives that support wider engagement that incorporates the principles of community planning.

The name used for the Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight workstream will evolve following engagement of people with lived experience.

The Moved by Nature workstream has changed from having a specific workstream group to operating across several related workstreams to help deliver all 5 priorities.

Additional workstreams can be added, if they contribute to the Big Plan priorities and outcomes.

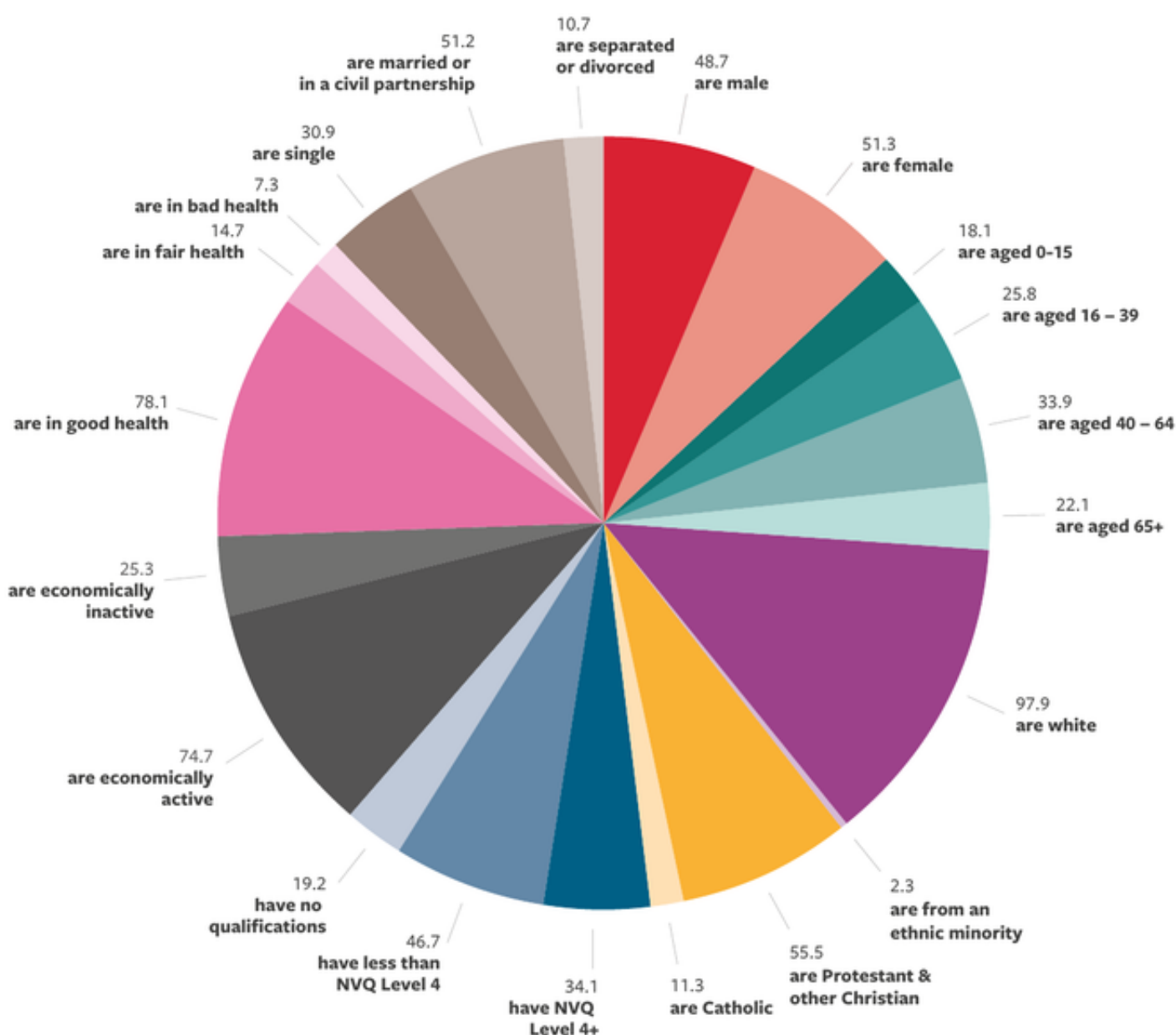
Evidence and Decision Making

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A key focus of community planning is using evidence to improve decision making. This means knowing what data is available and analysing it to understand what it means. We constantly review our statistical baseline and update our Assessment of Wellbeing. The Assessment of Wellbeing is a series of statistical dashboards that help show what life is like for people who live, work and visit Ards and North Down. It helps the Community

Planning Partnership to identify issues where life is not as good as it could be and put in place actions and service reviews to change this. Data within the Assessment of Wellbeing are used to inform the actions undertaken by the Big Plan Workstream Groups and includes a population profile to show who lives in Ards and North Down. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

If Ards and North Down was 100 people, then:



Other evidence analysed within the Assessment of Wellbeing includes:

- Age Friendly
- Agriculture, environment and infrastructure
- Arts and culture
- Children and young people
- Deprivation, poverty and inequality
- Education
- Health and Wellbeing
- Labour market
- Safety and crime
- Tourism

Population Indicators

From the Assessment of Wellbeing 28 indicators have been identified. Indicators act as a barometer to help the Community Planning Partnership assess whether an issue is getting better or worse. They help show if progress is being made in the right direction or whether additional interventions are needed. Indicators have been selected for careful monitoring based on the Big Plan outcomes, priorities and workstreams.

▶ % of school leavers achieving at least level 2 or above, including English and Maths	▶ Gap between % of non-free school meal entitlement school leavers and % of FSME school leaves achieving level 2 or above in English and Maths
▶ % of babies born at low birth weight	▶ Number of further education regulated enrolments by age
▶ % of population who were low self-efficacy (persons aged 16+)	▶ % of population who were low self-efficacy (persons aged 60+)
▶ Number of anti-depressant drug items dispensed per head of registered population	▶ Number of preventable deaths per 100,000 population
▶ Number of admissions to hospital per 100,000 for drugs related causes	▶ Number of admissions to hospital per 100,000 for alcohol related causes
▶ Gap in life expectancy between most and least deprived areas	▶ % of persons spending leisure time outdoors, once a week or more
▶ Level of influence people feel they have over local decision making	▶ Adult obesity rate in the SEHSCT
▶ Childhood obesity rate (BMI) in Primary 1	▶ Childhood obesity rate (BMI) in Year 8
▶ Number of road traffic casualties per 10,000	▶ Number of dwelling fires
▶ Number of anti-social behaviour crime offences	▶ Number of recorded crime offences
▶ Medium gross weekly earnings	▶ Working age population – skills level
▶ Number of VAT and PAYE registered businesses	▶ Proportion of working age population who are economically inactive (excluding students)
▶ Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of population in AND against NI average	▶ Total spend (£) during overnight trips
▶ Number of applicants on Social Housing Stress List	▶ % of individuals in relative poverty
▶ % of municipal waste prepared for reuse, dry recycling and composting	▶ % of households with home broadband access
▶ Kt of Carbon Dioxide emissions per km2	▶ % of journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport
▶ % of residents who said they would 'definitely' or 'strongly consider' buying an electric car for their next purchase	▶ Number of e-car charging points

Ards and North Down's Community Planning Partnership

Ards and North Down's Community Planning Partnership is the collective term used to describe aspects of community planning. The diagram below provides an overview of the Partnership.



Strategic Community Planning Partnership

Oversight of the Community Planning Partnership is provided by Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership (SCPP). Membership of the SCPP includes statutory partners (named in legislation - Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order 2015) government departments, co-opted organisations that deliver public services and the Chairperson of Ards and North Down's Third Sector HUB.

All members of the SCPP are considered equal partners and work to a Governance Agreement. Its remit is to ensure that community planning, and the Big Plan for Ards and North Down, are effectively implemented and that operation of the partnership results in positive outcomes for everyone across Ards and North Down.

The SCPP meet three times a year.

See back cover for members of the SCPP.

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community Planning Service

Community planning is facilitated by Ards and North Down Borough Council. Council's Community Planning Service is responsible for organising and participating in partnership meetings, providing the secretariat support for the Third Sector HUB, facilitating workstream group meetings, collecting and analysing data to help inform evidence-based decision-making and reporting progress to the SCPP. It is also responsible for promoting community planning activities and, within Council, works to help other services to embed the principles of community planning within their area of work.

Ards and North Down's Third Sector HUB

Members of the Third Sector HUB are primarily from the community and voluntary sector. Council provides secretariat support, but it is member led and operates to Terms of Reference that were agreed by consensus of its members. The purpose of the Third Sector HUB is to identify and consider opportunities for collaborative working; to work both strategically and operationally in the community planning process; to act as champions and amplify the voice of the third sector; and to act as a link between the SCPP and Third Sector HUB members.

The Third Sector HUB meets three times a year.

See back cover for members of the Third Sector HUB.

Ards and North Down's Big Plan Workstreams

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Big Plan Workstreams help community planning partners address the six Big Plan priorities and work towards the five Big Plan outcomes. Most workstreams are supported by dedicated workstream groups; several are cross-cutting and are delivered across multiple workstreams and groups. The citizen engagement workstream is an example of this.

Workstreams can be both strategic (membership drawn from senior officers within Strategic Partnership) or operational. Operational workstream groups include other officers from strategic partnership organisations as well as members of the Third Sector HUB.

Workstreams operate according to need and most tend to have their own Terms of Reference that have been developed to reflect their purpose or how they are funded. Some workstreams report only to the SCPP, while other also report to a funding organisation (e.g. Age Friendly and the Labour Market Partnership). Many workstreams also report their activities to relevant Ards and North Down Borough Council Committees in accordance with its governance arrangements.

The diagram on page 10 represents Ards and North Down's community planning structure. It illustrates the inter-dependency between outcomes, priorities and workstreams and how these are influenced by data gathered within the Assessment of Wellbeing. The value in community planning is in the co-ordination of actions delivered between the workstreams and priorities. The advantage of the community planning structure is that it is not linear, and it has been designed to have greater impact on the issues that have been identified as important for people living and working in Ards and North Down.

Workstream group meetings vary in frequency.





Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams

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Delivery of the Big Plan outcomes is via the identification of priorities and workstreams.

- ▶ **Outcomes** are very aspirational and explain what we would like to see happen in the future.
- ▶ **Priorities** have been identified that the Community Planning Partnership think will help us make progress towards achieving these outcomes by focusing on key issues.
- ▶ **Workstreams** help members of the Community Planning Partnership work together to develop action plans and/or implement activities that are deliverable.

In delivering the Big Plan, a balance is needed between what we would like to do and the resources we have available. However, working in partnership with each other means that we can try and use the resources of each partner to collectively have a bigger impact.

The Big Conversation

Not all evidence required to help inform the activities of workstreams needs to be based on statistics and complicated analysis. In addition to the information gathered via the Assessment of Wellbeing we also collect anecdotal information from residents and service users. This is often evidence based on life experiences. We take a 'people first' approach to the evidence we can collect as it is important that the Community Planning Partnership understands the stories and real-life experiences behind some of the statistics.



The Big Conversation is the brand of our engagement activities and we often use this when we need to gather information from the public. Information gathered via the Big Conversation is used to help the workstream groups to plan interventions and actions. We also use other mechanisms like Council online surveys; direct feedback from members of the Over 50s Council and Youth Voice; and information collected by Community Planning Partners.



The UN Sustainable Development Goals

Environmental, social and economic wellbeing are the corner stone of sustainable development and are an important part of the community planning process.

The UN Sustainable Development (SD) Goals provide a blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. The goals recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations go hand-in-hand with strategies to improve health, education, reducing inequality and driving economic growth.

In recognition of the importance of embedding sustainable development within the delivery of the Big Plan, the relevant SD Goals are integrated through the workstreams.

The strength of community planning is in the ability of the Partnership to make connections across Big Plan outcomes, priorities, workstreams and the SD Goals. This results in a more holistic approach to action planning.



Outcome 1

Priorities & Workstreams

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All people in Ards and North Down benefit from opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential.

We work towards this outcome by increasing participation opportunities for people within their communities and for them to have a greater say in decisions that affect them. We work in partnership to develop sustainable infrastructure that supports other Big Plan outcomes by providing space for people to belong, be healthy, safe, prosperous and supported within the limits of our natural environment.

Priority 1: Participation

Prioritising participation is important because by increasing the opportunities that residents, business owners and other stakeholders have to co-design and provide feedback on public services will result in the delivery of better quality services that meet their needs.

Focus of workstream

Our workstreams aim to get more people involved within their community.

The Community Resuscitation Group's action plan focuses on increasing participation and confidence in members of the public being able to respond in the event of a cardiac arrest. A Borough Reading Project is being developed to encourage and promote reading for fun. We want to have more reading, by more people in more places.

Many community planning partners have their own mechanism for involving the public in the design and delivery of their services. Specific to community planning we have established

the Over 50s Council, Youth Voice, Community Support Steering Group and Third Sector HUB.

CP Partners: ANDBC, EA, PHA, Libraries NI, SERC, SEHSCT, NIAS, PSNI, NIFRS and Third Sector HUB.

Priority 2: Infrastructure

Prioritising infrastructure is important because lots of community planning partners own and manage assets across Ards and North Down. By improving communication and working together, we can make joint decisions on how some of these are managed, including finding ways where we can share facilities and have a joint presence. Developing shared initiatives will help the partnership sustainably invest in future infrastructure.

Focus of workstream

Our Public Estate and Lands Group provides a platform for Strategic Community Planning Partners to discuss ideas and opportunities for shared spaces, surplus land and property and future aspirations. The Newtownards Citizen Hub is an example of a shared project.

A Task and Finish group is helping partners to work together to help reduce their carbon emissions and to comply with the NI Climate Change Targets. Partners have shared information on how they are reducing emissions as well as plans for future capital investment. The potential for shared infrastructure is part of these conversations.

CP Partners: ANDBC, SEHSCT, EA, Libraries NI, Invest NI, PSNI, NIFRS, NIHE, Translink.



Outcome 2

Priorities & Workstreams

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All people in Ards and North Down benefit from being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing.

We work towards this outcome by empowering people to take control of their personal wellbeing and making better life choices by increasing opportunities for people to adopt more active lifestyles. We work in partnership to make it easier for people to access support services and develop infrastructure that makes it harder for people to be overlooked.

Priority 3: The determinants of health

Prioritising the determinants of health is important because we need to create effective public policies and interventions that aim to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities.

The wider determinants of health are social, economic and environmental factors that influence an individual's health and wellbeing, such as income, education, housing and access to health care. By understanding these factors, we can work towards achieving health equity, where everyone can attain their highest level of health.

Focus of workstream

The Health and Wellbeing Workstream Group focuses on helping people to look after their own wellbeing by showing them how to take control and make positive changes across the determinants of health.

The **Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing** public health campaign has been adopted to help signpost people to the things they can do to maintain their own health and wellbeing. The Health and

Wellbeing Group will collate an interactive resource signposting people to what they can do locally to *connect, keep learning, be active, take notice and give*.

Part of this signposting initiative includes creating an interactive online **Moved by Nature** calendar. This tells people about some of the activities they can do in Ards and North Down each month that will help them look after their own wellbeing. This activity also supports priority 5 of the Big Plan to have environmentally Sustainable Communities.

Ards and North Down has an initiative to adopt a whole systems approach to healthier weight. A whole system approach acknowledges the complexity of weight management and all the other factors that influence a person's weight beyond just diet and exercise. By applying a whole systems approach to a problem, we are more likely to make necessary changes that help create lasting outcomes. This is a long-term initiative, and it will be 10 or more years before we know if it is having an impact.

CP Partners: ANDBC, SEHSCT, PHA, Sport NI, Libraries NI, SERC and Third Sector HUB



Outcome 3

Priorities & Workstreams

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All people in Ards and North Down benefit from communities where they are respected, safe and feel secure.

We work towards this outcome by making Ards and North Down a great place to grow older and where support is available to people who need it. We work in partnership to make this a welcoming place with increased amounts of shared spaces, where there are growing levels of respect among communities and cultures and where people are safe in their homes, within their communities and in all public spaces.

As a partnership we will identify people at risk and to reduce those risks to the lowest possible level.

Priority 4: Welcoming spaces

Prioritising welcoming spaces is important because they play an important role in fostering community, inclusion and wellbeing. Welcoming spaces break down barriers and promote understanding and acceptance among people of different race, religions and sexual orientation. Welcoming spaces is about making Ards and North Down a great place to live and grow older.

Focus of workstream

By making Ards and North Down Age Friendly we are making sure that people of all ages have the facilities and support they need to live safely, to socially interact, and to develop resilience to change. Ards and North Down's Age Friendly Alliance has

developed an Action Plan and Strategy and while lots of the priorities focus on older people, if you consider the needs of older people when designing services and developing infrastructure, you are also considering the needs of all other age groups and needs, and proofing services for future users. The Big Guide to Age Friendly Services was developed following feedback from older residents that they struggled to know where to go to for help and is available both in hardcopy and online.

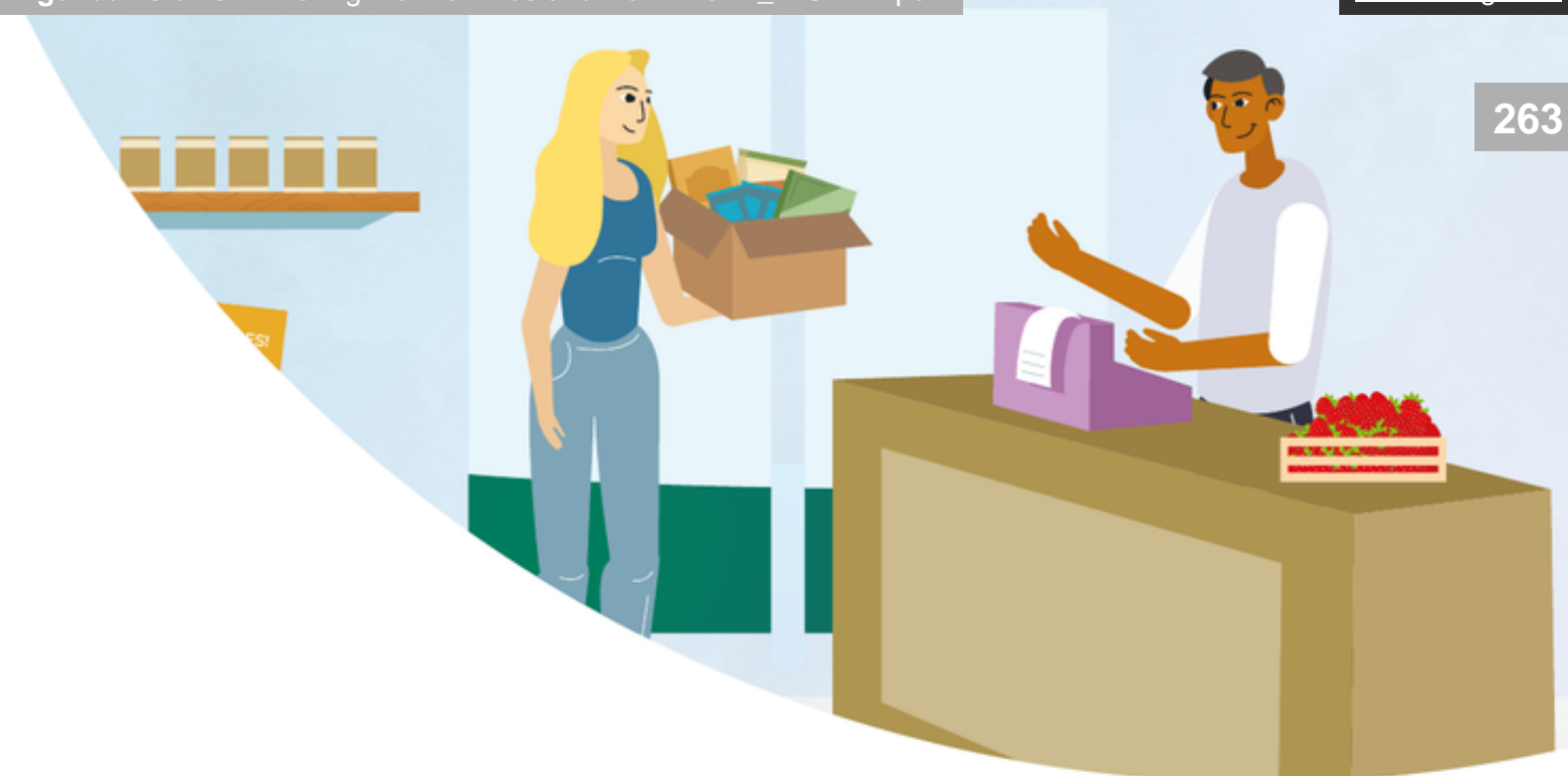
The Over 50s Council provides feedback to the Age Friendly Alliance to make sure the voice of older people is represented. Intergenerational activities between the Over 50s Council and Youth Voice have taken place.

One of the activities being taken forward by the Over 50s Council, and the Council's Disability Forum, is the development of a Considerate Parking Campaign. Members highlighted the challenges they encounter when navigating pavements and a campaign with the strap line "You have a choice we don't" is co-designed.

Dementia is not specifically an age-related condition. Creating Dementia Friendly Communities is included within the Age Friendly Action Plan. A South Eastern Dementia Friendly Partnership has been set up that also includes the council areas of Lisburn & Castlereagh and Newry, Mourne & Down. Following engagement with people living with dementia and their carers, an action plan has been developed. A focus of this action plan is improving communication and supporting people to access the appropriate care pathways to get help.

CP Partners: ANDBC, SEHSCT, PHA, Libraries NI, PSNI, NIFRS and Third Sector HUB.





Outcome 4

Priorities & Workstreams

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous and inclusive economy.

We work towards this outcome by addressing deprivation; and working to ensure that people have the financial resources to meet their everyday needs. We work in partnership to grow our local economy by developing a skilled workforce; helping those who are furthest away from the labour market; increasing access to employment; and investing in our infrastructure to support sustainable economic prosperity.

Priority 5: Employment, employability and economic inequalities

Prioritising employment and employability are important because a prosperous and inclusive economy requires a skilled and motivated workforce. In Ards and North Down there is a need to improve the quality of local jobs and encourage businesses requiring skilled labour to be located within the Borough. Employment, employability and economic inequalities also relate to priority 3, the determinants of health. There is a strong correlation between fulfilling employment and a person's wellbeing, because we need to have a sense of purpose as well as having an income. Prioritising economic inequalities is important because this helps to create more stable and prosperous environments for everyone.

Focus of workstream

With funding from Department for Communities, Ards and North Down has set up a local Labour Market Partnership (LMP). A strategic assessment of the labour market and employability within Ards and North Down is used to agree

LMP activities and actions. The themes of the LMP action plan include economic inactivity, youth unemployment, disability and a skilled labour supply.

In developing its action plan, the LMP recognised the many barriers faced by individuals in obtaining employment and training, such as: no suitable qualifications; poor skill set; no or little work experience; disability or other health problems; potential in reduction or loss of benefits from attending training; as well as issues to access affordable childcare and transport.

To help address these issues the LMP has established numerous academies including a Transport Academy, Classroom Assistant Academy and Disability Academy. Up-skilling programmes have been delivered along with workplace careers videos, enterprise readiness programmes and job fairs.

Research has been undertaken to understand what poverty looks like across Ards and North Down and to identify the barriers that exist. A Social Supermarket was piloted, and this was shown to be a useful tool to help address financial hardship in a sustainable way. Ards and North Down's Poverty Forum, and the Strategic Community Planning Partnership, are looking to develop practical and more strategic action plans that will help with some of the issues identified by the research which was carried out by collecting data within Ards and North Down.

CP Partners: ANDBC, Department for Communities, Invest NI, SERC, SEHSCT, and Third Sector HUB.

Outcome 5

Priorities & Workstreams

264

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible.

We work towards this outcome by working in partnership with our communities to ensure they value our local environment and benefit from its sustainable management. By providing individuals and communities with opportunities to increase their own resilience they will be better prepared to deal with some of the environmental challenges, such as climate change, that they will increasingly have to face. Enriching people's enjoyment of sustainability managed outdoor spaces, by improving access and promoting responsible recreation, will create opportunities for people to improve their own health and wellbeing and to feel safe within their communities.

Priority 6: Environmentally Sustainable Communities

Prioritising sustainability is important because it not only protects our environment but also supports economic and social wellbeing. Thinking sustainably means considering the long-term implications of activities to ensure that everyone benefits. Prioritising the value placed on our environment is important because it provides us with food, water, and protection from the elements. We need to make space for people and nature to successfully co-exist.

Focus of workstream

We want Ards and North Down to be a sustainable tourism destination. Sustainable Tourism is about taking full account of our current and future economic, social and environmental impacts whilst addressing the needs of visitors, the industry,

the environment and host communities. We want to enable stakeholders to make more sustainable choices; ensure that local communities benefit from tourism activities; help tourism operators mitigate against and adapt to a changing climate; and collect positive stories telling people about the impact of this.

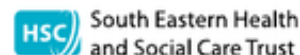
Ards and North Down is a member of Sustainable Food Places and the Sustainable Food Workstream group has developed an action plan to align lots of aspects of the food systems including food security (poverty), nutrition, environmental sustainability and the public having access to space to grow their own. Much of this workstream also integrates across the other Big Plan priorities and workstreams. A Climate Resilient Communities Workstream, incorporating the Sustainable Food Action Plan, will be developed.

We want to increase people's access to responsible use of outdoor spaces. Our 'Moved by Nature' workstream helps to promote this message. An interactive calendar has been created to highlight the ways people can use our local environment to look after their own wellbeing. The Public Health Campaign 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' is used to show the public how they can use nature to *connect, keep learning, be active, take notice and give*. The calendar is supported by a 'Moved by Nature' checklist of free activities, and it helps support the numerous other Big Plan priorities including determinants of health, economic inequality and welcoming spaces.

CP Partners: ANDBC, Tourism NI, Third Sector HUB, National Museums NI, Ulster University, PHA, SEHSCT







Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service



Third Sector HUB Members (Correct at March 2025)

Action Mental Health
AGenda (AGE north down and ards)
Alzheimer's Society
Ards Community Network
Bangor and Lisburn Sure Start
Bryson Energy
Bangor Foodbank and Community Support
Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND)

County Down Rural Community Network
Holywood Shared Town
Kilcooley Womens Centre
Linking Generations NI
MINDWISE
Newtownards Foodbank
North Down & Ards Women's Aid
North Down Community Network
North Down YMCA

Open House Festival Ltd
Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership Ltd (PHLP)
Supporting Communities
The Cedar Foundation
The Link Family and Community Centre
Ulster Wildlife
Volunteer Now

**Ards and North Down's Community Planning Partnership
is facilitated by Ards and North Down Borough Council**

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Unclassified

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ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	10 June 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	Nomination to Outside Bodies
Attachments	

Background

Places on working groups are filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and are thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position becomes vacant, it reverts back to Council to nominate a Member(s) to fill the place.

Following the retirement of Councillor Ray McKimm on 2 June, a number of places became available on outside bodies. At the Annual Meeting 2025, 1-year positions previously held by Councillor McKimm were filled, with the exception of Diversity Champions – which has remained vacant since Councillor McKimm resigned from the group in February 2025 and which did not receive nomination to fill at the Annual Meeting. Nominations are sought to fill the vacant 4-year positions plus the role of Diversity Champion.

They positions are:

- Diversity Champions (1-year appointment)
- Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership

Not Applicable

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- Bangor City Steering Group
- Age North Down and Ards Management Committee
- BRCD Council Panel

The below tables reflect the current membership of the above working groups:

Body: Diversity Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

	2024/25	2025/26
1	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McBurney
2	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Hollywood
3	(No nominations made to replace Councillor McKimm February 2025)	-

Body: Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Wilson	Councillor McCracken
3	Councillor McKimm	Vacant (No nominations made to replace Councillor McKimm February 2025)
4	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

Body: Bangor City Steering Group – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)

As Bangor Centre Councillors sit on the Bangor City Steering Group, Councillor Brady will replace Councillor McKimm on this group.

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Blaney	Councillor Blaney
2	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart
3	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Harbinson
4	Alderman Dunlop	Councillor McCracken
5	Alderman Irvine	Councillor W Irvine
6	Councillor McKimm	Councillor Brady

Body: Age North Down and Ards Management Committee – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2023/27	2023/27
1	Councillor MacArthur Resigned 15.4.2024	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray
3	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm
4	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine

Not Applicable

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Body: BRCD Council Panel – 4 Places

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Adair Councillor Cathcart (since 10/3/21)	Councillor Cathcart
2	Councillor Smart	Councillor Blaney
3	Alderman McDowell	Councillor McKimm
4	Councillor Dunlop	Alderman McDowell

Nominations are sought from Council to fill each of the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council nominate a Member to the following groups:

- Diversity Champions
- Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership
- Age North Down and Ards Management Committee
- BRCD Council Panel

Unclassified

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ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	09 June 2025
File Reference	CW51
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Services Order (NI)1986
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Update on Possible Leisure Operating Models from April 2028
Attachments	None

Background

Further to the Report presented to Members in April 2025 which outlined the background, possible operating models, the timeline, the Member engagement process and communications process required for Members to decide on the future leisure operating model, this Report provides Members with an update on progress made, since that time.

Leisure provision workshop one

The first leisure provision workshop took place on the 21st May 2025 to inform members of the process and to seek initial thoughts and requests for what information is required for the second workshop. The workshop was attended by 17 Members and supported by officers across various departments including HR, Finance, Leisure and Transformation.

Not Applicable

271

In advance of the workshop members were provided with a variety of previous reports and papers which were of relevance to the decision. The documents are still accessible to members via the link provided at the time.

Workshop one focused on the following areas.

- The need for a decision to be made by September 2025
- The four possible models (Hybrid, Outsourced, Inhouse, Local Authority Trading Company (LATC))
- Key considerations
 - Ability to deliver strategic outcomes
 - Control and influence
 - Revenue implications (VAT, Staffing, Pensions, Maintenance and Utilities, Implementation costs)
 - Risks
 - Case studies
 - Current profile of leisure across the Borough

The members requested additional information to be provided for workshop two.

- Review of the Four Models outlining how they support the delivery of the Leisure Strategy and deliver Council Outcomes
- Possible financial scenarios
- Staff Satisfaction
- Further assessment of the considerations (Financial, Control, Staff, Users, Risk, etc)
- For an Outsourced model (including hybrid) – what quality measures / penalty clauses could be included in the contract to help support Council's outcomes/mitigate risks?
- More detail on the maintenance arrangements

Leisure provision workshop two

Leisure provision workshop two is scheduled for 23rd June at 6.30pm in Bangor City Hall. The workshop will address the points raised at workshop one and will provide the Members with the opportunity to discuss in more detail the different operating models, and in particular criteria for guiding a decision on the way forward.

Timeline

Members are aware that the future leisure operating model has been discussed a number of times over recent years as it is a significant decision for Council.

If Council's decision is to continue to outsource the management of leisure facilities (either hybrid or fully), then a new procurement exercise must be undertaken. Therefore, the absolute deadline for a decision, as previously noted, is no later than the end of September 2025. If the decision is to insource and retain in house then a significant amount of time will be required to develop that process further.

The workshops between now and September will aid the Member's decision-making process on the future leisure operating model:

- 23rd June - Elected Members workshop two; and
- 28th July 2025 - Elected Members workshop three

Not Applicable

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At workshop one there was a request that the decision would be considered at a Special Council Meeting. It is recommended that a Special Council meeting is scheduled for 18th September 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the update and the anticipated timeline for decision by 18th September 2025 as outlined.

Unclassified

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ITEM 13

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	03 June 2025
File Reference	HER 01 R2 25/26
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Heritage Grants
Attachments	None

Background

Round 1 of the 2025-26 Heritage Grants were awarded in February 2025. There were seven applications to the grant, of which, six were awarded £500 (£3000 in total). This left £2000 of the budget remaining.

Round 2 opened in April 2025 and closed on 13 May 2025. Eight applications were received. The applications were assessed by a Panel comprising Mr Billy Carlisle (Arts and Heritage Panel), the Community Arts Development Officer and the Heritage Development Officer.

There is a total of £2,000 available in grant money with a maximum of £500 per application awarded. As shown in the accompanying Scoring Matrix, each application is scored out of 100. Recommendation for award of grant is based on a minimum score of 60.

Not Applicable

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The unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback on their application to assist them with future applications.

Application Assessment Scoring

GRANT REF:	ORGANISATION	PROJECT TITLE	SCORE	AWARDED
HER-PG008/2526	Kilcooley Women's Centre	Restoration of clock and outreach - Market Street: Step Back in Time	40	£0
HER-PG009/2526	Ards Historical Society	Booklet - The History of Scrabo Hill and Tower	85	£0 Already in receipt of grant for 2025-26
HER-PG010/2526	Donaghadee Parish Church Halls	Publication - Donaghadee Parish Church, Quadricentennial Anniversary, 1626-2026	72	£500
HER-PG011/2526	Portavogie Cultural and Heritage Society	Booklet - 12th Heritage Booklet Publication	79	£500
HER-PG012/2526	Friends of Columbanus Bangor	Columbanus Peace Walk	54	£0
HER-PG013/2526	Portaferry WI	Archive - Echoes from the Past: 90 Years of Portaferry WI	85	£500
HER-PG014/2526	Hollywood u3a History & Archive groups	Archive - Storage of Hollywood District u3a History Archive	85	£500
HER-PG015/2526	Boom Studios	Celtic Wheel of the Year Art and Craft Club	45	£0
		Total awarded		£2000.00

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve the funding awarded as outlined in the table above.

Unclassified

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ITEM 16**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 June 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	13 June 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Notice of Motion tracker

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

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

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NoM Ref:	Responsible Committee	Date Received	Submitted by	Notice (Original and any amendment)	Council & Committee Meetings (Date & Item)	Status (Most recent status update at the top followed by detail of what has been accomplished to date)	Responsible Officer	Final Outcome
11	Community & Wellbeing	31.05.15	Councillor Muir & Alderman Keery	Rory McIlroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McIlroy Organisation. 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 Council - April 2025 Item 14	Report to be brought back on the possible strengthening of no alcohol consumption byelaws on Council land and at the Borough's beaches and parks. Report to also explore options on possible restrictions of open fires and the use of disposable BBQs at beaches and parks. 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 June 2025 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Allison 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 'Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.	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 2025 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 recieved on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Allison 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>Update presented to P&P 12.6.25 - awaiting ratification at June Council</p> <p>Update report presented to 06.02.25 P&P Cttee</p>	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	Complete, to be removed post June Council
585	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.23	Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	<p>That Council recognise the value of our Beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DEARA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DEARA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.</p>		<p>Report to C&W Committee in January 2025.</p> <p>Further report requested to future C&W Committee to include site visits to Causeway Coast & Glens and Newry Mourne and Down District Council as per amended recommendation at January C&W Committee. Since January C&W Committee a summer site visit has been organised. Report to be brought back to October 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. There is currently discussions about payment of fees.	Allison 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	<p>"That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)</p>	<p>Council 20.12.23</p> <p>Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024.</p> <p>Corporate Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary.</p> <p>First working group was on 10th May 2024.</p> <p>Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Next report will be to June 2025 Committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	<p>That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams.</p> <p>Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved.</p>	<p>Council 27.03.24 Item 18.3</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>10.04.24 Item 14</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>04.09.24 Item 14</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>06.11.24 Item 3</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>11.06.25 Item 3</p>	<p>Agreed that the Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure Rivers Agency, sharing the findings of the study undertaken by AECOM, and asking that enhanced coastal defence schemes be progressed for the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee.</p> <p>Further agreed that Council officers make meaningful engagement with local stakeholders and incorporate their responses in an update report to be brought back to Council within 6 months.</p> <p>Agreed that the Council proceeds with the 'Phase 1' further investigation work regarding potential Donaghadee sea defence enhancements.</p> <p>Agreed that Council proceeds as proposed in section 4 of the report, with the outcome of engagement outlined being reported back to Environment Committee in 2025.</p> <p>Environment Committee April 2024 - Agreed to bring back a report.</p>	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	

624	Corporate Services	20.05.24	Councillor Kendall, Alderman McRandal and Alderman Graham	This Council notes that, subsequent to submission of a Notice of Motion in 2017, Council agreed to provide funding to assist in the building of a new war memorial in Conlig village; and to liaise with, and assist, the Conlig War Memorial Project Group in their efforts to build a monument to the seventeen men who are known to have lost their lives in World War I.	Council - May 2024 - Corporate Services Committee June			
626	Community & Wellbeing	13.06.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project.	Council 26.06.24 Item 15.2	Referred to Corporate Services Committee for hearing at September 2024 committee. Agreed that report brought back to C and W committee. Report going to June 2025 C&WC.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
628	Place & Prosperity	18.08.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	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 8.5.25 (4) Prosperity Cttee - 5 September 2024 (Item 14.1) Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.2) referred to P&P	Report presented to P&P 8.5.25 agreed and ratified 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	Brian Dorrian - (Interim Director of Place) to lead	Awaiting confirmation of funding from variance request
629	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	Furthermore, Council agrees to add the Conlig Memorial to the existing list of war memorials across the Borough that are maintained by Ards and North Down Borough Council.	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. Update to June 2025 C&WC.	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.	Allison 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. Report to September 2025 C&WC.	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 decision policies. 	Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2) Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)	Agreed at 7 Nov P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council - initial report to be brought back to future P&P Committee	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	
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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&P 8.5.25 (12) 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>	<p>Report presented to P&P 8.5.25 - agreed and ratified</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	Awaiting confirmation of funding from variance request
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>	<p>Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.</p>	<p>Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.</p>		

642	Corporate Services	15.11.24	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	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.	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	TO BE REMOVED FOLLOWING JUNE COUNCIL
644	Community & Wellbeing	10.12.24	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	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.	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. Site visit to take place 3 June 2025.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
646	Place & Prosperity	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)	Report to Oct P&P 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	Alison Stobie (Interim Head of Economic Development)	

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	Awaiting confirmation of funding from variance request
652	Place & Prosperity	16.01.25	Councillor Chambers and Councillor Hollywood	That this Council brings back a report detailing the associated costs, viability and public desirability to install a low level position lighting scheme along the promenade at Groomsport beach.	Postponed from Place and Prosperity February 2025 to Place and Prosperity March 2025 Council January 2025	Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion.	Interim Director of Place	Adopted 6.3.25 - this is a 'priority' arising from Groomsport's Village Plan and progress will be reported as part of regular general updates - to be removed post June Council

653	Environment	21.01.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee	<p>This Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression. However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Articles 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessarily cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011. Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA Minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.</p>	<p>Council January 2025 Environment Committee 05.02 25 Item 11.1 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Item 14</p>	<p>Letter from DAERA Minister dated 29.04.25 noted Reply 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>	TO BE REMOVED
654	Place & Prosperity	20.01.25	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall	<p>This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards.</p> <p>This Council notes that other areas of the Borough have the space, potential locations, and infrastructure required to host major events, for example 14,000 people attended the Donaghadee Lights Up event, and that a spread of large events across the Borough brings cultural, social and economic benefits, fostering a sense of whole-Borough inclusivity.</p> <p>Therefore, working with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI, this Council will bring back a report considering the potential for the ANDBC Pipe Band Championships to be held across the Borough on a rotational basis in Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee.</p>	<p>P&P 6.3.25 Council 26.02.2025</p>	<p>Meeting arranged with Pipe Bands for 13.5.25 Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion</p>	<p>Interim Director of Prosperity</p>	

655	Environment	18.02.2025	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	That this Council brings back a report outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber, to accommodate a list of historically researched names, currently being collated as per War Memorial Trust guidelines, of the fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, which were previously not included	Council 26.02.2025 Environment Committee 5 March 2025	Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion 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 partially sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life. Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.	Council 26.03.2025 - Corporate Services Committee 08.04.2025	Presented to 8.4.2025 CS Committee. 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. June 2025 Land Survey being undertaken ahead of Architect being engaged.	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	14.05.25	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 Hollywood. And further that this Council writes to congratulate Rory on his victory.	Council 30.04.25	Letter sent on 09.06.25 by Chief Executive's Office		

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		
666		23.04.25	Councillor S Irvine and Alderman McIlveen	<p>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 this 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.</p>	Council 28.05.25 and Corporate Committee 17.05.25			
667		23.04.25	Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood	<p>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</p>	Council 28.05.25 and Community and Wellbeing Committee 18.06.25			

668			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.	Council 28.05.25 and Place and Prosperity Committee 12.06.25			
669	Environment	07.05.25	Councillor Morgan and Councillor Irwin	This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste that 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.	Council 28.05.25 and Environment Committee 11.06.25	Agreed to adopt NOM at June 2025 Committee - report to be brought to future Committee Assigned to June 2025 EC Agenda	Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	