

September 23rd, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 24th September 2025** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - Council Chamber, City Hall, Bangor & via Zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

 C. 24.09.2025 Agenda.pdf

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2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
- 4 Mayor's Business
- 5 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of September 2025

 Mayoral Engagements September 2025.pdf

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- 6 Minutes of Council Meeting held dated 27th August 2025 (Copy attached)

 C 2025.08.27 Minutes.pdf

Not included

 C 2025.08.27 Minutes PM.pdf

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- 7 Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)

- 7.1 Planning Committee dated 2nd September 2025

Copy attached

 PC.02.09.25 Minutes.pdf

Not included

 PC.02.09.25 MinutesPM.pdf

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- 7.2 Environment Committee dated 3rd September 2025

 EC 2025.09.03 Minutes.pdf

Not included

 EC 2025.09.03 MinutesPM.pdf

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- 7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 4th September 2025

 250904 Place and Prosperity Committee Minutes.pdf

Not included

7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 9th September 2025

 CS.2025.09.09 Minutes.pdf

Not included

 CS.2025.09.09 Minutes PM.pdf

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7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 10th September 2025

 CWB 2025.09.10 Minutes.pdf

Not included

 CWB 2025.09.10 Minutes PM.pdf

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8. Request for Delegated Authority Tourism NI Draft Corporate Plan 2025/28

 8. Request for Delegated Authority Tourism NI Draft Corporate Plan Consultation.pdf

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9. Response to Resolution - Funding Cuts by Arts Council to National Youth Choir (correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)

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9.1 Response to Resolution CAR - T Cell Therapy Response from Health Ministers

(Report attached)

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 9.1 Appendix 1 - Letter from the Chief Executive to the Health Minister of NI.pdf

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12. Sealing Documents

13. Transfer of Rights of Burial

14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

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15. Notices of Motion

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Edmund

That this Council recognises the importance of every child having the opportunity to learn to swim - a vital life skill that supports physical health, mental wellbeing, and water safety. Swimming is not only one of the most effective forms of exercise, but also a key activity for building confidence and resilience in young people.

Further to this Council agrees to:

1. An audit of current indoor swimming lesson provision and also open water safety awareness programmes across the Borough against local demand: and

2. The development of a strategy to ensure that no child is denied access to swimming lessons or safety awareness programmes due to cost or capacity.

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and

Councillor Cathcart

That this Council expresses its deep disappointment at the correspondence sent to each councillor in Northern Ireland by NAC NI dated 2 September 2025 recommending that councillors take "industrial" action and considers the balloting of members to take any form of strike action as inappropriate, ill-judged and unlawful.

Notes that the eleven Councils in Northern Ireland pay a corporate rate to fund the NAC NI in Northern Ireland and that individual councillors are by default members of NAC NI rather than by choice.

Is further of the view that if the NAC NI wishes to act like a union then it should be governed by the same laws as any other union and that membership should be voluntary and a matter for individual councillors rather than funded by the ratepayer.

As such, this Council agrees to withdraw its corporate funding from the NAC NI, writes to inform the NAC NI of this decision and calls on the executive members of the NAC NI to resign their positions given the gross over-reach of this correspondence and how it has brought the role of hard-working councillors into disrepute.

15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Graham and Councillor Gilmour

Council, recognising the importance of Holywood as a Garrison town, seeks in conjunction with the Craigavad and Helen's Bay Branch of the Royal British Legion, to bring a military event to Holywood.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

17 September 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, 24 September 2025 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of September 2025 (Copy attached)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 27th August 2025 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 7.1 Planning Committee dated 2nd September 2025
 - 7.2 Environment Committee dated 3rd September 2025
 - 7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 4th September 2025
 - 7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 9th September 2025
 - 7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 10th September 2025
8. Request for Delegated Authority Tourism NI Draft Corporate Plan 2025/28 (Report attached)
9. Response to Resolution – Funding Cuts by Arts Council to National Youth Choir (correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) (Report attached)

- 9.1 Response to Resolution – CAR – T Cell Therapy Response from Health Ministers (Copy attached)
- 10. All Party Group Request on Sustainable Burials (Report attached)
- 11. Dilapidation Bill 2025 – Consultation Response (Report attached)
- 12. Sealing Documents
- 13. Transfer of Rights of Burial
- 14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
- 15. Notices of Motion
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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 SEPTEMBER 2025

Monday 1st September 2025

11:30 Leid and Learn Ulster Scots Photo Op, Ards Arts Centre

Tuesday 2nd September 2025

11:00 Bangor Business Awards Launch, Bangor Castle

14:00 Tea Dance, Queens Hal, Newtownards

14:45 Good Relations Week Photo Op, Bangor Castle

Wednesday 3rd September 2025

12:00 Ward Park Runners Photo Op, Ward Park Bandstand

18:00 History Detectives Exhibition, North Down Museum

Thursday 4th September 2025

12:15 Tide & Turf Portavogie Primary School Postcard Photo Op,
Portavogie Primary School

Friday 5th September 2025

10:30 Fields of Change Photo Op, Bangor Castle

11:00 RAF Open Day in in the Park, Ward Park

13:00 Annual Prize Day, St Columbanus College, Bangor

Saturday 6th September 2025

13:30 Tide & Turf, The Harbour, Portavogie

14:30 Irish Guards 125th Anniversary Parade, Bangor Castle

16:30 Horse Relay on the Beach, Donaghadee beach

Sunday 7th September 2025

11:00 Bangor North Down Kennel Club Event, Ulster Flying Club

14:00 Laying up of the old Colours - Irish Guards, St Mark's Church, 219
Holywood Rd

Tuesday 9th September 2025

- 14:00 AONB Calendar Judging, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick
- 16:00 ShoreLife Photo Op, Strangford Lough

Wednesday 10th September 2025

- 12:00 VIP Greeting Party, Hillsborough Castle

Thursday 11th September 2025

- 19:00 Kilcooley Women's Centre 30th Anniversary, Cultra Manor, Ulster Folk Museum

Saturday 13th September 2025

- 10:30 Air Ambulance Fundraiser Photo Op, Tescos, Newtownards
- 11:00 Softball European Championship, Ward Park, Bangor

Tuesday 16th September 2025

- 09:30 Meeting with Waste and Cleansing, Assets and Property and Fleet Teams
- 13:00 Meeting with Mayor's Chaplains, Bangor Castle, North Road Depot, Newtownards

Wednesday 17th September 2025

- 09:30 Meeting with Waste and Cleansing and Fleet Maintenance Teams, Environmental Resource Centre, Bangor

Thursday 18th September 2025

- 12:30 Senior Prize Distribution, Bangor Grammar School

Friday 19th September 2025

- 11:00 Ward Park Sensory Garden Photo
- 14:30 SERC Graduation Ceremony, Waterfront Hall, Belfast

Saturday 20th September 2025

- 10:00 Hollywood Ladies Football Club Charity Game, Hollywood
- 10:00 Carrowdore 100 Classic & Vintage Motorcycle Show, Carrowdore Presbyterian Church Hall

- 10:45 Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI Bangor Walk, Starting Crawfordsburn Country Park
- 14:00 Community Connection Festival, KDCDA Community Hall, 27 Beechvale Rd, Killinchy

Sunday 21st September 2025

- 11:45 Triathlon Finish Line, Donaghadee Sailing Club
- 14:00 Choral Event, Copeland Distillery

Monday 22nd September 2025

- 19:00 Donaghadee Male Voice Choir Reception, Bangor Castle

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 27 August 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor McCollum)

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

Councillors:	Ashe	Irwin (Zoom)
	Blaney	Kendall
	Boyle	Kennedy
	Chambers	Kerr
	Cochrane	McBurney
	Douglas	McClean
	Edmund	McCracken
	Gilmour	McKee
	Harbinson	Moore
	Hennessy	Morgan (Zoom)
	Hollywood	Smart
	S Irvine	Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Acting Head of Planning (G Kerr), Principal Professional and Technical Officer (L Maginn) and Democratic Services Officers (R King and S McCrea)

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Councillor Brady, Councillor McLaren and Councillor Thompson.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

Alderman McIlveen – Item 16 – Civic Office Site Selection (declared at 7.42pm).

Alderman McAlpine – Item 20 – Tender for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage Services.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor was delighted that Bangor Marine would be onsite the following day to commence the much-anticipated redevelopment of Marine Gardens, as part of the Queen's Parade regeneration scheme.

Over the following seven to ten days, site hoardings would be erected, and site preparation works undertaken, with construction due to begin on 5 September.

The Mayor further noted that on Saturday, 6 September, a ceremonial parade and musical performance by the Band of the Irish Guards was due to take place. This event marked their 125th anniversary and celebrated their status as Freemen of the Borough.

Members who wished to attend were asked to RSVP with Democratic Services, which would provide the necessary details for the day, including timings for robing and transportation.

September would also see the rollout of Taste Autumn in Ards and North Down, which was due to commence the following weekend with the return of the popular Tide and Turf event in Portavogie on Saturday, 6 September.

In addition, an RAF Town Show was due to be held in Bangor's Ward Park over that weekend. The Mayor remarked that it was brilliant to witness such a variety of events taking place across the Borough.

RESOLVED, that the Mayor's business be noted.

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

(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor reflected on August as 'festival month' across the Borough, noting a vibrant programme of cultural, musical, and community events.

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The Mayor and Deputy Mayor had attended a range of engagements from Donaghadee to Portaferry, including seafood festivals, Ulster Scots celebrations, the Ards Kite Festival, and the Clandeboy Festival.

Inclusive initiatives were highlighted, including the Gateway Summer Scheme in Carrowdore and the Orchardville Festival in Bangor, supporting people with learning and physical disabilities.

The Mayor also welcomed a visit from the STRIDES Centre to Bangor Castle, where officers discussed civic roles and responsibilities with participants.

A civic event was held to mark 15 years of service by Citizens Advice Ards and North Down, with the Mayor paying tribute to its contribution to the Borough.

The Northern Ireland Green Flag Awards were hosted in Bangor Castle Walled Garden, with widespread praise for the venue from visiting representatives from other local Council areas.

The Mayor also reflected on a wreath-laying ceremony organised by Bangor British Legion to commemorate VJ Day.

A personal highlight was shared: a visit to Mrs Grace Gordon of Bangor on her 100th birthday, and the Mayor had been touched by a shared birthday moment as Mrs Gordon sang Happy Birthday to the Mayor, who was due to celebrate her own birthday the following day.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the information be noted.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 30 JULY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

Item 11.1 - Consultation – Drinking in Public Bye-Laws and Powers

The Mayor raised a point of accuracy regarding her contribution to Item 11.1, referring to a specific comment which had been recorded as follows:

‘...when those powers did eventually become available that the Council would opt fully into that.’

The Mayor clarified that the passage should read: ‘...when those powers did eventually become available, *she hoped that* the Council would opt fully into that.’

This correction was noted.

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

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Planning Committee dated 5 August 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8. DEPUTATION REQUESTS

8.1 Deputation Request – Ards & North Down Business Forum (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that a deputation request had been received from Derek Wright of Ards & North Down Business Forum.

The request was in relation to the Council's Car Parking Strategy consultation to which the group wished to raise objections to the proposals.

The request was for the deputation to be heard at the Corporate Services Committee.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the deputation be referred to the relevant committee.

The Mayor advised that, although the applicant had requested to make the deputation to the Corporate Services Committee, the matter fell within the remit of the Environment Committee.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the deputation be referred for hearing at the relevant committee.

9. RESOLUTIONS

9.1 Facilitating Natural, Low-Carbon and Sustainable Burial Options (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that the All-Party Group on Climate Action (APG) had written to all councils to request support in exploring and enabling more sustainable end-of-life options in Northern Ireland. Further information was available in Appendix 1.

The Council was asked to consider whether it wished for officers to prepare a draft response to the APG, which would have been presented to the Council at its September meeting ahead of the submission deadline of 30 September.

RECOMMENDED that Council consider whether they wish to send a response.

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that officers prepare a draft response to the APG.

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor McKee noted that the timing of the discussion aligned well with the Council's ongoing exploration of future options for burial service provision. He emphasised the importance of considering all available approaches, particularly those that were low-carbon and sustainable, in support of the Council's Roadmap to Sustainability.

The seconder, Councillor Kendall reported having attended a valuable information session on the matter which was also attended by a Council officer. The session covered green burials along with broader alternative options that reflected public preferences. Councillor Kendall highlighted ongoing challenges with existing capacity and emphasised the importance of continuing to explore alternative solutions.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that officers prepare a draft response to the APG.

9.2 Notice of Motion – CAR-T Cell Therapy (correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)
(Appendix IV)

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

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that Council responds with its support for the Motion on all points listed in the correspondence with the exception of writing to all other NI Councils.

Councillor Kendall expressed strong support for the cause, emphasising the importance of securing any available treatment options. She stated that it was essential to do the very best for those affected.

Councillor Gilmour spoke in support of CAR T-cell therapy, describing it as a revolutionary treatment that offered hope to many. She noted that some residents from the Borough were currently receiving treatment at Addenbrooke's Hospital in England and acknowledged the difficulty of being away from their home support networks.

In terms of the proposal, Councillor Gilmour noted that there were four distinct points of request within the correspondence. She highlighted that one of the points involved writing to other councils, which she felt was unnecessary given that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council had already undertaken that action. She wondered if Councillor Kendall would exclude that action from her proposal.

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Councillor Kendall clarified her support for the motion was in relation to writing to the relevant Ministers and agreed to exclude the action of writing to other councils, as the letter had already been circulated.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that Council responds with its support for the Motion on all points listed in the correspondence with the exception of writing to all other NI Councils.

9.3 Notice of Motion – Funding Cuts by Arts Council to National Youth Choir (correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)
(Appendix V)

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

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Council responds with its support for the Motion and writes to the Chief Executive of the Arts Council along with the Communities Minister asking to find a way forward to prevent the collapse of this institution.

Councillor Boyle proposed that the Council formally respond to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to express agreement and support for its motion. He further proposed that letters be sent to the Chief Executive of the Arts Council and the Minister for Communities to convey the Council's disappointment regarding funding issues and to seek a way forward.

The seconder, Councillor Douglas provided background on the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland, formerly known as the Ulster Youth Choir, which was established in 1999 to unite talented young singers aged 11 to 24. The choir aimed to deliver high-standard choral experiences and professional vocal training from leading tutors across the UK and Ireland.

She reported that, in July, the choir had been informed that its funding application to the Arts Council had been unsuccessful. While the reasons were unclear, Councillor Douglas expressed strong support for writing to both the Chief Executive of the Arts Council and the Communities Minister to seek assistance and prevent the closure of the organisation.

She noted that young people from the Borough had been, and continued to be, members of the choir and went on to share a personal account from a young member of the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland, describing it as an "incredible, formative part" of her musical and personal journey. Participation in the choir had sharpened her vocal technique, musical sensitivity, and professionalism, enriching her studies in primary education in music at Stranmillis.

The experience had equipped her with the confidence to lead and inspire children through music, both in classrooms and performance settings. She also spoke of the choir's role in fostering community, lifelong friendships, and a sense of giving back, crediting it with instilling collaboration and self-discipline - qualities she intended to carry into her teaching career and life.

In closing, Councillor Douglas urged Members to support the proposal to prevent the organisation from closure.

Councillor Wray advised that following the announcement in July regarding the National Youth Choir's funding, he had met with the Chief Executive of the Arts Council, members of the choir's Board, and MLAs Diane Allen and Steve Aiken. He reported that the Board had understood the reasons why the Arts Council could not proceed with its application, noting that the rejection was not based on the merits of the submission but due to other internal factors concerning the Board.

Councillor Wray stated that, to his knowledge, the Board intended to undertake further work and potentially reapply for funding in the future. He echoed Councillor Douglas' comments on the value of the choir and expressed concern that the young people involved would be most affected by the funding issue.

Given his knowledge of the situation though, he felt that the Notice of Motion brought to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council appeared to be misguided, suggesting that direct engagement with the Board or the Arts Council would have provided greater clarity.

Councillor Wray, on reflection of the correspondence's wording however, acknowledged that it was general in nature, seeking "to find a way forward." On that basis, he would not oppose the proposal.

The Mayor concurred with this interpretation of the wording and endorsed Councillor Douglas' remarks regarding the valuable benefits and opportunities the choir offered to young people.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Council responds with its support for the Motion and writes to the Chief Executive of the Arts Council along with the Communities Minister asking to find a way forward to prevent the collapse of this institution.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Request for Delegated Authority – DAERA Consultation on New Rules for Selling and Supplying Puppies and Kittens (FILE 92013)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that DAERA was consulting on legislating to provide controls on those who sell and supply puppies and kittens.

As responses were required to be submitted by 15th September 2025, it was proposed that authority be delegated to the September meeting of the Environment Committee to agree a final Council response.

RECOMMENDED that the Council delegates authority to the September meeting of the Environment Committee to agree a final response to the DAERA consultation on proposals for new rules on the sale and supply of puppies and kittens.

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

Councillor Kendall supported the recommendation noting that this aligned with a 2021 Council motion supporting regulation of the sale and supply of puppies and kittens.

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

10.2 Delegated Authority request to September's Place and Prosperity Committee

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that Members may have been aware that the Department for Communities (DfC), in collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), had been developing the Shaping Sustainable Places Programme.

The programme aimed to create a range of focused and strategic interventions that maximised the available budgets for regeneration projects in an effort to address elements of decline in rural and urban areas.

This was a significant Programme that the three departments would co-fund over a 10-year period, contributing a minimum of £5m each per year for investment in capital projects. A further minimum contribution of 10% (£15m) was to be requested from Local Councils, creating an initial fund of £165m. However, the Programme was scalable and able to utilise additional funds for regeneration if they became available.

On 23rd June 2025, DfC Minister Gordon Lyons, DAERA Minister Andrew Muir, and Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins announced a public consultation seeking views on the programme. The consultation response deadline was 21st September 2025. The Regeneration Service, in collaboration with the Council's Heads of Service Team (HoST), were compiling a draft response to the consultation. The response was aligned to the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, The Big Plan, and the Regeneration Service Plan, and had synergies with priorities identified in the Masterplans and Village Plans.

RECOMMENDED that the Council gives Delegated Authority to the September Place and Prosperity Committee to consider and approve the draft response to the consultation so it can be submitted before the deadline of 21st September 2025.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. UPDATE TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION (FILE FIN58) (Appendix VI)

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PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that at its 2025 Annual Meeting, Council approved the latest updated Scheme of Delegation. Since then, some technical changes were required to be made to version 4 and to the Terms of Reference for Committees. Due to time sensitivity, these changes were presented in advance of the next scheduled review of the Scheme, which was the Annual Meeting in 2026.

Proposed Changes

Expenditure Approval Thresholds

Following the introduction of the revised thresholds in July, a number of simplifications were identified to delegations 6 – 9 (pg. 12) that eased the implementation of the new financial management system:

1. Amended bandings to ensure that
 - a. all Heads of Service had a £100k threshold and
 - b. all Service Unit Managers had a £25k threshold.
2. Deleted the £15k threshold band and moved any remaining staff to the £5k band.

Committee Terms of Reference for Standing Committees

Following the Council's approval of the new directorate structure under Phase 1 of the organisational redesign programme, the terms of reference for the committees were revised. It was proposed to rename the Community and Wellbeing Committee to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, to reflect the Directorate title change. The reporting lines were also updated to align with the transfer of service units within the directorate structure.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the changes outlined in version 4.1 of the Scheme of Delegation and updates any policies, procedures, strategies accordingly.

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

Alderman McRandal was satisfied that the updates outlined in the report formalised what had already been agreed around the new directorate structure.

Councillor Wray, as seconder, raised a query about the Audit Committee's membership. He referred to a discussion at its last meeting and good practice guidance recommending consistent long-term membership and appointment of an independent chair. Referring to the attached draft document, he noted it stated that membership should exclude the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. He sought clarification on the definition of a sub-committee and whether this included the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP).

The Director of Corporate Services clarified that the Council had no formalised sub-committees at present and that the PCSP was not considered one. He added that

recommendations regarding Audit Committee membership would be addressed in a more comprehensive update to the Scheme of Delegation at the Council's Annual Meeting in 2026.

The Mayor acknowledged the ongoing challenges with current membership arrangements and emphasised the importance of consistency, given the Audit Committee's critical role. She looked forward to seeing the recommendation progress.

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

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials: 41000 – 41028
- (b) Grants of Rights of Burials errors: Michelle Gordon and Sara Donna Scott
- (c) 999 Year Lease Agreement between Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Ards and North Down Borough Council relating to lands at Breezemount Park, Conlig
- (d) Bangor Marine Queen's Parade - Collateral Warranties

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

Ann McAdam – Ken McCullough – Movilla 59/165

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kerr, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Seal be affixed and transfers be approved.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT (Appendix VII)

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Boyle and Councillor Irwin

Ards and North Down Borough Council believes that young people deserve a say in who represents them, welcomes the UK Government's announcement to allow people aged 16 and 17 to vote in future Westminster, Assembly and Council elections, believes that this should be in place ahead of 2027 in time for the next Assembly and Council elections; calls on the First and Deputy First Minister to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ensure that any necessary UK legislation is passed to meet this timeline.

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

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.

16. CIVIC OFFICE SITE SELECTION

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – 5. EXEMPTION: A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to consider an analysis of two identified site options for the location of its Civic Offices.

It was recommended that the Council progress with the Queens Parade site, as the preferred option for project delivery.

The recommendation was agreed.

17. TENDER FOR PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND RECRUITMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – 3. EXEMPTION: RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

It was recommended that Council approve the appointment of the contract for a professional executive search and recruitment service to assist with the recruitment of higher-level positions within the organisation. This approach ensured transparency, efficiency, and access to a broader talent pool in alignment with Council's strategic workforce objectives.

The recommendation was agreed.

18. REQUEST FOR AN EASEMENT OVER LAND BEHIND THE WAR MEMORIAL, BALLYGOWAN

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

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

The Council was asked to approve a request for an Easement over land behind the War Memorial in Ballygowan.

It was recommended and agreed that the Council accedes to the request.

19. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY (Appendix VIII – X)

*****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 report outlined the final steps for launching and publishing the draft Plan Strategy of the Local Development Plan for Ards and North Down.

It was recommended that Council noted the content of the report, and the items attached as the publication advanced draft, and agreed to the progression for launch on 18 September 2025 with a 4 week reading week and public consultation opening on 16 October 2025.

The recommendation was agreed.

20. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF EXTERNAL CLEANING AND TANKERAGE SERVICES

*****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 report on a tender for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage Services at Various Ards and North Down Council Properties was considered.

It was agreed to award the tender to AM Powerwashing Ltd.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

C.27.08.2025 PM

19

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.20pm.

ITEM 7.1

20

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 2 September 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine
McDowell
McIlveen
Smith

Councillors: Cathcart
McCollum
Harbinson
Hennessy
Kendall (zoom)

Kerr (zoom)
McKee (zoom)
Smart
Wray

Officers: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Planning Officers (C Barker, A Todd and J Hanna) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were declared at this stage.

Alderman McIlveen declared an interest (later in the meeting) in respect of Item 4.5 – LA06/2023/1948/F – King House, 37-39 High Street, Holywood.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 5TH AUGUST 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

Alderman McDowell advised that he had declared an interest at the meeting in respect of Item 4.2 and had left the meeting. However that had not been recorded in the minutes.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2025/0516/F - 81 Cotton Road, Bangor (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee

Committee Interest: Called in off the delegated list

Proposal: Change of use from ancillary residential accommodation to dwelling

Site Location: 81 Cotton Road, Bangor

Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (C Barker) outlined the details of the application. The site was accessed via a long private driveway which connected to a shared lane off Cotton Road. Upon reaching the dwelling, the driveway split, leading to the dwelling and stables to the north and the ancillary accommodation to the east. There was a tarmac parking area directly adjacent to the south of the ancillary accommodation, with shared patio areas and the driveway to the main dwelling to the north. The surrounding area was rural in character, with dispersed neighbouring dwellings of varied scale and character. The site consisted of a large, detached, single storey dwelling, with detached 1.5 storey ancillary residential accommodation to its direct south. The ancillary accommodation was finished in red brick and natural stone, with a steeply pitched roof and 1no. chimney. Despite its 1.5 storey height, there was no accommodation within the building at first floor level.

The SPPS set out the transitional arrangements that would operate until a Local Development Plan was adopted for the Council area. Paragraph 6.73 of the SPPS stated that provision should be made for the sympathetic conversion and re-use, with adaptation if necessary, of a locally important building as a single dwelling. That went further than Policy CTY 4 of PPS21, which referred only to a 'suitable building'. Paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS stated that where the SPPS introduced a change of policy direction and/or provided a policy clarification that would be in conflict with the retained policy, the SPPS should be afforded greater weight in the assessment of individual planning applications. As such, the term 'locally important building' should take precedence over 'suitable building' from PPS21 Policy CTY 4. The original barn was approved under reference X/2005/0251/F for refurbishment of existing outbuildings to provide ancillary accommodation for elderly relative as an extension to the existing dwelling house. The approval provided one bedroom ancillary accommodation for an elderly relative which included an open plan kitchen, living room and shower room.

This application proposed minor alterations to the external gables of the barn but retained the traditional vernacular features of the building. However, the original barn was converted not in accordance with the approved plans and any traditional vernacular features the building may have had that would have been of merit have been lost. As a result the building had a new roof and a different overall footprint of the original building. Whilst it may once have been a small vernacular barn, due to the minor scale of the building, its considerable distance from the public road (and therefore lack of any public views or prominence in the landscape) and the

alterations that had been made to it the building would no longer meet the definition of a locally important building. Subsequently the building failed to meet the specified criteria.

The proposal involved a different design to that approved under X/2005/0251/F. It was 1.5 storeys in height with a steeply pitched roof. However, it was noted that the building was constructed in this manner on the back of the above-mentioned approval, and, considering the length of time that had lapsed, it would now be immune from enforcement action. In any event the design was considered appropriate in this rural location, the finishes match the existing dwelling and there were no views of this building from the main road. It was considered that the alterations would comply with criteria C of CTY4 and that they were appropriate in the location by way of scale and massing.

It was not considered that criteria D of policy CTY4 was met in terms of unduly impacting the amenity of neighbours as any future residents of the proposed new dwelling would be surrounded on two sides by the current driveways with no private amenity space. Although acceptable for the original ancillary accommodation the lack of amenity space was not considered acceptable for this application for a dwelling in its own right. Creating Spaces clearly set out that 40m² of private amenity space was needed for a new dwelling and that was clearly not provided and in fact no private amenity space was available.

Plenty of car parking was provided and DfI Roads were consulted and have no objections. The proposed dwelling would be using a septic tank and NI Water and NIEA Water management unit offered no objections.

In summary, the Planning Department was satisfied that the proposed dwelling failed to meet the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS and CTY4 of PPS21. The building failed to meet the definition of a locally important building with no provision of any private amenity space. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that full planning should be refused.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the building was ancillary to the main farm house however had a residential use. He assumed that the application was to sever the ancillary aspect and sought clarity in that regard.

The Planning Officer explained that it was not a residential dwelling in its own right, it was ancillary accommodation which could be seen essentially as an extension. The application was seeking to sever that and create a separate dwelling entirely.

Alderman McIlveen was unsure it fitted within the SPPS and quoted an aspect of that. He wished to ensure that the grounds of refusal were correct. The Planning Officer referred to the 3 refusal reasons and made particular reference to that the proposal was contrary to Paragraph 6.73 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland in that the building does not constitute a "locally significant building". The proposal was for a new building in the countryside.

Alderman McIlveen remained uncomfortable with refusal reason no 2.

Councillor Cathcart noted that the dwelling was not conditioned for ancillary use and therefore was residential use. There were objections or issues with views. The Planning Officer stated that if the application was to be approved for a residential dwelling there was no amenity space. It was ancillary accommodation dependent on the main dwelling.

Councillor Cathcart asked what the overriding reason was for the demonstrable harm. The Planning Officer stated that the proposal failed to meet the policy. She repeated that the building was ancillary.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be refused.

Alderman Smith stated that the Officer had outlined the aspects, there was no amenity space and he agreed with the assessment of the application.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 9 voting FOR, 1 AGAINST, 5 ABSTENTIONS and 1 ABSENT.

FOR (9)	AGAINST (1)	ABSTAINED (5)	ABSENT (1)
Aldermen McAlpine Smith		Aldermen Graham McDowell McIlveen	
Councillors Harbinson Hennessy Kendall McCollum McKee Smart Wray	Councillor Cathcart	Councillors McClellan Kerr	Councillor Morgan

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the recommendation be adopted, that Planning Permission be refused.

4.2 **LA06/2023/2012/F - Land between 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove, Helens Bay** (Appendix II - IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report and two subsequent addendums.

DEA: Holywood and Clandeboy

Committee Interest: Six or more representations contrary to the officer's recommendation

Proposal: Dwelling (change of house type from approval W/2011/0015/RM)

Site Location: Land between 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove, Helen's Bay

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application. As the construction of the dwelling had now been completed on site the description of the proposal had been amended to retrospective. The site was located between the existing dwellings at 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove, Helen's Bay and was originally the side garden of No. 3. Sheridan Grove was located off the Fort Road and to the immediate west of the public car park. The surrounding area was characterised by low density well-established housing. In terms of the Development Plan context, the site was located within the proposed Helen's Bay Area of Village character as designated within the draft BMAP. At the time of the submission of the application, the site already had the benefit of an extant planning permission for a dwelling with development having commenced on site within the timeframe of the reserved matters planning permission. This extant permission therefore represented a fall-back position for the development of this site and was a material consideration in the assessment of the current application for a change of house type. During the processing of the current application, the applicant had proceeded with construction works for the amended house type for which permission was now sought retrospectively. The applicant was advised that all works were being carried out at his own risk. The visual showed the dwelling under construction in April 2024 and the dwelling nearing completion more recently in August. The Council's Planning Enforcement Team had a current enforcement case in relation to the ongoing works at the site. This case was opened on 6th November 2023 further to receipt of a complaint in relation to the development. It was important to note that building without planning permission in most cases was not a criminal act, and that the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 permitted submission of a retrospective planning application under Section 55 to address any breach of planning control. In this particular case, it was not considered expedient to serve an Enforcement Notice, given the live planning application under consideration, the extant approval on the site provided a fall-back position for development and the minor nature of the changes proposed to the design and scale of the building.

The initial change of house type proposal submitted with the application was considered to be unacceptable by the Planning Department due to the significant increase in the scale and massing of the dwelling and its resulting visual dominance and adverse impact of the amenity of adjacent dwellings. The visual comparison of the approved house type and initial change of house type proposal and the significant difference in scale between the two could be seen.

An amended proposal was submitted by the agent which much more closely reflected the scale and massing of the original approval. The approved and proposed site layouts were very similar with the general position of the dwelling on the site remaining the same. Only a small increase in the footprint to the front and rear of the building was proposed under the current application as shown highlighted in yellow with the area to the rear extended by 1.3m and the porch area to the front extended forward by approximately 2m. The approved and proposed elevations were very similar. The general design of the dwelling remained the same with some changes to the windows. The proposed house type had a slightly taller ridge height at the front pitched roof section of the dwelling with an increase of 0.5m however that was not

considered to be a significant increase in terms of the overall appearance of the building.

The overall design, scale and massing of the dwelling was largely the same with just some changes in the placement of fenestration and also the addition of a small porch and balcony to the front of the dwelling. The height of two flat roof rear returns had also decreased from 8.5m to 8.3m and 6.4m to 6.2m. As the proposal was for a residential development within an urban area, planning policies contained within Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments and the Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7: Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas, were applicable to the assessment of this application. The overarching aim of these policies was to ensure that new residential development created a quality residential environment which respected the surrounding context. It was important to note that the previous extant planning permission on the site was assessed against those policies and found to be acceptable. This therefore must form the baseline for the consideration and assessment of the current application. As the current proposal was for a change of house type, only the changes between the approved and proposed schemes fell to be considered in the context of the relevant policies. As there had been no change in the policy context and no significant changes to the site context, the principle of the development of a dwelling on this site could not be revisited.

As set out in the planning report, the Planning Department had carried out a very detailed consideration of the proposal's impact on the character of the area. It was considered that the overall height, scale and massing of the dwelling was similar to that previously approved and also similar to the established built form in the area which was characterised predominantly by large detached two and two and a half storey dwellings.

It was also considered that the dwelling was very much in keeping with the existing dwellings within Sheridan Grove itself. The general design with red tiled hipped roof, render finish and similar styled window openings was in keeping with the existing dwellings. It was also considered that the development would blend sympathetically with its surrounding wider context. The visual showed the views of the dwelling from Fort Road at the entrance to Sheridan Grove and from Fort Road at the entrance to the public car park. From those viewpoints, the dwelling did not appear overly dominant or incongruous in its setting. From the public car park, the dwelling was largely screened by the existing toilet block building and the height of the dwelling did not appear excessive in the context.

Policy QD1 of PPS7 also required that the design and layout of a development must not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on existing properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance. The existing dwellings adjacent to the site which could potentially be impacted by the development include Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove. With regard to the potential impact on No. 2 which sat opposite the site, the proposed dwelling was located between 20 to 26.5m from the front of this dwelling across a public road, a comparable distance to the existing separation distance between Nos.3 and 2. The occupants of No. 2 had nevertheless raised concerns in relation to overlooking from the proposed balcony of the dwelling towards the front elevation of their dwelling

however it was noted that No. 2 itself already had a large front balcony with views towards the existing dwellings at Nos. 3 and 4. It was not considered that the proposed development including the front balcony, would result in any greater impact by way of overlooking than the extant approval. Furthermore, it was noted that the proposed dwelling sat at a lower level than No. 2 and therefore did not result in any unacceptable overbearing impact.

The Planning Department was also satisfied that there would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of No. 3 Sheridan Grove. A number of windows were located on the side elevation however, only the upper hall and kitchen windows had the potential to overlook the rear private amenity space of No. 3 and it had been recommended that those windows should be installed with obscure glazing. With regard to the impact of the development on No. 4 Sheridan Grove, the proposed dwelling had four windows on the elevation facing No. 4. Those served a hall and bathrooms and were all fitted with obscure glazing preventing any overlooking towards No.4. The occupants of No. 4 had raised concerns regarding overlooking from the rear windows of the dwelling however the Planning Department was satisfied that there was no unacceptable impact. The visual showed the two rear windows in question and showed photographs taken from each of those windows. As could be seen, there was no direct view from those windows towards any habitable rooms within the dwelling at No. 4 or towards its rear private amenity space. The occupants of No. 4 had also raised concerns that the proposed front balcony would result in an unacceptable degree of overlooking towards the front and side of their dwelling. The Planning Department considered that the balcony was located a sufficient distance from No.4 to ensure that no unacceptable degree of overlooking. In addition, as the balcony was located to the front of the dwelling, there were no views towards any windows serving habitable rooms within No. 4 or towards any areas of private amenity space. The visual displayed showed the view from the balcony towards No.4. As could be seen, the only view from here was towards the front garden area of No. 4 and even this view was mostly screened by the existing vegetation. There were no direct views towards any windows or private amenity space belonging to No. 4.

The Planning Department was also content that there would be no unacceptable loss of light to any habitable rooms within No.4. Two living areas were located on the southern side of No.4 facing the proposed dwelling. The living area located towards the front of the dwelling had one window on the southern side elevation of the dwelling and two to the front. When the 25 degree Vertical Sky Component light test was applied to the side window of this room, the tallest pitched roof section of the proposed development exceeded the recommended 25 degrees by 10 degrees. The central flat roof section also marginally exceeded the 25 degrees by approximately 5 degrees. The lower flat roof section to the rear however met the 25 degree test when applied to the rear living area window. While the light test was exceeded in part in this instance, policy advised that light tests were not to be applied as a rigid standard which must be met in every case. Rather they were intended as a tool to aid assessment in conjunction with other relevant factors including any alternative sources of light serving the room. In this case as outlined, the affected room had two additional windows on the front elevation providing an adequate additional source of light. It was also of note that the dwelling approved under the extant planning

permission also marginally failed the light test and this must also be a material consideration.

New landscaping was also proposed for the development which included new laurel boundary planting along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. The planting had already been undertaken on site. The choice of laurel species was considered to be appropriate at this location as it would provide a good degree of year round screening and compliments the laurel boundary planting already established at the neighbouring property No.4. A short stretch of Leylandii Cypress hedging and a tree located on the northern boundary of the site were removed during construction. The tree was already proposed for removal under the previous approval. While the hedge was conditioned under the previous approval to be retained to maintain privacy, it was considered that the new fence and planting now in place provided an appropriate alternative means of screening.

In terms of the biodiversity of the site, an Ecological Statement was prepared by a qualified Ecologist and submitted with the application. The site was found to be of low ecological value with no evidence of any protected or priority species or habitats present.

Adequate parking was provided by way of a gravelled hardstanding area at the front of the dwelling which provided space for the parking of three cars similar to the previous approval.

In total, 47 letters of objection from 10 separate addresses had been received throughout the processing of this planning application. The main concerns raised included:

- The adverse impact on the character of the area
- Loss of privacy and daylight
- The continuance of building works prior to the granting of planning permission
- Removal of the existing hedgerow
- Impact on biodiversity

Those issues had all been considered in detail in the main planning report and subsequent addendum.

In summary, the Planning Department was satisfied that the retrospective change of house type proposal meets all of the relevant policy requirements of PPS7 and PPS7 Addendum. The amendments to the design from that previously approved under the extant Reserved Matters permission were considered to be minor. The overall design and scale of the dwelling was in keeping with the established built form of the area. The dwelling did not cause any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of any adjacent properties by way of loss of privacy or light. The dwelling had adequate private amenity space, parking provision and a suitable level of landscaping had been provided. All consultees were also content with the proposal. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that full planning should be granted.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

The Mayor noted that permitted development rights had been removed going forward. The Planning Officer stated that was to ensure that there was no additional impact on the neighbours.

In relation to the front balcony, the Mayor questioned if that would have been allowed under permitted development rights. The Planning Officer stated that would need to be assessed separately under the regulations however given that it was forward of the building line it likely would not meet permitted development.

The Mayor referred to the balcony which was 20m from No2 and just met the minimum separation distance. The Planning Officer explained that the 20m was what had been recommended in Creating Places guidance in relation to back to back. This was to the front which included the road and was well in excess at 26.5m to the garage and 20m to the projecting window at No2. The extant permission had the same building line with windows in a similar position.

The Mayor referred to the overlooking concerns of No 3 and expressed concerns in respect of the light test which failed by 10%. She viewed that as significant and the amount of light into living spaces was important. The Planning Officer agreed and stated that Officers had been transparent, in this instance the roof affected had two other windows, one of which was quite large. The light test was not a rigid standard and was a tool that assisted Officers in the assessment of an application alongside other factors.

The Mayor recognised the Officer's professional opinion however felt the loss of amenity should be acknowledged. The Planning Officer stated that a light coloured finish would be used and that was also a mitigating factor.

Councillor Cathcart sought clarity on the light test from what was previously approved to be able to assess the difference in the impact. The Planning Officer explained that there was an increase in height of 0.5m in relation to the front section with the pitched roof. She suggested an approximate increase by 5%. Noting that the two sections at the back were lower in height than the extant permission. The Planning Officer highlighted the need to balance the factors with regards the overall impact.

Alderman McAlpine referred to the condition in respect of the roof terrace and she felt there would be a temptation to use the roof terrace due to the views. She believed the use would be dangerous and a loss of amenity for the neighbouring properties. The Planning Officer highlighted that condition 12 stated that the flat roof area of the building should not be used as a balcony or roof terrace at any time. That combined with the large roof lights, there was no railings for safety and she believed that it would be unlikely that would be used.

Councillor Kendall questioned what value there was on placing conditions on the application given that the Applicant did what they wished anyway. She asked in percentage terms how much the proposal was overall larger than the extant permission. The Planning Officer stated that the conditions were enforceable. She did not have a percentage of the overall increase stating that she had outlined the increase in terms of the footprint and height.

Councillor Kendall noted that the previous conditions were enforceable also.

The Chair invited Alan McGregor and Brian Kee to come forward who were speaking against the application.

Mr Kee commenced by stating that if the property approved 14 years ago had been built then “he would not be here tonight”. He found it bizarre and unlawful that the application was being heard while public consultation was still ongoing. He outlined the concerns in respect of overlooking and loss of privacy. The large overlooking window on the north elevation was a deviation from the 2011 approval which conditioned against such a window, looked directly towards his living areas and garden. Although obscure glazing had been added, the effect remained one of intrusion. The perception of being overlooked was itself a serious loss of amenity, contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS7. He questioned why a stairwell required so much light. He believed there to be multiple departures from the approved drawings and conditions. Those included a trebled in size sliding window allowing access onto a flat roof where a fixed recessed one was expected, two large roof panels instead of six rooflights, deficiencies found by the Enforcement Team and non-compliances requiring many amended plans to be submitted. Mr Kee stated that such changes demonstrated a pattern of building first and seeking permission later, which undermined confidence in the process. He outlined that the dwelling was significantly larger than the 2011 approval. He viewed it as approximately 10% larger in floor area, taller by half a metre, and longer at the rear. Those increases may sound small in percentage terms, but they had created a building that was overbearing in scale and out of keeping with his lower elevation neighbouring property. Its visual impact upon Grey Point Road, Fort Road and Church Road was stark and detrimental to the area. This development was very different to the properties in Sheridan Grove; it was aligned differently, had no garage and minimal garden space. Mr Kee also outlined concerns regarding procedural issues. The ownership certificate had to be corrected, the application form was inaccurate and neighbour notification dates were misstated. While those had apparently been amended, he felt that illustrated weaknesses in the process. In his view, retrospective approval in this context would set a damaging precedent and be open to judicial review. There had been a loss of amenity and environmental value. The original hedge, tree and screening were removed and the replacement planting was limited and tokenistic. It did not restore what had been lost, either in privacy or biodiversity terms. He strongly believed the development met the ‘significant benefit test’ for a site visit by the Committee. In conclusion, Mr Kee outlined that this development had gone well beyond what was originally approved, it had harmed the residential character and neighbour amenity. Mr Kee asked the Committee to refuse this application, or at least to defer it until compliance with conditions and accurate assessments could be independently confirmed.

In dispute of a comment made by the Planning Officer, Mr McGregor highlighted that the road referred to was not a public road, it was a narrow road and was the responsibility of the residents.

Mr McGregor (2 Sheridan Grove) explained that he had objected to the initial plan for a dwelling on the site in 2011 because it would, and now did significantly impact the amenities and character of Sheridan Grove, where originally 4 spaced out dwellings

were constructed, giving all residents good privacy. The leases of all the houses in Sheridan Grove stated there was to be no building on the sites to preserve the character of Sheridan Grove. He advised at the Planning Committee meeting in 2011 he was supported in person by MLA, the late Gordon Dunne. However those objections were overruled, so his wife and himself resigned themselves to the fact that a house would be jammed into the strip of garden between 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove. The original plan had an integrated garage, which would have lessened the future parking congestion. During the building of the house now designated 3a, Sheridan Grove, several notable deviations from the plans were noted. Every time those deviations were referred to Planning the reply came back that the builders had been told "they are building at risk". Mr McGregor outlined that the change impacting him most seriously was the construction of a balcony overlooking his front drive, and looking directly into the main bedroom and living area. Mr McGregor highlighted that significantly impacted his privacy. Why the new owners needed a balcony overlooking his property, when they had an uninterrupted sea view at the back was difficult to understand. Mr McGregor stated that the Planning department had failed to protect the residents and he therefore objected to planning approval for the existing construction. He requested that approval was not granted until at least the balcony to the front of the property, which was built at risk, at least be removed.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the differences from the extant permission and asked the representatives to outline the differences in terms of impact. Mr Kee stated that the dwelling was significantly larger than the 2011 approval, there was an increase in 10% of the floor area, with the dwelling being taller and longer. It was significantly overbearing, out of keeping and dominant. It looked directly into the two living areas of his property. In terms of the landscaping plan, the biodiversity element was of concern with significant hedging having been removed with birds and bats having been foraging and feeding. There was no compliance with the net gain required under the biodiversity act.

In respect of the concern regarding the balcony, Alderman Graham asked the representatives to elaborate on that. Mr McGregor explained that it was a point of concern for himself particularly as it pointed towards the main bedroom and living room in his property. The rear of the property provided an excellent sea view.

Mr Kee added there was also a sea view from the large window on the north elevation which served the stairwell.

The Mayor noted that Mr Kee had asked for at least a deferment of the application until compliance with conditions and accurate assessments could be independently confirmed. She asked Mr Kee what conditions and assessments he was referring to.

Mr Kee stated that the planning report concluded that there was no likely significant effects on nearby designated sites under regulation 43.1 of the habitats regulation. It appeared that no appropriate assessment had been published nor was there evidence how that conclusion was reached. Designated sites in proximity such as the other Ards SPA, SCCI, Belfast Lough and Crawfordsburn were not subject to hydrological or connectivity assessment despite checklist requirement. Site maps showed both soakaways and sewer connections with pipework leading towards those designated areas. He believed that strongly suggested hydrological links

without appropriate assessment and felt it was difficult to verify compliance with the habitat regulations.

In response to a further question from the Mayor, Mr Kee advised that when the plans for the development were initially submitted there was an indication that there would be a hedge along the boundary between No 4 and the proposal. With the numerous changes, particularly over the past year that had now gone as the room was not available. Mr Kee referred to the large overbearing window and stated that in the 2011 application which the planning department relied on as material consideration had conditioned against a such a window.

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

Councillor Wray referred to the light test which was 5% over from the previous approval and the change in height by $\frac{1}{2}$ m. The Planning department had viewed those as minor changes and he questioned on what guidance such changes were based. The Planning Officer stated that there were no set measurements, it was a professional judgement that Officers came to taking account all of the considerations. In terms of the light test, although it failed, the living area affected had two other large windows and policy dedicated that other factors such as that should be taken into account.

The Chair welcomed David Mills (Agent), Peter Thompson (Applicant) and Joanna Thompson (Applicant) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

David Mills stepped forward into the Chamber. Mr Mills detailed that the application was for modifications to a previously approved dwelling on which construction had previously commenced before his client had purchased the site, and which construction his client continued, albeit with some relatively minor changes. He advised that during the processing of the application his client on numerous occasions readily agreed to address any concerns or issues raised by the Case Officer and had quickly amended the drawings to suit. Mr Mills stated that it had been a very difficult two years for his elderly client, Mr Thompson and his daughter and therefore on their behalf he was pleased that the application had finally come to Council with a recommendation to approve. He was in agreement with the Case Officer's report and he hoped the Committee could approve the application to allow the applicants to begin living in their new home.

In respect of the height of building, Mr Mills stated that it was correct that the ridge height was 0.5m higher however the eaves were 25cm higher. The original application had an enormous chimney that sat 1.5m above the roof and that element had been removed. Mr Mills viewed the difference as negligible. In terms of large window which was referred to, that was of obscure glass and therefore was not overlooking.

The Chair stated that it had been mentioned the confidence in the planning process and he questioned why the dwelling had been built at risk. Mr Mills stated that when his client bought the house, there was the previous permission. His client believed

that the modifications were minor, Mr Mills or the Planning department did not agree with that and reductions were made in the early stages of the application. Mr Mills viewed the changes that had now taken place as relatively minor.

Councillor Hennessy highlighted that Mr Mills had stated that his client on numerous occasions had readily agreed to address any concerns or issues raised by the Planning Officer and asked Mr Mills to elaborate on that. Mr Mills stated that concerns had been raised during the processing of the application regarding the objections. More recently, those related to the boundary treatment, the retaining wall and the roof lights were amended from 6 small lights to 2 large flat roof lights.

Alderman Graham referred to the site plan and the size of the curtilage. He asked Mr Mills if he felt increasing the footprint was pushing the boundaries for this site. Mr Mills disagreed, the main addition was the front porch area and in his view the current proposal was an improvement and an enhancement.

Councillor Cathcart noted the objectors had outlined the differences from the extant permission and this application as overbearing, dominant, out of keeping and overlooking. He asked for Mr Mills viewpoint in that regard. Mr Mills believed that there was no overlooking and felt the planners report demonstrated that. With the chimney element having been removed, it could be argued that there was a reduction in overshadowing and the rear aspect was lower. Mr Mills believed the elements to be negligible.

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

The Mayor noted the viewpoint that the objectors had been fobbed off while the building was able to continue. She questioned the level of engagement with the objectors and applicant in respect of their concerns particularly in respect of the balcony. She asked if there any suggestions from planning in respect of the balcony that perhaps had not been taken onboard.

The Planning Officer stated that they were of the opinion that the balcony did not result in any unacceptable overlooking. She felt that she had demonstrated well that there was no view on any private amenity space or habitable room windows at No 4. In respect of No 2 the separation distance was adequate and the site in question sat above the dwelling.

The Mayor stated that her main concern was the overlooking into the living area at No2. The Planning Officer stated that the impact was considered fully to all of the windows at No 2. She reiterated that was deemed acceptable.

In response to a question Alderman McIlveen, the Planning Officer clarified that the reference to public road was meant in the sense that it was the main means of access. It made no difference in the determination of the application.

In response to a question from Alderman Smith, the Planning Officer explained that Planning Officers were looking at the overall footprint on the site, the height and the overall massing. Referring to the proposed and existing visuals, she remarked that

the garden was generous in size. The density could be not revisited due to the extant permission. The increase was not considered significant.

Councillor Cathcart asked the Planning Officer asked if she viewed the proposal as a betterment overall. The Planning Officer stated that was subjective. She had visited the site recently and she viewed the dwelling as a quality residential development.

Councillor Smart asked if any consideration was given to limiting the use of the balcony. The Planning Officer stated that the balcony was considered small, it was off the bedroom and she did not feel a condition could be put on to restrict use.

The Head of Planning stated that Officers had be mindful of the legal tests when adding conditions and ensure that those conditions were enforceable. The assessment of the application had been thorough and the balcony was considered acceptable.

(Councillor Kerr withdrew from the meeting during the consideration of the application)

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

Councillor Hennessy agreed with the Officer’s assessment of the application.

Alderman McAlpine noted that there were 15 conditions associated with the application. She hoped the use of balcony would not be abused.

Alderman Graham stated that he was not happy with the decision to approve. He had no issue with the design however was concerned regarding the location of the proposal as the other dwellings had large curtilages. With regard the 2011 application he believed that the house had been ‘shoehorned’ into the site and pushed the boundaries to the limit.

Councillor Kendall stated that whilst she appreciated that there were fine margins between the two applications, she could not support the proposal. She felt the retrospective nature of application, undermined the planning process, negated neighbour consultation and she had no faith that the conditions would be complied with or enforced.

The Head of Planning asked Members to be mindful of the reasonings for their arguments, that those should be in relation to the application and not in respect of the process of planning and the undermining of that process.

The proposal was put to the meeting and was declared LOST, with 4 voting FOR, 6 AGAINST, 4 ABSTENTIONS and 2 ABSENT.

FOR (4)	AGAINST (6)	ABSTAINED (4)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Aldermen	Aldermen	
McAlpine	Graham	McIlveen	
McDowell	Smith	McKee	

Councillors

Harbinson
Hennessy

Councillors

Cathcart
Kendall
McCollum
Wray

Councillors

McClean
Smart

Councillors

Kerr
Morgan

The Head of Planning referred to the protocol and the reasoning that was required.

Alderman Graham had concerns in respect of the application with a combination of various matters. He believed the extant permission was the baseline and any increase within that confined site was detrimental to the residents of the surrounding properties.

The Head of Planning reminded Members that a robust reasoning was required under planning policy.

Alderman Graham believed the proposal was detrimental to the surrounding area.

The Mayor noted the option for the Committee to be minded to refuse the application and to provide reasoning in time for next meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the options with guidance provided by the Head of Planning and it was;

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the Council is minded to refuse the application.

Councillor Cathcart had concerns regarding the scale, massing and dominance.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 7 voting FOR, 4 AGAINST, 3 abstentions and 2 absent.

FOR (7)

Aldermen

Graham
Smith

Councillors

Cathcart
Kendall
McCollum
Smart
Wray

AGAINST (4)

Aldermen

McAlpine
McDowell

Councillors

Harbinson
Hennessy

ABSTAINED (3)

Alderman

McIlveen

Councillors

McClean
McKee

ABSENT (2)

Councillors

Kerr
Morgan

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the Council is minded to refuse the application.

4.3 LA06/2024/0720/F - The Sir Samuel Kelly Compound, Copeland Marina Carpark, Railway Street, Donaghadee
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee

Committee Interest: Land in which the Council had an interest

Proposal: Extension to Existing Temporary Structure to provide additional exhibition space and storage with ramped access. Erection of Project 24 Exhibition Pod.
(Temporary Permission)

Site Location: The Sir Samuel Kelly Compound, Copeland Marina Carpark, Railway Street, Donaghadee

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (J Hanna) outlined the detail of the application. No objections had been received in relation to the application. Consultees were also content and had raised no objection to the proposal.

The site was located within the car park to the northwest of Copelands Marina. It was occupied by Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat which was under canopy for restoration purposes. The site was located directly adjacent to and grouped with other boats in the Southeast portion of the car park. There were a variety of uses in the wider area particularly residential dwellings to the west. The site was situated within the settlement limits of Donaghadee as defined by the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The path that lay to the northeast of the site was part of the 'Commons and Coastline' Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA8). LLPA 8 states 'The Commons' and coastline is understood as an attractive stretch of coastline affording views out to the sea as well as a valuable area of local amenity importance with extensive public walkways and including both passive and active recreational areas.'

The planning history on site was a material consideration in particular the approval of LA06/2022/0904/F. This application was for the retention of works on site including the canopy, exhibition space and perimeter fencing for a temporary period. A condition had been attached limiting the time to match this existing permission. As illustrated on the block plans, the application adds and integrated into the footprint of this approved development.

The Officer displayed visuals illustrating the existing elevations and floorplans on site. The development was dominated by the steel framed canopy with an exhibition area finished in timber. There would be an additional 7m x 5m exhibition room in the northwestern corner of the site, with a timber ramp and platform system to facilitate access and the installation of a smaller separate metal "pod" in the northeastern corner of the site. An objective of PPS16 was to ensure a high standard of design for all tourism development.

Policy TSM 1 (Tourism Development in Settlements) of PPS16 stated "Planning permission should be granted provided it is of a nature appropriate to the settlement, respects the site context in terms of scale, size and design, and has regard to the specified provisions of a development plan."

As already indicated, the component parts of the proposal would be in addition to existing features of the site. Previous assessment had considered the design to be functional and appropriate for the proposed use and coastal setting. The proposed design was in keeping with that already approved. The inclusion of those proposed works within the site would not cause demonstrable harm to the immediately surrounding area and wider coastal environments. Overall, given its temporary nature, the proposal was acceptable in context of visual amenity.

Under the SPPS the guiding principle for the Council in determining planning applications was that sustainable development should be permitted, having regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, unless the proposed development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Paragraph 6.34 stated “The aim of the SPPS in relation to the coast is ... to support the sensitive enhancement and regeneration of the developed coast largely within coastal settlements”. As this proposal was on a car park within a defined settlement it comprised part of the developed coast in accordance with this. Paragraph 6.39 stated state “Within the developed coast, areas of amenity value (such as parks, outdoor sports/play areas and coastal walkways) and areas or features designated for their importance to the archaeological, built, or natural heritage, should be protected from inappropriate development.” Paragraph 6.44 added “Some developments require a coastal location.” The Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat has been located within the car park beside other boats for several years. The nature of the proposal (restoring a lifeboat), and associated exhibition room was therefore appropriate to its coastal location and site.

All elements of the proposal, were confined to a small area of a public car park and would have no undue impact upon designated open spaces, would not obstruct access to the car park or have any negative impact upon enjoyment of the coastal walk along the Local Landscape Policy Area.

The SPPS also aimed to promote a sustainable approach to tourism projects, particularly in the provision of high-quality developments in appropriate locations. The Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat was a Marine Heritage Asset which had tourism potential. PPS16 ‘Tourism’ sought to utilise and develop the tourism potential of settlements by facilitating tourism development of an appropriate nature, location, and scale (para 3.1). Policy TSM 1 (Tourism Development in Settlements) of PPS16 was material and sought to support tourism development appropriate to the settlement where they were to be located. Furthermore, Policy TSM 8 detailed that permission would not be granted for development that would in itself or in combination with the existing and approved development in the locality had an adverse impact on a tourism asset such as to significantly compromise its tourism value. In this instance the development would enable increased interaction with the asset and the proposal was considered to comply with TSM 8.

Proposals for a tourism use were also subject to criteria under TSM 7. There was not considered to be any conflict with the criteria and the proposal was deemed to meet TSM 7 . The application site was in the wider setting of Donaghadee Harbour which was statutorily listed as being of special architectural and historical interest. Historic Environment Division were consulted in respect of the listed harbour and were

content that the proposals were sufficiently removed in situation and scale of development as to have no impact.

The closest residential properties were located at Edward Street, William Street and Railway Street. The closest point from the application site boundary was approximately 30m away, with the Canopy being over 38m's. That was in excess of the typical separation distance of 20m recommended in the 'Creating Places' guidance. Given this distance and the nature of the proposals it was not considered there would be undue impact on residential amenity, including from overshadowing/loss of light, dominance, and loss of privacy.

The compound had been in situ for several years and would not obstruct access into or out of the car park. The access to the car park was 45m away from the canopy in its North-east corner. To facilitate the exhibition room and disabled access the area of the compound would extend by approximately 8m into the site retaining the current depth of approximately 20m. It was considered the proposal allowed for ample room to facilitate movement and would not restrict or obstruct manoeuvring vehicles. Also, due to the size of the car park, availability of spaces and footpaths/public transport it was considered that any potential impact from additional staff and visitors would not have any significant adverse effect. DfI Roads had been consulted and had no objection to the proposals.

In summary, the Planning Department was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS and CTY 4 of PPS21. The development would not adversely affect any designated features, nor would it adversely impact on residential amenity or access. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that temporary planning permission should be approved.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor Hennessy noted that the application included the erection of a Project24 pod. He was of the understanding that Donaghadee Heritage Association had been unsuccessful in securing a pod and questioned if a similar structure could be erected without having to gain further approval. The Head of Planning noted that was speculative and Officers would have to provide an assessment for any future structures.

The Planning Officer stated that the Case Officer was not aware of a different structure and any change would need to be assessed.

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

4.4 LA06/2023/1688/F - Approximately 40 m NE of no 12 Craigavad Park, Holywood, 'Plot 16' (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Hollywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Subject to objections from 6 addresses contrary to the recommendation.

Proposal: 2No. semi-detached dwellings and garages, associated site works and landscaping

Site Location: Approximately 40 m NE of no 12 Craigavad Park, Hollywood, 'Plot 16'

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (J Hanna) outlined the detail of the application. A total of 10 objections had been received in relation to the application. The issues raised included the impact on character, need for protection fence, road safety, reliance on extant permission and piecemeal development. Those issues had been addressed in detail within the committee report. Consultees were also content and had raised no objection to the proposal with the exception of NI Water who had recommended refusal. That was due to lack of network capacity and a negative condition was proposed for a means of disposal to be agreed prior to commencement.

The application site was located at Craigavad Park, Hollywood and was within an approved housing development site. It was accessed via an existing access from Station Road. Planning permission was originally granted under W/2006/0314/RM for 26 dwellings which had been commenced and was under construction. The application site was 'Plot 16'. The site was located within the development limits of Hollywood and was zoning for housing under both the North Down & Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 and the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. The site sat within the proposed Area of Townscape Character (ATC) for Marino, Cultra, Craigavad (Designation HD12). The surrounding area was characterised by large houses on mature plots. There was considerable variety in scale, appearance and design, with a mixture of traditional houses and more modern detached dwellings.

The application site was located within the development limits of Hollywood under the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984. The proposal lay within Cultra/Craigavad Policy zone which referred to a plot size policy of 0.2 ha in order 'to protect the inherent qualities of this locality'. The plot size in this case measured 0.16ha for the 2 No plots (0.08ha for each plot) which fell just below the 0.2ha plot size. However, paragraph 18.9 recognised that that there would be developments which were acceptable in planning terms although they were not strictly in accordance with the 0.2ha plot size. Those would be generated by the physical or environmental considerations of a particular site or the nature of the development proposed. The Planning Appeals Commission considered objections in the Public Inquiry that the Policy Zone should be retained in BMAP, however it did not consider that there was a need for such a policy, given the ATC designation, which was also intended to protect the area's character. Subsequently, it fell to an assessment on a case-by-case basis as to whether the proposed plot sizes would have an impact on the character of the area and would be a matter of planning judgement.

The site was within lands that were zoned for housing in Draft BMAP 2015 – Zoning HD 04/03. The draft BMAP zoning has Key Site Requirements including a minimum gross density of 5 dwellings per hectare. The other requirements of the zoning were addressed in the original planning permission. The density of the proposed development would equate to approximately 12 dwellings per hectare (dph) which

was in accordance with the key site requirements. The site also fell within the proposed Area of Townscape Character (ATC) for Marino, Cultra, Craigavad (Designation HD12). Although the adoption status of the plan had been altered due to the legal judgment the proposed designation of this ATC was likely to be included again in any formal adoption of the plan. The ATC covered a large area north of the Belfast Bangor railway line near Holywood and included a wide range of development types and buildings such as terraces, semi-detached and detached dwellings, a girl guide centre, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Royal Belfast Golf Club.

The proposed development was for an increase in the number of approved units on Site 16 from one detached dwelling to two semi-detached dwellings. In terms of the potential impact on the character of the area, the proposed dwellings would sit in a similar position to the dwelling previously approved on the site. The position of the dwellings would respect the established building line and their height would be comparable to the adjacent existing dwellings. The proposed plots would be spacious in size at around 0.08ha each with adequate private amenity space. The site was not located close to any existing trees that were protected by the TPO. Adequate separation distances were maintained between the recently constructed dwelling on the adjacent site No.17. All other dwellings were located on the opposite side of the road.

It was considered that the proposal would not appear as overdevelopment and would not cause any harm to the development by any cumulative impact. Policy QD1 of PPS7 states that in an ATC intensification of site coverage would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, however, it went on to say that prevailing consideration must be whether or not the development would have an adverse impact upon overall character. In this case the proposal was for two semi-detached dwellings within an approved residential development site and would not result in an adverse impact on the character of the area and harm to the overall appearance of the proposed ATC. The original site was large enough to accommodate the proposed dwellings which were still large on spacious plots and of low density which was in keeping with the remainder of the development of Craigavad Park.

The dwellings would be two and a half storeys, rendered and painted with hipped slate roof, with sliding sash windows and garages. PPS7 – Quality Residential Environments and PPS7 (Addendum) – Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas both applied to this development. Criterion (a) of Policy QD1 of PPS7 required that the development respects the surrounding context and was appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas. A similar design located within the development. Criterion (g) required that the design of the development draws upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing. The provisions of this policy must also be considered in conjunction with policy LC1 of PPS7 Addendum – Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas. The addendum provided additional planning policies on the protection of local character, environmental quality and residential amenity within established residential areas. The proposed house types and design were considered to be acceptable in the context of the site and the proposed ATC in

respect of the materials and finishes and the proposal as a whole was considered to be sympathetic to the appearance of the area.

As could be seen from the floor plans, the proposed dwelling would be built to a size that provided a generous allotment of space in excess of the minimum standards set out in Annex A of Policy LC1 of the Addendum to PPS7. It was therefore considered that the proposal would not erode the character of this established residential area.

The site was accessed from Station Road. DfI Roads were consulted and had raised no objections to the proposal. Station Road was a private road up to the railway bridge where it then become an adopted public road up to the main A2 Bangor Road protected route. DfI Roads were satisfied that the application did not represent intensification of use from the private road onto the public road adjacent to the railway bridge. This assessment had taken into account the number of existing units and future committed development. Policy AMP3 Access to Protected Routes was not applicable as the proposal did not have direct access onto the A2 Bangor Road protected route.

DfI Roads were content that the existing junction where Station Road meets the A2 provided a safe means of access onto the Protected Route. Where the private section of Station Road meets the adopted section, DfI Roads had advised there was no evidence of a collision history or record of delays and inconvenience caused to traffic within its vicinity.

In terms of parking provision, the Parking Standards document advised that for a 5 bed-detached dwelling, 3 in-curtilage spaces were required. The proposed site plan showed a single garage for each dwelling and there was ample room for the parking for another 2 cars within the curtilage and on this basis, it was considered that the parking provision was compatible with policy requirements. It was therefore considered that the proposal complied with Policies AMP 2 and AMP 7 of PPS3, and criteria (f) of Policy QD1 of PPS7.

In respect of residential amenity, it was considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse affect on neighbouring properties. The most likely potential impact in terms of a loss of amenity would be on the adjacent dwelling on Site 17 bounding the site on the southern side. This dwelling sat at right angles to the site so only the north facing gable elevation which had two first floor gable windows would face the proposed dwellings. There were eight windows on the proposed elevation that would be visible from Site 17 which serve the landing areas and bedrooms. The two storey elevation of the proposed buildings would not come any closer to the dividing boundary with Site 17 than the original dwelling approved on the site. The separation distance between the proposed two storey elevation and the dividing boundary was 13.5m and 18.5m to the gable elevation of the dwelling on Site 17. Due to this substantial separation distance, it was considered that there would be no unacceptable overlooking caused from the proposed first floor and attic bedroom windows. A 1.8m closed timber fence was to be constructed along the dividing boundary with a hedgerow so there would be no unacceptable overlooking caused from the ground floor windows. On this basis it was considered that there would be no unacceptable impacts caused to the dwelling on Site 17 in terms of any unacceptable overlooking overshadowing or overdominance.

The proposed layout had been designed to help safeguard the residential amenity of both the proposed dwellings and the adjacent existing dwelling. It was considered that the separation distances between proposed dwellings, the location and orientation of windows, and the proposed intervening boundary features, would together ensure that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the residential amenity of any existing or approved dwellings in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, or dominance. It was therefore considered that the proposal complied with part (h) of Policy QD 1 of PPS7, and all relevant guidance. Policy QD1 of PPS 7 stated that adequate provision should be made for private open space. The indicative layout showed that the proposed dwellings would have adequate areas of private amenity space in the form of private rear gardens and would have more than the minimum requirement of 70sqm as set out in the Creating Places guidance.

Overall, the development proposed a suitable design which would not appear as overdevelopment and would respect the character of the surrounding area and the Area of Townscape Character. There would not be an unacceptable adverse affect on the amenity of nearby residential receptors and safe access to the site could be provided. For those reasons it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

As there were no questions for Members at this stage, the Chair invited David Donaldson (Agent) to come forward who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr Donaldson believed the overview from the Planning Officer to be comprehensive, he had previously provided his speaking note and had no matters to add.

The Chair invited questions from Members for Mr Donaldson.

The Mayor raised a question in relation to the future intentions of the developer. She noted at present there was permission for 28 houses with 12 detached and 2 semi-detached having been constructed. Mr Donaldson confirmed that as correct. The 2 semi-detached properties were approved by Planning Committee in 2020. 1-2 houses a year were built on the site. The application related to plot 16 and plot 17 sat adjacent.

The Mayor asked if the future properties would be mix of detached/semi-detached. She wondered if there was disappointment from the original purchasers of properties within the site who may have envisaged a lower density development. Mr Donaldson stated that one set of semi-detached properties had been built, those were large and very much in keeping with the overall development. The developer had built 5-6 detached houses. The intention was to keep a mix of detached/semi-detached, with a high quality and low density development. Maintaining the character of the development was an important aspect for the developer.

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

The Chair wished to be recorded as abstaining.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 8.57 pm and resumed at 9.08 pm.

Alderman McDowell withdrew from the meeting at this stage.

4.5 LA06/2023/1984/F - King House, 37-39 High Street, Holywood (Appendices VII, VIII)

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

DEA: Holywood and Clandeboyne

Committee Interest: Local application which has received six or more separate objections contrary to the case officer's recommendation.

Proposal: Demolition of building and erection of 4 storey building comprising ground floor office and 5 apartments above

Site Location: King House, 37-39 High Street, Holywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

Alderman McIlveen declared an interest at this stage and withdrew from the meeting.

The Planning Officer (C Barker) outlined the detail of the application. The application site was located on the north-western side of High Street and was occupied by a symmetrical two storey block of former two dwellings with central coachway, dating from the middle part of the 19th Century (named King House). The rear yard of the building was accessed via Strand Mews, which was a residential development of two storey terraced housing and some larger three and four storey apartment blocks. The yard was enclosed by a part stone, part block boundary wall and was occupied by a large single storey outbuilding with a pitched corrugated metal roof.

The character of the surrounding area was largely commercial to the south but residential to the north. Strand Avenue was a large housing development which includes terraced properties and substantial apartment blocks. There were also three storey apartment blocks adjacent to Kings House, overlooking High Street.

The site was within the settlement of Holywood and was located within the Town Centre, Primary Retail Core and Conservation Area in draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. The proposal was to demolish the detached single storey building to the rear of the site, the boundary wall and also some elements of the rear elevation of King House and then the erection of a link and a four storey block to the rear with the fourth floor recessed back into the roof so it respected the height of the adjacent building and the character of the surrounding area. The existing King House building would remain in situ with its internal provisions. The new extension to the rear would facilitate an office unit of 60sqm and five new apartments provided over the first, second and third floors. The proposed development did extend to the boundary of the site and therefore in-curtilage parking was not provided.

The SPPS, in paragraph 6.269, stated that *'It is important that planning supports the role of town centres and contributes to their success'*. In relation to relevant policies R1 and R2 the PAC Report in the Adoption Statement recommended that they were replaced by a single policy as follows: *"Non-retail development will be restricted in designated Primary Retail Cores (and Primary Retail Frontages) so that no more than 25% of the frontage of the shopping street(s) to which it relates is in non-retail use and no more than three adjacent units are in non-retail use. The Primary Retail Cores will be the preferred location for new comparison and mixed retail development."*

Given the location of the unit at the rear of the existing building and its small scale (60sqm) it was considered that it would not harm the vitality and viability of the primary retail core. The proposed extension would be located to the rear of the existing King House building. Due to the built-up nature along High Street, there would be very limited views of the proposed extension. The existing building was visible from the Hollywood by-pass however it was approximately 100m from this road and there were intervening two storey terrace dwellings which screened the majority of the rear elevation and only the roof form could be seen.

The footprint of the building would replace development already in situ with the height of the development being the most significant alteration. While it did add to the density of this existing plot, it must be considered that it was rising to a similar height of the main Kings House building. The surrounding area was characterised by apartment blocks which were 3-4 storeys in height along High Street and Strand Avenue. The location of the development would appear as a continuation of this existing density along the streetscape of Strand Mews and would not be considered to be inappropriate. The footprint of the proposed extension was similar in scale to the existing main building and the scale of the building was comparative to other development in the locality. It was considered that the design, layout, scale and massing of the proposed development would respect the topography of the land and the character of the area in accordance with PPS7 Policy QD1.

The visuals showed the proposed floor plans with the balconies shown shaded orange with a mix of studio and two-bedroom apartments. Due to the small number of units provided there was no requirement for the provision of open space within this proposal. Creating Places recommended that the level of amenity for apartments should range from a minimum of 10 Sq m per unit to around 30 Sq m per unit. In this instance an average of 5.8sqm had been provided per unit in the form of balconies which fell below this provision but it was considered that those were commensurate to the town centre location and to the apartments they serve. Due to the proximity of the proposed development to the waterfront and town centre parks there would be open space available within walking distance which negated the requirement for the full provision of private or communal amenity space under this application.

In terms of impact on residential amenity, Policy QD1 (h) stated that design and layout should not conflict with adjacent land uses and there should be no unacceptable adverse effect on existing or proposed properties in terms of over-looking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance. The proposed development was compatible with the adjacent residential uses to the northeast and north of the site.

There were bedroom windows and side balcony windows proposed on the gable elevation at both first and second floor level and a kitchen/dining room window proposed at third floor level on the gable of the proposed extension looking towards the rear amenity of the adjacent flats and the parking area to the rear of the flats. There were also windows proposed on the link which were in line with the amenity area of the adjacent apartments. Those windows had been conditioned to be finished in obscure glazing and be non-opening below 1.7m to ensure that direct over-looking did not occur.

The windows closest to the application site were bathroom windows which were opaque, with the next windows over serving the kitchens. The 45-degree light test had been employed to assist assessment and it was noted that the proposed extension did breach this test. It was important to note that that was intended as guidance only and was not a rigid standard which must be met in every case. Rather it was an assessment tool which would be used in conjunction with other relevant factors in order to gauge the acceptability of proposals in terms of the overshadowing / loss of light impact upon neighbouring properties. The rooms to the rear of the adjacent flats consisted of bathrooms with opaque glazing and a kitchen window with the living rooms and bedrooms facing on to High Street. In this case the separation distance of 15m between the proposed extension and neighbouring windows would limit any loss of daylight or sunlight to the occupiers.

The rear of the terrace dwellings 30-36 Strand Mews back onto the application site with approx. 23m between the rear of the proposed extension and the rear boundary of the dwellings. There was approx. 28m between the opposing rear elevations. As stated above, balconies were proposed on the rear elevation along with windows. The balconies were recessed and were of small scale. The adjacent apartments had a full length external balcony to the rear on the second floor which also had an outlook in the same direction as that of the proposal. The dwellings at Strand Mews were front facing to the south-west and looked out onto the existing parking area. The windows proposed on the rear of the extension were orientated to the north-west which meant that over-looking from those windows would only have oblique views towards 1-3 Strand Mews and not direct. Whilst balconies were proposed on this rear elevation, the floor area of them ranges at 3-4sqm at first and second floor level and then there was one larger area at 15sqm on the third floor. The balconies were recessed into the building so views would be directed towards the north-west. It was acknowledged that oblique views could be taken from the balustrades but the relevant area associated with 1-3 Strand Mews serves front gardens which were already open to public views.

In relation to archaeology and built heritage, the proposal included the demolition of the detached single storey building to the rear of the site and the boundary wall enclosing it, in addition to some elements of the rear elevation of King House. The building to the rear of the site was single storey and constructed in blockwork with a corrugated metal roof and did not display any of the typical characteristics of the buildings in the conservation area listed in the design guide. The 2m high wall enclosing it was partially constructed in stone, and the rear section was brick. In view of all of those considerations, the rear outbuilding and boundary wall were not considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area and would be no objection in principle to their demolition. Some sections of the rear elevation of King

House were also proposed to be demolished in order to permit the construction of a glass link to the new apartment building beyond. Most of the glazing on the existing rear elevation was double glazed and there would be no objection to their removal. The majority of the historic fabric of King House was being retained and it was considered that the building made a material contribution to the conservation area and therefore its retention and incorporation into the scheme was welcomed.

In relation to access, road safety and car parking, the Planning Officer outlined that the proposal did not include in-curtilage parking. The site was located within the town centre close to transport links of both bus and rail and within walking distance of amenities. A Transport Assessment Form (TAF) was completed and submitted in support of the application. It established that there were several on-street car parking spaces and public car parks located within short walking distance of the site, some of which were free to use after 6pm and before 8am Monday to Saturday. The parking survey demonstrated that on average there were 173 available spaces within a 200m walking distance of the site between the hours of 7pm and 7am.

Given the town centre location, the availability of parking spaces within walking distance of the site and of alternative modes of transport, it was considered that parking was not critical to serve the proposed development. Following the most recent objection the applicant had offered the use of a travel card for a period of two years for each apartment which would encourage the use of public transport and promote more sustainable living. If Committee were minded then submission of details for the use of this card could be negatively conditioned. DfI Roads were consulted and subsequently offered no objections to the proposal. Historic Environment Division (HED) had considered the impacts of the proposal on the nearby Grade B2 Johnny the Jig statue and consider that the listed building was sufficiently removed to remain unaffected by this application. There were no archaeological, built heritage or landscape features to protect or integrate into the overall design and layout of the development.

At the time of presentation 60 letters of representation, from 8 different addresses, had been received and this number included 2 pro-forma letters. In accordance with the Scheme of delegation multiple letters of objection from one individual person (or body including any corporate entity) would constitute one objection.

The objections raised varying issues which included:

- Development increasing population density
- Potential for noise and light pollution on nearby residential receptors
- Impact on parking
- Impact on residential character
- Loss of light and overshadowing
- Impact on the Conservation area

All of those matters had been covered in the detailed case officer report and also discussed in this presentation.

In summary the development of the site included the removal of an unattractive outbuilding and its replacement with a high quality residential/office scheme which would enhance the conservation area. The original building fronting High Street would be unaffected so the street scene in this location would not be disrupted. In terms of height, scale and massing of the new rear building the height was set at a

level that was below the ridge line of the main building fronting onto High Street and was therefore invisible from High Street. The buildings to the south (43 and 45 High Street) were significantly taller than the proposal meaning that when viewed from Strand Mews the proposal was set against them as a backdrop resulting in minimal visual impact on the area. It was considered that the proposal was in keeping with the surroundings and the density was no higher than that of the surrounding area. The apartments would have no adverse impact on adjacent properties and would cause no significant overlooking or overshadowing. There was sufficient separation between the proposed development and the existing two storey dwellings to the rear, as the public road was between, which would reduce any adverse impacts on residential amenity. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that planning permission should be granted subject to the stated planning conditions with delegated powers to amend the condition relating to the travel cards.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor Cathcart queried the response received from Dfl in respect of the survey and did not agree with the idea that residents should use pay and display car parks.

The Head of Planning clarified that Dfl responded with an opinion but were content for the Planning department to assess the parking. She highlighted the considerations including the town centre location, proximity to public transport, availability of car parks in the area and travel cards would be provided to promote sustainable travel.

Councillor Cathcart questioned if an additional condition was being proposed in respect of the travel cards. The Planning Officer confirmed that to be case and explained that following the most recent objection, the Agent had contacted the Planning department with the suggestion of the use of travel cards.

As a Holywood resident, the Mayor spoke of the difficulties faced daily finding a car parking space in Holywood. She disputed that car parking would not be an issue for this application. She encouraged the growth of Holywood, people living in the town centre and more small sustainable units however parking was needed. The Mayor stated that she had grave concerns regarding the parking and the parking survey undertaken. She appreciated the efforts that the developer had made providing travel cards however did not feel they were realistic solution to the problem. The Planning Officer explained that in terms of the assessment of the application, the land was back land development, the building was in need of works and town centre living was to be promoted. It was a small site with the proposal for studio apartments. She recognised the parking element however a parking survey had been carried out, the apartments were ideal for sustainable living and travel cards would be provided.

The Mayor recognised the transport links however felt that the majority of the residents in the apartments would have a car putting additional pressure on the parking in the area.

Councillor Hennessy hoped that the apartments would be attractive to those people without cars. He expressed concerns regarding the neighbours at No 27. The current

dwelling was one storey and was being replaced by a 4 storey dwelling and he felt that would be overbearing and would overshadow. The Planning Officer explained that the 4 storey was recessed into the roof and set slightly back.

Referring to the visual, Councillor Hennessy felt the shadow would impact the nearby houses.

The Planning Officer explained that although it did fail the light test, it would not be deemed unacceptable as there was still plenty of light available with an open aspect.

The Head of Planning expanded and highlighted the need to balance the material considerations. It was a town centre location and a sustainable location.

The Chair invited Michael Worthington (Agent) and Morne Strydom (Applicant) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Worthington stated that the application had been dealt with thoroughly by the Planning department and all consultations had been returned with no objections raised by the consultees. He thanked the Planning department for their work where they had recommended that the application be approved subject to the stated planning conditions. Mr Worthington stated that he was happy to accept those planning conditions.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Wray noted the concerns around parking and asked the representatives thoughts with regard those concerns. He asked how many people would be using the office space which would potentially bring additional cars. Mr Worthington outlined that car parking demand occurred at different times of the day. The peak parking demand for residential uses was overnight (6 pm – 8 am). He advised that he drove through Holywood every day, very early in the morning and there were rarely any cars parked in the High Street stretch of the road at that time. In relation to Strand Mews, that area was owned by the Housing Executive. When the transport assessment was carried out, Strand Mews was specifically excluded. Mr Worthington viewed the legitimate concerns as a matter of lack of policing by the Housing Executive and believed they could do more to prevent the authorised access of Strand Mews by commuters. He emphasised that was not a matter for the Council or himself to solve. He advised that it was likely that the office would accommodate 4-6 people however those people should not be parking in Strand Mews. Morne and his associates were happy to communicate to the new residents of the apartments and the people within the office that parking should not occur at Strand Mews.

Councillor Hennessy questioned how the building works would take place. Mr Worthington advised that Morne were exploring methods of construction with a possible pre-fabricated construction. If access was required via Strand Mews that would need to occur with the agreement of the Housing Executive. He accepted that all building works caused some degree of disruption to the nearby residents.

The Mayor asked if the Agent had any other ideas to mitigate the increase in cars. Mr Worthington stated that he had lots of ideas however he felt it was up to the

Housing Executive to take action. As had been detailed travel cards would be provided to the new occupiers. There was no capacity within the site for car parking spaces.

Councillor Smart stated he had discussed the issue with the Housing Executive on a number of occasions and they had never found a way that was legal or affordable to enforce such parking issues. He did not understand how the building owner could dictate no parking in Strand Mews.

Mr Worthington stated that Strand Mews was private and any access would need to be undertaken with the agreement of the Housing Executive. In relation to the management of the car parking, the only mechanism was to tell the new occupiers not to park at Strand News which was also advised to the tenants of King House.

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

The Chair invited questions from Members.

In response to a question from Councillor Cathcart, the Planning Officer stated that the building was in use as a laundrette, therefore a commercial identity already existed without parking provision and was proposed to be replaced with an office.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Alderman Smith felt the proposal was an enhancement of the area and in terms of policy having people living in the town centres was a priority. He recognised the parking issues which was a challenge but believed that should not be to the negation of future developments.

Councillor Cathcart stated that in terms of making a balanced decision on the proposal there was a need to look at the planning policy. He felt the mixture of commercial and residential was an appropriate use of the town centre. He recognised parking was an issue and he felt it was a difficult call to make. The proposal was a good design and he hoped travel cards suggested as a mitigation measure would help. He also hoped the developer would work with the new tenants in terms of parking.

Councillor Kendall could not support the proposal. She appreciated the willingness of the applicant to mitigate the issue with parking however parking within the town was difficult and she felt Strand Mews would undoubtedly suffer as a result of this development. Councillor Kendall stated that she also did not agree on the basis of PPS7 and felt there would be overshadowing, loss of light and noise disturbance.

Alderman Graham felt the Committee would be naïve to think that the proposal would not affect the car parking for the residents in Strand Mews. He felt provision should be made for car parking. It was a single storey building currently and to raise that to a four storey building would undoubtedly present overshadowing and be overbearing.

The proposal was put the meeting and on the Chair using their casting vote was declared CARRIED with 5 FOR, 5 AGAINST, 2 ABSTENTIONS and 4 ABSENT.

FOR (5)
Aldermen
McAlpine
Smith

AGAINST (5)
Alderman
Graham

ABSTAINED (2)

ABSENT (4)
Alderman
McDowell
McIlveen

Councillors
Cathcart
Harbinson
Wray

Councillors
Hennessy
Kendall
McCollum
McKee

Councillors
McClean
Smart

Councillors
Kerr
Morgan

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted and that delegated authority be awarded to the Planning department to impose the negative conditions.

Alderman McIlveen returned to the meeting.

5. UPDATE TO STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity attaching updated Statement of Community Involvement. The purpose of the report was to seek approval of a revised Planning Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Subject to approval by Council, and once receipt of agreement had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in accordance with Section 4(3) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the SCI shall be published, thus fulfilling obligations under regulation 7 of the Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 – available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/63/contents/made>

The purpose of a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was to outline how the Council proposed to engage the community and stakeholders in exercising its planning functions. The SCI sets out a council's policy as to the involvement, in the exercise of the Council's functions under the development management and local development plan provisions of the **2011 Act**, of persons who appeared to the Council to have an interest in the matters relating to development in its area.

The SCI explained how the community and stakeholders would be involved in the development management process (planning applications) as well as the preparation of the local development plan. It would also set out the steps that the Council would take to facilitate community involvement. It allow everyone to know with whom, what, where and when participation would occur in the planning process. In short, it presented a vision and strategy for involving the community and stakeholders at various stages of the planning process. The SCI sets out the standards to be met by the Council in terms of community involvement, building upon the minimum requirements set out in both the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI)

2015 and the Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (NI) 2015.

Section 4 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 required Council to prepare a SCI. The SCI Regulations set out the requirements for the preparation, form and content and publicity for the SCI.

A Council should involve the community at an early stage in the planning process and anyone who wished to get involved was encouraged to do so at the opportunities provided. The following groups of people were most likely to become involved:

- People living within the area / neighbourhood;
- Elected representatives;
- Voluntary groups;
- Community forums / groups / umbrella organisations;
- Environmental and amenity groups;
- Residents' groups;
- Business community
- Public bodies;
- Developers / landowners;
- Government departments;
- Adjacent councils;
- Groups identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

It should be noted that the above list was not intended to be exhaustive and in no way restricted other individuals, groups and organisations from participating in the planning process.

The planning system could be difficult to understand which meant some groups of people may find it difficult to get involved. Those underrepresented groups could include young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and disadvantaged communities. The Council may therefore wish to liaise with community representatives to help identify under-represented groups within its area and develop strategies and specific consultative methods in order to encourage engagement with these groups in the planning process. This may include targeting participation through workshops, focus groups or mapping exercises and ensuring venues for consultation events were as accessible as possible to all groups of the community, and that events were held at locations within the community and at varying times which appeal to a wider range of people.

The SCI was last reviewed and updated to take account the arrangements for community involvement in the planning system post-pandemic and now deals with privacy in respect of data and consultation arrangements. Once approved by Council, would be submitted to the DfI for review seeking to agree terms as per Planning Act (NI) 2011, Part 2 section 4 (3).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report and approves the updated Statement of Community Involvement.

The Head of Planning spoke briefly to the report.

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

6. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS
(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity attaching Appeal decision 2024/E0049. The report detailed the undernoted:-

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was upheld and enforcement notice quashed on 29 July 2025:

PAC Ref	2024/E0049
Council Ref	LA06/2023/0607/CA
Appellant	Ms C Kelly
Subject of Appeal	Erection of Pigeon Loft
Location	12 Island View, Greyabbey

An appeal against an Enforcement Notice could be brought on any of the following grounds:

- a) that, in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by the matters stated in the notice, planning permission ought to be granted or, as the case may be, the condition or limitation concerned ought to be discharged;
- b) that those matters have not occurred;
- c) that those matters (if they occurred) do not constitute a breach of planning control;
- d) that, at the date when the notice was issued, no enforcement action could be taken in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters;
- e) that copies of the enforcement notice were not served as required by the relevant section of the Planning Act;
- f) that the steps required by the notice to be taken, or the activities required by the notice to cease, exceed what is necessary to remedy any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters or, as the case may be, to remedy any injury to amenity which has been caused by any such breach;
- g) that any period specified in the notice falls short of what should reasonably be allowed.

The Council initially received a complaint about an unauthorised pigeon lift in May 2023 and attempted to engage with the owners. The Council had to serve an enforcement notice on 18 September 2024 which was appealed under grounds (a) (f) and (g).

In terms of Ground (a), under policy EXT 1 of the Addendum to PPS 7, the Council considered the pigeon loft offended criterion (b) in that insufficient information had been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal will not unduly affect surrounding residential amenity.

There was no evidence before the Council that showed that proper cleaning and maintenance was being carried out and therefore had the potential to adversely impact neighbouring amenity by noise, odour, flies and vermin.

The Commissioner found that as the loft was raised above ground level it protects against vermin and provides an ability for easy cleaning. At the time of the Commissioner's visit all of the pigeons were within the loft and there was no evidence detected of noise from the structure. The Commissioner concluded that given the distance and intervening features and fact that the number of birds could be controlled by a condition, noise does not unduly affect neighbouring amenity.

The owner outlined at the appeal that the loft was cleaned, disinfected and the floor scraped each day that was done daily to limit any potential odour and the presence of flies. The Commissioner noted that there was no evidence of flies or odours during his visit.

However, whilst the Commissioner noted that there were no complaints to the Environmental Health Department, who did not attend the appeal on the day, and concluded that the pigeon loft did not offend policy EXT1, he considered it necessary to impose a condition requiring the owner to submit a management plan for the pigeon loft to the Council for approval. This must include measures on the control of noise, odour, vermin, flies and the management of litter and waste as well as set out the maximum number of pigeons that can be housed at any one time. This was welcomed by the Council as this ensured a level of control over the management of the pigeon loft.

On this basis the appeal was successful and the Enforcement Notice quashed. There was therefore no requirement from the Commissioner to consider the administrative grounds (f) and (g).

Appeals lodged

No new appeals were lodged since the last council meeting.

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachments.

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

7. DFI ANNUAL PLANNING STATISTICS 2024-25 (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity attaching DfI Statistical Bulletin 2024-25. The report detailed that the purpose of this report was to update Members on the publication by DfI of the annual finalised results of Northern Ireland planning statistics April 2024 – March 2025 issued.

The bulletin, the press release and detailed tables could be viewed on the Department's website here: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-2024-march-2025>

The report advised that there had been some key events in recent years that would have impacted on planning activity and processing performance including the coronavirus pandemic with varying restrictions in place up until February 2022; the accessibility of the planning system for some users for a period during January and February 2022, and a significant change in IT planning systems with the development and implementation of two new planning systems in June and December 2022; this should be borne in mind when making comparisons with other time periods.

Applications in the Major category of development

The following table details the performance for Ards and North Down against the statutory performance indicators.

Majors	Received	Decided	Approved	Withdrawn	Average Processing Time (target 30 wks)
Quarter 1	2	1	1	0	80.6
Quarter 2	1	1	1	0	90.5
Quarter 3	1	2	2	0	30.7
Quarter 4	0	1	1	0	304.3
Total	4	5	5	0	107.4

The time taken to process a decision/withdrawal was calculated from the date on which an application was deemed valid to the date on which the decision was issued or the application was withdrawn. The median was used for the average processing time as any extreme values have the potential to inflate the mean, leading to a result that may not be considered as "typical".

Update on major applications

Majors - Quarter 1

Planning ref LA06/2022/1076/F was for 63 dwellings, open space, landscaping, parking and access was approved on 8 May 2024 located at 50 Main Street and lands to the rear of Nos 38-48 Main Street, Carrowdore. The proposal sought approval for Phase 2 at the site. Phase 1 was granted under planning ref LA06/2022/0881/F for 25No. Dwellings open space, landscaping, parking and all other associated site and access works, on 10 November 2023 with the principle of development on the site granted under planning ref: X/2009/0470/F.

Majors - Quarter 2

LA06/2022/1072/F was for a new proposed post primary school, car park, bus drop off area and playing pitches with floodlighting at the former Redburn Primary School site on the Old Hollywood Road, Hollywood.

The application, submitted in October 2022 required extensive consultations with many consultees requesting submission of further detailed information in order to be able to provide substantive responses – all which required further re-advertisement neighbour notified in addition to assessing submitted objections to the proposal.

DfI Roads initially had concerns with the proposal which were not resolved until the final consultation response on the application on 20 June 2024. The application was presented to Planning Committee on 02 July 2024 with a recommendation of approval.

Majors - Quarter 3

Recorded in the statistics for Quarter 3 are two applications determined with an average processing time of 30.7 weeks against the statutory performance target of 30 weeks.

The two applications relate to the Section 54 applications:

LA06/2023/2248/F - variation of condition to accommodate the wildlife corridor associated with the residential development at Beverley Heights on Bangor Road, Newtownards with a processing time of 42 weeks; and

LA06/2024/0559/F – variation of phasing conditions and new drainage solution at Queen’s Parade (planning ref LA06/2024/0559/F) was processed in 19.5 weeks.

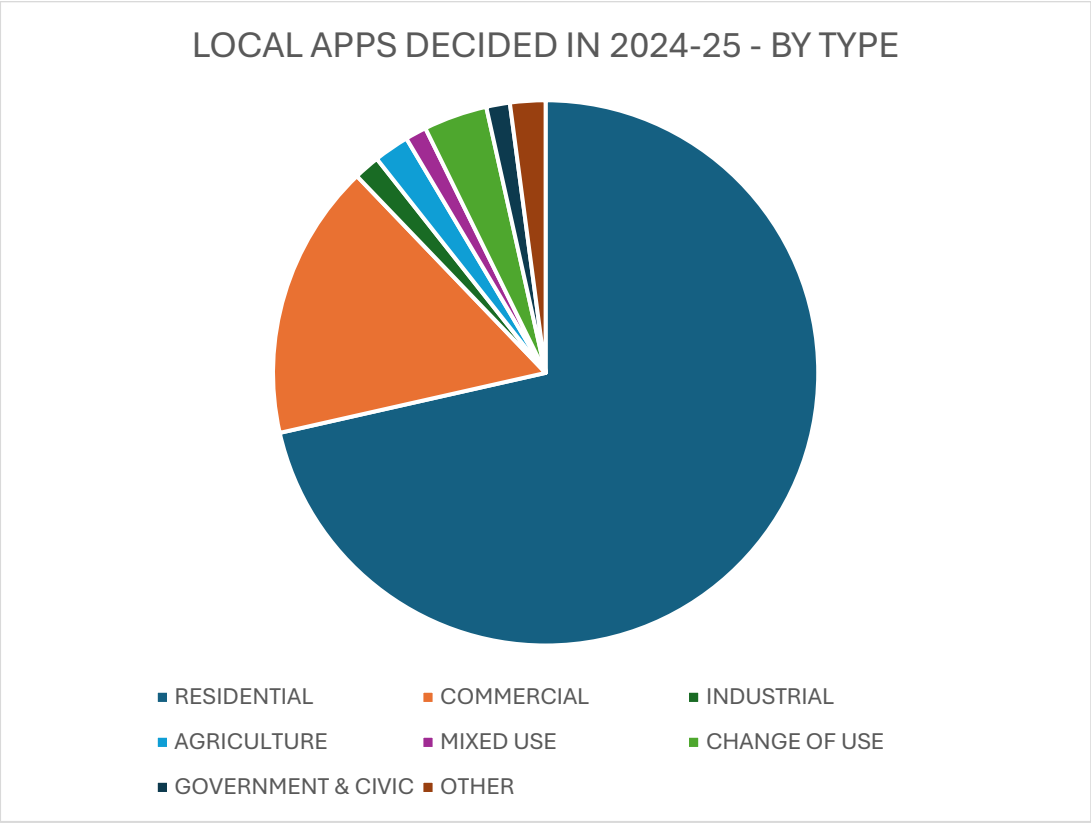
Majors - Quarter 4

Planning ref LA06/2019/0308/F was the application for the extension of the existing Comber Greenway approved on 10 Jan 2025. Members would recall that this long running application was affected by the central portion of the original application being affected by restrictions of the dual carriage and concerns by DFI Roads. To progress the application, the proposal was amended to remove the central portion of the lands affected in order to enable the remainder of the lands to be considered for the Greenway with the ‘final’ portion to be submitted for determination under a fresh application once issues had been resolved with the statutory consultee. That was reflected the 304.3 weeks processing time for determination.

Applications in the Local category of development

Locals	Received	Decided	Approved	Average Processing Time (target 15 wks)
Quarter 1	181	164	161	34.65
Quarter 2	173	210	203	30.05
Quarter 3	153	170	161	37.49
Quarter 4	182	171	163	35.56
Total	689	715	688	34.18

These figures do **not** include those applications received which were subsequently returned as Invalid. Of the application received during this time period, the development types were as follows:



Householder Development

Of the 715 local applications determined above, 332 applications fell within the 'householder development' category of development, i.e. applications for alternations to an existing dwelling such as extensions, conservatories, loft conversions, or outbuildings within the boundary of a dwelling. Planning Service operated an internal target of 65% of householder development proposals being processed within 8 weeks.

In 2024-2025, 132 of the 332 applications were determined within 8 weeks (39.8%) whilst of the 332 householder applications received from 01Apr '24 - 31Mar '25 a total of 230 were determined within the statutory target of 15 weeks (69.3%).

Additional Activity

In addition to the above planning applications, it was important to draw attention to additional work carried out within the Development Management Section which was not reported upon. Additional activity details the "non-application" workload of the Planning Service, and includes Discharge of conditions, Certificates of Lawfulness (Proposed & Existing), Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)/ Consents to Fell Trees in Conservation Area, Pre-Application Discussions (PADs), Proposals of Application Notice (PANs) and Non-Material Changes. Preparation of Statements of Case for appeals and attendance at hearings was not detailed.

Type	Received 01/04/24 – 31/03/2025	Determined - by 31/03/2025
Discharge of Condition	98	59
Certificate of Lawfulness	63	47
Non-Material Change	49	43
Pre-Application Discussion	23	N/A
Proposal of Application Notice	5	N/A
TPO	71	58

For PADs and PANS, only the received cases were included in the table as it was not considered appropriate to report on decided/withdrawn cases or processing times for these types of activity.

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

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

8. UPDATE ON TREES PRESERVATION ORDERS AND WORKS (Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity attaching 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. The update provided information from 13 May 2025 (date of previous report) to 13 August 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

9. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS (Appendix XIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6:6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person.

The report provided an update 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 Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.03 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Kendall

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter (7.51 pm)
Cummings (7.11 pm Zoom)
McAlpine

Councillors:	Ashe (7.10 pm Zoom)	Edmund
	Blaney	Harbinson
	Boyle	Irwin
	Cathcart	Kerr (Zoom)
	Douglas	Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Brady. Apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, Alderman Cummings and Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

NOTED.

2.1 DEPUTATION – CAR PARKING CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – CHAMBERS OF NEWTOWNARDS, BANGOR, COMBER, DONAGHADEE AND HOLYWOOD

Derek Wright, President of the Newtownards Chamber, and Vice President Michael Cafolla were welcomed to the Committee and invited to present their concerns

regarding car parking in Newtownards. Mr Wright expressed appreciation for the consultation process but noted that it was no longer fit for purpose due to significant changes in working patterns over recent years; namely increased remote work and online shopping. He highlighted the impact of those on local businesses, reporting one business closure in the town of Newtownards and five more anticipated this year. Only one new business had planned to open in the same period.

He emphasised the competitive disadvantage faced by the High Street compared to out of town retail parks and shopping centres, which offered free parking. Mr Wright argued that car parking was a critical issue for the High Street and questioned the Council's approach to its own car park assets, such as those at the City Hall, Bangor, and leisure centres, where customers were able to park free of charge. He suggested that radical reform was needed along with the introduction of two hours of free parking followed by an hourly charge.

The presentation also touched upon falling retail and commercial property values, referencing the recent £32M purchase of Bloomfield Shopping Centre and a significant drop in rateable values throughout the Borough. Mr Wright called for innovative thinking around rate valuation and parking policy to support struggling town centres.

(Councillor Ashe entered the meeting at 7.10 pm)

Councillors responded with a mix of support and concern. Councillor Edmund asked Mr Wright if he thought that parking reform could safeguard the High Street and was informed that parking was the most frequent criticism of customers to the town and therefore he believed that the issue needed to be considered boldly.

Councillor Cathcart acknowledged the Council's commitment to traders but questioned whether small charges would deter visitors and in his experience motorists were happy to pay if they could be confident of finding a parking space when they arrived in a town centre.

(Alderman Cummings entered the meeting at 7.11 pm)

Councillor Wray raised financial concerns for the Council about subsidising parking and also the current poor condition of car parks. Councillor Blaney emphasised the importance of ease of parking and payment and the visiting experience that was unique to town and City Centres.

The meeting concluded with thanks to the Chamber representatives for their presentation and due to time constraints, Members were invited to follow up with further questions directly.

NOTED.

3. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – PARTNERING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REMOVAL OF SNOW AND ICE

FROM TOWN CENTRE FOOTWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN AREAS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would recall that the Council had previously agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) relating to the removal of snow and ice from town centre footways in the event of severe adverse weather conditions. That would involve provision of support by the Council to the DfI in situations where prolonged and exceptional weather impact prevented Council staff from delivering other frontline services and thereby allowing them to be deployed to alleviate town centre access problems caused by severe snow and ice deposits.

The attached correspondence requested that the new MoU and schedule, which commenced on 1 October 2025 and would remain in force for a maximum period of 3 years, be reviewed, signed and returned.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to sign the new Memorandum of Understanding, which commences on 1 October 2025 and will remain in force for a maximum of 3 years, as requested.

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

The Director stated that the agreement within the Memorandum of Understanding was similar to the one that had been in place previously.

Councillor Wray referred to the language used in the Memorandum and if it provided clarity of responsibilities and the Director confirmed that the use of words such as "may" had been intentional to ensure the Council would not be strictly bound. The benefit of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been that it provided DfI with a degree of comfort and acted as a safety net in the event of an extreme weather event. DfI had attempted to provide as much support as possible in relation to legislative cover regarding potential for negligence claims, but all parties still had an obligation to exercise due diligence in carrying out any maintenance works. The general consensus had been that the MoU had presented the best opportunity to act collectively amongst statutory bodies in the Borough's interest – with the key objective of keeping the commercial centres of towns accessible in extreme weather conditions.

Alderman McAlpine believed that the map of Newtownards town centre was missing in the MoU and the Director agreed to double check that.

Councillor Boyle expressed support for the report but had felt it had not been sufficiently complete and he was disappointed that no financial contribution was being made to the Council unlike previously. He felt unable to support the MoU.

Councillor Edmund had raised concerns about retail businesses clearing ice close to their premises which seemed like a practical option and whether or not that would make them liable for possible damages related to their premises. The Director had advised that a private business would not benefit from legal protections afforded to Council by DfI, under the MoU and public-spirited businesses may be disincentivised from acting in case of negligence claims.

Councillor Boyle asked to be recorded as against.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. CONSULTATION ON NEW RULES FOR SELLING AND SUPPLYING PUPPIES AND KITTENS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that DAERA was currently consulting on legislating to provide controls on those who sold and supplied puppies and kittens.

That was in response to the concerns around animal welfare and health of animals used for breeding, whether commercially or not, and was specifically aimed at the third party selling, transferring or giving away of puppies and kittens.

Many of the proposals were welcomed, although DAERA was proposing that the policing, enforcement and the undetermined costs thereof be the responsibility of the Councils. Powers were proposed to allow Councils to charge such fees as were necessary, however it would be considered that to fully recoup the costs would require a disproportionate charging fee structure.

The attached documents provided the Consultation details and proposed response.

Responses were required to be submitted by 15th September 2025 and at the August Council meeting, power was delegated to the Environment Committee to agree the final response for submission to DAERA by that deadline.

RECOMMENDED that the Council submits the attached response to DAERA.

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

As seconder of the recommendation Councillor Cathcart welcomed the Consultation and wished to see the introduction and implementation of the outcome promptly. Animal cruelty was heinous and further debate needed to take place with the Department in respect of funding the costs of the work.

Alderman McAlpine had a query about the Council's response to question six and seven and if the answers were contradictory. She asked the Director to look at that

but she stressed the need for the Council to express its firmly held views over animal protection.

(Alderman Armstrong-Cotter entered the meeting at 7.51 pm).

Alderman Irwin appreciated the overall tone of the Consultation on the proposals from the Minister while also having concern about the funding associated with it. She stressed that the Consultation should fully commit to protection for cats equally with puppies and appreciated concerns around funding. Overall she believed that the Council's response was good and she thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken.

The Chair agreed with the comments expressed by Members that the Department must fund the work.

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

5. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN OFF-STREET PARKING (PUBLIC CAR PARKS) ORDER 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would recall that a Parking Strategy and Action Plan was agreed by the Council in June 2021. The agreed strategy set out a range of key initiatives aimed at promoting a sustainable off-street car park service which supported town centre businesses, while promoting sustainable travel options and ensuring the car park estate could be maintained and improved to play its role as a key economic asset in the Borough.

As part of the strategy, the Council agreed not to extend car park charging beyond the previously charged car parks that transferred from DfI in 2015 and to introduce a reduced tariff for the first 2 hours parking across all charged car parks to incentivise shorter stay visits by people coming into town centres to shop and do business, whilst also increasing charges for longer stay parking to dissuade 'bay blocking' by people who were not necessarily generating economic activity in town centre businesses.

The Strategy was widely consulted upon during development, and the proposals drew wide support across key stakeholders, including from the Newtownards Chamber of Trade which specifically indicated at the time that it was supportive of the planned parking tariff structure and concessionary rate along with other strategy initiatives.

New Car Park Order

The making of a new Car Park Order to implement some of the changes set out in the Council's agreed Strategy had been delayed due to a legislative anomaly that must be corrected by the Assembly. All Councils had now been urged by DfI to

have their new Orders approved and ready for implementation, before the necessary enabling legislation was introduced to the Assembly.

In May 2025, the Council agreed the draft Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2025 and agreed to proceed with the enactment process under the Road Traffic Regulations (NI) Order 1997.

As part of the enactment process the Council agreed that officers would engage with the Town and City Steering Groups. As a result, a response was received from Derek Wright, President of Newtownards Chamber of Trade on behalf of Ards and North Down Business Forum and was attached.

The Order was also publicly advertised and the responses were attached.

Responses to Consultation and Public Advertisement and Officer Comment

The responses related solely to the tariff element of the draft Order with Derek Wright making a submission on behalf of the Ards and North Down Business Forum calling for 2 hours free parking across the current charged car parks within the Borough.

The tariffs included in the draft Order were agreed by the Council in June 2021 as part of its Car Parking Strategy, following a long period of consultation which included the town and city steering groups. The 50p for 2 hours tariff was agreed as a concessionary tariff in all charged car parks to support the town centres. It should be noted that 2 hours was the period of time identified in the Strategy as the average stay for people shopping and doing business in the town centres.

Tariff A (50p for 2 hours and £1 per hour thereafter) was agreed to subsidise/incentivise shorter stay parking events for the period of time that the majority of shoppers/visitors said they needed to park but disincentivise long stay parking/space blocking by those less likely to be contributing to local business revenues.

Tariff B (50p for 2 hours and 50p per hour thereafter) was a lower rate for the peripheral or less well utilised car parks. That encouraged longer stay parkers to use those spaces rather than space block in the town centre car parks.

Those tariffs only applied to the current charged car parks within Bangor, Newtownards and Holywood. Free parking would still be available in Eisenhower Car Park Bangor, Spafield Car Park Holywood, and Mill Street Gasworks South and Talbot Street Car Parks Newtownards, and in all car parks in Comber and Donaghadee.

In addition, the proposed tariffs facilitated promotion of sustainable transport options in line with both the Car Parking Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

It should be noted that the new 2 hours concessionary parking tariff of 50p was better value for short stay (up to 2 hours) car park users in 20 of the Council's 22

charged car parks than the existing standard hourly tariffs (currently between 60p and £1.20) or use of the £1 for 5 hour rate.

Members should be aware that the Council's current Pay and Display machines were not capable of facilitating a 2 hours free parking tariff. With newer technology, enforcement of the implementation of 2 hours free parking also faced challenges which were likely to be detrimental to town/city centre shopping, for example, inability to extend a parking event should you wish to stay longer than anticipated.

The cost of replacement Pay and Display machines would be approximately £195,000 plus installation costs of approximately £39,000, and extensive additional enforcement time (more frequent and longer visits per car park) would be required at a large cost to Council. Furthermore, the latter would have to be explored from a contractual perspective with the Council's car park enforcement service provider.

It should be noted that none of the other 10 Councils currently provided either a period of free parking tariff in any of their Pay & Display Car Parks or the £1 for 5 hour rate.

Members' attention was also drawn to a report that was brought to the Committee in March 2025, which highlighted the poor condition of many of the car parks and identified a £2.1M capital budget requirement to bring the condition of those up to an 85% condition score in line with the condition score threshold for Council buildings. Assuming that the Council would want to invest extra capital into improving and maintaining its public car parks to a better standard than at present, if that cost was not borne by car park users, it would have to be levied upon all ratepayers through the District rate (whether they used the car parks or not).

Consultants had estimated that introduction of the new Tariff structure as described above (Tariffs A and B) would yield around £0.5M in additional charging revenue (through increased turnover for a greater number of short term parking acts and higher charging for longer parking acts). The consultant had further estimated that departure from the tariff structure agreed in Council's Car Park Strategy to make parking free across all charged car parks for the first two hours, and implement the new Tariff A & B hourly rates (50p/£1) from hour 3 was likely to result in £0.4-0.5M less car park income than previously predicted and therefore no or negligible increase to car park revenue from where it was currently.

They had cautioned that that estimate was best case scenario and advised that it was based on installation of new technology Pay & Display machines, increased Traffic Attendant Patrols and a no return after 2 hours policy. As indicated above, there were uncertainties around the practical/contractual viability of facilitating the enforcement of such a period of free parking, and even if those hurdles could be overcome, there would be significant extra cost from enforcement (amount unknown) and new technology (£234K), further reducing the amount of car park revenue available for the necessary car park upgrades.

Season Tickets

At present there were Season Tickets available across a number of the charged car parks in Bangor, Newtownards and Holywood. A season ticket allowed regular car park users to purchase a Monthly or Quarterly Monday – Friday car park ticket for a discounted rate.

It was proposed that Season Tickets should continue to be made available which assisted in alleviating a number of the concerns raised in responses to the public advertisement, with new rates as followed:

Tariff	Monthly discount	Quarterly discount
A	25%	27.5%
B	25%	27.5%

The number of available tickets per car park and car parks were monthly and quarterly tickets were available would be monitored and amended as necessary by the Car Park Management Officer and responsible Service Unit Manager in line with the priorities in the Car Parking Strategy.

Amendments to the Draft Order

As part of the consultation process, it came to light that there was an error in Schedule 2 of the draft Order concerning the charging of Gas Works Mill Street Car Parks. Tariff A had now been applied Gas Works North which was currently charged and no charge had been applied to Gas Works South which was currently non charged and Items 58 and 59 in the Schedule 2 of Appendix 1 had been amended to reflect that.

Enactment Process

The Council should consider the comments received and agree to either proceed with the enactment process or alternatively agree to make amendments to the Order.

Once the Order was agreed, it would be signed and sealed by the Council.

The Council will further advertise the Order in the local press with the date of implementation, as required. The implementation date would be the date which was determined by the Department for Infrastructure upon repeal of the Off-Street Parking Order 2000.

RECOMMENDED that the Council:

- 1. Agrees the season ticket rates detailed in this report.
- 2. Agrees the draft Order detailed at Appendix 1.
- 3. Proceeds with the enactment process.

It was proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Blaney that an amendment be made to the recommendation:

The report is deferred for Members to give consideration to the proposals set out in the Deputation from the Borough's Chambers. A detailed officers' report will consider the costs and implementations of the Chamber's proposals, including the potential use of new number plate recognition technology. A report will also examine the proposed tariff changes in other Council areas throughout Northern Ireland.

Councillor Cathcart believed that the Deputation from the Borough's Chambers presented a series of proposals aimed at improving service delivery. To support those an officers' report would be prepared looking at options and he felt those points deserved thoughtful consideration and time for reflection.

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

6. INTRODUCTION OF CONTINGENT DESTRUCTION ORDERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF NON-EXEMPTED DANGEROUS PRESCRIBED BREEDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that from 1 January 2025, keeping an XL Bully without an exemption certificate constituted a criminal offence under the legislation.

The Council had no residual administrative power to issue exemption certificates for XL Bully dogs after the statutory deadline had expired.

Where unexempted dangerous prescribed breeds come to the attention of the Council, the Council had no ability to issue an exemption certificate. That had left owners and the Council with limited options. Further developments would now allow the Council, should it choose, to facilitate an approach to the court to seek a Contingent Destruction Order (CDO), where the court was satisfied that the dog would not be a danger to the public if kept under strict conditions.

Such a CDO would exempt the dog from the ban provided specified conditions were met within two months of the court order.

Such dogs could then be legally kept subject to the normal XL Bully conditions and following the issue of a CDO by the court.

In order to approach the courts to seek a CDO, it would be required to carry out the following approach: -

1. Professional Assessment Process, where qualified Neighbourhood Environment Officers conduct a thorough breed and temperament assessment.
2. Comprehensive Documentation. Prepare detailed reports including professional opinions, photographic evidence and examination records.

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3. Pre-Court Preparation. Ensure all exemption conditions are verified and documented before court application, including licensing, microchipping, neutering arrangements, and insurance coverage.
4. Court Presentation. Present cases with supporting evidence.
The dog would need to be held for a period in the run up to the court hearing, and the full cost of that, and the above process would be payable by the applicant prior to the issue of any CDO.

RECOMMENDED that the Council determines if it wishes to facilitate the use of the CDO procedure to allow the retention of unexempted, but compliant XL Bully dogs.

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

Proposing Councillor Harbinson was content that the Court would make decisions rather than the Council. Councillor Blaney agreed with those sentiments.

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

7. REVIEW OF VEHICLE REPLACEMENT POLICY

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a recent audit of the Fleet Transport Service Unit highlighted a number of areas for improvement, specifically around the recording of procedures for the procurement and purchasing of vehicles.

Officers since had updated Appendix 5 within the vehicle replacement policy to include the revised procedures; the revised policy was attached for approval.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the revised version of the Vehicle Replacement Policy attached.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Blaney reiterated previously expressed concerns regarding the absence of comparative data to support the proposed £23 million expenditure over the next decade. He indicated that this lack of data made it difficult to approve the plan and questioned whether a more cost-effective procurement strategy could be adopted such as bulk buying.

The Head of Assets and Property Services responded by noting that vehicles were usually procured in batches rather than one off purchases, specifically referencing the acquisition of six vehicles together during the last cycle. He emphasised the advantages of leveraging buying power through established government

procurement frameworks and proposed that such longer-term frameworks could better accommodate evolving technologies.

Councillor Blaney further stressed the importance of identifying efficiencies and expressed interest in benchmarking procurement practices against those of other Councils.

The Director highlighted that the service area in question was subject to audit scrutiny, particularly because of its cost. He noted that the recommended policy changes had arisen from the most recent internal audit findings.

Councillor Kendall highlighted that vehicle acquisition and replacement constituted a significant portion of the service budget. She underscored the importance of implementing cost-saving measures to relieve financial strain.

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

8. Q4 SERVICE PLAN PERFORMRANCE REPORTS (H2 – OCTOBER 2024 – MARCH 2025)

8.1 Assets and Property Services

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the 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 that requirement the 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
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H2 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to five outcomes as followed.

Outcome 1

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

Key achievements:

- Harbours stakeholders meeting held.

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

Key achievements:

- Numerous energy saving initiatives implemented, as reported in quarterly energy updates.
- EV Charging infrastructure installed at North Road Depot.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors.

Key achievements:

Refurbishments completed at:

- Alderman George Green CC
- Balloo ERC Roof
- Kilcooley CC
- Portaferry Market House Repainting
- Carrowdore CC Repainting
- Whitechurch Cemetery

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing.

Key achievements:

- Over 3400 maintenance jobs completed.
- Stoma friendly toilet adaptations completed across the estate.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy.

Key achievements:

Replacement Playgrounds completed at:

- Ward Park, Bangor
- Londonderry Park, Newtownards

New outdoor fitness equipment installed at:

- Millisle Beach Park
- The Commons, Donaghadee

Emerging issues:

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

Action to be taken:

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Response times for maintenance jobs	Staff vacancies and long-term absences	Work with colleagues in HR to address vacancies. Supplement workforce with Contractors.	Peter Caldwell	Ongoing

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

8.2 Regulatory Services

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the 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 that requirement the 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
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for Full Year 1 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to four outcomes as follows:

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

Key achievements:

- Reduction in CO2 emissions from building stock through increased energy performance by constructing building to up-to-date building Standards.

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy.

Key achievements:

- Effective and timely licencing of entertainment, wedding venues, street trading and pavement cafes.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors.

Key achievements:

- Effective car park management with planned steps to improve the car park environment.
- Effective dog and litter control making the borough a more attractive location.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing.

Key achievements:

- Effective enforcement of legislation to improve the safety of people in and around buildings places of entertainment.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was 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. Delivery on our role as a regulator of outside activities.
2. Appropriate health and safety arrangements for staff leading to loss of life, serious injury etc, resulting in failure to meet moral and legal obligations, loss of reputation and investigation.

3. Procure/retain parking enforcement contract, leading to possible
 - a. loss of reputation, and failure to deliver adequate enforcement.

Action to be taken:

1. Legal responsibilities would come to the Council but as yet they were unknown. Would depend on outworkings of the Building Safety programme reviews and legal requirements arising. Ongoing, but review on 6 monthly basis.
2. Continue to review and update risk assessments
 - a. Develop action plans to further address health and safety
 - b. Review and update training needs
 - c. Physical handling of dangerous dogs training being taken up as it became available
3. Review situation regularly. Review options available.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Develop EV strategy for Council carparks	Works are ongoing with the Council's consultant but other activity around carparking has taken higher priority. To be rolled into following year.	Further work to completion	Licensing and Regulatory Service manager	Oct 2025
% spend against budget	Due to temporary staff placements and backfilling of some posts on a temporary basis this underspend will continue	Agency staff to be recruited where practical on ongoing works to fill vacant posts. This underspend will continue into the following year.	All Service unit managers	Oct 2025
NET to improve (increase) total number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued	6-month figures were close to target but late year absences due to illness and staffing issues have impacted	Continued concentration of FPNs	Neighbourhood Environment Service Manager	Oct 2025

	target achievement.			
NET Commence response to complaints / service requests within 4 working days	Software provider cannot accommodate the KPI	Alternative KPI to be determined. KPI for following year has been amended	Neighbourhood Environment Services manager	March 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

8.3 Waste and Cleansing Services

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the 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 that requirement the 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

The report for October 2024 – March 2025 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to three outcomes as follows.

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

Key achievements:

- The recycling rate at the Council HRCs increased to over 78%.
- With the commencement of the residual waste treatment contract in January 2025, none of the Council’s residual waste was sent directly to landfill.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses, and investors.

Key achievements:

- Achieved 100% success in the Loo of the Year Awards (2024) with five Platinum Awards (McKee Clock, Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Groomsport, and Newtownards).
- Success with several Best Kept Awards for Bangor, Comber, and Donaghadee.

Outcome 7

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

Key achievements:

- Waste and Cleansing Services delivered within agreed budgets.
- Overall recycling rate for 2024 – 2025 increased to 56.4% (up from 55.3%).

Emerging issues:

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

- Difficulties with the independent monitoring of street cleansing service.
- Ongoing issues with the used textiles market delaying the introduction of a kerbside collection service.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to negotiate with KNIB regarding the re-introduction of an effective street cleansing survey service at an affordable cost that would get the buy-in of all NI Councils to enable benchmarking.
- Continue to monitor the state of the UK textile market for signs of recovery including the possible introduction of a textile extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme in 2027.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Actions to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Achieve or exceed the NI average	Independent monitoring service no longer	Continue discussions with KNIB	Head of Waste and Cleansing	October 2025

LEAMS Cleanliness Index Score	available through KNIB	regarding re-establishment of service		
Tonnes of textiles diverted from landfill through new kerbside collection service	Due to current market conditions, it is unlikely that an outlet would be available for collected materials	Continue to monitor the textile market via arc21 contact with current bring bank service provider (CTR)	Head of Waste and Cleansing	October 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

9. PAINT REUSE EXPANSION PROJECT 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members may recall that the Council introduced a community waste paint re-use scheme in November 2021.



The scheme was a truly sustainable waste resource management development initiative, aiming to:

- Reduce the **financial** burden upon the Council (and ratepayers) of paint disposal.
- Reduce the **environmental** impact of paint manufacture and disposal (re-using discarded paint reduced the amount of newly manufactured paint that was purchased by residents with associated resource and environmental benefits, and avoided the environmental impacts of paint 'disposal', and
- Promote **social** benefits of making reusable paint available to the community at no charge – helping to improve householder/community well-being.

From 4 August 2025 the scheme had been expanded to the following six additional sites, meaning that the service was now available at all nine of the Council's HRCs.

- Ballygowan HRC

- Donaghadee HRC
- Holywood HRC
- Kircubbin HRC
- Millisle HRC
- Portaferry HRC

The initiative allowed residents and community groups to collect suitable paint for DIY and community projects free of charge, promoting sustainability and resourcefulness.

The expansion built upon the success of the Council's three existing paint re-use sites at the following locations:

- Balloo HRC
- Comber HRC
- Newtownards HRC

The paint re-use scheme not only offered an environmentally friendly alternative to disposal but also provided a valuable resource for those undertaking home improvements or community-based initiatives, fostering a circular economy approach to waste management.

In addition to the added environmental benefits, the expansion of the initiative was a strategic measure to help further address the considerable financial burden associated with paint disposal, which often involves specialized treatment due to its chemical composition. Since inception of the scheme in November 2021, approximately 21,210 litres of paint had been diverted from disposal, directly contributing to lowering operational waste management costs.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that her church had successfully used the facility for its summer scheme and described the experience as very positive. Councillor Edmund similarly praised the initiative.

Members were in agreement that the Council's communications team should be asked to promote the facility more widely. It was useful to those facing financial pressure, had a positive environmental advantage and the savings made by the Council avoiding the cost of paint disposal was a further benefit.

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

10. SCHOOL UNIFORM PROJECT 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that for many parents, the school uniform shop was unlikely to be the highlight of their summer. The average cost of a school uniform per year, per child, in Primary School was £315 and £337 per child in Post-Primary (The Children's Society, 2020) - a cost that was a stretch for many families at the best of times, and simply unaffordable for those hit hardest by the rising cost of living.



The concept of the School Uniform Project was very simple but the impact it had was good. Preloved, good-quality uniform items for nursery, primary and post-primary schools were donated and were then made freely available for families struggling to afford new uniforms. Each scheme had dedicated days for families to browse and pick out uniforms. Community venues such as church halls were turned into 'uniform shops' with volunteers sorting donations ensuring those receiving the uniforms would get good wear out of the items. Items included shirts, trousers, skirts, school branded sweatshirts, PE kits, blazers, school bags and shoes. The initiative was also a good environmental project reducing the number of textiles going to landfill. Above all, the ROC School Uniform Project aimed to provide practical support in a dignified and respectful way.

Stages of Project Development

Council officers from the ANDBC Recycling Team were involved in the project development/management alongside ROC NI and Orchardville.

It was decided that Council venues accessible to the public would be used as drop off locations for preloved school uniforms.

Venues were secured at the following Council locations and that was a good example of interdepartmental collaboration.

- Alderman George Green Community Centre
- Hamilton Hub Community Centre
- Redburn Community Centre
- Donaghadee HRC
- Comber Leisure Centre
- Portaferry Leisure Centre
- Londonderry Park Pavilion

Those locations gave a good spread throughout the Borough, with the more heavily populated areas generating larger volumes of donations.

School uniforms received at drop off points were transported to Orchardville for sorting and cleaning.

Feedback from the public, and lessons learned from the Winter Coat project 2024, led to the project management team focussing upon the need to ensure that suitable venues situated within walking distance from public transport network points were identified.

The following locations were selected for the pop-up shops.

- City Church, Bangor Main Street (0.2 miles from the Bangor bus/train station)
- Newtownards Salvation Army Community Hub (0.04 miles from Newtownards bus station)

A strong communication campaign was vital to ensuring the project was a success and the following methods were used when communicating the project to the public.

- Council social media channels i.e. Facebook, Instagram
- Council website
- Bin-ovation app
- Press release
- Promotion from the Mayor's office
- Signage (Purchased through a grant from John Gray & Co Community Assistance Programme)
- Radio interview with Frank Mitchell on U105

Local businesses also supported the initiative:

- Signature Works (Bangor) donated 6 boxes of brand new school trousers of various sizes.
- Belfast City Airport provided funding for 600 stationary packs.

Outcomes

Overall, the project was a success with the initial support of the project by local residents donating their preloved school uniforms, leading to four successful pop-up venues.

In total 261 children and families benefitted by receiving preloved items of school uniform and stationery.

Four tables of free toys were also given to children attending the events. Those toys were collected from the HRC Reuse containers and diverted from disposal.

To complete the free service, a representative from Sustainable Stories Bangor attended the pop-up events with a sewing machine to make any required minor alterations to uniforms for the children.

Sustainable Waste Resource Management

The project was yet another example of Council proactively seeking to address all strands of the sustainable waste resource management agenda, promoting not just recycling, but also reduce and reuse initiatives to achieve interrelated financial, environmental and social benefits.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Douglas highlighted the success of the initiative, noting it was something positive at a time of soaring living costs. The recycling of school uniforms along with toys was very welcomed by the community.

Councillor Wray emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication with the individual efforts of schools and a central hub to assist schools and promote collaboration should be supported.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter was aware that many local primary schools already had preloved uniform sales and thought that initiative should be introduced more widely in the secondary schools.

Councillor Irwin was in agreement with Councillor Wray adding that centralisation was positive for parents encouraging the recycling and reuse of uniforms while also reducing waste.

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

11. Q4 BUILDING CONTROL ACTIVITY REPORT (Jan - Mar 2025)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of Building Control, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance. The report format had been introduced across Regulatory Services.

Applications

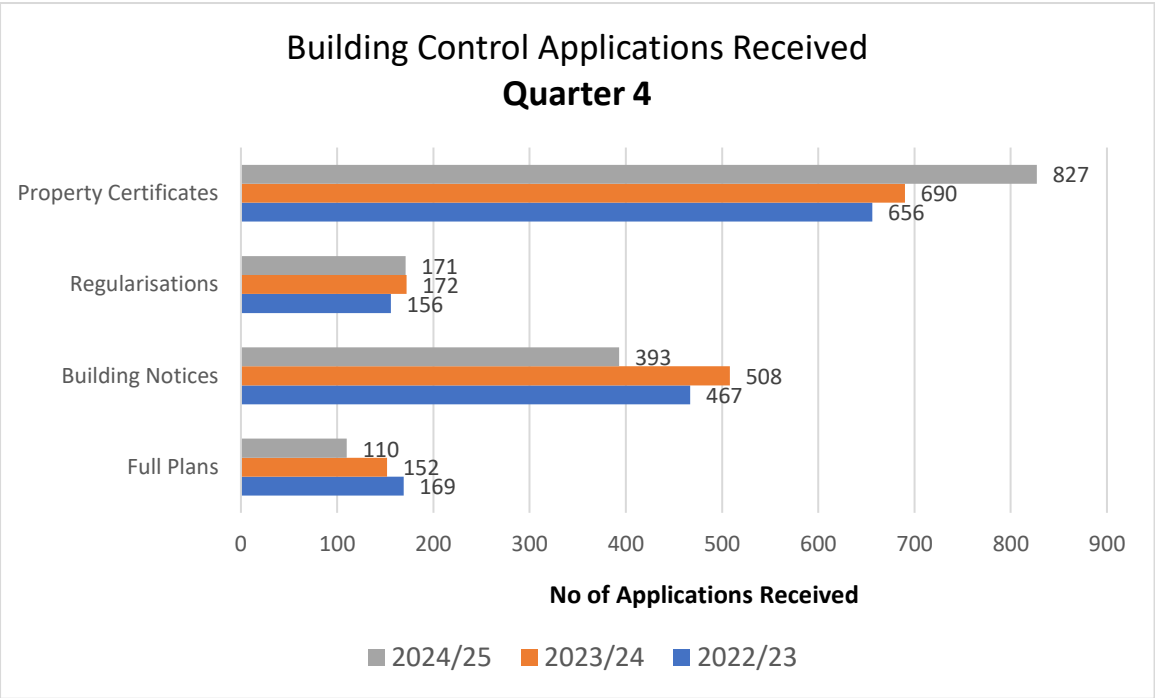
Full Plan applications were made to Building Control for building works to any commercial building, or for larger schemes in relation to residential dwellings.

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

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

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

QUARTER 4	Period of Report 01/01/2025 – 31/03/2025	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2024	01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023
Full Plan Applications	110	152	169
Building Notice Applications	393	508	467
Regularisation Applications	171	172	156
Property Certificate Applications	827	690	656



The number of Full Plan applications received was very much determined by the economic climate, any changes in bank lending or uncertainty in the marketplace may cause a reduction in Full Plan applications. There was no internal means to control the number of applications received.

Regulatory Full Plan Turnaround Times

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

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

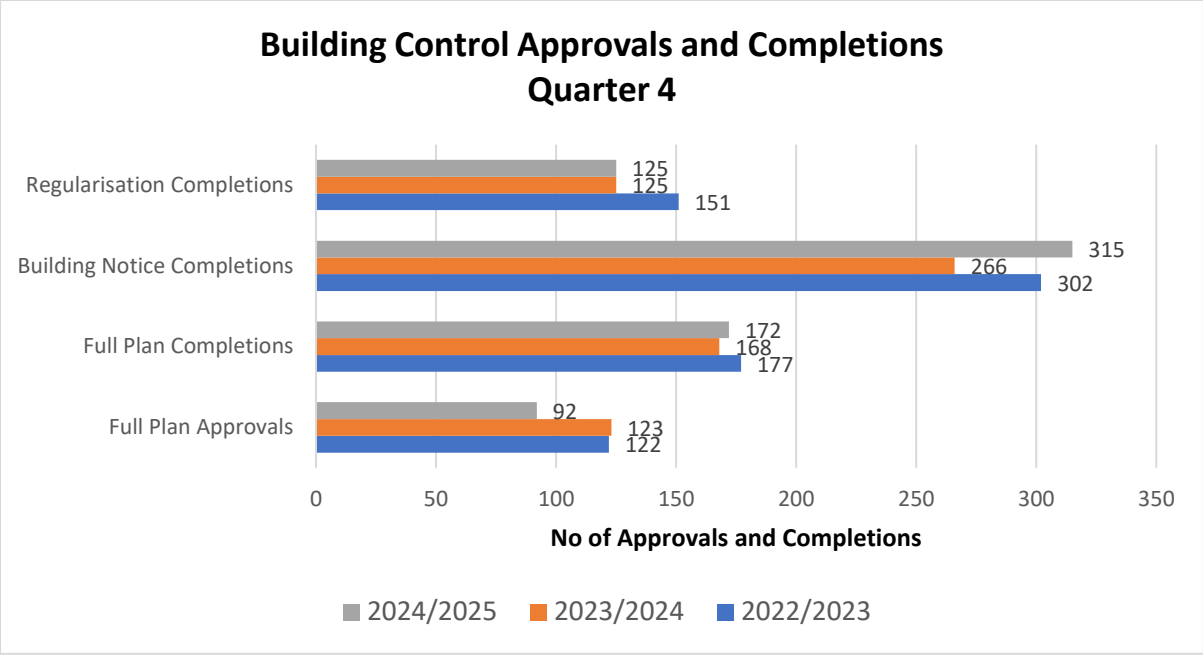
QUARTER 5	Period of Report 01/01/2025 – 31/03/2025	Same quarter last year	Comparison	Average number of days to turnaround plan
Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (21 calendar days)	73%	53%	↑	18
Non-Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (35 calendar days)	79%	40%	↑	22

Regulatory Approvals and Completions

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

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

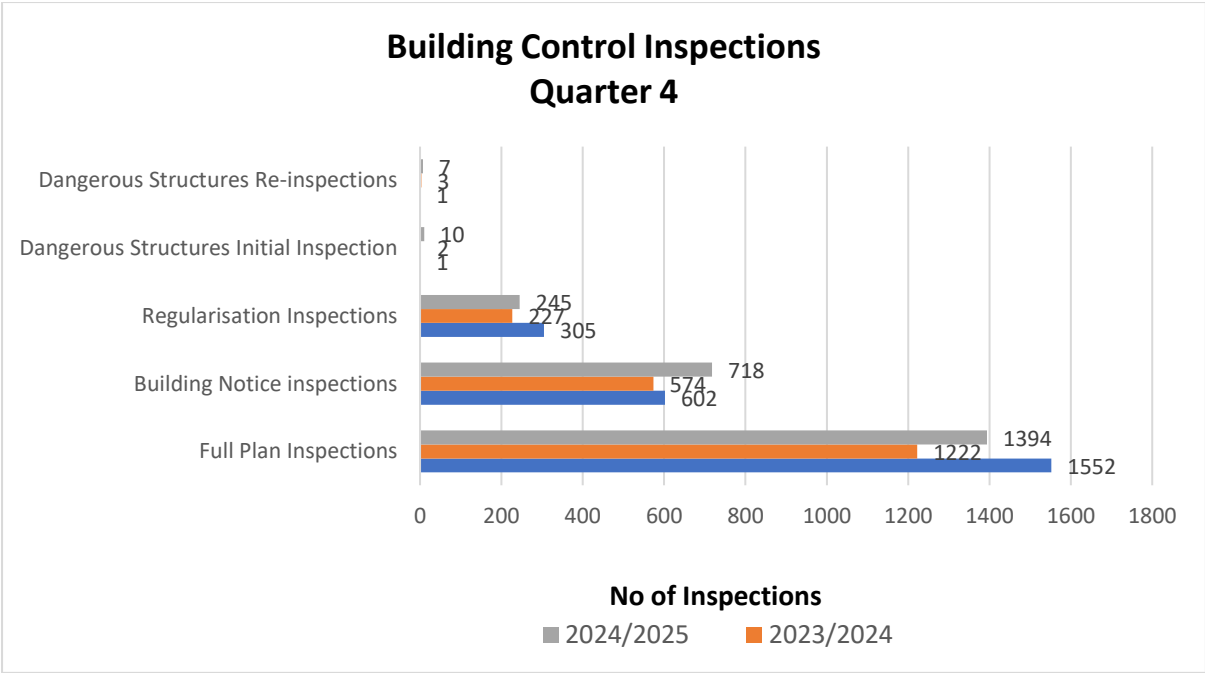
QUARTER 4	Period of Report 01/01/2025 – 31/03/2025	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2024	01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023
Full Plan Approvals	92	123	122
Full Plan Completions	172	168	177
Building Notice Completions	315	266	302
Regularisation Completions	125	125	151



Inspections

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

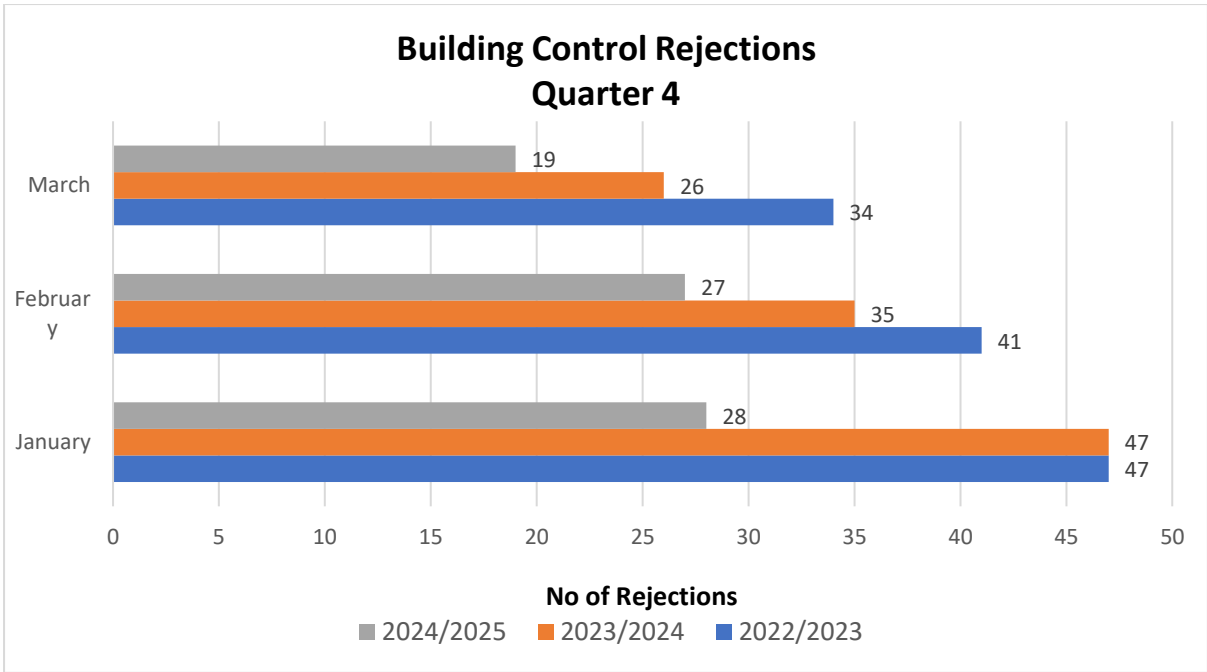
QUARTER 4	Period of Report 01/01/2025 - 31/03/2025	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2024	01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023
Full Plan Inspections	1394	1222	1552
Building Notice Inspections	718	574	602
Regularisation Inspections	245	227	305
Dangerous structures initial inspection	10	2	1
Dangerous structure re- inspections	7	3	1
Total inspections	2374	2028	2461



Non-Compliance

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

QUARTER 4	Period of Report 01/01/2025 – 31/03/2025	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2024	01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023
Full Plan Rejection Notice	74	108	122
Dangerous Structure Recommended for legal action	0	0	0
Court Cases	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

12. Q1 BUILDING CONTROL ACTIVITY REPORT (Apr - Jun 2025)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of Building Control, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance. The report format had been introduced across Regulatory Services.

Applications

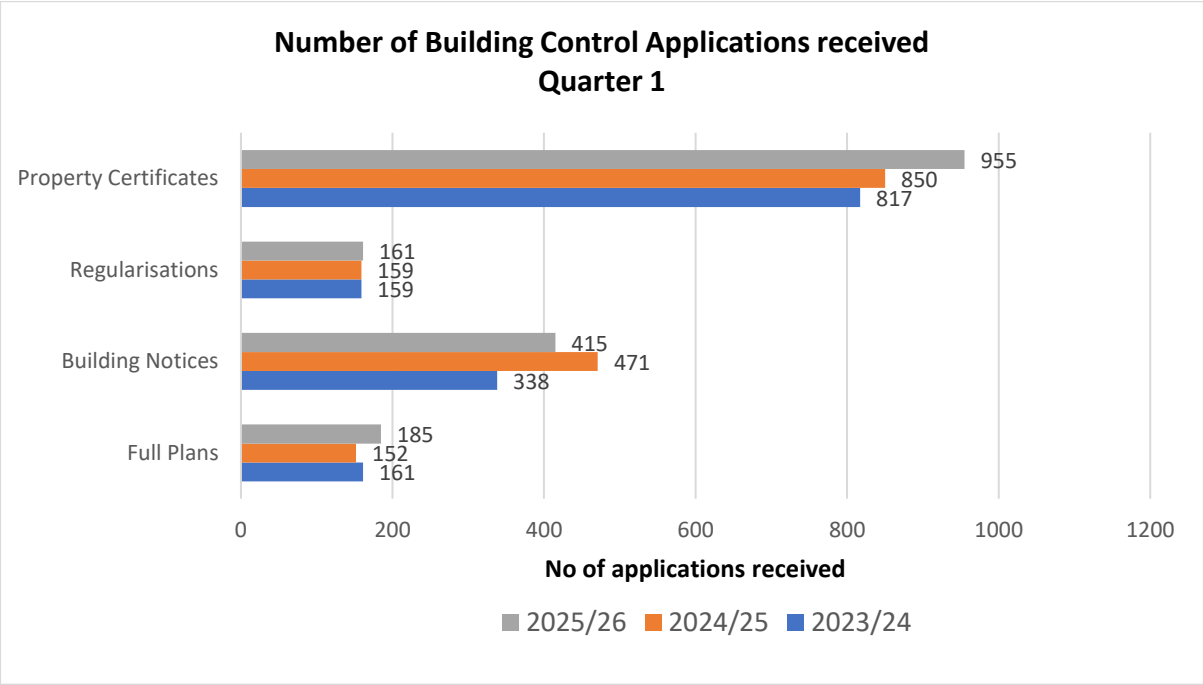
Full Plan applications were made to Building Control for building works to any commercial building, or for larger schemes in relation to residential dwellings.

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

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

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

QUARTER 1	Period of Report 01/04/2025 – 30/06/2025	01/04/2024-30/06/2024	01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023
Full Plan Applications	185	152	161
Building Notice Applications	415	471	338
Regularisation Applications	161	159	159
Property Certificate Applications	955	850	817



The number of Full Plan applications received was very much determined by the economic climate, any changes in bank lending or uncertainty in the marketplace may cause a reduction in Full Plan applications. There was no internal means to control the number of applications received.

Regulatory Full Plan Turnaround Times

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

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

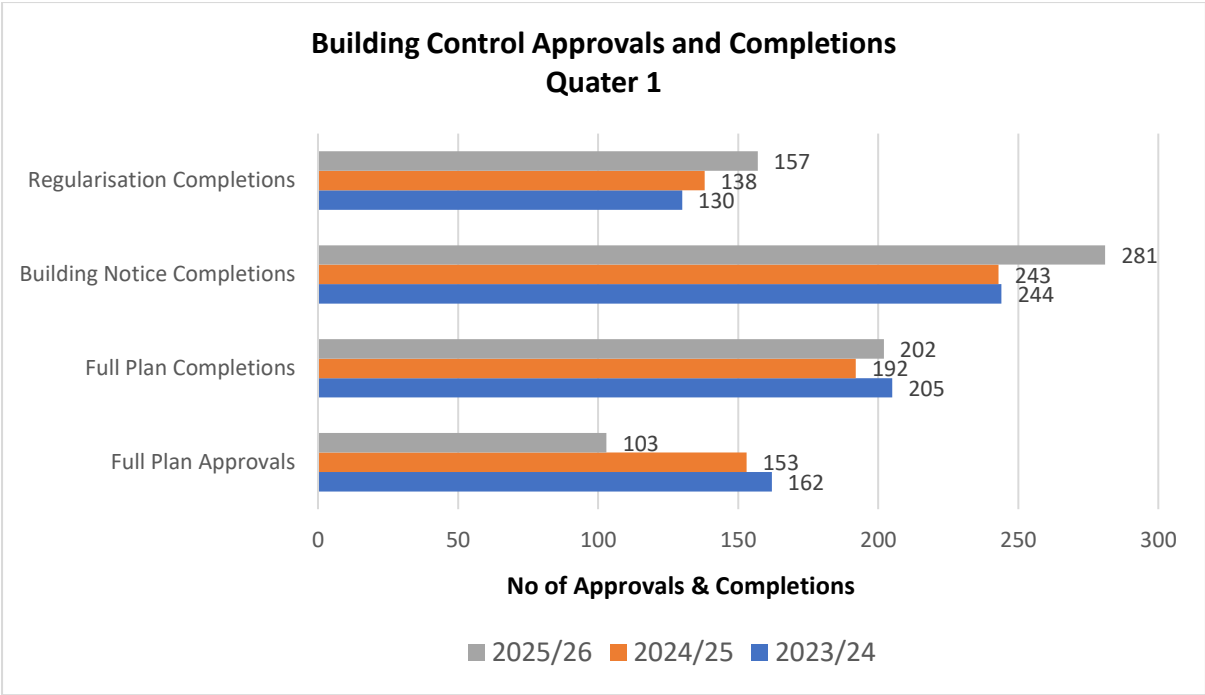
QUARTER 1	Period of Report 01/04/2025 – 30/06/2025	Same quarter last year	Comparison	Average number of days to turnaround plan
Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (21 calendar days)	68%	80%	↓	21
Non-Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (35 calendar days)	62%	70%	↓	26

Regulatory Approvals and Completions

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

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

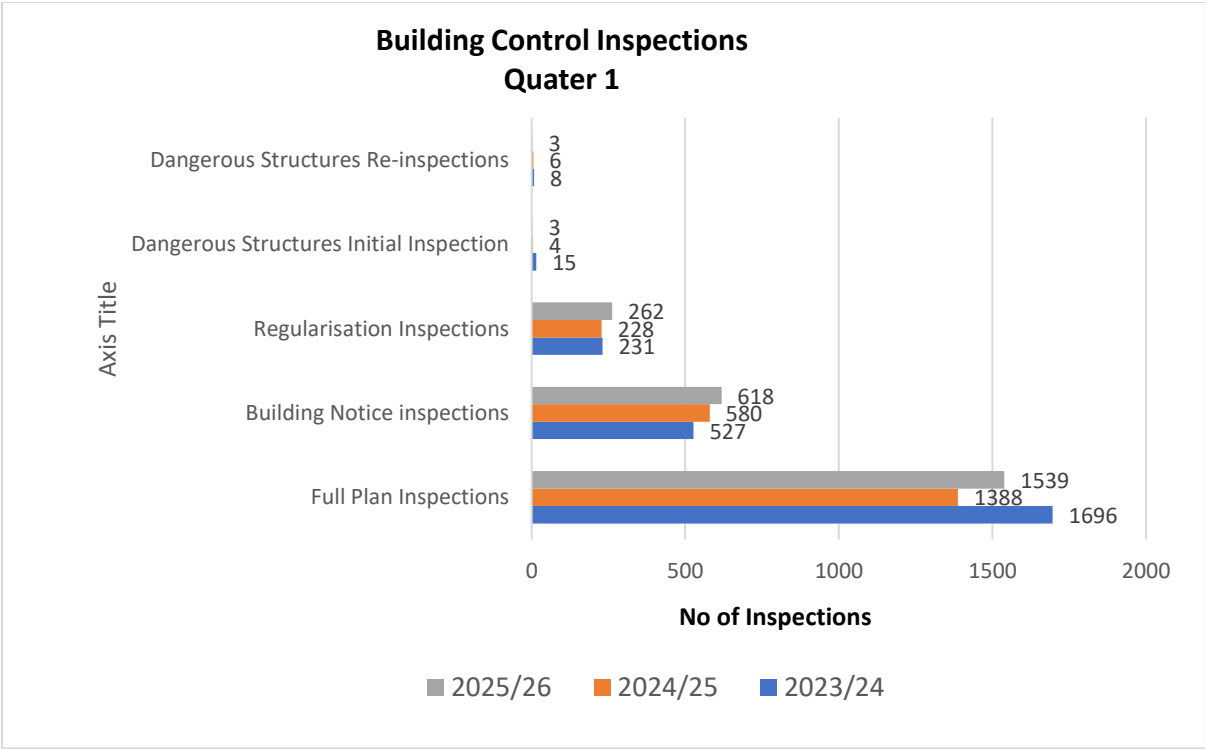
QUARTER 1	Period of Report 01/04/2025 – 30/06/2025	01/04/2024 – 30/06/2024	01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023
Full Plan Approvals	103	153	162
Full Plan Completions	202	192	205
Building Notice Completions	281	243	244
Regularisation Completions	157	138	130



Inspections

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

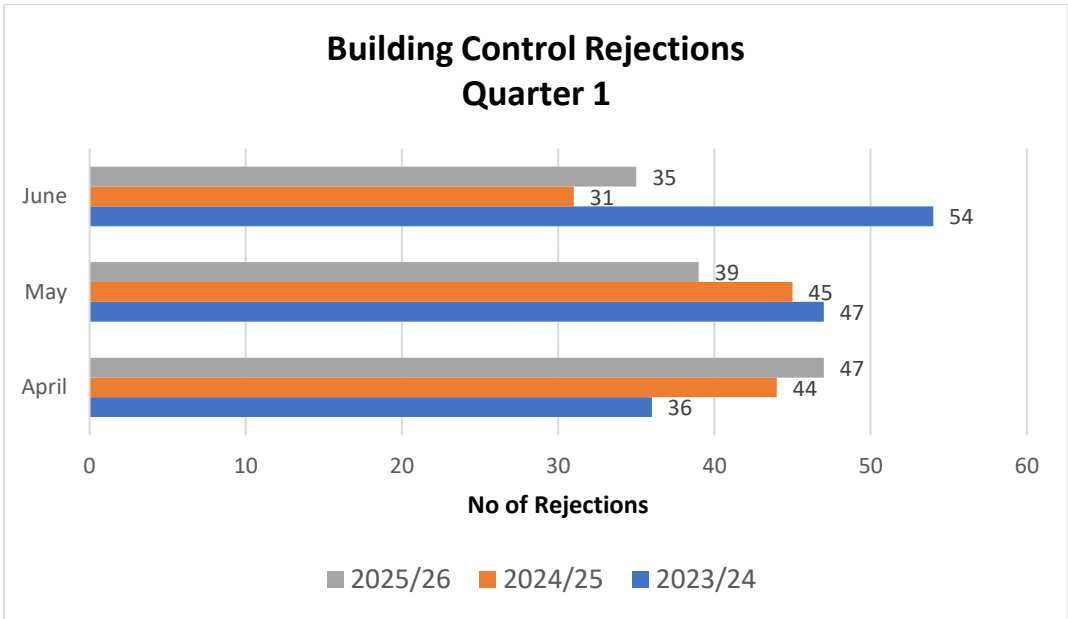
QUARTER	Period of Report 01/04/2025 - 30/06/2025	01/04/2024 – 30/06/2024	01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023
Full Plan Inspections	1539	1388	1696
Building Notice Inspections	618	580	527
Regularisation Inspections	262	228	231
Dangerous structures initial inspection	3	4	15
Dangerous structure re-inspections	3	6	8
Total inspections	2425	2206	2477



Non-Compliance

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

QUARTER 1	Period of Report 01/04/2025 – 30/06/2025	01/04/2024 – 30/06/2024	01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023
Full Plan Rejection Notice	121	120	137
Dangerous Structure Recommended for legal action	0	0	0
Court Cases	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

13. IMPACT OF COUNCIL FUNDING TO KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND BEAUTIFUL 2024/2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council had received the attached letter from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, providing insight into the work delivered by KNIB with Council funding from the RCIF fund, from cost savings through increased recycling of waste.

The Council would see that the scheme had been very successful at reaching a wide range of numerous small groups, and projects which enabled communities to become involved, and to deliver outcomes which were of value to those communities.

The requested budget would be included in the 2026/27 rate setting process and the SLA would be brought to the Council for approval when ready.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this correspondence and the impact of Council funding through Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

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

As proposer, Councillor Wray, thought that the value of Keep Northern Ireland beautiful was indisputable and hoped that the Council could support the organisation into the future.

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

14. PRESENTATION BY DIRECTOR – SUMMARY OF RECYCLING PROGRESS 2015 TO 2025

The Director thought that it was important to give this presentation explaining that it provided a full ten years of data and it helped to summarise the progress that had been made since the formation of Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Between 2015/16 and 2024/25, the Council had successfully achieved a 40% reduction in annual residual waste tonnage, significantly outperforming the average reduction of 11% recorded by other Northern Ireland Councils. Over the same period, household waste recycling rates in the Borough had risen from 40.2% to 56%, exceeding the Northern Ireland average of 50.9%.

That progress translated into substantial financial benefits to the Council. The annual cost of residual waste disposal dropped from £6.8 million in 2015/16 to £4.2 million in 2024/25, resulting in annual savings of £2.6 million for ratepayers, based on the prevailing gate fees.

The Director went on to say that transformation of service models played a key role in those outcomes. The Council had introduced new kerbside food waste recycling arrangements, expanded its blue bin recyclables service, introduced kerbside glass recycling, implemented a booking system for Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) and enhanced kerbside services for both businesses and schools. Those initiatives collectively contributed to vastly improved recycling performance for the Borough over the past 10 years.

Waste collection trends had also shifted noticeably. The proportion of waste collected at kerbside and HRCs for recycling increased, with ANDBC reaching an impressive 83.5% recycling collection rate at its HRCs in 2024/25, compared to 70.2% achieved by other Councils in Northern Ireland.

Looking ahead he considered the priority actions included consolidating the HRC booking system, rolling out a further transformed kerbside service model, and conducting a strategic review of the HRC estate. He emphasised the positive impact of those service model transformations on both recycling rates and cost efficiency, while outlining the next steps required to sustain and build upon the achievements made in the first 10 years of Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The Director stressed that the improved outcomes outlined had not happened by chance, and he stressed that public education had to be accompanied by appropriate service redesign.

Alderman McAlpine found the ten-year report very positive as well as interesting and stated that the Director of Environment and the Head of Waste and Cleansing had led with passion and commitment, and the entire team should be commended for the results. She remarked that the Director of Environment had always kept a smile on his face even when faced with obstacles on the journey to this stage.

The Chair of the Environment Committee acknowledged that waste and recycling issues had consistently presented challenges and were never a popular responsibility. She extended warm wishes to those departing and hoped they would enjoy a well-earned rest and stay in touch.

Councillor Boyle thanked the Director stating that it had been a privilege to serve as the first Chair of the Environment Committee when the two Councils had come together ten years previously. He reflected on the difficult decisions that had been taken over the past decade and expressed his gratitude for the Director's work and the patience he had shown to Members. Despite differing views at times, he affirmed the deep respect he held for both the Director and the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services. He welcomed the incoming Director and emphasised the importance of enjoying one's role and making the most of the years ahead.

Councillor Cathcart spoke on behalf of the DUP group and recalled being part of the original Environment Committee and serving as Vice Chair. He described the presentation the Director had made as a "greatest hits" compilation and emphasised that financial decisions had been made responsibly over the years. He acknowledged the necessity of progress and extended best wishes to both the Director and Head of Waste and Cleansing Services in their new roles.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter jokingly admitted that she may have been one of the most challenging Councillors for the Director but nevertheless expressed deep respect for his passion and drive. She also commended the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services for his patience and humility and wished both officers God's richest blessings for their future.

Councillor Harbinson echoed the sentiments shared by others, stating that the Director's leadership had made a lasting and meaningful impact and he wished both officers a happy retirement.

Councillor Wray noted that the Director would be sorely missed and praised the Director's accessibility, direct communication style, and courageous decision-making. He expressed hope that the Director's voice would continue to be heard and valued as the Committee moved forward.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Councillor Wray that the information be noted.

15. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, JANUARY TO MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the official waste management statistics for the final quarter of 2024/2025 (January to March 2025) had been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The aim of the 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, all key indicators were very positive for the reporting period. They showed that the Council had been successful in maintaining and further building upon the gains achieved since it started a renewed programme of performance improvement since 2021-22.

The Council's residual (non-recycled waste) was now disposed of via a new residual waste treatment contract, and it recorded a 38.2% increase in the waste energy recovery rate - the largest of all the Councils.

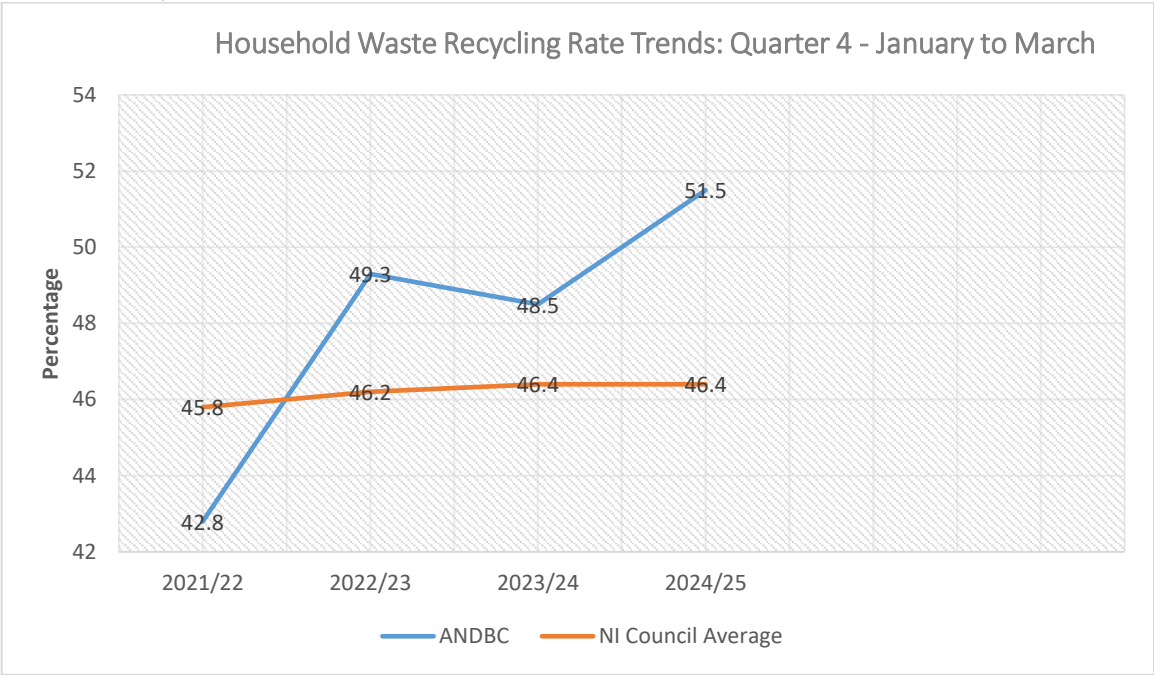
Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics – October to December 2023

Summary Table of Key Changes Q4 2023-24 v Q4 2022-23

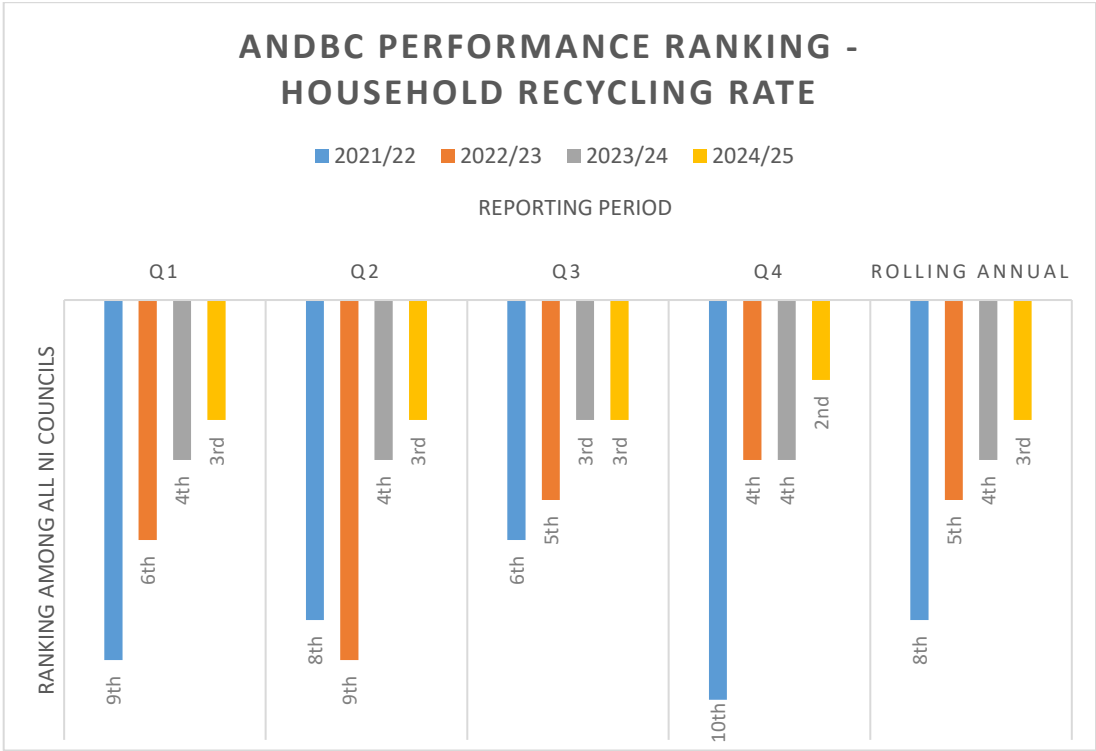
	2023-24	2024-25	Change
Household Waste Recycling Rate	48.5%	51.5%	 3%
Recycling Rate Ranking	4th	2nd	 2 places
Composting Rate	26.1%	25.7%	 0.4%
Dry Recycling Rate	21.9%	25.4%	 3.5%
Total HRC Waste	4753T	4663T	 1.9%
HRC Residual/Landfill Waste Received	1416T	769T	 45.7%
HRC Recycling Waste Received	3337T	3894T	 16.7%
Proportion of HRC Waste Received for Recycling	70.2%	83.5%	 13.3%
Total Kerbside Waste	13284T	13868T	 4.4%
Kerbside Residual Waste Received	6352T	6591T	 3.8%
Kerbside Recycling Waste Received	6932T	7277T	 5%
Proportion of Kerbside Waste Received for Recycling	52.2%	52.5%	 0.3%

The significant headlines contained within the latest DAERA report showed that:

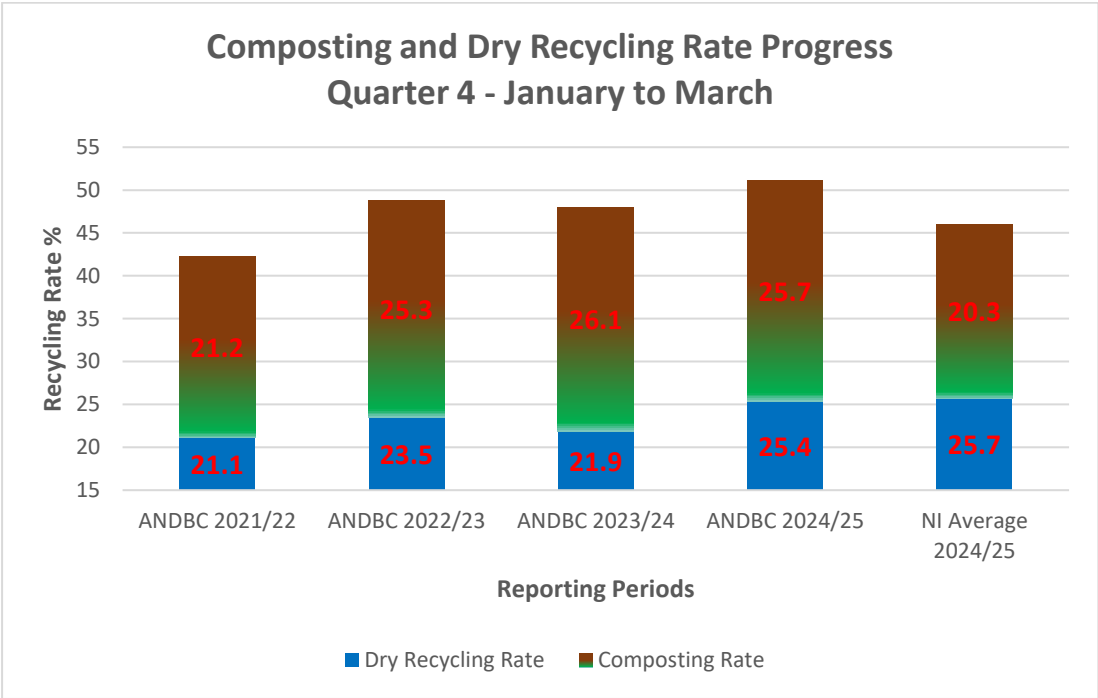
- i. Our household waste recycling rate **rose significantly** by 3% compared to Q3 last year, from 48.5 to 51.5%. The NI Council average remained the same, at 46.4%.



- ii. Our household waste recycling rate of 51.5%, was 5.1% **higher** than the NI average of 46.4%.
- iii. We were ranked **second** out of the eleven NI Councils for our household waste recycling rate, up two places from last year.



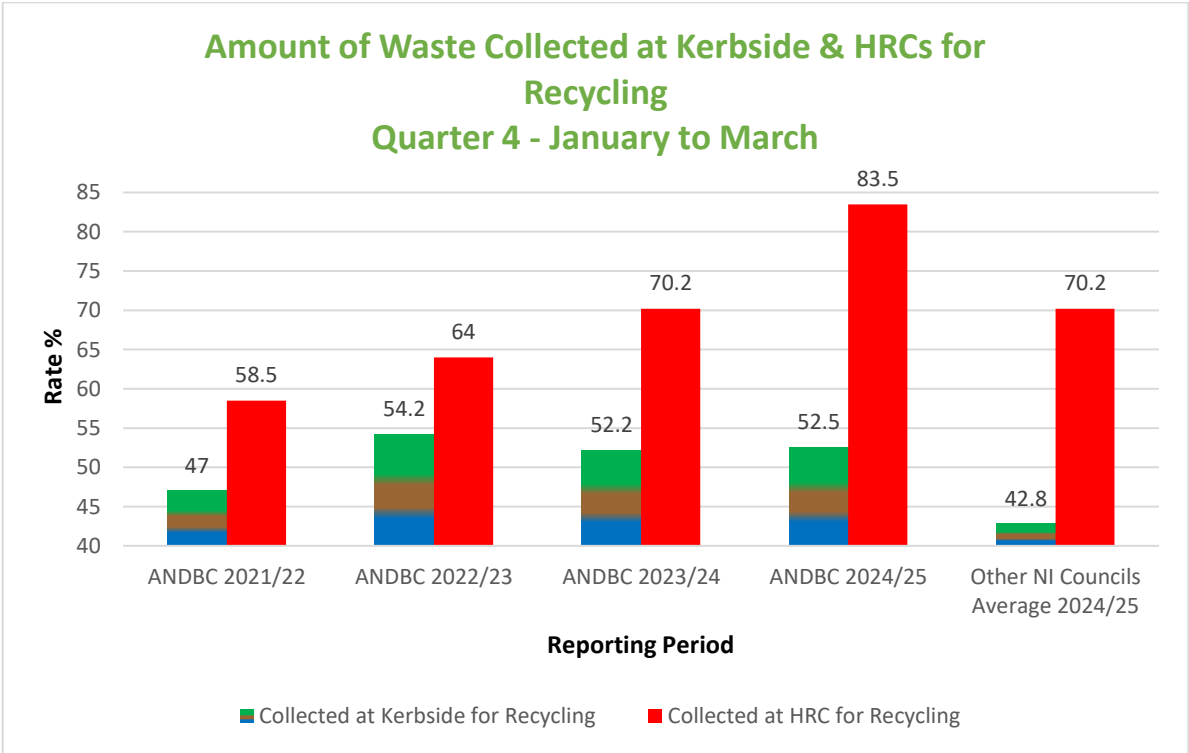
- iv. Our household waste composting rate **fell slightly** by 0.4% - from 26.1% to 25.7%. Our household waste dry recycling rate **rose significantly** by 3.5% - from 21.9% to 25.4%.
- v. Our household waste composting rate of 25.7% was 5.4% **higher** than the NI average of 20.3%.
- vi. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 25.4% was 0.3% **lower** than the N.I. average of 25.7%.



- vii. Our kerbside recycling capture rate of 69.1% for household compostable waste materials compared to a NI Council average of 59.4%.
- viii. Our **lowest** kerbside capture rate for recyclable materials was for mixed plastics, at 18.7%.

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	60.6	49.6
Paper & Card	59.2	53
Mixed Metals	31	32.1
Mixed Plastics	18.7	22.6
Organic/Compostables	69.1	59.4

- ix. We ranked 6th in the Council performance table for ‘dry’ recycling rate and 3rd for composting rate.
- x. We received 14.4% **less** total waste per capita at our HRCs compared to the average for other NI Councils; during the same period the previous year we received 5.6% **less** HRC waste per capita.
- xi. We received 52.5% **less** residual (non-recycled) waste per capita at our HRCs compared to the average for other Councils, compared to 13.8% **less** during the same period the previous year.
- xii. The proportion of waste collected at our HRC sites for recycling was **very significantly higher** than the average for other Councils – 83.5%, compared to an average rate of 70.2% for other Councils. During the same quarter the previous year, our HRC recycling rate of 70.2%, compared to an average of 69.3% for other Councils.
- xiii. We collected 10.1% **more** waste per capita from homes through our kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils. During the same period the previous year, we collected 4.7% **more**.
- xiv. We collected 7% **less** residual/landfill waste per capita from homes through our kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils. During the same period last year, we collected 11.4% **less**.
- xv. The proportion of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside bin collection system was very significantly **higher** than the average for other Councils – 52.5%, compared to an average of 42.8% for other Councils.



Operational Performance Improvement Measures

Marketing and Communications Indicators

MC1 – 83 social media posts were issued with associated engagement/management of feedback across Waste and Recycling on ANDBC corporate channels.



MC2 – 6 Bin-Ovation ‘News and Info’ articles were published, 7 Bin-ovation ‘Push Notifications’ issued, and 2675 Bin-ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered nine community and engagement events, talking to 318 people.

- 3 x schools
- 4 x adult groups
- 1 x shopping centre info event
- 1 x after school club



Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC1 – Volume of blue bin recyclable materials separated from mixed waste by residents on-site: 677,500 litres.



That equated to approximately 28 tons of blue bin waste; whilst that 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 in landfill skips at HRCs. A collateral benefit of the 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.

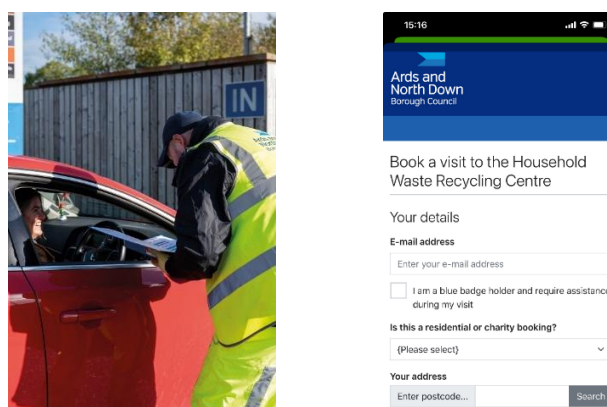
That represented just one type of recyclable waste category which was prevented from entering landfill skips at HRCs as a consequence of the Council's more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access; many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips as reflected in KPI, HRC3.

HRC2 – Number of visitors turned away from site: 653

That 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 the Council's 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 the Council's HRCs; the impact of that would also be reflected in HRC3 and other KPIs.

HRC2a – Number of HRC bookings: 73,224

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.02 (averaged across the 71,976 households in the Borough)



HRC3 – % change in tonnage of total waste received (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **27.2% decrease** in the total amount of waste received at our HRCs, down from 6409T to 4663T.

HRC4 - % change in tonnage of residual (non-recycled) waste received (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **71% decrease** in the amount of residual (non-recycled) waste received at our HRCs, down from 2659T to 769T.

HRC5 - % change in tonnage of waste received for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced an **3.8% increase** in the amount of waste received for recycling at our HRCs, up from 3750T to 3894T.

HRC6 - % change in proportion of HRC waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **25% increase** in the proportion of all waste received at HRCs which was collected for recycling, up from 58.5% to 83.5%.

Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators



KS1 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 1860

KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 145

KS3 - Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 71

KS4 – % change in tonnage of total waste collected (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced an **13.3% increase** in the total amount collected at the kerbside, up from 12,241T to 13,868T.

KS5 - % change in tonnage of grey bin waste collected for disposal (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **1.7% increase** in the amount of grey bin waste collected, up from 6482T to 6591T.

KS6 - % change in tonnage of waste collected at kerbside for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **26.4% increase** in the amount of waste collected at kerbside for recycling, up from 5759T to 7277T.

KS7 – % change in proportion of kerbside waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- We experienced a **5.5% increase** in the proportion of kerbside waste that was collected for recycling, up from 47% to 52.5%.

Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 7 (July 2024 – September 2024)	Monitoring Period 8 (October 2024 – December 2024)	Monitoring Period 9 (January to March 2025)
MC1 Social media posts	20	53	83
MC2	3	1	6

Print press and online articles			
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	12	13	9
HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres)	640,660	800,300	677,500
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	844	800	653
HRC2a No. of bookings	85,381	70,843	73,224
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	1.19	0.99	1.02
HRC3 Total HRC waste compared to same period 2021/22	 31%	 33.7%	 27.2%
HRC4 Residual waste compared to same period 2021/22	 52%	 54.3%	 71%
HRC5 Recycling waste compared to same period 2021/22	 19%	 20.2%	 3.8%
HRC6 Proportion of HRC waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	 10.8%	 12.2%	 25%
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	2837	2187	1860
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	224	154	145
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	112	76	71

KS4 Total kerbside waste compared to 2021/22	 No change	 3.7%	 13.3%
KS5 Grey bin waste compared to 2021/22	 12%	 2.9%	 1.7%
KS6 Kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	 10%	 9.2%	 26.4%
KS7 Proportion of kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	 4.8%	 2.8%	 5.5%

Summary Analysis of Indicators

The report confirmed a trend of continued strong improvement in the Council's sustainable waste resource management performance. Following the changes to its waste service model design and the associated education and engagement campaigns, the Council was experiencing sustained falls in the amount of residual (non-recycled) waste as well as improvements in its recycling rates. During the reporting period it experienced:

1. A further 'step change' reduction in the amount of residual (non-recycled) waste received at its HRCs.
2. A 'step change' rise in the proportion of waste received at HRCs for recycling.
3. Sustained decrease in total amount of municipal waste relative to the same period in the baseline year of 2021-22, compared to a sustained increase on average across other NI Councils.
4. A significant further rise in the HRC recycling rate.
5. **Our overall Borough household waste recycling rate rose by 8.7% compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22, against an average NI Council rise of just 0.6%.**

Whilst the information set out in the report maintained a very encouraging picture of the Council's progress and reflected a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of the waste and recycling teams as well as improving recycling engagement by residents, 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 the kerbside collections model and a future strategic review of our HRC capital assets, would be critical.

Whilst the Council had now achieved what could be called a further ‘step change’ improvement in its HRC recycling performance as a consequence of the HRC transformation programme, a similar type of further ‘step change’ improvement in its kerbside recycling performance was highly unlikely without further significant transformation of that service model.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

16. ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – APRIL – MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Environment Directorate’s Budgetary Control Report covered the 12-month period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing a small overspend of £7k (0.0%) – box A.

Explanation of Variance

Environment’s budget performance is further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£833k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods and Services Expenditure	£855k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£15k favourable	3

Explanation of Variance

The Environment Directorate’s overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £50k): -

Type	Variance £’000	Comment
Payroll	(832)	- Waste and Cleansing (£397k) – vacancies within Waste Collection - Assets and Property (£209k) – vacancies within Property Operations and Fleet Management. - Regulatory Services (£222k) – vacancies within Building Control and Neighbourhood Environment Team.
Goods and Services		

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Waste and Cleansing Services	(129)	- Waste Resources costs (£197k):- i. Landfill/Residual (£191k). ii. Recycled Waste (£107K). iii. Haulage £51k. iv. HRC costs £50k. - Borough Cleaning £32k. - i. PC running costs £48k ii. Street Cleaning (£15k) - Waste Collection £37k. Refuse bins £24k, glass containers £20k.
Assets and Property Services	844	- Statutory and Planned maintenance £808k – Aurora pool floor repairs / storm damage repairs large part of this. - Energy costs (£229k) – electric £329k, gas (£309K), heating oil (£27k), vehicle fuel (£222k) - Water / sewerage/ trade effluent charges £77k. - Vehicle maintenance £142k
Regulatory Services	135	- Licensing and Regulation - £59k – CCTV £38k and off-street parking £21k - Animal Welfare - £93k
Income		
Waste and Cleansing	205	- Trade waste income £147k. - Special collections income £33k. - Recycling income £57k.
Assets and Property	(274)	- Wind Turbine (£160k). - Property Maintenance (£35k) - Technical Services (£52k)
Regulatory Services	54	- Building Control income (£93k). - Car Park income £90k - Licensing income £27k

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REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 12 - March 2025					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	212,148	211,700	448	211,700	0.2
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	17,285,441	17,606,000	(320,559)	17,606,000	(1.8)
220 Assets and Property Services	10,191,539	9,831,900	359,639	9,831,900	3.7
230 Regulatory Services	536,647	568,900	(32,253)	568,900	(5.7)
Total	28,225,775	28,218,500	A 7,275	28,218,500	0.0
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Payroll					
200 Environment HQ	172,177	176,200	(4,023)	176,200	(2.3)
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	9,577,827	9,975,100	(397,273)	9,975,100	(4.0)
220 Assets and Property Services	2,217,715	2,427,000	(209,285)	2,427,000	(8.6)
230 Regulatory Services	2,111,062	2,333,100	(222,038)	2,333,100	(9.5)
Total	14,078,781	14,911,400	B (832,619)	14,911,400	(5.6)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Goods & Services					
200 Environment HQ	39,972	35,500	4,472	35,500	12.6
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	8,953,297	9,081,800	(128,503)	9,081,800	(1.4)
220 Assets and Property Services	8,447,167	7,603,800	843,367	7,603,800	11.1
230 Regulatory Services	674,253	538,800	135,453	538,800	25.1
Total	18,114,688	17,259,900	C 854,788	17,259,900	5.0
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Income					
200 Environment HQ	-	-	-	-	-
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	(1,245,683)	(1,450,900)	205,217	(1,450,900)	14.1
220 Assets and Property Services	(473,344)	(198,900)	(274,444)	(198,900)	(138.0)
230 Regulatory Services	(2,248,668)	(2,303,000)	54,332	(2,303,000)	2.4
Totals	(3,967,694)	(3,952,800)	D (14,894)	(3,952,800)	(0.4)

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

17. ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – APRIL – JULY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Environment Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 4-month period 1 April 2025 to 31 July 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an overspend of £231k (2.3%) – Box A.

Explanation of Variance

Environment's budget performance was further analysed into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£241k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods and Services Expenditure	£528k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£56k favourable	3

Explanation of Variance

The Environment Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £25k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(241)	- Waste and Cleansing (£78k) – vacancies within Waste Collection - Assets and Property (£85k) – vacancies within Property Operations and Fleet Management. - Regulatory Services (£77k) – vacancies within Building Control
Goods and Services		
Assets and Property	477	- Technical and Maintenance - £438k. Storm damage repairs at Bangor Aurora £303k (total expected costs are £830k but this is subject to an insurance claim) - Other Maintenance - £90k - Harbours - £11k – Groomsport and Donaghadee (diesel and equipment) - Transport running costs - £33k
Regulatory Services	50	- Licensing and Regulation - £43k – CCTV £11k and off-street parking contract £30k - Neighbourhood Environment - £7k – vehicle leasing and radio equipment
Income		
Assets and Property	(50)	Wind Turbine (£54k)

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REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 4 - July 2025					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	70,674	70,600	74	214,700	0.1
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	6,294,249	6,374,600	(80,351)	15,398,500	(1.3)
220 Assets and Property Services	3,515,505	3,174,000	341,505	10,131,600	10.8
230 Regulatory Services	297,178	327,600	(30,422)	757,900	(9.3)
Total	10,177,606	9,946,800	A 230,806	26,502,700	2.3
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Payroll					
200 Environment HQ	60,064	60,000	64	180,500	0.1
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	3,413,807	3,492,200	(78,393)	10,451,900	(2.2)
220 Assets and Property Services	770,416	855,700	(85,284)	2,602,800	(10.0)
230 Regulatory Services	732,825	810,500	(77,675)	2,432,100	(9.6)
Total	4,977,112	5,218,400	B (241,288)	15,667,300	(4.6)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Goods & Services					
200 Environment HQ	10,610	10,600	10	34,200	0.1
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	3,434,760	3,433,600	1,160	9,170,500	0.0
220 Assets and Property Services	2,911,181	2,434,400	476,781	7,853,200	19.6
230 Regulatory Services	323,932	273,900	50,032	579,800	18.3
Total	6,680,482	6,152,500	C 527,982	17,637,700	8.6
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Environment - Income					
200 Environment HQ	-	-	-	-	-
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	(554,317)	(551,200)	(3,117)	(4,223,900)	(0.6)
220 Assets and Property Services	(166,092)	(116,100)	(49,992)	(324,400)	(43.1)
230 Regulatory Services	(759,579)	(756,800)	(2,779)	(2,254,000)	(0.4)
Totals	(1,479,988)	(1,424,100)	D (55,888)	(6,802,300)	(3.9)

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

18. UPDATE OF MARINE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would recall a presentation in April 2025 given by Alexandra Thompson of Orcades Marine, the Council's appointed "Designated Person" under the Port Marine Safety Code.

The presentation updated Members on the findings of her audit on the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) in place at the Council's Harbours and made a number of recommendations:

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

The purpose of the report was to confirm to Members that the MSMS had now been updated, and all recommended actions were considered complete.

The updated version of the MSMS was attached for information.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

RECESS 9.59 pm

RECOMMENCED 9.12 pm

(Councillor Kerr left the meeting)

19. Q1 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE 2025-2026

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".

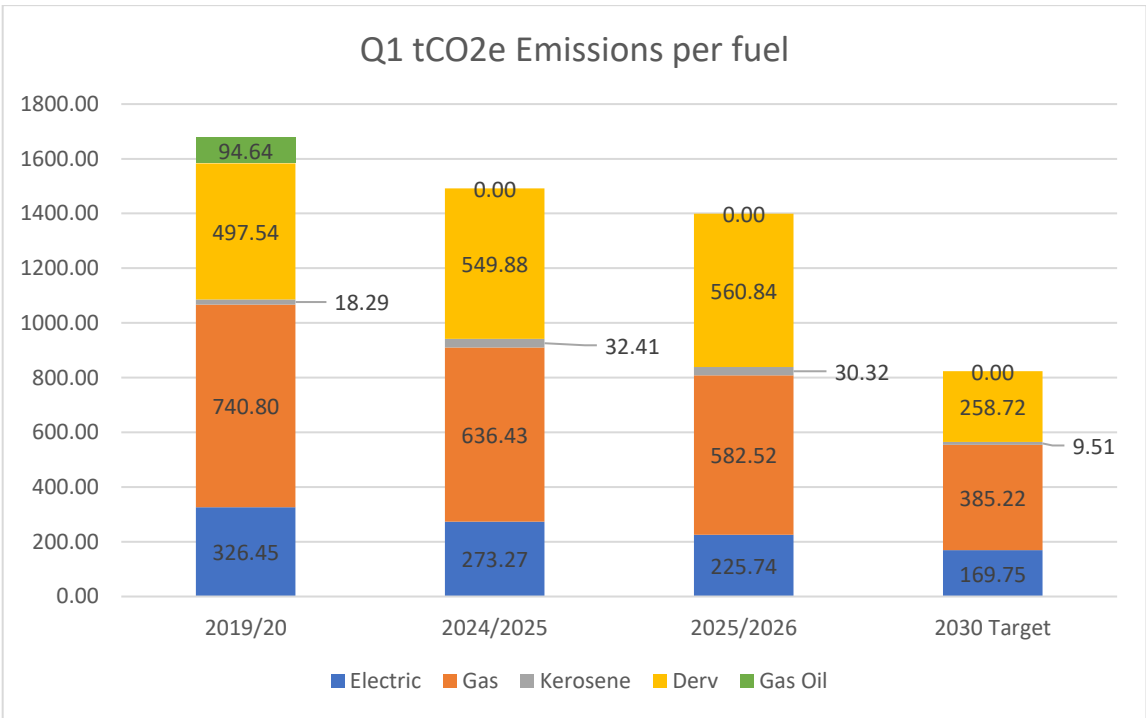
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management would ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan would be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance would improve energy performance by ensuring actions were effectively implemented and consumption trends routinely monitored, which should result in reduced consumption, costs, and emissions.

Reporting Periods

The report was part of the Council’s ongoing quarterly series, tracking energy consumption against the 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 illustrated in the graph above, electricity consumption continued its downward trend in Q1, showing an 8.5% decrease compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a reduction of 47.53 tCO₂ in carbon emissions.

That positive outcome reflected the Council's ongoing commitment to energy efficiency, supported by initiatives such as the integration of PV solar generation, the phased replacement of outdated equipment with modern, energy-efficient alternatives, and continued efforts to encourage energy-conscious behaviour across the workforce.

When compared to the baseline year, Q1 also demonstrated a significant improvement, resulting in a 30.9% reduction in carbon emissions, equivalent to 100.71 tCO₂. The Council was committed to building on that momentum by

implementing further energy-saving measures and enhancing staff engagement, both new and existing, to support its goal of achieving the 2030 emissions reduction target.

Natural Gas

Natural gas consumption had seen a reduction of 8.5% in Q1 compared to the same period in 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a 53.91 tCO₂ emissions reduction.

When compared to the Council's baseline year, Q1 also demonstrated a significant improvement, resulting in a 21% reduction in consumption, equivalent to 158.28 tCO₂.

The improvement was largely the result of continued optimisation efforts, including the review and adjustment of boiler time controls and temperature settings. In addition, the Council had been actively assessing and fine-tuning the Building Management System (BMS) controls and parameters in selected buildings to enhance operational efficiency.

Looking ahead, further action would be necessary to support the transition to electric heating systems, complemented by solar PV and other low-carbon generation technologies, in order to achieve the 2030 emissions reduction targets.

Kerosene

Kerosene oil was typically procured at the start of Q1 each year to replenish depleted stocks and ensure readiness for the autumn heating season. That approach helped maintain continuity of public services in the event of an unexpected drop in temperature. The advance stocking ensured adequate supply when usage rose.

Kerosene consumption had seen a reduction of 6.5% in Q1 compared to the same period in 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a 2.09 tCO₂ emissions reduction.

A comparison of Q1 weather trend data between 2024/25 and 2025/26 indicated broadly similar temperature and climate conditions. As such, the observed reduction in consumption could be reasonably attributed to recent improvements made to boiler thermostatic controls.

Historical data from 2019/20 showed that several community centre central heating systems were previously operating on Gas Oil (red diesel). Those systems had since been upgraded to use Kerosene, which had contributed to an apparent increase in reported consumption. As such, caution should be exercised when comparing Kerosene usage data between 2025/26 and the baseline year, as the fuel switch impacted the comparability of figures.

The Council's kerosene stock data however showed an apparent increase in kerosene purchased in Q1 compared to the baseline 2019/20 year, for the reasons outlined above.

Diesel

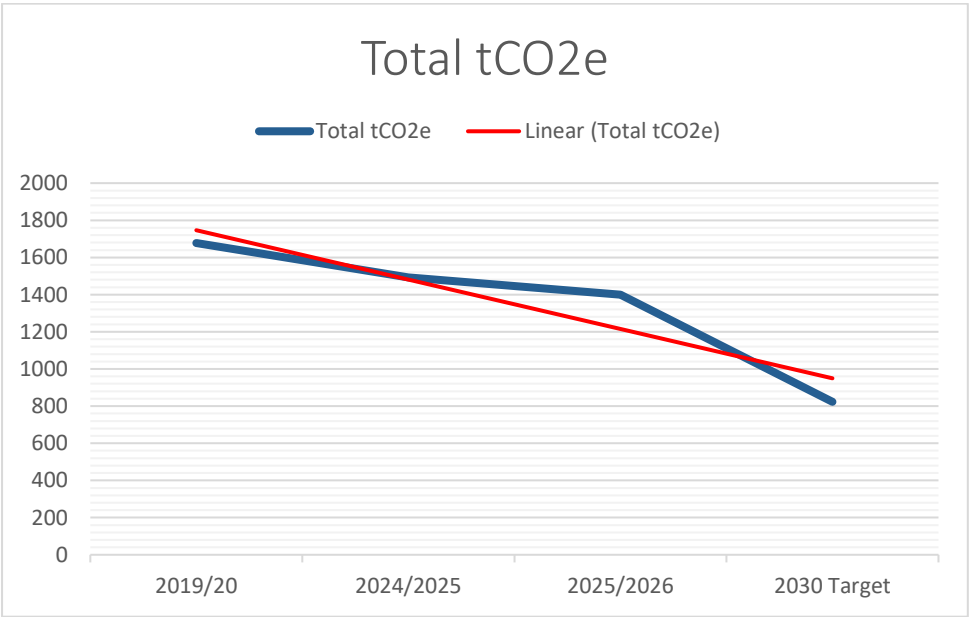
Carbon emissions figures for gas oil (red diesel) used in small plant and Derv (diesel) used in the road fleet had been combined to provide a cumulative total for 2019/20 Q1 diesel emission, in line with the 2022 reform on red diesel usage.

Considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage had decreased by 3.9% in Q1, leading to a reduction of 31.34 tCO₂ emissions compared to the 2019/20 baseline year.

Notwithstanding the above situation regarding comparison of 2025/26 with the baseline year of 2019/20, diesel consumption in Q1 had increased compared to the same reporting period in 2024/25. That was primarily attributed to an additional 4,073 miles travelled by the waste collection fleet, resulting in an extra 6,519 litres of diesel consumed and 17.35 tCO₂ emitted. Across the entire Council fleet, total mileage increased by 21,388 miles during this period, leading to an additional 10,369 litres of fuel used and 27.6 tCO₂ emitted. While operational efficiency measures had been implemented to help manage fuel consumption, the increased mileage had had a direct impact on higher fuel use when compared to the previous year.

Targets and Trends

The graph below illustrated the Council's overall fuel emissions for the period, set against the 2030 target. The linear trendline represented the trajectory required to achieve the Council's 48% emission reduction target by 2030. A modest level of overall progress had been made towards achieving the emissions reduction goals. While the Council was currently behind the linear trendline target, with continued efforts particularly regarding transition to a greener fleet, officers believed that the long term goal targets could be achieved.



Consumption Costs

The table below presented fuel consumption costs for each year, along with the corresponding unit prices. That allowed for a comparison of both usage and changes in market rates over time.

Quarter 1	2019/20 (NET)	2019/20 £/unit	2025/2026 (NET)	2025/2026 £/unit	2019/20 (NET) costs based on current £/unit
Utility					
Electric	£191,586	£0.15	£272,965	£0.23	£288,882
Gas	£214,992	£0.05	£182,086	£0.06	£230,440
Kerosene	£3,180	£0.44	£5814	£0.55	£3,506
Derv	£190,162	£1.03	£227,952	£1.15	£200,109
Gasoil	£19560	£0.57	N/A	N/A	£24,965
Total Cost	£619,482		£688,817		£747,902

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Taken in This Reporting Period

List below of recent energy saving initiatives:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO ₂ e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate (NET)
Adjusting Heating Control Thermostats - Manor Court Community Centre - Green Road Community Centre - Glen Community Centre - Ballygowan Community Centre	8285 kWh	1.5	£521
Smart Street Lighting – Public Car Parks - Abbey Street - Bingham Lane	40661 kWh	7.2	£12198

• Castle Street • Central Avenue • Mills Road • Killinchy Street • Bridge Street • Church Road • Hibernia Street • Moss Road • Newtownards Road • West Street • Ann Street • Kennel Lane • Mill Street & Gas Works • South Street • Talbot Street • Upper Court Street			
New CHP Control Panel – Aurora Leisure Centre	13,587 kWh	2.48	£16,008
Town Hall Bangor – New UFH mixing actuator and BMS configuration	23,151 kWh	4.2	£1,416
North Road Depot – Recent install of New Gas Boiler with Trend BMS IQ4 configuration	54,044 kWh	9.9	£5,088

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.
- Develop and implement a Council-wide policy for the seasonal shutdown of heating systems during the summer months across the entire estate.
- Develop and implement an employee e-learning programme to promote awareness and best practices for energy conservation in the workplace.
- Replacement of boilers at various Council properties and upgrade of control systems.
- Design of new lighting control and LED lighting at North Road Depot and Bangor Waste Transfer Station
- Installation of new lighting control and LED lighting at Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre.
- Design of new lighting control and LED lighting at various Council properties
- Solar PV Installation at chosen compatible Council properties.
- Continuation of Car 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.
- Installation of double-glazed windows at North Road Depot
- Installation of double-glazed windows at Ballygowan Community Centre

List below of planned works for Q2-Q4:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO₂e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate (NET)
North Road Depot Solar PV	81,358 kWh	14.4	£24,407
Ballygowan Community Centre Solar PV	8,230 kWh	1.5	£2,421
Green Road Community Centre Solar PV	6,758 kWh	1.2	£1,937
Skipperstone Community Centre Solar PV	4,250 kWh	0.78	£1,920
Manor Court Community Centre Solar PV	2943 kWh	0.5	£629
Portavogie Community Centre Solar PV	7348 kWh	1.3	£2,138
Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre Solar PV	226,515 kWh	40	£67,107
Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre LED Lighting upgrade	37739 kWh	6.6	£9057
North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station LED lighting upgrade	17,860 kWh	3.2	£4,338
Bangor Waste Transfer Station	7,523 kWh	1.3	£1,805

LED lighting upgrade			

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the latest quarterly energy consumption update.

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

(Councillor Harbinson took the role of Chair at this point in the meeting)

20. NOTICES OF MOTION

20.1 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.

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

Councillor Kendall introduced her Motion as a reflection of the Council's commitment to becoming a Dog Friendly Borough - one that respected animal welfare, public safety, and the enjoyment of shared spaces. She had observed a notable rise in both recreational and professional dog walking across parks and public footpaths throughout the Borough. As a dog lover, she appreciated the joy dogs brought but acknowledged the challenges of managing dog behaviour, particularly when multiple dogs were under the control of a single person.

She informed Members that the growing number of dogs had led to increased risks, including dog fights, fouling, interference with other park users, and uncontrolled behaviour. Many residents had reported incidents involving uncontrolled dogs and dog fouling. She emphasised that those issues were not limited to specific breeds or owners, but were often the result of irresponsible ownership and a lack of understanding around dog behaviour and control.

Her Motion requested that the Council consider limiting the number of dogs any one person could walk to four, aligning with Belfast City Council's policy. She also proposed that professional dog walkers be required to keep all dogs on leads, especially when they were not the owners and might lack familiarity with the animals. She acknowledged the ongoing debate about designating all public spaces as on-lead zones, noting that many responsible dog owners felt unfairly penalised. Councillor Kendall agreed that education and appropriate enforcement were key to balancing safety and freedom in public areas.

Additionally, the Motion asked the Council to explore the cost of a public education campaign to support those measures. She highlighted that the rise in professional dog walking had coincided with increased problems, including reports of individuals walking up to nine dogs at once, often off-lead. That had raised concerns about whether adequate control could be maintained in emergencies.

At the time, there were no licensing or registration requirements for professional dog walkers in the Borough, meaning there was no assurance of insurance, training, or experience. The Member referenced troubling reports from across the United Kingdom and cited the 2018 Smith vs Worth case, where a professional walker managing four off-lead dogs caused a serious injury to a horse rider. The court had found the walker negligent, underscoring the risks of walking multiple dogs without proper control.

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Finally, the Motion called on the Council to write to the DAERA Minister, urging the introduction of mandatory registration for professional dog walkers and funding support for enforcement. Councillor Kendall concluded by stressing that without proper enforcement, those measures would be ineffective. She also acknowledged the pressures facing enforcement officers, including responsibilities under XL Bully legislation, and emphasised the need to act in support of all residents, human and canine alike, to ensure safe and enjoyable public spaces.

Seconding the Motion Councillor McKee gave his support emphasising the need to keep public spaces safe and accessible for all including families, joggers, cyclists, and those who were uneasy around animals. He reported that dog ownership had evolved, with professional dog walking services rising to meet modern demands. Whilst many of those were responsible, the lack of regulation posed risks to both public safety and animal welfare.

He suggested that limiting dog walkers to four dogs was a practical safety measure. Managing multiple unfamiliar dogs required skill and vigilance and beyond four, the risk of distraction and loss of control became unmanageable.

The proposed public education campaign was essential. Rules alone would not change behaviour but awareness could. Residents must understand what “under control” meant, the risks of off-lead dogs, and how to share public spaces respectfully.

Writing to the DAERA Minister was crucial. A mandatory registration scheme for professional dog walkers would align Northern Ireland with best practices in the United Kingdom, enabling Councils to monitor and support standards. He did not think that would be punitive, but rather it was accountability, like licensing for driving or childcare.

Ultimately he believed this was about community and making parks places of joy, not fear, and protecting vulnerable residents and dogs alike from harm and poor handling. He suggested that the Council should provide a framework for safety, respect, and shared responsibility.

Councillor Boyle was happy to support and appreciated the Motion being brought forward although he would have been happier to support even fewer dogs. He said that there were still irresponsible dog owners and acknowledged that some dogs could be unpredictable in their behaviour. He also called for dogs to be kept off the sports pitches of the Borough.

Other Members rose to support with Councillor Wray believing it to be absolute common sense, he did, however, express some concern about the ability to enforce changes. Councillor Irwin and Councillor Cathcart echoed those sentiments referring to the pressure being placed on Enforcement Officers.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also supported the Motion and thought it was imperative that the Council retain space for dogs off the lead. She looked forward to a balanced report being brought back to the Committee.

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Concluding Councillor Kendall thanked Members for their comments and hoped the report would consider the points made by the Committee.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillor Kendall resumed the role of Chair)

20.2 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.

Introducing his Motion Alderman Graham thanked the Committee and admitted that this was not the most exciting topic but it was a vital one for visitors to, and residents of, the Borough. He spoke of the frustration expressed by people when they were out on summer evenings enjoying the beauty of the Borough and finding that the public toilets had closed early.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Cochrane commended his colleague for bringing it forward. As Members were aware the summer months brought a welcome increase in footfall to the Borough's beautiful public spaces - whether that was families spending time in local parks, visitors enjoying the beaches, or residents simply out walking in the longer evenings. That increased footfall brought a very basic and practical need and that was access to public toilets.

He considered that extending public toilet opening hours to 9pm in busy areas during the summer was not just a convenience but rather it was a matter of public health, dignity, and good civic infrastructure.

He explained that in his own DEA, that was especially relevant. Places like The Commons in Donaghadee were increasingly busy during summer evenings, with families picnicking, children playing, and tourists strolling along the coastal path. The early closure of the toilets was particularly problematic for families with young children and the elderly.

Similarly, Harbour Road, Groomsport, saw a great deal of evening activity during the summer months. Whether it was people dining at the local restaurants, enjoying an ice cream by the water, it was not uncommon to see people caught out by a lack of facilities after 6pm and he believed it detracted from the experience and created unnecessary stress.

He referred to Ward Park, Bangor, a vital green space in the heart of the city. The park was used well into the evening during the summer for evening strolls, dog-walking, children playing in the newly refurbished park or people just enjoying the peace and quiet. If the toilets closed too early, it limited how long people could comfortably enjoy that space.

He stressed that the Motion was not about major capital expenditure but rather adapting Council services in line with public use and the benefits were wide-ranging:

- Health and hygiene: Longer hours reduced the risk of public urination and associated hygiene issues.
- Inclusivity: Those with health conditions, families with young children, and older people were disproportionately affected by poor access to toilets.
- Tourism and hospitality: Visitors were more likely to spend time and money in areas where basic amenities were readily available.
- Civic pride: Offering clean, accessible toilets into the evening signalled that the Council valued its public spaces and those who used them.

He was also pleased that the Motion considered the need for expanded baby changing facilities across the Borough. Too often, those facilities were either limited or tucked away in inaccessible corners. A 2023 survey by QS Supplies found that the Ards and North Down Council area was ranked sixth worst for access to baby changing facilities.

By exploring options for improved and extended facilities the Council would not only be responding to community needs but planning for a Borough that was welcoming, family-friendly, and forward-thinking.

He fully supported the Motion and urged Members to do the same.

Councillor Boyle stated that the Motion was a “no-brainer” and was clearly needed. He referred to having a business in Portaferry and had often permitted people to use toilet facilities on his premises due to lack of provision in public places.

Councillor Wray also expressed strong support and had been surprised the issue had not been discussed previously, particularly in respect of baby changing facilities, which he felt encouraged positive family outings.

Councillor Edmund described the Motion as sensible, highlighting the importance of tourism from Portaferry to Hollywood. He supported formatting the proposal into something workable and mentioned increasing numbers of walking groups visiting the area.

Councillor Cathcart thanked Members and reflected on a proposal from ten years ago to abolish toilet charges, stating that access to facilities should be a basic human right. He looked forward to seeing a report on the matter. Alderman McAlpine referred to the Stoma Awards and Changing Places facilities and hope that they would also be considered in a report.

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The Chair agreed it was important to review the issues regularly, especially for disabled individuals, elderly residents, and women and children, describing them as very worthy considerations.

Alderman Graham supported Alderman McAlpine's suggestion and stressed the need to consider those who relied on such facilities. He highlighted Seapark as a location of particular interest in his area and noted that, ideally, facilities there would not need to close early but noted the vandalism that often occurred later in the day. He thanked Members for their support and extended his good wishes to the Director and Head of Waste and Cleansing noting they had served diligently despite some unjustified public criticism.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

21. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

*****ITEMS 22-23 IN CONFIDENCE*****

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

22. EXTENSION OF GLASS REPROCESSING CONTRACT

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report on extension of the glass reprocessing contract was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that Council agrees to extend the current contract on the terms outlined in the report.

23. FURTHER COMPETITION FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF 80,000 ROLLS OF COMPOSTABLE FOOD WASTE CADDY LINERS

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

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A report on a tender for the supply, and delivery of compostable food waste caddy Liners was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that Council agrees the award of the tender to Cromwell Polythene.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.04 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 4th September 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor McCracken	
Alderman:	Adair	McDowell
	Armstrong-Cotter	Hennessy (Zoom, 20:01)
Councillors:	Blaney	Hollywood
	Brady	McCollum
	Edmund	Morgan (Zoom)
	Gilmour	Smart

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), A Stobie (Acting Head of Economic Development), Nicola Webster-Pickett (Labour Market Partnership Manager) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors Kennedy and Thompson.

An apology for lateness was noted for Councillor Hennessy.

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.

At 21:38, Councillor Blaney made a declaration of interest for Item 23: Go Succeed Service Level Agreement between Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council and Enterprise Northern Ireland Ltd.

3. PRESENTATION ON LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP (LMP)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of Presentation

The Ards & North Down Labour Market Partnership Manager provided a summary to Members, explaining that the LMP operated with a small team, consisting of only one administrative officer. Each year, a strategic assessment was carried out, and in the 2025/26 cycle, projects included the Classroom Assistant Employability Academy. The first cohort comprised of 12 individuals and covered areas such as driving licences, HGV training, catering and Health and Social Care.

The Borough was noted for having one of the oldest populations among the 11 Councils. A Work-Ready and Pre-Ready programme was introduced, offering training and access to various academies. The Green Academy focused on preparing electricians for roles in green energy production. The Employer Skill-Up Programme launched with grants of up to £2,000 allowing companies to identify staff development needs.

Applications were accepted over a six-week period, closing on 17th October. Training topics included NEBOSH, PAT2 testing, mentoring, mental health, and tender writing. Where possible, training providers were sourced locally to retain funding within the Borough. Outreach efforts included collaboration with primary schools and mail drops. Two Disability Employment Support Days were held to assist individuals and children with neurodiverse conditions in planning their post-school futures.

Two job fairs were scheduled: one on 5th February at Aurora Leisure Centre, which was delayed due to roof repairs, and another on 26th March at Ards Blair Mayne. Since 2022, the HGV Transport Academy had funded 155 participants, with 125 in employment as of the reporting date. The Driving Licence Academy had eight participants, two of whom had passed and entered employment. Disability employment support resulted in 33 individuals securing jobs and 30 entering placements. Thirty-six classroom assistants gained employment, and 77 additional roles were filled through other academies. The estimated economic impact, based on minimum wage, was at least £1.9 million. Approximately 99% of those employed remained in their roles at the six-month mark.

Councillor McCollum praised the presentation figures and referred to an annual report that highlighted the programme's successes. The open day had been well attended by charities and disability-focused groups, with attendees signposted to additional support services where needed.

Councillor Hollywood enquired about collaboration with SPF-based projects, which was confirmed by the Labour Market Partnership Manager. It was noted that while the LMP did not receive direct support from the skills and employment clinics, they continued to signpost individuals to relevant services. Due to limited staffing and budget, the team had adopted a min-maxing approach to resource management.

Councillor Gilmour commended the LMP and referenced the Bangor Castle launch event, where participants had shared personal stories about the positive impact of the programme. She asked what further steps could be taken to raise awareness of the LMP's work. In response, the Labour Market Partnership Manager stated that a full list of academies were available on the website and suggested distributing leaflets and flyers via Democratic Services to councillors. It was also mentioned that some academies had been split throughout the year to accommodate changes in individuals' economic circumstances. While not all issues could be resolved, the LMP continued to offer signposting support.

The Labour Market Partnership Manager also highlighted a shortage of catering staff in schools and confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Education Authority to encourage stronger links with the Partnership.

Alderman McDowell expressed support and asked whether the focus was solely on economically inactive individuals or if broader skills development was or would be promoted. He raised concerns about the lack of suitably qualified candidates for both public and private sector roles and asked whether advanced fields such as IT and cyber security were being considered, even at an introductory level. The Labour Market Partnership Manager confirmed that referrals had been made to organisations like Springvale, and that individuals working under 16 hours, on zero-hour contracts, or facing redundancy were being targeted for support.

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

4. RESPONSE TO THE DFC SHAPING SUSTAINABLE PLACES CONSULTATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which outlined Members might have been aware that the Department for Communities (DfC), in collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), would have been developing the Shaping Sustainable Places Programme.

The programme would have aimed to create a range of focused and strategic interventions that would have maximised the available budgets for regeneration projects in an effort to address the elements of decline in rural and urban areas. The programme would have aimed to engage communities at the earliest opportunity and would have sought to use the regeneration projects as a catalyst to encourage private sector investment to add sustainability to the projects and areas.

This would have been a significant Programme that the three departments would have co-funded over a 10-year period, contributing a minimum of £5m each per year for investment in capital projects. A further minimum contribution of 10% (£15m) would have been requested from Local Councils, creating an initial fund of £165m. However, the Programme would have been scalable, and would have been able to utilise additional funds for regeneration if they had become available.

On 23 June 2025, DfC Minister Gordon Lyons, DAERA Minister Andrew Muir, and Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins would have announced a public consultation seeking views on the programme. Appendix 1 would have provided the consultation documents.

The Regeneration Service, in collaboration with the Council's Heads of Service Team (HoST), would have compiled a draft response to the consultation, provided in Appendix 2. The response to each question would have been aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 2024–2028, The Big Plan 2017–2032, the Regeneration Service Plan 2025–2026, and would have had synergies with priorities identified in the Masterplans and Village Plans. Additionally, the feedback from ongoing

communications with the various Village Partnership Groups and C/TAGs would have informed the responses to the consultation. The draft response to each of the multiple-choice questions would have been highlighted, and comments in any text box would have been provided by the Council to supplement the rationale of the response.

To encourage as much input from residents and businesses from the Borough, the Regeneration Service would have undertaken the following engagement actions:

- Would have emailed the consultation notification and link to C/TAGs
- Would have emailed the consultation notification and link to Village Partnership groups
- Would have completed letter drops in businesses in each urban area
- Would have shared the consultation link internally to all staff, requesting it be forwarded to any key stakeholders not identified through Regeneration

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the draft response to the consultation to enable officers to issue a formal response before the consultation completion deadline of 21 September 2025.

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

Alderman Adair expressed his gratitude to officers and highlighted the significant benefits expected from the initiative. He hoped that, following the completion of the consultation process, a date would be confirmed for when the fund would become available.

Councillor Edmund supported Alderman Adair's remarks and added that retaining children within their local communities, schools, and universities had proven beneficial.

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

5. VISIT BELFAST 12 MONTH VERVIEW 24/25 AND THREE YEAR PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity explaining that Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) would have maintained an annual Regional Tourism Partnership (RTP) with Visit Belfast (VB) through a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

This partnership would have served two primary purposes:

1. To have facilitated collaboration between ANDBC, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Belfast City Council on tourism development and integrated working.
2. To have delivered effective, value-for-money marketing and visitor servicing platforms tailored to each council area.

Through this SLA, ANDBC would have leveraged Visit Belfast's significant audience reach and prominent presence at key visitor gateways, thereby ensuring strong, year-round visibility of the Borough's tourism offering to both international and domestic audiences. As one of only two partner councils (alongside Belfast), ANDBC would have benefited from a competitive advantage in showcasing the Borough's appeal as a short-break destination, just one hour from Belfast.

Key Promotional and Servicing Benefits

- **Year-Round Promotion:** Ards and North Down content would have been featured consistently across Visit Belfast's digital and traditional platforms, including experiences, events, itineraries, and themed guides.
- **Visitor Servicing:** Support would have been provided at the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre and across 20+ transport hubs, with staff trained to have presented the ANDBC tourism offering.
- **Collaborative Campaigns:** Visit Belfast would have worked closely with Council officers to have amplified Borough messaging using its trade networks, consumer databases, and branded channels under the Belfast Plus brand.

A detailed report on activity would have been produced each year. Visual examples from the 2024/25 SLA would have been included in Appendix 1.

Summary of SLA 2024/25 Activity

Digital Marketing:

Ards and North Down content would have featured prominently on visitbelfast.com (2.3M annual visits), with 23 Borough locations showcased. More than 100k page views would have been generated from blog content featuring local staycations, walks, and foodie guides.

Targeted Email Marketing

AND would have been included in 94 ezines reaching 1.28M consumers (30% open rate) and 10,228 trade contacts (44% open rate).

Leveraging VB's Social Media Reach

Over 100 posts would have promoted AND to VB's 465,000+ followers, including inspiring video content.

Promotional Literature:

AND would have featured in the Belfast City and Region Guide (3 seasonal editions), visitor maps, and student guides (120,000 print run). 24,525 printed materials would have been distributed across VB sites.

Presence at Visitor Gateways:

Information would have been displayed at VB Welcome Centre, both NI airports, Lanyon Place and York Street stations, Titanic Belfast, motorway Appletree hubs, ferry terminals, and more dedicated campaign placements at the VBWC, including a 16-screen video wall, self-serve screens, and an 8-week promotional Event Island.

Industry Engagement

- Visit Belfast would have led familiarisation trips including a group of Canadian agents.
- Borough presence would have been maintained at quarterly briefings attended by 200+ tourism professionals.
- VB would have represented AND at key trade events in the UK, RoI, Europe, and the USA; Council officers would have joined the VB team at World Travel Market.

Visitor Servicing

- VB would have handled 13,379 AND-specific visitor enquiries.
- As a partner, the Council would have had access to visitor servicing training webinars.
- Visitor servicing (in person/digital) would have been available 365 days a year.

Strategic Tourism Partner

Visit Belfast would have remained a critical strategic partner, offering 24/7 promotion and visitor servicing. It would have positioned the Borough as an appealing visitor destination adjacent to Belfast City, reaching a vast international audience. Its significant investment in digital in-house resources and infrastructure (including a new website launching in 2025) would have further strengthened the reach it could have offered to partners.

- 2.3M+ annual website visits
- 465K+ social media followers
- 89K ezine subscribers
- 49M social media impressions

Visit Belfast would also have acted as a key delivery agent for major events such as Fleadh 2026–27, offering additional exposure and integrated working opportunities for RTP partners.

Value for Money

The Council would not have been able to independently match Visit Belfast's visitor reach through alternative marketing or trade channels. The partnership would have ensured sustained visibility in key markets, particularly the Republic of Ireland and international audiences.

Key Points

- Annual membership cost of £30,000 would have remained unchanged since 2015, despite inflation-adjusted value now exceeding £51,000.
- Additional promotional space within the VB Welcome Centre would have been secured for £6,500.

- A 2024 cost analysis would have shown that equivalent promotional activity would have cost £60,000–£65,000 per year, at least 50% higher than current RTP investment.

Strategic Proposal

In September 2024, it would have been reported that meetings were scheduled to discuss likely increased delivery costs for RTP membership. In June and July 2025, officers would have met with Visit Belfast colleagues to discuss how the Council could have benefited from new opportunities and increased activity. A proposal was further presented by VB to officers with a new enhanced RTP model that delivers all the current benefits of the existing SLA (promotional and visitor servicing model), but with a more brand-led, digitally driven strategic approach and featuring an additional Grand Central Visitor Hub presence to further elevate the Borough's profile.

Key enhancements

1. New strategic marketing approach

Repositioning of the Belfast Region would ensure additional promotion of AND as a unique short-break destination that complements Belfast with additional presence across all VB platforms.

2. Digital-Driven Marketing Partnership

Visit Belfast had significantly enhanced its digital capabilities by doubling its marketing team and launching a new web platform. This allowed RTP partners to benefit from additional digital campaigns that would run across social media, email, and web – further boosting Ards and North Down's online profile as a visitor destination.

3. Enhanced presence for AND based tourism providers including extra support for new/ emerging tourism businesses

Council would support up to five startup or micro tourism businesses with funded Visit Belfast partnership listings (local criteria to be determined). A further new membership initiative would encourage wider participation from AND-based providers.

4. Targeted business development activity for travel trade to maximise potential

- Engagement events for with 15 high-potential trade contacts
- Dedicated familiarisation trip for key buyers
- New annual Meet the Trade event (6–8 tourism buyers) for RTP members
- Dedicated trade ezine to over 2k contacts

5. New High-Impact Welcome Hub at Grand Central Station

- The offer included exclusive access for partners to the dedicated Welcome Hub at Belfast's Grand Central Station featuring:
- Four digital displays and a large LED screen
- Staffed by Visit Belfast and Translink with strong knowledge of AND

- Four Borough promotional animations annually
- Grand Central sees 20M journeys per year and 15 daily Dublin trains
- RoI visitor numbers grew 46% in 2023
- Equivalent display advertising value estimated at £102,000/year

This hub delivered exceptional value for money giving the Council prime, continuous visibility and an opportunity to inspire visitors arriving from RoI to explore and stay in the Borough.

Budget

In September 2023, the Council approved £30,000 per annum RTP funding for 2024/25 and 2025/26 with an additional £6,000 per annum for Belfast Welcome Centre space. To continue with the local authority membership, the new proposed investment was as follows:

- £81,500 per annum
- 3-year term: 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29

The equivalent independent cost was estimated at £162,000 per year.

(Estimated independent costs based on independent purchase of Visit Belfast marketing opportunities and equivalent in station advertising options at Grand Central Station)

The same proposal had been issued to Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council.

Conclusion

Visit Belfast continued to be a high-performing, high value, strategic tourism partner for ANDBC. In 2024/25, the SLA delivered strong, multi-channel exposure and robust visitor servicing that would be unachievable by the Council alone. The promotional value exceeded the cost, with proven results in audience reach, campaign engagement, and trade development.

The proposed enhanced 3-year RTP offered a timely opportunity to build further on the success of a 20-year partnership. With improved strategic positioning, digital visibility, and travel trade engagement, as well as exclusive year-round presence at a key visitor gateway, the new model represented strong value for money to ensure that Ards and North Down was front of mind to potential visitors from international markets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the enhanced Visit Belfast RTP proposal and the development of an associated Service Level Agreement at £81,500 per annum for years 2026/27, 2027/2028 and 2028/29, subject to the rates setting process.

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

Councillor McCollum regarded the update as another positive development with no apparent drawbacks and requested that the Head of Tourism provide information

regarding plans for the next three years. The Head of Tourism responded by noting that Visit Belfast had introduced a new proposal which officers considered a valuable opportunity. There had been a longstanding and fruitful 20-year partnership with the organisation. Visit Belfast had offered reassurances that they would collaborate on key digital campaigns aimed at supporting micro business startups. One element of the proposal included establishing a digital presence at Grand Central Station, which experienced high footfall and was seen as a strategic location.

Councillor Gilmour acknowledged that the Borough had often been viewed negatively by some residents within the Borough and felt this initiative presented a strong opportunity to improve its public image, noting that the digital potential at Grand Central Station could significantly enhance visibility and added that the borough was already beginning to see positive outcomes, such as increased tour group visits.

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

6. UPDATE ON KIRCUBBIN HARBOUR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising that Members may have recalled a deputation by the Kircubbin and District Community Association to Committee on 13 June 2024, in which a request was made of the Council to consider purchasing Kircubbin Harbour.

Subsequently, an update report was provided at the Committee meeting in September 2024 that outlined the following four key points for consideration, those points were summarised as below.

Ownership

The harbour was privately owned and therefore the Council had no remit, responsibility, or influence on its use or state of repair. Additionally, the seabed was owned by the Crown Estate and therefore any potential work completed on the harbour by the Council would firstly be dependent on a willingness by the owner to sell the harbour to the Council, and a potential agreement between Crown Estates and Council if the seabed was included in the works.

Current state of repair

The harbour's current state of repair was widely accepted as being of a poor standard. This had been evidenced in a Structural Report completed on 16 December 2015 by Mann Williams Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers on behalf of the DoE NI. The report detailed sections of the harbour that had collapsed or were unstable at the time of the report. Additionally, multiple sites of erosion, voids of large sections of the walls, and a collapsed section of the parapet wall were some of the noted required remedial works in four locations within the harbour. Estimated costs of repair at that time were £177,351.

A full structural engineer's report would be required to enable the Council to give consideration for a potential purchase of the harbour inclusive of estimated costs to repair the harbour to a safe standard.

Potential demand for harbour usage

As part of the decision-making process, an assessment of the potential operational and strategic use, and demand, of the harbour should be completed. For example, it was anticipated that nearby access points to the water and established sailing clubs (Kircubbin, Portaferry and Newtownards) provided opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy water-based activities. A potential challenge for usage capabilities of the harbour was noted in the Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland Accessibility Report 2018. Details were provided of the tidal nature of Kircubbin bay and the significant number of mud flats at low tide, indicating that full time use of the harbour, unlike other harbours within the Borough, would be unfeasible.

Rationale

As with any Outline Business Case or Full Business Case (OBC or FBC) informed consideration and evidence of clear rationale on the expenditure would need to be provided. Additionally, an alignment to the Council's objectives should be evidenced, for example the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 or Big Plan 2017 – 2032. Budget would be required to undertake an OBC/FBC. Furthermore, any future capital expenditure would also need to be reviewed in line with the Council's Capital Expenditure process.

The following was agreed at September's Committee meeting:

1. Officers contact the owner, via their legal representative, to make enquires on the current ownership status of the harbour and to advise that for the Council to consider the request further a structural engineer's report as outlined is required.
2. Writes or meets with representatives of Kircubbin and District Community Association to advise of the Council's decision and the process for going forward.

Update

As agreed, communications were sent to the named owner of the harbour's solicitor asking for confirmation if their client was the registered and sole owner of Kircubbin harbour. A combination of emails and letters were sent on:

15 October 2024
30 October 2024
4 December 2024
21 January 2025

However, following an initial reply from the solicitor on 21 October 2024 asking for a clarification of the request, no further response was received from the solicitor.

After communications with Kircubbin and District Community Association on ownership status, a letter was received on 22 February 2025 stating it was from the owner and that they were the legal owner of the harbour and remained willing to dispose of the harbour for a nominal consideration.

A letter of reply was subsequently sent to the owner stating that in order for the Council to make an informed decision on any potential purchase of the harbour, a

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structural engineer's report detailing the current state of repair of the harbour, including estimated costs of repair, should be commissioned and then submitted to the Council.

The owner contacted an officer by telephone stating that he would be unlikely to submit a structural engineers report.

Communications had been ongoing between Regeneration and Kircubbin and District Community Association. The Association contacted the owner and confirmed that sufficient funds had been raised from within the community to pay for the survey costs in full.

Structural Engineers were appointed by the Association to conduct a full survey on the harbour. The same company completed the previous survey in 2015 and supplied the itemised costs of repairs (£177,350 correct as of March 2016).

As far as officers could be aware, the survey process was ongoing at the harbour and the Association would provide the owner with the survey once received.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this update and agrees for this matter to be paused until the full structural engineers report inclusive of anticipated repair costs is submitted by the owner of the harbour, as per the Council's decision, with an assurance of the report's findings.

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

Alderman Adair gave thanks for works carried out so far as well as acknowledging Kircubbin Harbour Working Group who had dedicated much time and effort to the cause.

Councillor Edmund shared the same sentiment and referenced the need to consider that figures in the report would require updating due to inflation. He gave examples several instances of price increases on the project from 2009 onward.

Councillor Smart commended the efforts of officers and the endeavours of the local community to raise funding.

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

7. REGENERATION WORKING UP PROJECTS 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained how Members may have been aware that the Regeneration Service had an annual allocation of £200K for the development of 'working up' projects (£100K urban and £100K rural).

With the recent announcement of the proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places' Programme, officers had carefully selected projects for the 2025/26 period that

aligned with the programme objectives to effectively prepare the urban and rural areas for this funding programme. The Shaping Sustainable Places Programme aimed to create a flagship programme of interventions to arrest the decline in our valued village, town and city centres. Through more strategic interventions led by communities, it was hoped that the programme would stimulate place making and catalyse private sector activity.

In addition, the proposed projects supported the delivery of the town and city masterplans and village plans, whilst recognising and supporting relevant Council priorities, outcomes, and strategies. Furthermore, the proposed projects were in addition to the 2025/26 Urban Regeneration Programme and in addition to the Strategic Development's projects planned for Bangor and Newtownards as was previously reported and agreed.

Project Plan 2025/26

Project	Location	Strategic Alignment	Approx. Value	Delivery Method/ Timescale
Study to identify the level of vacancy and dereliction within the commercial areas/ Main Streets of each Village.	Rural – all villages	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors Village Plans Priority Address Vacancy and Dereliction The Big Plan Outcome 4 - All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.	£30,000	Tender Appointment in January 2026 Completion 31st March 2026
Concept design for a Ballyhalbert Environmental Improvement Scheme	Rural - Ballyhalbert	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors,	£25,000	Quotation Appointment in November 2025 Public Engagement early 2026 Completion 31st March 2026

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		businesses and investors Village Plans Theme – Connectivity Priority – Pedestrian Routes, Access and Safety Public Realm The Big Plan Outcome 5 - All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.		
Completion of the Concept Design for Ballywalter Environmental Improvement Scheme	Rural – Ballywalter	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors Village Plans Theme – Safe and Accessible Streets The Big Plan Outcome 5 - All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.	£10,000 (£5,000 under 2024/25 budgets)	Ongoing – Public Engagement September 2025 Completion expected December 2025
Completion of the Concept Design for Helen's Bay Environmental Improvement Scheme	Rural – Helen's Bay	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough	£10,000 (£5,000 under 2024/25 budgets)	Ongoing Public Engagement September 2025 Completion expected December 2025

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		for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors Village Plans Theme – Safe Streets The Big Plan Outcome 5 - All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.		
Concept Design for a Lighting Scheme in Groomsport	Rural – Groomsport	Corporate Plan Outcome 5 – safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing opportunities for people to be active and healthy Village Plans Theme – Promote and Protect Priority, Infrastructure Improvements The Big Plan Outcome 5 – All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.	£10,000	Quotation Appointment November Public Engagement early 2026 Completion 31st March 2026
Study to look at possible options for Electrical Vehicle Charging Points in the rural communities	Rural – all villages	Corporate Plan Environmental Priority – reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero Outcome 2 - an environmentally	£15,000	Quotation Appointment November 2025 Completion 31st March 2026

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		sustainable Council and Borough The Big Plan Outcome 5 – All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.		
Study to identify the level of vacancy and dereliction within the town centre boundary of Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood	Urban – Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors The Big Plan Outcome 4 - All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.	£20,000	Tender Appointment January 2026 Completion 31st March 2026 (include within the Rural Study tender package)
Study to identify opportunities to develop the night-time economy in Newtownards Town Centre	Urban – Newtownards	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors Masterplan Priority – Streets for All The Big Plan Outcome 4 – All people in Ards and North Down benefit	£25,000	Quotation Appointment November Public Engagement early 2026 Completion 31st March 2026

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		from a prosperous economy.		
Study to identify opportunities to further develop the tourism offering of Donaghadee (experiences, attractions and accommodation)	Urban – Donaghadee	Corporate Plan Economic Priority – increase economic growth Outcome 4 – a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors Masterplan Priority – Destination Donaghadee The Big Plan Outcome 4 – All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.	£25,000	Quotation Appointment November Public Engagement early 2026 Completion 31st March 2026
Creation of a Database for each town/city that will provide an up-to-date Business Directory and contact details for the purposes of communicating directly to the businesses on regeneration matters	Urban – All towns and city	Corporate Plan Outcome 1 – an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment	£20,000	Quotation Appointment November Completion 31st March 2026

Total investment: £190,000 (£10,000 contingency)

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RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the delivery of the projects outlined above.

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

Councillor McCollum enquired about the concept design expected in December 2025. The Head of Regeneration explained that the environmental improvement scheme had originated pre-COVID and that an engagement session was scheduled for 2nd October, welcoming new and relevant suggestions. Councillor McCollum expressed confidence that residents of Groomsport and Donaghadee would be pleased and commended their contributions toward progress.

Alderman Adair referenced various projects across the Ards Peninsula and received an update from the Head of Regeneration on initiatives such as Millisle Lagoon, which was with the Planning Department and, if approved, was set to undergo phased development. Alderman Adair noted that Portaferry was the only location in the Peninsula with a car charging point, which had been out of order for some time. Regarding public realm works in Millisle, he questioned the feasibility of funding. The Head of Regeneration reported that recent meetings with DFI and DFC had taken place, with plans to use DFI contractors to accelerate progress. Agreements were hoped for around Christmas 2025, with a target completion date before 31 March 2026. Alderman Adair also praised Joe Scott and the officers for their efforts.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter spoke positively about the Borough-wide initiatives and praised the current state of Millisle Lagoon. She shared personal experiences and expressed optimism about future developments.

Councillor Edmund acknowledged the progress made and suggested that redeveloping Millisle's main street would enhance its appeal to visitors. He highlighted the phrase, "vibrant, attractive and sustainable borough" from the report as being particularly impactful.

Councillor Smart reiterated the Council's commitment to promoting local shopping and noted that the nighttime economy in Newtownards had been a strategic focus. He referred to dereliction studies and asked how the timeline aligned with proposed solutions and next steps. The Head of Regeneration responded that strategic planning was enabling a state of preparedness and that the Council's programme timeline would complement this. He emphasised the importance of evidence-based planning, drawing on lessons learned and past successes.

Alderman McDowell welcomed the report's emphasis on Newtownards' nighttime economy, which had grown significantly over the past 10–15 years. He noted that some had questioned whether Bangor could match this progress. The Head of Regeneration expressed a desire to see Bangor's nighttime economy improve but stated that budget constraints for the current financial year limited expansion of the nighttime economy study to Bangor. Plans to explore both urban and rural areas were expected in 2026/27.

The Director of Place & Prosperity remarked that Bangor was approaching a pivotal moment, likely in mid-2026 when the Queen's Parade works were likely to conclude for phase 1 of the development. He thanked the Council for its foresight in allocating budget for development work even in the absence of capital delivery, noting that a list of projects was ready once funding became available.

Councillor McCollum concluded by crediting all involved for ensuring support was distributed across both urban and rural areas. She emphasised that every resident deserved support and expressed hope that extending the nighttime economy study to Bangor would be a valuable next step.

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

8. THE CREATIVE CABINET CANVAS PROJECT (NOM 650)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED – Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that Members may have recalled, Notice of Motion 650 submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor McCollum tasked officers with returning a report on a proposed 'Utility Canvas' project which:

- Identifies suitable utility cabinets 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
- Identifying any external sources of funding.

The Creative Cabinet Canvas

It is proposed to deliver a pilot 'Creative Cabinet Canvas' Project throughout the city and town centres which will transform utility cabinets into creative and vibrant expressions that reflect local history and heritage.

The project seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Enhance the environment / streetscape of our towns and city
- Engage and upskill local artists
- Celebrate local history and heritage
- Assist to reduce graffiti turning utility cabinets into vibrant and visually appealing artwork
- Community engagement

Members would have been aware that funding of £10,045 had been secured from the Department for Communities (DfC) under the Urban Regeneration Programme for the delivery of this project.

Officers had conducted a review to identify the quantity and locations of utility cabinets within each town and city. As expected, there was a high quantity of utility cabinets in each location, both Council owned, and utility company owned.

It was proposed the project would initially be delivered as a pilot programme focused on Council owned utility cabinets in urban centres, utilising the DfC funding stream to demonstrate the concept and impact as outlined in Appendix 1.

Following the successful implementation, it was proposed the Council apply to the Openreach Cabinet Art Scheme when it reopens for applications, aiming to expand the initiative throughout both urban and rural areas, incorporating a broader range of utility cabinets.

The Belfast Canvas Project

The Belfast Canvas Project delivered by Belfast City Council, in conjunction with the Department for Communities and Virgin Media, demonstrated the successful outcomes in transforming utility cabinets. The initiative was based on a Dublin model, Dublin Canvas, which saw the transformation of utility boxes across Dublin City.

The Belfast Canvas Project commenced in 2019. Belfast City Council partnered with Cathedral Quarter BID and Belfast One BID to commission Seedhead Arts as the leading organisation. Daisy Chain Inc took over the project in 2022. The project recently completed its fifth phase in 2024 with over 100 utility cabinets completed to date. The project provided an opportunity for established artists along with less experienced artists to showcase their talents. Street art workshops were held to upskill less experienced artists. The initiative had brought vibrancy and animation to the city and is supported by an interactive map for visitors.

Project Delivery

Officers proposed implementing the Belfast City Council model by inviting interested art organisations to submit a proposal to deliver the Creative Cabinet Canvas Project.

The selected organisation would be responsible for overseeing the project implementation and delivery, utilising both established and less experienced local artists, and ensuring alignment with the initiative's objectives. This approach aimed to harness and upskill local talent whilst ensuring creative quality.

The selected organisation would be required to:

1. Artist Call Out (prioritisation of artists within the Borough)
2. Artist Design and Selection (include panel assessment of submitted designs)
3. Delivery (to include all preparation works)

In addition to the above, the selected organisation would be required to –

- Demonstrate community engagement
- Engage in any organised publicity coverage

It was suggested that the project included a variety of styles such as abstract, graffiti inspired, monochrome, minimalistic, and contemporary with the aim to create curiosity and stimulate public engagement with thought-provoking pieces. This would create a dynamic visual landscape that encourages the public to explore.

The project would be overseen by the Regeneration Service with representation from Arts and Tourism on the assessment panel.

It was proposed to open for expressions of interest from Monday 6th October 2025, closing for responses on Friday 17th October 2025, with assessment and appointment week beginning 20th October 2025.

The completion date would be no later than 1st March 2026 (in line with the funding requirements).

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the proposed 'Creative Cabinet Canvas' Project.

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

Councillor McCollum expressed her enthusiasm for the item appearing on the agenda and commended the work already undertaken. She endorsed the proposal to apply the same to the Openreach Cabinet Art Scheme once it became available and supported inviting local art organisations to submit proposals. She hoped participation would be limited to artists from within the Borough, if possible. However, she raised concerns about whether the proposed two-week application window would be sufficient to generate adequate interest. The Head of Regeneration, who had been working with colleagues in the Arts Section, believed the timeframe would be adequate but confirmed that the deadline could be extended if necessary.

Councillor Gilmour noted the diversity of artistic talent within the Borough and emphasised the importance of treating artworks sensitively in historically significant areas, such as near war memorials and asked whether planning permission would be required in such instances. The Head of Regeneration responded that, if the item was approved, his Section would engage with planning to address such considerations. He explained the preference for working with established artists or art groups and confirmed that the Queen's Parade box was included at the time of writing, though he would investigate how long it would remain in place.

Councillor Smart described the initiative as a real opportunity and echoed concerns about certain cabinet locations, such as one near Newtownards Town Hall, which was not visually prominent. He suggested that in such cases, alternative display locations might be more effective. He also asked whether the consultation would be brought to Town Steering Groups for feedback. The Head of Regeneration confirmed that it would be presented to Town Advisory Groups, even if only as a single-item agenda.

Councillor McCollum concluded by thanking officers and colleagues for their contributions and supported the idea of engaging with local action groups to further the initiative.

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

9. **BANGOR ART SCULPTURES UPDATE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which outlined how Members would have been aware that renowned local artist Colin Davidson was in the process of completing three major art sculptures for the Bangor waterfront area. These bespoke pieces of artwork would be a significant art regeneration project but moreover, these would be a fitting complement to the wider Queens Parade and Bangor Waterfront redevelopment projects.

Each of the three bronze hand sculptures would have standalone lighting columns nearby to produce directional lighting towards the sculpture, therefore creating different shadow shapes on to an adjacent wall or on the ground. The type of lighting, and their directional positioning, would maximise the amount of light cast on to the ground or adjacent wall, and additionally avoid interference with biodiversity (i.e. bats).

A brief summary of each art piece is as follows:

1. The Dove - hands positioned to produce a dove shaped shadow onto the ground creating a focal point of the Marine Gardens.
2. The Swan – to the west of the existing Queens Parade car park. This hands sculpture will be positioned to produce a swan shaped shadow on to an adjacent wall.
3. The Crab – on the Eisenhower Pier. This sculpture of hands will produce a crab shaped shadow onto an adjacent wall.

The preferred locations of The Dove and The Swan sculptures had been confirmed. Council officers and external stakeholders were working collaboratively with the Council's Disability Forum on the location of The Crab sculpture on Eisenhower Pier.

The proposed and approximate locations of each Art Sculpture, subject to Planning approval, were illustrated in Appendix 1.

In June 2025, three separate Pre Application discussions (PADs) were submitted to the Council's Planning section and colleagues had been assisting with this process. Once the PADs process was complete it was anticipated that three separate planning applications would be submitted.

As this project progresses, a further report would be brought to this Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Blaney advocated for the immediate installation of sculptures upon agreement, rather than delaying the process due to Planning Department requirements which he felt might be an embarrassing situation. The Director of Place

& Prosperity confirmed that the ICT team had taken the lead on the Queen's Parade project and reported that no negative feedback had been received through the PAD process. It was anticipated that the application for the main sculpture would be submitted by the end of October.

Councillor Hollywood raised a query regarding the standalone lighting columns and whether consistent shadow effects could be achieved during cloudy conditions. The Director of Place & Prosperity clarified that the shadows were intended for nighttime viewing and that the artist had collaborated with an electrical engineer to optimise light placement for the best visual impact.

Councillor McCollum noted that concerns had been raised within the Disability Forum. Councillors had received a walkthrough visual demonstration from Hogarth showing how the installation would appear both in situ and at night, and she believed it would be a significant attraction. However, some forum members had expressed concerns about the location of one sculpture on Eisenhower Pier, citing potential health and safety risks. She urged that these concerns be addressed before progressing further. The Head of Regeneration confirmed ongoing engagement with Hogarth and suggested that options and rationales could be presented to the Disability Forum at its next meeting. A site visit was also proposed to provide additional context, with a commitment to exploring all available options. Councillor McCollum emphasised that the sculptures should be accessible and enjoyable for all, regardless of ability.

Alderman Adair reiterated his longstanding opposition to the project and confirmed he would vote against it again. He referenced a different sculpture at Burr's Point that had required £5,000 in repairs due to wear and tear but was not actioned, and expressed concern over this project's £1 million cost, questioning its value for residents. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also stated her intention to vote against the proposal, acknowledging the value of art but objecting to the high price tag.

In response, Councillor Blaney acknowledged the concerns raised but pointed out that a significant portion of the funding—approximately £1,000,000—was external and would be lost to another borough if the project were rejected. He also noted that artworks across the borough had occasionally been subject to graffiti and suggested that placement in less vulnerable locations could help mitigate vandalism.

Despite some Members objecting to the proposal, in a non-recorded vote, there were more in favour than against the proposal.

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

10. UPDATED FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT FOR COMBER ENTERPRISE HUB

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which advised that Members may have recalled that it was agreed at the Place and

Prosperity Committee on 12 June 2025 to seek further details on the report presenting the findings of Feasibility Study for a potential Enterprise Hub located in Comber.

The purpose of the deferment was to enable officers to present the methodology for the Feasibility Study and to re-present the report with the actual study attached (Appendix 1). For additional information, the questionnaire results summary report was attached as Appendix 2, a respondent's personal information had been redacted on page 12.

The Study

The Feasibility Study was part of the Regeneration Working Up Projects for 2024/25. McGarry Consulting was appointed in December 2024 to carry out the Feasibility Study to gather research to determine the following information:

- Market Demand and Community Support
- Existing provision
- Potential suitable locations

Report Methodology

The Committee requested further details of the research methodology carried out by the consultants and in particular to provide further details on the number of respondents received to the consultant's survey which was considered very low (16).

The Feasibility Study was commissioned and managed by Strategic Development Officers. The consultants met with officers on a fortnightly basis or more frequently when required.

The consultants carried out desktop research, in person site analysis, and in person and online stakeholder engagements supported by Comber Chamber of Commerce and Comber Town Advisory Group (TAG).

The consultants met with the Comber Chamber of Commerce, who are also members of the Comber TAG, to discuss a potential Enterprise Hub in February 2025. The consultant also met with representatives of Ards Business Hub and Inspire Business Centre to understand the Enterprise Park model, as well as additional identified businesses in the proximity of Comber that may offer a similar service that an Enterprise Hub may offer. The consultant also met with the Council's Economic Development officers in February 2025 to discuss the 'Mini Digi-hub' project in Comber and any potential impact, benefit, or synergies it would have on an Enterprise Hub.

A questionnaire was drafted by the consultant in collaboration with Regeneration Officers to determine the interest in a potential Enterprise Hub in Comber. The survey was distributed to the Chair of the Comber Chamber of Commerce to distribute among the members of the Comber Chamber of Commerce and reminder emails sent to encourage responses. The survey was also distributed to the Comber Community Association as well as the Comber Community Residents Association.

The final report was distributed to the Comber TAG on 27 May 2025, no queries were received. The report was also included as an agenda item and presented at a meeting of Comber TAG on 18th June 2025, no queries or comments were noted.

Comber Chamber of Commerce members consist of:

Category	Description	Number
Retail	Butchers, pharmacy, bakeries, crafts	35
Taxi Services	Single taxi provider	1
Hospitality	Bars, restaurants, hot food outlets	13
Professional Services	Solicitors, medical services, etc.	12
Art	Galleries, studios, or art-related establishments	7

Comber TAG Profile of Members:

Comber TAG profile of members	
Elected Members	Comber DEA (5)
Chamber rep	1
Comber Regeneration	1
Community rep	1
Faith representative	1
DFI Official	1
DFC Official	1

Summary of Findings (Previously Reported)

Market demand and Community Support

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

The Feasibility Study reported that there were five Hubs within a ten-minute drive from Comber town centre, three of which are in Newtownards. Office and meeting room

spaces ranged from 100 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft. 24-hour access is available at some of the Hubs and all had 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 locations outside the town centre have been identified. Comber Community Centre and Enler Mill. Comber Community Centre, owned by the Council, was due to receive £500,000 in external funding to be transformed into a 'Mini Digi Hub'. Once complete, the facility would offer modern facilities for meetings, hybrid events, mentoring, and co-working. It was close to the town square, had ample parking, and will feature advanced technology.

Enler Mill was a newly constructed commercial site on the periphery of the town. The premises had planning permission limited to Class B1 uses (Call Centre or R&D). It required a full fit-out and offered significantly larger units, which may not suit the scale or purpose of an Enterprise Hub.

Conclusion

The Feasibility Study concluded that there was currently no market demand or identified need for an Enterprise Hub in Comber, with a lack of suitable site locations also noted. Enler Mill remained a potential location, contingent on planning permissions and suitability for SME use. Should future demand arise, Enler Mill could provide a larger Enterprise Hub to be considered by Council, subject to a Business Case. It was hoped that the Council through the 'Mini Digi Hub' located within Comber Community Centre would be able to provide modern facilities, co-working space and space for meetings to support local enterprise activity.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the findings of the study.

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

Councillor Morgan would have liked more detail on the methodology and expressed reluctant acceptance of the study's conclusions.

Alderman McDowell echoed the need for further information, particularly in relation to business hubs whilst emphasising the importance of ensuring Comber received a centre. He noted the challenges in selecting a location and gauging future usage due to numerous variables. While supporting the proposal to note the study, he suggested the report be made available to the local economic partnership, stressing the importance of exploring solutions and increasing employment premises across the borough. He cited the success of developments like Nendrum, Strangford Park units, and the Sketrick office facility through Ards Business Centre over the past 30

years. Waiting for perfect data would have stalled these now fully occupied projects, and sometimes risk was necessary. The Director of Place & Prosperity confirmed willingness to share the report with the LEP group and highlighted the need for a strategy, stating that more information and detail would benefit the group. In closing, Councillor Morgan noted that demand in Comber could be assessed through the digi-hub.

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

11. PARTICIPATION IN DSIT REGULATORS POINEER FUND (RPF4) – NATIONAL MOBILE COVERAGE MAPPING REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that the UK Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) was running Round 4 of its Regulators' Pioneer Fund which aimed to support regulatory innovation.

A collaborative bid had been submitted by Caerphilly County Borough Council (on behalf of all Welsh local authorities) and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (on behalf of all Northern Ireland local authorities) in partnership with StreetWave, a telecoms data innovator.

The project proposal included mobile signal mapping across all 11 council areas in Northern Ireland. The resulting data would provide detailed coverage maps for all roads and railways within the Borough.

Mobile connectivity responsibilities and influence span multiple Council directorates. The deadline for project submission was 31 July 2025. If successful, the project was expected to commence before the end of the calendar year.

Partner

The Council as listed as a supporting partner in the joint Wales-Northern Ireland funding application under the RPF4, led by Caerphilly County Borough Council and coordinated in Northern Ireland by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Project Objectives

The project objectives included:

- Collection of real-world mobile signal data across Northern Ireland council areas through drive and walk studies using mobile coverage sensors
- Supporting regulatory innovation and investment planning with verified, hyperlocal coverage insights
- Informing future digital infrastructure decisions, including emergency services coverage and rural accessibility

Council's Roles and responsibilities

No financial or resource commitment was required from ANDBC. The Council was asked only to support inclusion in the bid as a partner.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes:

1. the inclusion of Council as a supporting partner in the RPF4 bid and
2. that Council officers will liaise with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council on any future steps or outputs and report back to Committee when appropriate.

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

Alderman Adair gave thanks to Antrim and Newtownabbey Council for taking the lead, as well as Caerphilly for their reference, explaining that mobile phone coverage was paramount to many across the borough.

Both Councillors Edmund and Gilmour agreed that receiving a map of mobile phone coverage at zero cost could be nothing but a bonus.

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

12. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME 24/25 EVALUATION RPEORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which advised how the Tourism Events team delivered the following eight Tourism Events between May and November 2024.

Event	Date (2024)	Budget
May Day, Holywood	Monday 6 May	£10,000
UK Pipeband Championships, Ward Park, Bangor	Saturday 18 May	£34,900
Sea Bangor	Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 June	£75,000
Summer Food Festival including Comber Earlies Food Festival (Saturday 22 June)	Saturday 22 – 30 June	£70,000
Autumn Food Festival incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (Saturday 7 September)	Thursday 5 - 13 October	£70,000
Shorelife Celebration	Saturday 5 October	£30,000
Bangor Switch On	Saturday 23 November	£20,000
Newtownards Switch On	Saturday 30 November	£20,000
		£329,900

The programme attracted a total of 80,000 attendees, just below the target of 81,000. Unfortunately, no attendance figures were recorded for the Bangor Switch On event due to being cancelled. This figure also only included events directly delivered by the Tourism Events team, excluding shoulder events and other related events within the Taste Summer and Autumn Food Festivals.

Market research was undertaken at each of the tourism events. Some events had market research undertaken by the in-house team (May Day, Shorelife Celebration and Newtownards Switch On). Sample sizes ranged widely and therefore results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary was included in Appendix one.

Hollywood May Day— Monday 6 May

The Hollywood May Day celebrations were delivered in partnership with Hollywood and District Community Council (HDCC). The event retained its traditional structure and featured; community activities - Bonnie Baby, fancy dress competitions, the ceremonial crowning of the May Queen, two scheduled maypole dancing sessions, c.70 stalls spread across the Hibernia Street car parks with commercial and charitable offerings prioritised for Hollywood and Borough-based enterprises. Art on the Rails included 30 arts and crafts stalls along Church Road supporting local artists and encouraging extended visitor dwell times.

Successes

- Community engagement - two Hollywood Walking Tours were delivered and the fancy dress competition was simplified with one category for judging.
- Event communications were significantly enhanced through the new control room infrastructure. More cohesive coordination of event plans between Council Tourism Events team and HDCC will assist.
- The introduction of professional Event Security contributed positively to overall operations.
- No cross-contamination was reported in the waste recycling, attributed to comprehensive waste station management and effective signage.

Challenges and observations

- High reliance on gazebos presented operational vulnerabilities.
- Several town centre shops remained closed, limiting additional attendee spend.
- Programmed entertainment was curtailed due to budget and no formal entertainment programming was included; resources were allocated to essential services including traffic management, first aid, stewarding, and cleansing.

UK Pipe Band Championships, Ward Park, Bangor — Saturday 18 May

This event was hosted at Ward Park on Saturday 18 May 2024, following an approach to the Council from the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA). It was delivered in collaboration with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI). The championship brought together pipe bands and spectators from across the UK and the weather on the day was very favourable.

Successes

- The Ward Park venue received strong endorsements from RSPBANI and participating bands, with positive remarks on layout, trade offerings, and convenient on-site parking.
- Partnership between RSPBA, RSPBANI and Council.
- Delivery of the hospitality provided to the RSPBA by SERC.
- PSNI, Eventsec, and Bronze Command reported smooth operations and no incidents.

Challenges and observations

- Breaks that bus drivers required needed to be built into the programme so that these did not slow down operations or increase wait times.
- Rotation of the event returning to Newtownards in 2025 – new site identification.

Sea Bangor – Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 June

A well supported event with excellent weather entertaining c. 30,000 over the weekend. The festival marked the 80th anniversary of D-Day and included a 1940s themed programme to commemorate the occasion with an urban beach, funfair rides, 1940's music programme and dancing, festival bar, food trucks, food demonstrations, children's entertainment and 'have a go' on water activities as well as the return of the rowing competition.

The D-Day 80 Commemorative Service was held at the McKee Clock Arena on 2 June including a Drumhead Service and Beating Retreat by the Royal Irish Regiment accompanied by a military village. Both were well attended.

Successes

- The passport trail, which spanned the City Centre on Saturday and the Military Village on Sunday had 1000 passports completed.
- The urban beach was busy with families throughout the day and the rowing competition drew significant interest, with positive feedback from participants encouraging consideration of a two-day format going forward.
- A pre-event disability audit was carried by North Down Disability Forum prior to opening the Sea Bangor site. The audit confirmed the site was well laid out, with only minor adjustments suggested for further improvements.
- Waste and cleansing operations were notably effective, achieving zero contamination across all four recycling stations. Elevated signage and pagoda placement proved successful in guiding waste disposal.

Challenges and observations

- Some limitations arose around maritime content: the absence of a ship and fewer sea-themed crafts were noted in market research.
- Budget constraints restricted options for further programming elements.
- The Old Market House was open on Saturday to house local traders, although only four in attendance they reported a positive day.

Taste Ards and North Down Summer Food Festival incorporating

Comber Earlies Food Festival – 22 June

The Comber Earlies Food Festival is the headline event in the Taste Summer in Ards and North Down programme which showcases the Borough's food and drink offering. Programming at the event included artisan stalls featuring local producers, a demo kitchen featuring celebrity chef Rachel Allen, producer stage, cookery school, music stage and bar along with family themed arts, crafts and activities.

Successes

- Celebrity chef Rachel Allen was a major attraction. Culinary demos by SERC were professionally executed and well received by audiences.
- A closure of Bridge Street Link was implemented due to observations from the previous year.
- Directional signage and additional car parks were implemented to support the set up and event day.
- Implementation of previous disabled access audit recommendations such as location of toilets and an accessible viewing area improved inclusivity across the site.
- The passport trail encouraged attendees to visit shops in the town with 800 passports distributed. Positive feedback from businesses indicated increased footfall in previously unfamiliar shops to those attending.

Challenges and observations

- Pinch points for attendee flow were experienced during peak times. Site layout and timing of opening hours require reassessment.
- Cars were double parking along Darragh Road which caused access problems for the petrol station.
- The leisure centre site works well for this event, however, considerations will be given to managing the site regarding capacity as necessary, along with the external traffic management plans.

Taste Ards and North Down Autumn Food Festival incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie – Saturday 6 September

The Tide and Turf Festival welcomed an estimated 11,000 attendees over its five-hour duration, offering a mix of music, local food and drink, culinary demonstrations, and sea/harbour themed activities. Artisan and food vendors were distributed across three themed zones: food demo area, stage/bar, and children's area. 20 chalets hosted local traders, complemented by eight truck-based vendors and two mobile dessert/coffee stalls. Stargazing and Demo at Dock formed shoulder events at the event in the preceding day.

Successes

- The jet lev display was received well by good audience attendance. This extended the footprint of the site allowing people to view it from the harbour wall, an area which had not been used before.
- The trial routes from Millisle helped alleviate local parking pressure. 551 tickets were booked across Ards, Bangor, and Portaferry for transport services.
- Positive feedback from PSNI regarding staffing, traffic management, and communication.

Challenges and observations

- Disabled parking arrangements were ineffective; future plans may involve relocating accessible bays to the next quay adjacent to the harbour office.
- Issues within the working harbour during build/takedown to be reviewed for planning.
- Traffic enforcement measures and resident-focused signage are to be reviewed for Harbour Road in 2025.
- Parking pressures, particularly along Harbour Road, despite park and ride support.
- Community Safety reported 22 youth engagements and handled one minor disruption involving alcohol.
- The Food and Drink Officer and Events Team have been trying to source local suppliers to sell wet fish/seafood at the festival for a number of years without success. Negative feedback around the lack of wet fish/seafood for sale at a seafood festival is a common theme from the market research. Officers with the local event working group will continue to try to source producers or providers of wet fish/seafood to sell at the festival.
- The distance to travel for site visits and set up, deliveries to the site etc are higher in cost due to location from depot/office.
- This format will be planned for 2025 with a focus placed on improving the traffic management.

Shorelife Celebration – Saturday 5 October

The Shorelife Celebration ran as a pilot event in 2024. It was held across Castle Espie and Mount Stewart House and Gardens and was a collaboration between the Council and the two venues. The agreed partner ethos behind the event was a celebration of nature, heritage and community and the event attracted a first time attendance of c. 4,000 visitors with average dwell times exceeding 3 hours. The event showcased the best of both sites, bringing families, nature enthusiasts, and culture seekers together.

Successes

- Strong partnerships and collaboration between Mount Stewart House and Gardens and Castle Espie contributed significantly to the event's delivery.
- Both venues reported successful secondary spend; Mount Stewart's food court and Castle Espie's retail areas performed strongly.
- Both venues offered free entry on the day which proved effective in securing attendees for this pilot event.

Challenges and observations

- Planning and marketing were constrained by a tight schedule in the first year of delivery.
- The talks programme was affected by the short lead time and as a result experienced low attendance.
- There was a delay in the homeward bound service due to traffic outside each site leaving lengthy wait times for those wishing to depart
- Resources stretched due to the dual-site format.

Both venues had confirmed their participation for a second event in 2025. Shorelife Celebration had the potential to grow into a key shoulder season event and it was therefore programmed for a second year. Proposals included more planning time, audience development to include stalls and exhibitions aligned to each venue and improved traffic management.

Bangor Switch On, Saturday 23 November

Working in partnership with Bangor Chamber of Commerce, the Bangor Switch On event was planned to include a light show which was to be projected onto the Castle. Unfortunately, due to a storm over the weekend the light show was unable to take place. Other elements of the event happened on the day, including a Christmas Market within the vacant TK Maxx building, a school choir programme at Translink and the Christmas passport trail, run in partnership with local businesses to encourage movement through the city centre. Market Fresh ran an additional craft market in City Church on Main Street and the Old Market House was open with free family activities.

A second attempt to run the light show was planned for Wednesday 4 December but again the weather conditions made this impossible.

It should be noted that no market research was undertaken at this event as this was planned for the finale element which included the light show.

Successes

- The passport trail with over 1,000 passports being used.
- Collaborative working with Bangor Chamber, Market Fresh and the Old Market House
- Planned indoor events were able to happen despite the poor weather.

Challenges and observations

- Weather mitigations are a requirement at this time of year.
- Budget limitations.
- Planning conversations are required with Bangor Chamber regarding programming.

Newtownards Switch On – 30 November

Working in partnership with Newtownards Chamber of Trade, the Newtownards Christmas Switch On event was delivered, attracting 5,000 visitors despite the adverse weather. A festive programme included a Christmas Market, a community programme in Conway Square, a switch on finale with snow effects, cold spark displays, choirs and festive characters/ walkabout performers. The passport trail was also delivered with 1000 passports printed and all distributed. The feedback from retailers was positive ensuring footfall moved around the town and into the shops.

The traditional Ards Saturday Market was moved to the car park at Kennel Lane.

To facilitate this event, a road closure was implemented on Friday night to allow for the four hour build time for the chalets, reopening at midnight on Saturday night.

Successes

- The Newtownards Switch On event continued to be successfully 'weather proofed' with the chalet set up for the market and has less reliance on a switch on finale programme
- Collaborative working with Newtownards Chamber of Trade.

Challenges and observations

- Delivery costs are high for infrastructure and traffic management to facilitate the road closure. Considerations should be given to how cost efficiencies may be maximised across these two areas.
- The weather continues to be a challenge at this time of year.

Event Service Developments 24/25

The 2024 events programme met attendance targets and maintained high levels of attendee satisfaction. Strong recycling performance was recorded across all events and effective partnership working and operational improvements e.g. control rooms and bus shuttle services were implemented across the season.

Infrastructure improvements (toilets, parking, shelter) remain a priority and are to be managed within budget. For Council to grow on the success of sustainability initiatives at events, and at more events, further investment and attendee education is required.

The Borough Events Strategic Direction 2021-26 (BESD) set out the key areas for event development over a five year plan. Due to the pandemic, the planning and programming of events across Tourism and Arts were not fully delivered in the first two years. A desk top review of the BESD has taken place across event delivery, grant schemes, capacity development and bid for opportunities. There had been progress across all strands and a further two years to address the 'missing' events years, implemented as a Strategy extension (until 2028), should place the Council in a good position regarding intended outcomes.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the evaluation report and the Borough Events Strategic Direction extension to 2028/29.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Adair commended and welcomed the success of the Tide and Turf event, which had attracted 11,000 visitors the previous year. He noted the good mix of events that contributed to its popularity.

Councillor Smart spoke positively about the events that had been organised and the impressive number of attendees they drew. As a representative for Newtownards, he expressed disappointment that the area did not yet have its own signature event, although he was grateful for the recent pipe band championships. He also praised the Christmas switch-ons from last year, describing them as fantastic. However, he raised concerns shared by the Chambers of Commerce regarding the financial

pressure caused by road closure costs and questioned the viability of continuing such arrangements this year and in the future.

The Head of Tourism responded that an addition to the budget had been granted for the switch-ons and confirmed that they were working closely again with the Chambers. While the outlook was positive, she acknowledged that event costs continued to escalate and emphasised the ongoing effort to operate more efficiently.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, speaking on behalf of Newtownards as a premium town, expressed a desire to claim a major event as their own. She showed interest in the footfall figures from the Council event craft fair held at Conway Square. The Head of Tourism acknowledged the importance of engaging a younger demographic as part of audience development. She noted that TikTok was a key platform for reaching younger audiences and highlighted the partnership with Visit Belfast, which had provided resources and examples for TikTok engagement. However, she explained that social media was resource-intensive, and any decision to expand into another channel would fall outside the Event Team's remit. She suggested that Visit Belfast might be a suitable avenue for further development in that area.

Councillor McCollum, in her role as Mayor, shared appreciation for the opportunity to explore the entire Borough. She believed that the more people who visited, the better the experience for all. Although she was unable to attend the upcoming Tide and Turf event, there had been a meeting with SERC earlier that day, students of which expressed their excitement of the upcoming event. Councillor McCollum reiterated the gap in Newtownards, which still lacked a dedicated festival or focus event. Using Hollywood's May Day celebration as an example, Councillor McCollum advised how it had been spearheaded by Marilyn Toogood for many years who had ensured a new team was in place before her departure from the Hollywood Community Association. There had been recurring anxiety around securing funding each year and, in 2025, a simple change in layout had made a difference. Overall, it had been a positive day for traders, although much of the budget had been consumed by traffic management and security, leaving little for enhancements that could elevate the event further.

Councillor Gilmour remarked that many people did not fully appreciate the time and effort officers invested in the intricate details of each event. She praised the small tourism team for their remarkable achievements and recalled during her Mayoral year that Sea Bangor had successfully adapted to include D-Day 80 commemorations, which complemented the weekend festivities. In terms of cost and attendance, she felt the events delivered a good return on investment. It had been unfortunate that Bangor's Christmas 2024 event had been impacted by poor weather and mentioned that the tree lighting had been moved that year. For the next one to two years, the alternative venue for the Christmas tree would be used given works that were taking place in the city centre. She asked whether there were any plans to make the event more weatherproof.

The Head of Tourism confirmed that conversations with the Chamber of Commerce were ongoing, with a focus on improving weatherproofing measures. Councillor Gilmour also praised the passport trails, which she felt were effective in encouraging people to move around the town beyond the main event areas.

Councillor Edmund extended his thanks to the team and congratulated them on the success of the events.

In conclusion, Alderman Adair added that Paddington had been a great addition to the Ards events.

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

13. TOUR OPERATOR/ TRADE SHOW ENGAGEMENT 24/25 UPDATE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that, throughout 2024/25, the Tourism Development Team (Tourism Manager and a Tourism Development Officer) promoted the Borough at a series of Tour Operator Trade Shows and by hosting familiarisation trips. The budget allocated within existing tourism budgets was c. £8,500 per annum.

One-to-one Appointments at Trade Shows

During 24/25, a total of 112 face to face appointments took place at trade shows with 220 follow up emails. Tour operators are given a 10-15 minute 'pitch' of the destination and later are sent links to the bespoke 'Tour Operator' web pages on [Visit Ards and North Down Tour Operators](#). This included a photo library, itineraries, interactive map and details of local tourism businesses within the area. New contacts were established, and existing relationships were strengthened with the aim of securing tour operators to attend familiarisation trips to the borough. See below for those attended in 2024/25 season and see the Appendix 1 for more details.

Event	Location	Appointments	Follow Up Emails
<i>Meet the Industry Evening</i>	<i>Dublin</i>	4	4
<i>Meet the Buyer (MTB)</i>	<i>Belfast</i>	33	36
<i>Global European Marketplace (GEM)</i>	<i>London</i>	22	22
<i>World Travel Market (WTM)</i>	<i>London</i>	27	132
<i>ITOA (Irish Tour Operator Association)</i>	<i>Derry/Londonderry</i>	10	10
<i>Britain and Ireland Marketplace (BIM)</i>	<i>London</i>	16	16
		112	220

Familiarisation Trips (fam trips)

The aim of securing fam trips was key to educating and showcasing the destination to tour operators. However, these trips could take several years of face-to-face meetings, regular communication and relationship building for them to consider a destination worthy of inclusion in tours. Practically, attending fam trips was also a significant time away from their base, so they must have a high level of assurance that the area would work for their customer base or clients. It was a valuable opportunity to showcase

AND and engage with local providers who would negotiate the rates directly with the operators. The fam trips were created on a bespoke basis, based on the operators' desired product/area. All associated costs were covered within existing tourism development budgets, with local trade e.g. hotels supporting by offering complimentary or reduced rates. The Tourism Development service secured seven 'out of market' fam trips and two NI industry fam trips in 2024/25. Word of mouth referral was still a trusted source for visitors making choices for their trips and itineraries. The following trips had taken place during summer 2025.

Tour Operator/other	Fam trip detail/note
Claudia Anton, 360 Travel Design	One day fam trip including visits to Strangford Lough Activity Centre, Walled Garden Helen's Bay, Castle Espie, Echlinville Distillery, North Down Museum and Bangor Castle Walled Garden. This followed initial contact at Meet the Buyer (2024) and follow up at BIM (2025).
AC Group	A one hour online/virtual fam hosted by Tourism Development for approximately 80 of the AC Group team across their various national/international offices. This showcased the destination to a large group with the aim to secure and host in person visits at a later stage.
Meet the Buyer (range)	Meet the Buyer is the largest trade engagement opportunity in Northern Ireland, hosting over one hundred international operators (normally held in ICC Belfast) in the Eikon Centre, Lisburn. In addition to the Business to Business (B2B) meetings, buyers undertook fam trips of different areas of Northern Ireland. This year the Ulster Folk Museum was included as a fam destination with Tourism Officers attending on the day to support the museum with animation and present destination pitches to the operators. Copeland Distillery and Echlinville Distillery were also at the show to promote their offerings.
Ireland US Experience	Beginning in early 2024 the relationship developed over the next 12 months and a subsequent two-day fam trip hosted the two owners of Ireland US Experience in spring 2025. Visits included: Walled Garden Helen's Bay, Bangor Abbey, Bangor Castle Walled Garden, North Down Museum, Copeland Distillery, Echlinville Distillery, The Old Inn, Mount Stewart House and Gardens, Grace Neill's, Ulster Folk Museum and Ulster Transport Museum. Both owners were first time visitors to the area and now plan to include AND in place of 'more traditional' NI locations within their bespoke travel itineraries, when possible, for their US market.
Alainn Tours	This French Tour Operator, based in Sligo, was scheduled to visit in early 2025 but due to a change of plan now aims to schedule a visit at a future date.
Tim Burford (travel writer)	Writing a travel guide to Northern Ireland for 'Bradt Guides', the world's largest independently owned guidebook publisher, and following a meeting in 2024, Tim spent two days of his nine-day visit to NI within AND. His itinerary included, Nendrum Monastery Castle Espie, Greyabbey, Echlinville Distillery, Bangor Castle

	Walled Garden, North Down Museum and Ulster Folk and Transport Museums. This publication due to be published in 2026.
Italian Bloggers	A group of three Bloggers who the team initially met in 2023 visited AND in summer 2024 as part of a week-long tour of NI. Visits included Mount Stewart Gardens, the Ulster Folk Museum and staying overnight in Pier 36, Donaghadee. They indicated that the visit highlighted their lack of knowledge of the area and they have committed to return to AND in autumn 2025. Sites they wish to visit include the Walled Garden Helen's Bay, Bangor Abbey, Bangor Castle Walled Garden, North Down Museum, Copeland Distillery, Echlinville Distillery, Mount Stewart House, Grace Neill's, and Ulster Transport Museum. Following their visit, they have posted 11 Blogs on the area reaching over 44K followers.
Hastings Hotel Group	This fam trip included 15 members of staff from different departments within the Culloden Hotel and Spa visiting Redsmith's Forge, Eden Pottery, Copeland Distillery, Harbour & Co., Walled Garden Helen's Bay and Strangford Lough Activity Centre.
Tourism Northern Ireland Staff Fam	In June 2025, members of the Grants Team visited previously TNI funded sites including Tracey's Farmhouse Kitchen, Strangford Lough Activity Centre, Exploris and finishing with lunch in the Portaferry Hotel.

Tour Operator business

Lead time on 'direct return on activity' for all aforementioned activity was lengthy, in most instances, and most contacts did not provide updates until 'deals' were already well progressed/committed. However, it was known that the following schedules/tours were direct results of officer trade engagement activity over the last period.

Rabbie's Tours

[Discover Northern Ireland - 3-day tour | Rabbie's Tours](#). Includes Mount Stewart House and Gardens.

Middleton's Tours

[Antrim Coast & Mount Stewart](#). Includes Donaghadee, Ballywalter and Mount Stewart House and Gardens.

Nordic Visitor Ireland

[Ulster Folk and Transport Museum : Travel Guide & Map : Nordic Visitor](#)

And

[Mount Stewart House : Travel Guide & Map : Nordic Visitor](#)

Included on four of their tours: Complete Ireland, Grand Tour of Ireland, Ultimate Tour of Scotland and Ireland and NI Road Trip

Great Days Tours

[Hidden Gems of Northern Ireland](#). Includes Walled Garden Helen's Bay and Ulster Folk Museum

Tours by Locals

[Tour of Belfast & Ards Peninsula by Lorraine M. The best private tours in Belfast](#)

Includes Greyabbey and Mount Stewart House and Gardens.

Norwegian Cruise Line

[Belfast, Northern Ireland Scenic Ards Peninsula Excursion | Norwegian Cruise Line](#)

Includes: Greyabbey, Millisle and Donaghadee

Kudos Executive Transfer

[Ards Peninsula day tours](#). Includes Newtownards, Scrabo Country Park, Mount Stewart House and Gardens and Echlinville Distillery

2025/26 activity

The upcoming season of trade shows begins in October with spaces confirmed to date at Flavours of Ireland, Meet the Industry, to be followed by World Travel Market, Global European Marketplace, Ireland Inbound Tour Operator Workshop and Britain and Ireland Marketplace. Additional shows may be attended as opportunities arise, and existing budget allows.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Smart thanked officers for their work whilst Councillor McCollum explained the low investment in trade shows for their high return was more than worth the cost.

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

14. HERITAGE CROSS TRAILS PEACEPLUS PROJECT UPDATE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that, in November 2023, the Council was advised that through the East Border Region (EBR) the Tourism Thematic Local Authority Group would be applying under Investment Area 4.2: Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion for a 'Heritage Cross Trails' project. It would deliver inclusive shared space within the local area and would see the enhancement and creation of up to three outdoor trails (heritage and biodiversity) to increase links between existing green infrastructure, community heritage and tourism, build cross-community outdoor access and services, and provide better health outcomes. The identified sites were:

1. Sketrick Island (Whiterock Car Park to serve as trailhead)
2. Island Hill
3. Glastry Clay Pits

The project was submitted in May 2024 to SEUPB with a total budget allocated to the Council projects of €522,528.14 (Euros).

Officers provided numerous clarifications during the period August to November 2024. In April 2025, the Council was advised the project had been unsuccessful. The Project Manager at EBR sought feedback on behalf of the Council partners. This was provided and shared with the tourism service in June 2025.

The Project Manager was advised that the application failed to meet the required eligibility scoring thresholds and SEUPB indicated it was a very competitive call and severely oversubscribed.

Significant preparatory work had been completed for the three trails included in this project. Therefore, officers in Tourism and Parks and Cemeteries services would continue to seek other sources of funding to deliver these projects.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Smart expressed disappointment that the initiative had not borne fruit. Alderman Adair agreed with this sentiment and acknowledged that while other projects were progressing across the Borough, the outcome remained unfortunate. He mentioned his recent appointment to the East Border Region and stated his intention to use the position to contribute positively where possible. He paid tribute to the officers involved and emphasised the need for a more equitable spread of funding.

Councillor McCollum echoed similar disappointment and requested further detail regarding the failure to meet eligibility requirements. She also asked what the next steps would be. In response, the Head of Tourism explained that feedback was limited due to the competitive nature of the fund. She speculated that the thematic focus, particularly the social aspect, may have played a role. She confirmed that the next steps involved Parks taking the lead, with plans currently being developed. She added that the team would continue to explore all available funding opportunities.

Councillor Morgan also expressed frustration, particularly at the lack of detailed feedback on why the application had failed. She pointed out that the submissions had been made in May 2024, but the response had only arrived in April 2025. She noted that had the outcome been known earlier, alternative funding streams could have been pursued and asked whether this could be reported back.

The Head of Tourism acknowledged the lengthy timeframe and confirmed that colleagues in the East Border Region had been actively following up on the application. She agreed to pass on the feedback and noted that Parks had been working on parallel applications at the same time, fully aware that success was not guaranteed.

Alderman McDowell shared in the disappointment but highlighted that £500,000 had been secured for the Comber Digi-hub through the East Border Region, which he considered a reasonable return.

The Director of Place and Prosperity confirmed that while the funding for Comber Digi-hub was indeed a positive outcome, none of the other elements submitted had received support. He explained that applications had been made across various fields, and although the success of one project was welcome, it was unfortunate that the others had not been funded.

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

[The meeting entered recess at 20:59, recommencing at 21:09]

[Items 15-18 were noted together]

15. PLACE DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that the Place Directorate’s Budgetary Control Report covered the 12-month period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £410k (22.3%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate’s budget performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£178k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£255k favourable	3
Report 4	Income	£23k adverse	3

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate’s overall variance can be summarised by the following table (variances over £25k): -

Type	Variance £’000	Comment
Payroll	(178)	• Mainly vacant posts within Regeneration and Strategic Capital Development.
Goods & Services		
Regeneration	(98)	• Project underspends:- i. Rural (£56K) ii. BID (£50k)

PP.04.09.25

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Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Strategic Development	(152)	Underspend in revenue costs for Capital Projects
Income		
Regeneration	(42)	Additional project grant funding – i. Shop Local Campaign (£20k) ii. Rural Devel Grants (£10k)
Strategic Development	65	24/25 Levelling Up grant less than budget.

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 12 - March 2025					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Place					
800 Place HQ	251,614	266,900	(15,287)	266,900	(5.7)
810 Regeneration	865,363	1,113,300	(247,937)	1,113,300	(22.3)
820 Strategic Capital Development	307,160	453,600	(146,440)	453,600	(32.3)
Total	1,424,136	1,833,800	A (409,664)	1,833,800	(22.3)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Place - Payroll					
800 Place HQ	163,924	174,900	(10,976)	174,900	(6.3)
810 Regeneration	545,914	654,200	(108,286)	654,200	(16.6)
820 Strategic Capital Development	314,289	372,900	(58,611)	372,900	(15.7)
Total	1,024,127	1,202,000	(177,873)	1,202,000	(14.8)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Place - Goods & Services					
800 Place HQ	87,689	92,000	(4,311)	92,000	(4.7)
810 Regeneration	361,128	459,100	(97,972)	459,100	(21.3)
820 Strategic Capital Development	52,870	205,200	(152,330)	205,200	(74.2)
Total	501,688	756,300	(254,612)	756,300	(33.7)
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Place - Income					
800 Place HQ	-	-	-	-	-
810 Regeneration	(41,679)	-	(41,679)	-	-
820 Strategic Capital Development	(60,000)	(124,500)	64,500	(124,500)	51.8
Totals	(101,679)	(124,500)	22,821	(124,500)	18.3

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

16. PLACE DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – JULY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained that the Place Directorate’s Budgetary Control Report covered the 4-month period 1 April to 31 July 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £15k (2.8%) – box A on page 2.

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate’s budget performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£28k favourable	2
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£13k adverse	2
Report 4	Income	n/a	2

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate’s overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £10k): -

Type	Variance £’000	Comment
Payroll	(28)	• Regeneration vacancies
Goods & Services		
Regeneration	12	• EI Schemes - £10k

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT						
Period 4 - July 2025						
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance	
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place						
800 Place HQ	134,470	133,400	1,070	266,300	0.8	
810 Regeneration	271,397	276,300	(4,903)	1,717,200	(1.8)	
820 Strategic Capital Development	121,707	133,100	(11,393)	641,100	(8.6)	
Total	527,574	542,800	A (15,226)	2,624,600	(2.8)	
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Payroll						
800 Place HQ	58,065	57,900	165	174,300	0.3	
810 Regeneration	240,736	257,300	(16,564)	771,100	(6.4)	
820 Strategic Capital Development	118,419	129,800	(11,381)	386,900	(8.8)	
Total	417,220	445,000	(27,780)	1,332,300	(6.2)	
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Goods & Services						
800 Place HQ	76,404	75,500	904	92,000	1.2	
810 Regeneration	30,661	19,000	11,661	946,100	61.4	
820 Strategic Capital Development	3,288	3,300	(12)	254,200	(0.4)	
Total	110,354	97,800	12,554	1,292,300	12.8	
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Income						
800 Place HQ	-	-	-	-	-	
810 Regeneration	-	-	-	-	-	
820 Strategic Capital Development	-	-	-	-	-	
Totals	-	-	-	-	-	

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

17. PROSPERITY DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – MARCH 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity which explained how the Prosperity Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 12-month period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £480k (14.5%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's budgetary performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£75k favourable	3

Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£142k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£548k favourable	3

Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £50k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(75)	- Economic Development – (£83k) – vacant post during the year. - Tourism – £13k. mainly due to extra staff costs for Tourism Events.
Goods & Services		
Economic Development	260	- Go Succeed Programme grants - £303k. Offset by additional grant income. - Development Projects (£42k) – £33k re Seal Sanctuary claim which offsets the adverse income variance below. (£55k) for Innovation Hub
Tourism	(119)	- Ards TT 100th Anniversary (£60k) – Council transfers £60k per year to its EarMarked Funds for this event but the transfer is processed at a Corporate level and not charged to Tourism so it shows as an underspend in Tourism. - Growth Event fund (£33k)
Income		
Economic Development	(495)	- Additional grant income for the Go Succeed Programme (£303k). - Bangor Harbour contract income higher than budget (£139k).
Tourism	(53)	- Tourism - (£17k) - Tourism Events – (£35k).

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REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 12 - March 2025					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	151,175	153,500	(2,325)	153,500	(1.5)
720 Economic Development	960,529	1,278,600	(318,071)	1,278,600	(24.9)
740 Tourism	1,723,741	1,883,700	(159,959)	1,883,700	(8.5)
Total	2,835,445	3,315,800	A (480,356)	3,315,800	(14.5)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Payroll					
700 Prosperity HQ	141,443	145,100	(3,657)	145,100	(2.5)
720 Economic Development	834,229	917,200	(82,971)	917,200	(9.0)
740 Tourism	1,016,554	1,004,500	12,054	1,004,500	1.2
Total	1,992,226	2,066,800	B (74,574)	2,066,800	(3.6)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Goods & Services					
700 Prosperity HQ	9,732	8,400	1,332	8,400	15.9
720 Economic Development	1,462,642	1,202,400	260,242	1,202,400	21.6
740 Tourism	795,395	914,700	(119,305)	914,700	(13.0)
Total	2,267,769	2,125,500	C 142,269	2,125,500	6.7
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Income					
700 Prosperity HQ	-	-	-	-	-
720 Economic Development	(1,336,342)	(841,000)	(495,342)	(841,000)	(58.9)
740 Tourism	(88,208)	(35,500)	(52,708)	(35,500)	(148.5)
Totals	(1,424,550)	(876,500)	D (548,050)	(876,500)	(62.5)

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

18. PROSPERITY DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – JULY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity, advising that the Prosperity Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 4-month period 1 April to 31 July 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £38k (3.1%) – box A on page 2.

PP.04.09.25

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Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's budgetary performance had been further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£6k favourable	2
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£37k favourable	2
Report 4	Income	£4k adverse	2

Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances of more than £10k explained below): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Goods & Services		
Tourism	(44)	Spring Food Festival (£21k), Armed Forces Day (£10k) and Festival of Seas (£8k) and small underspends across others

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 4 - July 2025					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	52,207	52,800	(593)	158,500	(1.1)
720 Economic Development	338,640	372,700	(34,060)	1,299,200	(9.1)
740 Tourism	789,191	792,900	(3,709)	2,169,600	(0.5)
Total	1,180,038	1,218,400	A (38,362)	3,627,300	(3.1)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Payroll					
700 Prosperity HQ	49,838	50,000	(162)	150,100	(0.3)
720 Economic Development	275,800	314,300	(38,500)	947,600	(12.2)
740 Tourism	386,063	353,300	32,763	1,029,800	9.3
Total	711,702	717,600	B (5,898)	2,127,500	(0.8)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Goods & Services					
700 Prosperity HQ	2,368	2,800	(432)	8,400	(15.4)
720 Economic Development	196,880	189,200	7,680	859,100	4.1
740 Tourism	434,361	478,400	(44,039)	1,199,800	(9.2)
Total	633,609	670,400	C (36,791)	2,067,300	(5.5)
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Income					
700 Prosperity HQ	-	-	-	-	-
720 Economic Development	(134,040)	(130,800)	(3,240)	(507,500)	(2.5)
740 Tourism	(31,233)	(38,800)	7,567	(60,000)	19.5
Totals	(165,273)	(169,600)	D 4,327	(567,500)	2.6

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report

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

19. ECONOMIC SCOPING STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SECTORS IN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN (2025)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity which explained that Jettora Consulting was commissioned by the Economic Development Section to produce an Economic Scoping Study on the future economic development sectors within Ards and North Down area.

The aim of the scoping study was to assess the current economic landscape of the Borough, explore its future potential and forecast how the local economy might evolve.

The report was structured around two main elements:

Setting the Baseline

This involved assessing the Council's progress towards achieving its job creation, productivity and visitor targets over the last six years (2018-2024). The research was primarily desk-based research, drawing on relevant quantitative data to inform conclusions.

Scoping Study

The study addressed the following areas:

- What will the economy look like in Ards and North Down by 2030?
- Which sectors are expected to be most prominent and high performing and where should the Council focus its efforts to create more and better jobs, boost productivity and build on existing strengths?
- Considering the current sectoral and human capital profile of the Borough, which jobs are likely to be in demand and which may decline?
- Will ongoing and future market disruptions impact certain jobs and how can the Council and its partners manage the transition to minimise hardship?
- Are traditional and current working models likely to be replaced by more flexible approaches and what would be the implications for the Borough's economy, infrastructure and society?
- How can the Council prepare for and respond to these shifts to in the local economy to support businesses, promote job creation, increase productivity, and GVA, grow the non-domestic business rates base and meet its environmental commitments?
- What interventions could the Council consider in reaching these goals?
- Which stakeholders or partners should the Council engage to deliver the proposed interventions?

The attached Economic Scoping Study (Appendix 1) outlined the key findings and recommendations for the Council to consider as part of its strategic efforts to drive economic growth in the Borough.

It was recommended that Council approved the conclusions and recommendations detailed in this Economic Scoping Study. This would support continued progress on the current Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Development Strategy (ITRDS) 2018-2030 and inform the development of any future strategies aligned with the report's key findings. Members would have been aware that Council had already been progressing a number of the recommendations outlined in the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the conclusions and recommendations detailed in this Economic Scoping Study.

Prior to a proposal being made, the Acting Head of Economic Development provided Members with a summary of key points. The report was divided into two main sections. The first section established a baseline for job creation, productivity, and visitor targets. The second section presented the findings of a scoping study, with further details outlined on page 2 of the covering report. This study explored the projected state of the Borough's economy by the year 2030, identifying which sectors were likely to become more prominent, assessing the impact of future market disruptions on employment, and considering how the Council and its partners could respond to minimise hardship.

The scoping study was commissioned by Jatora Consulting and involved a four-part methodology. It began with desk-based research using data from NISRA, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and internal Council sources. This was followed by a stakeholder consultation exercise, which involved a tailored questionnaire distributed to key groups including public sector bodies (such as the Council itself), skills providers, business development organisations, and innovative businesses.

The third component of the study involved a review of existing Council interventions. These included initiatives such as the Go Succeed Labour Market Partnership, as well as capital projects led by East Region, including the Bangor Waterfront and the Hollywood Innovation Hub. The final element was a market analysis conducted by Cushman Wakefield, which provided insights into future demand for flexible office accommodation and identified key growth sectors.

Six priority sectors were highlighted in the scoping study: creative technologies (including screen industries), financial, professional and regulatory services, advanced manufacturing, health and wellbeing, agri-food, and cybersecurity. The report also included a set of recommended interventions to support development across these sectors.

The Acting Head of Economic Development outlined six strategic areas for intervention. These included support for innovation and entrepreneurship, facilitation of commercial space, enhancement of smart infrastructure and digital readiness, improved access to finance, skills development, and the promotion of partnerships and joint ventures.

Following this, the next steps for Council were presented. Five key actions were identified, most of which were already underway to varying degrees. These included the establishment of a local economic partnership, prioritisation of existing interventions such as the Waterfront and Hollywood Innovation Centre, development

of a net-zero strategy, engagement with private developers, and enhancement of event-driven tourism.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that Council approves the conclusions and recommendations detailed in this Economic Scoping Study, and convenes an all member workshop during 2025, focused on the conclusions and recommendations in this report and to provide an update on the council strategy for economic growth, including the necessary increase of the non-domestic rates base.

Speaking on the proposed amendment, Councillor Smart voiced strong confidence in the borough's growth potential and praised the committee's efforts, but acknowledged the scoping study revealed serious challenges—particularly declining Gross Value Added (GVA) and resident concerns. He stressed that while supporting local businesses was important, it was not enough to attract new enterprises, especially given the lack of suitable accommodation for expansion. He called for a coordinated, long-term approach involving financial commitment and broader member engagement, proposing an all-members working group. He also raised concern over the delayed report on non-domestic rates.

Alderman McDowell echoed these concerns, referencing his earlier proposal from June and the inclusion of similar concerns in the Comber report. He emphasized that economic improvement would take 5–10 years and required full Council support. He highlighted business departures in the borough due to inadequate infrastructure and stressed the need for strategic decisions, including setting aside rates to support a clear growth strategy. He advocated for the Local Economic Partnership to use the report as baseline material and suggested inviting its members to future workshops. He concluded by noting that the Director of Corporate Services had begun allocating funds for capital projects, starting with the purchase of land in Newtownards. With more opportunities on the horizon, including potential partnerships, he expressed optimism that the borough could unlock its potential—provided the problems are clearly understood and addressed with practical solutions.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the recommendation be amended and that Council approves the conclusions and recommendations detailed in this Economic Scoping Study, and convenes an all member workshop during 2025, focused on the conclusions and recommendations in this report and to provide an update on the Council strategy for economic growth, including the necessary increase of the non-domestic rates base.

20. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL ON 2025

20.1 NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MCCRACKEN AND COUNCILLOR HARBINSON

[Councillor McCracken stood down as the Chair of the Committee with Vice Chair Alderman Adair taking his place to hear the Notice of Motion]

Councillor McCracken introduced an amended motion that had originally been intended to stimulate progress on the Queen's Parade development.

"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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Amendment Received to Notice of Motion from Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson as follows:

"This Council welcomes the update on Marine Gardens provided by Bangor Marine on 13 August 2025 and agrees that:

- 1. Council officers should work alongside Bangor Marine to support public communication around this project. This includes inviting Bangor Marine to the next meeting of the Bangor CAG to update stakeholders, supporting the proposed public consultation hub led by Bangor Marine, and by holding regular meetings with Bangor Marine to ensure accurate and complementary messaging on respective websites, newsletters and social media.*
- 2. Council should also work with Bangor Marine to support a commercial marketing plan with the aim of attracting investment for the further phases of Queen's Parade along with complementary investment that will support the ambitions of the wider City Deal. An initial outline should be brought to Committee in Q1 2026 with a view to approve draft marketing collateral that can be used at future property investment conferences in the UK and abroad."*

The amended Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor McCracken, seconded by Alderman McDowell.

(Councillor Gilmour left the meeting at 21:25.)

Councillor McCracken, speaking as proposer of the Notice of Motion, welcomed the recent update from Bangor Marine on 13 August, noting it had been positively received. He acknowledged, however, that this marked only the beginning of a longer process and stressed the importance of rebuilding public confidence, which had been undermined by years of delays beyond the Council's control.

The first part of the motion focused on enhancing communication and coordination among stakeholders. Councillor McCracken proposed that groups such as Bangor CAG receive the same briefing as councillors to ensure consistent understanding.

He referenced Bangor Marine's plans for a communications hub and highlighted suggestions made during the presentation, including the use of websites and newsletters to maintain a steady flow of public information. He emphasised the need for alignment between Bangor Marine and the Council's communications efforts.

While Bangor Marine led the project, the Council played a key role in promoting it and had a dedicated communications officer for the Bangor Waterfront. The motion called for regular meetings, shared messaging, and collaborative use of promotional materials to ensure unified and complementary communication. Councillor McCracken also underscored the Council's expertise in community consultation and expressed a desire to support Bangor Marine in delivering an effective Consultation Hub that fostered meaningful two-way engagement with residents.

The second part of the motion addressed Queen's Parade, which he felt had been overshadowed by the focus on Marine Gardens. He noted that the previously cited £50 million investment figure was outdated, originating from 2019, and required revision in light of construction inflation. He clarified that the funding was private capital yet to be raised, and suggested the final investment could exceed £100 million depending on future changes to the plans.

Councillor McCracken stressed the importance of promoting Bangor, the City Deal, and the waterfront investment opportunity to private developers. He expressed confidence in Oakland Holdings' ability to attract investment but emphasised the Council's role as a key partner, especially given its broader strategy to secure complementary funding along the waterfront and toward Ballyholme. He cautioned against the Council and Bangor Marine pursuing separate strategies, advocating instead for a unified marketing approach with consistent messaging. He reminded members of the previous consideration to attend MIPIM, the international property investment conference, which had been postponed due to the scheme's early stage and lack of marketing materials.

To move forward, the motion proposed that draft marketing concepts be brought before the committee and then to full Council, along with any budget requirements. These materials would be used to promote the project at national and international property investment events, including MIPIM. The motion called for collaborative development of this collateral between the Council and Bangor Marine, beginning with committee approval and culminating in a coordinated promotional effort.

Alderman McDowell expressed support for the Queen's Parade and Marine Gardens development, describing it as a major project that would provide Bangor with a renewed heart and centre. He highlighted the potential for job creation and new housing opportunities, and acknowledged public frustration over delays, noting that criticism had extended as far as Newtownards. He affirmed that the Council had done its best to keep progress moving and stressed the importance of keeping the public informed. He urged continued efforts to support the development and ensure its success.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reflected on past challenges but stated that the project had reached a turning point since June. She called for a more professional tone in public discourse, encouraging members to move away from colloquial language and instead focus on supporting a transformative initiative that would benefit the entire borough. She emphasised the need for unity and collaboration across all communities—not just Bangor—and noted that a capable team was already in place to deliver on the project’s ambitions.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the Notice of Motion be agreed.

[At 21:36, Councillor McCracken took his place again as Chair of the Committee.]

21. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

22. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL ANNUAL REPORT

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

Not Applicable – report in confidence due to embargoed status

SUMMARY

Members were asked to approve the BRDC Annual Report 2024/25 - embargoed until the end of September.

23. GO SUCCEED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN BELFAST CITY COUNCIL AND ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL AND ENTERPRISE NORTHERN IRELAND LTD

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

[Councillor Blaney declared an interest, leaving the meeting at 21:38]

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

SUMMARY

This report refers to a consultation exercise with specific stakeholders as part of the study which was commercial in confidence and should not put in the public domain. The study also details a series of recommendations and conclusions that will be used at the Council's discretion to determine its strategic direction. It is not appropriate to share this currently until full consideration is given by the Council and the LEP therefore should be treated in confidence.

[Councillor Blaney returned to the meeting at 21:39]

24. SUPPORTING THRIVING HIGH STREETS PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

SUMMARY

This report details an early and informal consultation with DfC on a potential requirement for additional funding which has been tentatively agreed in principle pending a formal process. Additionally, considerable streamlining of a DfI process is included in the report after lengthy negotiations which should be treated in confidence.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 21:53.

Item 7.4

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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 9 September 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cochrane

Alderman: Brooks (zoom) McIlveen
Graham Smith
McRandal

Councillors: Chambers Kennedy
Gilmour McBurney (zoom)
Irvine, S Moore
Irwin Thompson

Officers in Attendance: 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), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair wished to put on record congratulations to the Director of Corporate Services on the safe arrival of his baby girl and wished the family God's blessings for the future.

Apologies for inability to attend were received from the Director of Corporate Services and Councillor McCracken.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alderman McIlveen declared an interest in Item 3 – Deputation – Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

NOTED.

(Having declared an interest in Item 3 Alderman McIlveen left the meeting at 7.02 pm)

3. DEPUTATION – NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE PRESENTATION – HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN UPDATE (Appendices I – II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Housing Investment Plan 2025 Update and copy presentation.

(Alderman Graham entered the meeting – 7.03 pm)

The Chair welcomed Grainia Long (Chief Executive) and Eileen Thompson (Area Manager).

Ms Long commenced her presentation by thanking the Council for the collaboration both in respect of the Community Plan and in Housing delivery.

Tenure Breakdown & Total Homes

There were 70,445 houses across the Council area. 72.3% Owner Occupied, 15.1% Private Rented, 12.6% Social Rented which included NIHE and Housing Association properties. At March 2025, the Housing Executive had a remaining stock level of 6,139 properties.

Housing Executive Spend 2024/25

The past year had delivered significant housing investment for a wide range of services, and the 2024/25 public sector housing investment totaling £63.50m for the area. Ms Long highlighted a number of those areas of spend:-

Housing benefit (£31.76m) – A very importance subsidy for households who needed assistance to cover their housing costs. Housing benefit was also spent in the private rented sector and across housing association properties.

Investment in New Build (£5.14m) – The Housing Executive had commissioned Housing Associations for those builds.

Supporting People Programme (£5.93m) – An important programme that enabled the HE to invest services through the voluntary community sector to provide housing support to households with disabilities, older households, households with mental health issues and also in the area of homelessness.

Affordable Warmth (£0.54m) – It was unfortunate that last year the budget bid for was not received for affordable warmth and effects would have been seen of that for those households living in fuel poverty.

Temporary Accommodation (£1.40m) – Increased costs for temporary accommodation given the level of demand for temporary accommodation and homelessness.

New homes in the site on the last year

In 2024/25:

£5.14m was invested in new social housing stock
38 new social homes completed; and
160 new social homes under construction at end of March 2025.

Waiting list trends 2022-25

At March 2025, there were 3,348 applicants on the waiting list for Ards and North Down Borough Council area with 2,498 in housing stress.

Fifteen Year Housing Market Assessment

That was a projection of the number of homes that were required in the Council area over the next 15 years and had identified the need for 6,020 homes.

Affordable Housing Supply

Social

2025/28 SHDP – 186 (gross) new social housing units programmed

Includes 179 urban units and 7 rural units.

5 Year SHDP Performance

418 starts (371 urban and 47 rural) was the SG target for A&ND during the 5-year period

344 starts (299 urban and 48 rural) were achieved against the target

Resulting in 74 fewer starts (-72 urban and -2 rural) against the SG target.

Intermediate

Co-ownership Housing Association had an active stock of 1,410 dwellings at March 2025, 118 of which were purchased during 2024/25.

One of the major challenges, was the availability of land.

Projected Spend 2025/26

The current projected spend for £31.79m with an increase in the budget for planning maintenance and stock improvements.

Key Housing Challenges

- The shortage of social and affordable housing
- Rising homelessness and continued need for temporary and emergency accommodation
- Shortfall in capital funding impacting directly on new social homes delivery, Housing for All and Affordable Warmth scheme
- Uncertainty regarding the long-term funding stream for the maintenance and modernisation of NIHE stock - rental income did not cover our planned investment last year - linked to historic low levels of NIHE rents (£74.35 per week)
- Wider impact of housing issues on health and wellbeing of households
- Growing number of incidents and displays of race hate in NIHE neighbourhoods.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman Smith noted that the build volumes across Northern Ireland were historically low, yet population and demand had increased. The report detailed that the average rent was £903. He questioned how Ards and North Down could get more housing investment into the area to get its fair share. Ms Long explained that the Housing Executive had an important role in terms of assessing housing need with that 15 year projection, as detailed. That projection split what was needed for new build for sale, new build for intermediate housing and new build for social housing. Ms Long

explained that it was that assessment that formed the bid that was made to the Department for investment in social housing. A bid had been submitted for 2,000 homes the previous year and investment was only received towards the end of last year for 1,500 homes. She emphasised the need to collectively continue to make a case for housing however fundamentally it would come down to the capital being available. The Housing Executive had been making a case to the Department to enable them to make better use of public land. She would like to be in a position where the Housing Executive could receive land from other public bodies for use as housing.

Councillor Gilmour praised the work of the local Housing Executive office. She referred to the estates and noted there were parts which were owned by the Housing Executive and parts owned by DfL. She asked if there could be more of a joined up approach to make it easier to identify what elements were owned by the Housing Executive and what elements were owned by DfL. In terms of general maintenance, she outlined some minor maintenance issues that could be looked at on a more proactive basis to improve the overall look of areas. Ms Long stated that she would continue to make the case to DfL regarding the demarcation of land. In relation to environmental improvements she noted there was an increase in budget for planned maintenance.

Ms Thompson stated that the best mechanism at the moment was the estate walkabouts which included representatives from the Housing Executive, community groups and elected representatives to identify minor improvements that could be undertaken. Work was also occurring with the community network in supporting them to deliver initiatives on the ground and she outlined examples such as providing litter pickers and providing skips to encourage residents to clear out. She welcomed ideas for other approaches.

Councillor Chambers referred to the availability of land and noted the competitiveness of the housing market. He asked if the Housing Executive was able to approach land owners themselves. Ms Long explained that the Housing Executive had a place shaping team which worked closely with the Council and with Housing Associations to identify land. The relationship with landowners was also important. They currently had a programme called the Housing Executive Land Acquisition Programme, that was subject to budgets and work was occurring with the Department of Communities. Ms Long stated that as a housing authority she would like to see additional powers given to the Housing Executive in terms of land assembly to look at sites in a more joined up way.

The Chair thanked the Housing Executive team for the presentation and the representatives withdrew from the meeting.

NOTED.

(Alderman McIlveen returned to the meeting)

Reports for Approval

4. NI CLIMATE ACTION PLAN – CONSULTATION

(Appendices III, IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching consultation document and ANDBC draft Response to NI CAP Consultation. The report sought approval for Ards and North Down Borough Council's draft response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) consultation on the *Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan 2023–2027*. The proposed draft response was attached to the report.

Under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, DAERA must publish five-year Climate Action Plans outlining how Northern Ireland would cut greenhouse gas emissions and progress towards Net Zero by 2050.

The NI Climate Action Plan for 2023–2027 was the first statutory plan under the Act.

In the draft response, the Council welcomed its publication and supported its overall ambition. Council recognised the role in leading climate action locally and were developing its own Climate Action Plan to sit alongside our Climate Adaptation Plan—both part of the holistic *Roadmap to Sustainability*. The response drew on practical experience of delivering local climate projects and highlighted where national policy and local support could be strengthened.

Summary of Response

The Council's draft response affirmed broad agreement with the proposed actions and targets but raised key issues in the following areas:

Summary of Key Points in the Draft Response

1. Quantification and Modelling

- Acknowledge DAERA's work on emissions quantification but highlight concerns that top-down modelling does not reflect local conditions, especially in rural and mixed urban-rural areas.
- Recommend place-based modelling tools, borough-level forecasts and more detailed, granular data.
- Call for greater transparency on modelling assumptions, uncertainties and scope.

2. Just Transition and Local Delivery

- Support just transition principles but stress the need for targeted investment and genuine local engagement.
- Raise concerns about fuel poverty, rural transport, energy access, and local authority resourcing.

3. Sector-Specific Issues and Opportunities

- **Energy:** Support for local renewable generation, grid investment, and large-scale household retrofitting schemes.
- **Transport:** Expansion of EV charging infrastructure and hydrogen fuel depots for all public bodies.

- **Business:** More SME support, green skills training, and retrofit funding.
- **Agriculture:** Strong support for a Just Transition Fund and farmer-led co-design of measures.
- **Nature:** Alignment with Local Development Plans and funding for nature-based solutions.
- **Public Sector:** Funding for retrofits and mandatory Net Zero building standards.

4. Investing in Climate Action

- Highlights gaps in understanding the cost of delivering actions locally.
- Recommends creating a regional Net Zero fund and support for costed project pipelines.
- Supports blended funding models and early investment to secure long-term savings.

RECOMMENDED that Council consider and approve the draft response to the Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan 2023–2027.

Alderman McIlveen thanked the Community Planning Manager for compiling the response however he wished to make an alternative proposal.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Kennedy, that the consultation is noted but not sent and that political parties make their own representations.

Alderman McIlveen felt that what was proposed by Minister Muir lacked clarity and any realism. The estimated costs were over £1b between now and 2027. The Department had claimed that would be cost neutral however there was no evidence of that. There was no evidence of sustainable food production, fair transition or evidence led policy making. He expressed concern regarding the policies within regarding fisheries and agriculture. Overall, financial, economic and social impact assessments had not been carried out. Alderman McIlveen felt it was too contentious an issue for the Council to be agreeing a corporate response and therefore he felt it was the best option for the individual parties to make representations.

Alderman McRandal stated that he would not be supporting the proposal. The consultation affected the work of Council in many ways and he felt it was important that the Council responded.

Alderman Smith felt the context was missing as if Northern Ireland was sitting on its own microclimate. He outlined the need to look at the wider global impact. He was happy for the individual parties to make their own responses.

Councillor Irwin understood the intention of the proposal however agreed with Alderman McRandal. The issues impacted the work of the Council and to simply note a consultation of this importance when climate change was such a big issue. She thanked the Officer for the response and felt that it reflected the magnitude of the issue.

Councillor Kennedy spoke of the reasonings why he felt the response should not be sent from the Council. He noted the importance of climate change as an issue however highlighted the need for a prudent approach to ratepayers money.

The proposal was put to the meeting and was declared CARRIED with 10 voting For and 4 AGAINST.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Kennedy, that the consultation is noted but not sent and that political parties make their own representations.

5. **DRAFT ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25** (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching Draft Annual Self-Assessment Performance Report 2024/25. The report detailed that the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement in the delivery of council services in the context of strategic objectives and issues that were important to those who receive the services.

Section 92 of the Act placed a requirement on councils to assess and report on their performance against the previous financial years; and to compare its performance, so far as was practicable, with the performance of other councils in the exercise of the same or similar functions. The comparison and assessment report covering 2024/25 should be published by 30th September immediately following the financial year to which it related.

The purpose of the report was to review Council's performance in the delivery of the agreed Improvement Objectives for the 2024/25 financial year and to assess performance in discharging our duties under Section 84 of the Act.

The intention of the report was to:

- give an assessment of the effectiveness of our continuous improvement arrangements and reflect on our performance against the 2024/25 Performance Improvement Plan.
- provide an assessment of wider performance aspects including statutory indicators and self-imposed indicators; and
- provide an update on progress against proposals made in the NIAO Audit and Assessment Report 2024/25.

As the Council works towards their vision to be a Sustainable Borough, the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 drove the annual Performance Improvement Plan objectives to ensure the focus remained on achieving the commitments the Council had set for the next four years.

The past few years had seen the Council, and the Borough face unprecedented challenges; however, Council was confident that it was demonstrating good overall

performance and would continue to further develop, monitor and manage its activities to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions.

Progress summary - 2024/25 Performance Improvement Plan objectives

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

Some measures under this objective were slightly below target due to various factors and had either been carried forward to 2025/26 or a change in process had been made.

Development work completed in 2024/25 to progress major capital and strategic projects for Council: Newtownards Citizen Hub, Bangor Waterfront redevelopment and Digital Innovation Hub. Officers would continue to progress these projects, along with other strategic projects in 2025/26.

Significant progress made within the Go Succeed programme with job creation under this scheme increasing from 77 in 2023/24 to 129 in 2024/25. Work would continue in this area in 2025/26.

A key economic focus for Council in 2025/26 would be developing a capital grant scheme for vacant or derelict properties, aimed at transforming vacant properties into vibrant spaces, fostering redevelopment, boosting the local economy and increasing the non-domestic rate base.

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

The majority of measures were on target and good progress made.

Significant work completed across the parks service including £22,473 invested in 'In Bloom' projects, 5 'In Bloom' /Best Kept awards achieved, 7 Green Flag awards for the Borough achieved and 111 community gardening projects delivered. Annual target of 15,000 trees planted exceeded along with 132,302 m2 of rewilded Council being maintained and target being exceeded.

A lot of the measures within this objective had been carried forward to 2025/26 Performance Improvement Plan as they still remained a priority for Council in terms of reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net Zero and/or improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality.

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

Two measures under this objective had been put on hold due to external factors. Waste management recycling targets had all been exceeded in 2024/25 and the Council was making good progress to achieve the statutory recycling target of 65% by 2035. Waste management measures form part of Council's 2025/26 Performance Plan and would continue to be a focus for Council in terms of reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net Zero.

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

The majority of measures were on target and good progress made.

Significant development work completed in 2024/25 to progress major capital and strategic projects for Council that would provide outdoor facilities aimed at improving health and wellbeing such as the development of Greenways, Whitespots redevelopment project and the Ward Park redevelopment project. Officers would continue to progress these projects, along with other outdoor recreation projects in 2025/26.

2024/25 saw the development of Council's 10-year Leisure Strategy "Getting Active, Staying Active" which links clearly with the Council's Corporate Plan, which would see progress towards A Sustainable Borough through innovation in our services and greater partnerships with our residents and other organisations.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached 2024/25 annual Self-Assessment Report and that it is published by the required deadline date of 30th September 2025.

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

Alderman Smith welcomed the report which he believed provided a good summary of the achievements of the Council.

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

6. ANDBC PROCUREMENT POLICY
(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching ANDBC Procurement Policy. The report detailed that the Procurement Manager had undertaken a review of the Procurement Policy to ensure it was up to date and following best practice. That followed the recent introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 from 24 February 2025 and the announcement by the Department of Finance that their procurement control limits for firms involved in government contracts would increase from £30,000 up to £50,000 from 6 March 2025.

Below set out the main issues to be addressed and to ensure a consistent approach was adopted across Council and the wider sector.

Procurement Control Limits

The current Procurement Control Limits were last reviewed in April 2015.

Given the increase in inflation over the last five years, a review of Council's Procurement Control Limits was undertaken to ensure the transactional cost of procuring goods and services was proportionate to the contract value itself.

The review highlighted that the current procurement control limits had not kept up with inflationary uplifts over recent years.

Current Procurement Control Limits

Up to £3,000	No quotation necessary
£3,000 to £15,000	Seek three written quotations
£15,001 to £30,000	Seek four written quotations
Over £30,000	Public Tender
£214,904	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender (Goods & Services)
£5,372,609	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender Works

It was proposed that the current Procurement Control Limits were increased.

Proposed New Procurement Control Limits

Up to £5,000	No quotation necessary
£5,000 to £30,000	Seek three written quotations
£30,001 to £50,000	Seek four written quotations
Over £50,000	Public Tender
£214,904	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender (Goods & Services)
£5,372,609	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender Works

The proposed new procurement control limits allowed for inflationary uplifts over recent years and ensure a consistent approach was adopted across the public sector.

Benefits to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The Council recognises the benefits SMEs bring to the local economy and endeavour to empower SMEs to compete for local government contracts. For contracts below the tender threshold, suppliers to be invited to quote were selected by the Officer going to quote. In accordance with the Buy Local Policy, Officers were encouraged to select local suppliers where possible.

The Procurement Services Unit was constantly looking at ways to provide more access to contracts and business opportunities for SMEs and ways to work towards sustainable procurement targets (a Social Value in Sustainable Procurement Policy had been drafted and would be presented to the Committee in due course).

Revising the Procurement Control Limits would help speed up the procurement process with the increased limits enabling Officers to make more local spending decisions.

Reporting of Contract Awards (Above Tender Limit)

Currently the award of contracts procured via a public tender or via a Single Tender Action (STA) must be reported to and approved by Council.

The Procurement Policy had been updated to require the award of contracts for all spend over £50,000, no matter the procurement route used, a recommendation must be reported to Committee or Council for approval before a contract was awarded.

That would ensure a consistent approach for all contract spend and include the reporting of contract awards that had been procured via pan government frameworks.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:

1. The revised Procurement Control Limits detailed in the table below are adopted.

Up to £5,000	No quotation necessary
£5,000 to £30,000	Seek three written quotations
£30,001 to £50,000	Seek four written quotations
Over £50,000	Public Tender
£214,904	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender (Goods & Services)
£5,372,609	Above Threshold (Regulated) Tender Works

2. and that the revised Council Procurement Policy is adopted.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Gilmour felt the review was timely noting the limits had jumped quite a bit.

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

7 (A) NOTICE OF MOTION 659 UPDATE - VISUALLY AWARE BOROUGH

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council in April 2025 meeting:

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 were already in place and identifying what measures the Council could take to ensure a welcoming, visually aware Borough.

Initiatives already in place

Ards and North Down Borough Council currently provided support and initiatives for disabled individuals including blind and partially sighted people:

- Consultation and Engagement: Council had an established a disability forum to regularly consult with blind and partially sighted people and other disability stakeholders to ensure their needs were being met.
- Disability Action Plan: The Council had a Disability Action Plan 2020 – 2025 (2025-29 current at consultation phase) that outlined how it meets its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This plan (and the draft 2025-2029 plan) details actions and processes to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities, including those with sight loss, were integrated into Council decision-making and service delivery.
- Website Accessibility: The Council works to ensure its website was accessible, with features like resizable text, alternative text for images, and clear link writing. They also provided contact information for those needing information in alternative formats.
- Buddycard Scheme: The Council offered a Buddycard scheme, which allowed a person with a disability to bring a helper to Council events and leisure facilities for free.
- Changing Places Facilities: The Council provided "Changing Places" facilities at several locations, which were accessible toilets with additional equipment and space for people with disabilities and their carers.
- Beach Accessibility: The Council, in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, offered beach equipment, including all-terrain wheelchairs, to improve beach access for people with mobility and sensory needs.

Suggested measures for improvement

To ensure Ards and North Down was a truly welcoming and visually aware Borough, the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability), in collaboration with the RNIB, had identified a range of strategic improvements. Many of those enhancements could be initiated and implemented within the existing budget.

- Training: Sight loss Awareness training sessions for staff and councillors. Conduct mandatory training for all staff involved in siting, moving, emptying, or maintaining public bins. Use simulations or "blindfold walks" to demonstrate the impact of poorly placed bins, this can be provided by RNIB.
- Communication: Audit of council communications: to provide advice on accessibility of website, publications, social media, videos, and wider council communications/council meetings etc provided by RNIB
- Visual accessibility audits: Arrange a further two visual accessibility audits with elected members and RNIB: Suggested locations are Newtownards and a rural location in the Borough.
- Website Accessibility: Conduct regular accessibility audits with users who are blind or partially sighted to identify and address any usability issues. Ensure all new website content and updates adhere to the highest accessibility standards.
- Buddy card Scheme: RNIB and Council can promote the Buddy card scheme more widely to ensure that all eligible individuals are aware of it. Consider expanding the scheme to include a wider range of Council services and events.

- Review of council policies: Conduct a review of specific council policies to ensure that these are inclusive for those blind or visually impaired individuals.

The following additional improvements could be achieved through the allocation of a dedicated budget.

- Assistive Technology: Provide access to assistive technology for blind and partially sighted individuals to help them access Council services and information. Explore and implement other communication technologies that may benefit blind and partially sighted individuals, such as speech-to-text services for in-person and phone interactions. An example would be Cloverbook pro. Placing a CloverBook Pro in main Council reception areas would significantly boost accessibility to Council services. Visually impaired visitors could easily magnify, adjust contrast on, or have read aloud vital documents, forms, and planning materials, overcoming major barriers to access. An added benefit was the device's ability to offer text-to-speech in multiple languages and can be connected to a larger screen via HDMI. The cost for this service was £2,850.00 including VAT per item
- Business Best Practice" leaflet: To encourage compliance and educate local businesses, create a "Business Best Practice" leaflet. This concise resource could outline legal obligations regarding pavement obstructions and provide clear guidelines for placing bins, service goods, and signage. It could emphasise keeping items close to the property line, ensuring a minimum 1.8m (ideally 2m) clear pavement width, and detailing recommended times for bin placement and prompt retrieval. This leaflet could also cover commercial waste best practices, serving as a valuable tool for Waste services and Environmental Health officers to combine enforcement with education during routine checks.
- "Bin Smart" initiative: For direct communication to households, implement a "Bin Smart" initiative using information leaflets or eye-catching stickers. These could be directly attached to wheelie bins on collection day, specifically targeting areas with known obstruction issues. This method ensures direct delivery to the intended audience. Furthermore, this effort could be strategically aligned with the existing Considerate Parking campaign within Community Planning, maximising its reach and impact.
- Procurement of specific sight loss leisure equipment and set up specific sight loss leisure activities.
- Engage specifically with SIGHT, a local community group, to actively champion the incorporation of diverse lived experiences into all Council policymaking processes and practices.

Members may be aware that Derry City and Strabane Council recently passed a similar notice of motion, and five other councils had expressed interest in doing the same. Derry/Strabane had prioritised integrating sight loss awareness and accessibility into core Council policy and practice. ANDBC currently did that with the screening process and could add a specific question about sight.

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) had suggested to RNIB to establish a Joint Council-RNIB Accessibility Working Group with the interested council parties. This strategic initiative would aim to ensure the alignment and consistent implementation of the larger proposed actions, thereby maximising their collective

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impact and improving overall outcomes for accessibility and inclusion. RNIB would contact Solace with a proposal for them to consider.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree the recommended proposals and allocate a budget for 2026-2027 to implement the actions, subject to budget process.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Gilmour thanked the Officers for compiling the comprehensive report in response to her Notice of Motion. She thanked the Compliance Officer, who had since left the Council, for her work. Councillor Gilmour referred to aspects that she personally welcomed including the site loss awareness training and an audit of the Council's communications and website to ensure those were as visually accessible as possible. She had been unaware the technology aspect of the Cloverbook existed and she felt that would be really useful. Councillor Gilmour viewed the budget as modest to provide the accessibility for all. She also welcomed the bin smart initiative as the placement of bins was an issue. She knew the sight group was looking forward to working with the Council and she paid tribute to their work.

Councillor Chambers thanked Councillor Gilmour for bringing forward the motion. He felt it was wonderful see the work that was already occurring and welcomed the suggested improvements. It had been discussed about the possibility of an audit of Council facilities in terms of the use of Braille signage, blind maps etc and he asked that be added to the suggested improvements.

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

7 (B) SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

(Appendix VII, VIII, IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching NI Direct - Public facing information, Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework and Monaghan County Council example of Public information booklet. The report responded to Member recommendations contained within Notice of Motion (NoM) 656 from Councillors Wray and McClaren – Corporate Services Committee, Tuesday 8 April 2025, updated Council 30 April 2025.

The NoM concerns severe weather event impacts on residents and business, and it was recommended that: *Officers 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.*

Elected Members recognised the existing and very strong provision of Emergency Planning and Communications Services within Council during emergency incidents.

Current provision (Regional context)

Regional communications inform all Council communications and support activities.

[NI-Direct](#) website - Content was agreed through regional working groups, the Executive Office, Northern Ireland Emergency Planning Group (NIEPG), SOLACE and partner groups. Appendix 1 shows public facing information contained on [NI-Direct](#), “*Be ready for emergencies*”, providing useful information and toolkits for both domestic and business settings. The information was set covered a number of emergency scenarios, including flooding, severe weather and an array of less frequent types of emergencies. Template plans were provided for households, and businesses to consider their own premises based on their family circumstances including a suggested list for creating individual household kits (grab bags).

The ‘[Regional Community Resilience Group](#)’ (RCRG) was a Northern Ireland, multi-agency and cross departmental working group, which our Emergency Planning Officer is a member of. The group currently had approximately 50 community groups across Northern Ireland (not all Councils) and engages in multi-agency / cross departmental task and finish actions, with communities on identified flooding issues where criteria are met, such as remedial action or infrastructure improvements.

Regional officers were currently being recruited for specific purpose of community resilience across NI (North, South, Belfast) process currently being concluded (Sept/Oct 25).

A regional survey across partner agencies was currently being concluded in relation to the purchase of additional stock items within each council at community assistance centres, such as power bank batteries, wind up radios, blankets, hot water bottles etc. The results would be discussed during meetings in September / October 2025.

The **Northern Ireland Civil contingencies framework** was attached to the report. That was a public facing document, designed to “*outline the philosophy of civil contingencies in Northern Ireland, the guiding principles of emergency response and recovery, and practical considerations at times of an emergency*”.

Current provision (Council context)

Council Website. The Council website held up-to-date information from professional bodies, developed through the existing multi-agency working arrangements across Northern Ireland. That information was consistent with that provided on [NI-Direct](#) and, as relevant, via other local authorities websites.

Officers had recently reviewed layout and content to ensure it was easy to access and follow. It included tips on how to better prepare for an emergency and advice on how to response in emergency situations. [Emergency Preparedness - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

During emergency events a ‘live update’ section was created providing all the latest information and any specific information/ advice.

The Emergency Planning Officer received a **flooding report** for Northern Ireland each morning. When applicable a more detailed report was provided for each Council area. This report was shared with our Public Health and Housing Team, who engage with the householder to offer assistance and assess the potential to administer a [Scheme Emergency Financial assistance](#) claim (SEFA). Every engagement with members of

our community involved signposting to relevant information and identifying whether the community issue could be investigated further through our regional flooding hotspots report within the RCRG.

The Emergency Planning Officer participated in a quarterly, **regional flooding and severe weather group meeting**, which assessed incidents, warnings and responses in the previous period. Reviews potential remedial actions by agencies amending the flooding hotspot register for NI.

Every [Met Office weather warning](#) received was assessed for impact within the Ards and North Down area and was circulated both internally across service areas and widely on our social media platforms. Anyone could sign up to [receive](#) those warnings. A variety of visual aids had been prepared by the MET office and were promoted across partners and media platforms. By example the current Met Office [Summer toolkit](#).

Potential enhancement to provision

Following discussion Officers recommend the following:

- **Regional groups:** Officers would continue to engage with regional groups to ensure access to the latest regional updates for both residents and businesses.
- **Fridge Magnet:** It was further recommended that a fridge magnet was produced with a QR code (linking to this section of the website) and a key contact number for information in emergency situations – that could be distributed at events and via existing community channels and would help raise awareness of emergency preparedness.

An order of 10,000 magnets would cost approximately £6,000.

- **The Big Guide:** To reach as many people as possible the Big Guide to Age Friendly Ards and North Down (to be reviewed and updated 2025/26) could also include that information in a non-digital way to offer accessibility; as well as being 'to hand' in the event of the internet not being available. While information on flooding was included, the level of information on dealing with an emergency may require an additional section to be included in the document. That would increase the reprint cost but would complement the information included on Council's website. (Community Planning team and Emergency Planning Officer are consulting with the Over 50's Council in September 25, that would provide insight into content for the Big Guide).
- The cost for re-printing the Big Guide had been included in 2025/26 budget, but the inclusion of this additional information would increase the page count and therefore potentially the cost. The first print run of the Big Guide was for 10,000 copies. These were distributed across the Borough via Libraries, Community & Voluntary Organisations, Food Banks, Community Advice Ards and North Down and Social Workers. They were also available via Council buildings. There were extremely popular, and organisations are frequently asking for more. It was likely that would be the same method of distribution. A digital version was also included on Council's

website. The current digital version could likely be amended but there was a cost of (estimated) £20 per page. The cost could be absorbed by existing budgets.

The distribution and promotion would be directly to residents via Council's Social Media channels and by engaging with the wider Community Planning Partnership and support organisations operating across Ards and North Down. However, the promotion of those would focus on Age Friendly (as that was their primary purpose). Consideration would be given to additional awareness raising that publication also contains support information in relation to emergency planning and useful information for residents.

Workshops: The Council's internal 'Climate Change and Sustainability Champions' would align with Ards and North Down's Community Planning Partnerships commitment to establish a 'Climate Resilient Communities' Workstream. This workstream would include external stakeholders, including Community Planning Partners and members of the community, and would endeavour to engage with existing or new community groups on the subject matter. This workstream group would also consider how it aligned with other Council initiatives, such as In Bloom Groups and Village Partnerships, to develop an action plan. Officers would welcome further opportunities to engage with constituted groups to develop community resilience, including future climate incidence, across the Borough. Officers would review the existing resources available to deliver this work and identify options for rolling this out. Delivery of an action plan and engagement with communities and individuals was not an insignificant piece of work and may require additional staffing resource to deliver effectively.

Elected Member involvement: Officers are also keen to continue engagement with Elected Members, both at a local and regional level through NILGA events.

Visual Media – It was recognised regionally that continual work needed to be undertaken with public information. That included the suggestion of a publication for residents across Northern Ireland, similar to a publication in Monaghan County Council (Appendix 3). That had obvious cost, sustainability implications and would no doubt take a period to develop, if agreed. It was however critical to retain the same messaging across Northern Ireland.

Education – There were several educational and training strands in relation to emergency planning focussing in on severe weather. Officers were aware that the Department of Education was developing an education programme in the school sector.

Learning points from previous severe weather events: Storm Eowyn (Jan 2025) was the subject of an Executive Office led multi agency debrief at the start of June and this would produce key learning points (how to assist vulnerable people). That would align with UK and Cross border learning. The Council would be provided with outworkings from this and would continue to review how best to support our residents.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and that production of the Fridge magnet at an approximate cost of £6,000 (subject to estimates process) proceeds.

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Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith thanked Officers for the preparation of the in-depth report. The impact of the recent storms had been seen, preparedness was important and he felt people forgot and having that information to hand was useful. He welcomed the production of the booklet similar to that of Monaghan County Council which he felt would be valuable across all of Northern Ireland.

Alderman McIlveen thanked Councillors Wray and McLaren for bringing forward the motion and he believed some good work and learning had occurred. He noted the suggestion regarding the production of the fridge magnet with a QR code and he was not convinced that was a good spend.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, as an amendment, that the Council notes the report and does not proceed with the production of the fridge magnets.

Councillor Gilmour had similar concerns as Alderman McIlveen regarding how useful the fridge magnet with a QR code would be in a storm situation. £6k in the entire Council budget was small however each of the spends accumulated.

Alderman McRandal was in agreement with the amended proposal and was not convinced that the spent could be justified.

Alderman Graham noted the importance of the topic and that it needed to be taken seriously. It was key to get the message out and encourage people to take the message seriously when such storms were forecast.

Alderman Smith was content to support the amendment.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, as an amendment, that the Council notes the report and does not proceed with the production of the fridge magnets.

Reports for Noting

8. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS & TREASURY MANAGEMENT (FIN165)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that in February 2025, Council approved its annual Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the setting of Prudential Indicators (PIs) for the current financial year ending 31 March 2026. Those were statutory requirements in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The purpose of this report was to provide members with an update on the PIs and treasury management activity as required by the CIPFA Codes, at the end of June 2025 (Quarter 1)

1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The Pls for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council were affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to these Pls were set out below.

	Original Forecast	Revised Forecast
Table 1.11	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure 2025/26 (Current Year)	26.264	16.952

The original estimate of £26.264m had been revised down to £16.952m, reflecting the capital spend that was now expected to be incurred by 31 March 2026. This was consistent with the deliverability risks outlined in the 2025/26 budget strategy, where it was reported that capital ambition was not being matched by delivery due to reasons including officer resource, business readiness and planning and/or funding delays.

The main schemes impacted by such risks for this reporting period were Portavogie 3G pitch (£1.5m costs reassigned to 2027/28), Ward Park (£2.2m works deferred to 2027/28) and the Digital Innovation Hub (£3.7m works postponed to 2027/28). One notable operational spend of replacement vehicles had also been reduced for this year by £570k to £1.78m.

The revised capital expenditure forecasts for the three-year plan, together with the capital financing implications and previous year activity are summarised below.

	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Table 1.12	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure	15.453	16.952	30.791	56.214
Financed by:				
Loans	3.462	8.487	22.928	34.688
Leasing	5.928	-	-	-
Grants	4.751	6.530	7.304	21.315
Capital Receipts	0.804	1.217	0.459	0.211
Revenue/Reserves	0.508	0.718	0.100	-

1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance was measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increased with new debt-financed capital

expenditure and reduces with MRP (minimum revenue provision). 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 Council had complied and expected to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as shown below.

	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Table 1.2	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	77.865	78.984	94.199	121.490
External Gross Borrowing	(56.876)	(53.426)	(75.003)	(93.247)
External Gross Leasing	(5.859)	(5.716)	(5.637)	(5.583)
Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement	15.130	19.842	13.559	22.660
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£19.84m 25/26 forecast) 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 previous years and the access to grant funding streams. The position had been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018. Nevertheless, it was expected that drawdown of loan finance would begin early next financial year.

1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

The 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 revised forecast for external gross borrowing at 31 March 2026 was £59m as seen in table 1.2 above. The Council was therefore forecast to remain well within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year as follows:

Table 1.3	2025/26
Authorised limit – borrowing	£ 83.984m
Operational boundary – borrowing	£ 78.984m

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. Those financing costs were compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from District Rates and

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general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which was made up of capital financing costs.

Table 1.4	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast
Financing costs (£m)	£8.8m	£9.7m	£10.7m	£11.6m
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	13.3%	14.1%	15.0%	15.3%

The forecast financing costs for 2025/26 of £9.7m was in line with the budget set for the year.

2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

The following table summarised the position on long-term borrowings at 30 June 2025.

Table 2.1				
Lender	Balance 01/04/25	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 30/06/25
Dept of Finance	£ 50.601m	£ -	£ -	£ 50.601m
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 6.275m	£ -	£ (1.000) m	£ 5.275m
Totals	£ 56.876m	£ -	£ (1.000) m	£ 55.876m

The Council did not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

The revised capital financing requirement (table 1.2) showed that the Council could increase its level of external borrowings to £79m by 31 March 2026. However, an assessment of the Council's cashflow position forecasts showed there would be adequate cash reserves to temporarily finance capital expenditure for the remainder of the current year and therefore no further borrowing was anticipated before 31 March 2026.

The Council repaid a £1m bank loan in early April 2025. When further repayments on existing long-term loans were made, (£2.593m), during the remainder of 2025/26 the level of external borrowings at 31 March 2026 was forecast to be £53.3m.

2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The tables below showed the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2025/26	Actual at 30/06/25
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	0%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	100%

Table 2.22			
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2025/26	Upper Limit 2025/26	Forecast 2025/26
Under 12 months	0%	15%	5%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	5%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	19%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	24%
10 years and above	30%	90%	47%

2.3 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 continued 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 period 1 April to 30 June 2025, Council had earned interest of £137k on investment deals with approved financial institutions as summarised below:

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.46%	£33,430
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.36%	£32,880
State Street Global Advisors	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.34%	£32,310
Barclays Bank	£1.6m	Call A/c	4.25%	£16,668
Bank of Scotland	£1.8m	Call A/c	4.18%	£19,133
Santander	£0.4m	Call A/c	2.60%	£2,781
Totals				£137,202

This compared favourably to the budget set for the same period of £136.5k, resulting in a favourable variance of £0.7k.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts at 30 June 2025 was £10.0m.

The table below showed the risk and return metrics on the Council's investments held at 30 June 2025 against other NI Councils.

Table 2.32	Counterparties	Investments	
	Credit Rating	Liquidity	Rate of Return (%)
ANDBC	A+	100%	4.27%
NI Council Average	A+	49%	4.15%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Jun-25

The Council was outperforming the NI Council average on rates and cash balances. The treasury management function had been managing surplus cash balances well during the first quarter of 2025/26.

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 during this period.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

9. STRATEGIC BUDGET REPORT (FIN23) (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching Strategic budget report. The report stated that this was the first budget report for the financial year. It set out the variances for expenditure and income for the first four months and showed a budgetary deficit of £298k, thus far.

The budgeting policy required officers to forecast potential outturn on four occasions during the financial year – those would occur at the end of June, August, November and January. The final column on page 2 of the report show that management were forecasting a potential deficit of around £617k which was mainly due to storm repair work at Aurora. This forecast and the next one would feed into the estimates process and allow judgements to be made in respect of potential reserves positions at the year end.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the Strategic Budget Report for September.

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

10. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION - DONAGHADEE MALE VOICE CHOIR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that a letter had been received from Councillors Cochrane, Hennessy and Thompson

requesting that Donaghadee Male Voice Choir be considered for a Civic Reception to acknowledge its 100th anniversary in 2032.

Founded in 1932, Donaghadee Male Voice Choir had become one of Northern Ireland's most respected and accomplished male voice ensembles. With a rich history spanning over 90 years, the choir had upheld a strong tradition of musical excellence, community engagement and cross-community harmony.

The choir had performed across the UK, Ireland and internationally, proudly representing Donaghadee and the wider Borough. In recent years, the choir had achieved considerable success, including high-profile performances, charitable fundraising and competition accolades, reaffirming its place as a cultural ambassador for the region.

The Council wished to acknowledge the Choir's dedication to promoting male voice singing, supporting new musical talent and contributing to the artistic heritage of Ards and North Down.

The choir qualified for a Civic Reception on the criteria of exceptional service to the local community and a significant anniversary. 2032 marked its 100th anniversary.

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

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

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception

The criterion against which each request would be assessed are as follows: -

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

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

OR

2. A Very Significant or Unique Achievement

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

This request had been submitted in line with the agreed procedures and met Criteria 1 of the policy - Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary. However, given the significant timeframe until the anniversary, it would be appropriate to note the request with a further report to be brought to the Committee in early 2032.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the request and that a further report be brought to the Committee in early 2032.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Irwin noted the work that was occurring in the background to ensure that Donaghadee Male Voice Choir received proper recognition for their achievements. She wished to put on record her thanks to Councillor Hennessy, Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the recognition for the great Choir.

Alderman McIlveen stated that the recognition was well deserved.

Councillor Chambers felt it would be wonderful to bring the Choir to the City Hall for their significant milestone. He was disappointed that not all the elected Members names for the area appeared in the report as they were all communicating together.

Councillor Gilmour had enjoyed many of the Choir's performances and wished to put on record her thanks for their charity efforts particularly during her time as Mayor. She wished the Choir well.

The Chair echoed that it was very much a cross-party effort to achieve the civic reception.

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

11. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION:

(a) Vacancy & Dereliction Rates (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching Minister of Finance response - COR-0378-2025 - Property Vacancy and Dereliction Rates. The report stated that an Ards and North Down Borough Council meeting on 25 June 2025, property vacancy and dereliction rates within the Borough were discussed. It was noted that a strategic goal of the Council's Corporate Plan was the growth of the non-domestic rate base. To support the achievement of this goal, Council requested that a letter be written to the Minister of Finance asking that consideration be given to amending the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill to provide local Councils with the powers to vary the level of district rate increases between SMEs and larger businesses. A letter was sent by the Chief Executive to the Minister of Finance on 7 July 2025 and a reply, was received on 21 July 2025.

As follow up to the letter received, the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services met with the Director of Rating Policy within the Department of Finance to discuss the ongoing review of rating policy.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the reply received.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith noted within the letter there was a focus in the rates review and small business rates relief. The letter alluded to some scope for enhanced sectoral targeting which tied into the Council's request to have powers to vary the level of rates depending on business size. Alderman Smith was concerned regarding the Minister's interest in the uniformed business rate from GB. That would move the matter into the opposite direction from which the Council was trying to achieve which was increased devolution to Councils to make more decisions around those types of issues. He felt centralisation would be a poor step. The letter alluded to a meeting with the Director of Rating Policy and he asked if there was any clarity received from that meeting.

The Head of Finance was not aware of the outcome from that meeting.

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

b) Proposed Changes to the Welfare System
(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching response. The report stated that at the Corporate Services Committee meeting on 13 May 2025 the Council noted with concern the announcement made by the Work and Pensions Secretary on Tuesday 18 March proposing changes to the social security system, particularly in relation to the potential impact on disabled people. It therefore agreed to write to the Work & Pensions Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the Minister for Communities expressing concern, requesting information on what would 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.

A letter was sent to each of the three parties above on 30 June 2025 and a reply was received from the Department for Communities on 30 July 2025. The Department for Work and Pensions contacted the Chief Executive to say that the Department for Communities would reply rather than them. A follow up email from the Northern Ireland Office indicated that they had passed the letter to the Department of Work and Pensions for them to reply.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the reply received.

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

(c) Lough Neagh and Water Pollution
(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching reply from DAERA. The report stated that the Council meeting on 25 June

2025, it was agreed that the Chief Executive should write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs about the need to tackle all sources of pollution affecting water quality in Lough Neagh and in rivers throughout Northern Ireland.

Council wanted to express alarm at plans by the Minister 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. Council believed such measures could devastate agriculture, reduce livestock numbers, add cost and undermine food security and wanted to stress that any future nutrient management policy, which was focused on more sustainable agriculture practices, must be the product of genuine partnership, rather than policies that risk the viability of our agri-food industry.

Council further stressed the need to redouble efforts and actions to address the sources of pollution in wastewater treatment and asked the Minister 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 was fair and workable for all stakeholders.

The Chief Executive wrote to the Minister on 7 July and a reply, was received on 18 August.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the reply received.

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

Alderman McIlveen noted that it did not mention that the Minister had to backtrack. There was now a multi-sectoral consultation stakeholder forum with the terms of reference being requested to ensure representation across the sector to look at the proposals in more detail. He hoped through the forum the proposals would be amended and an improved NAP brought forward.

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

12.a) 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.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman McIlveen spoke about the "Nip It In The Bud" campaign delivered by the Farming Community Network in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. The campaign was not just about awareness; it was about saving lives. Research showed that people within rural communities were often diagnosed with cancer at a later stage compared to those in urban areas. People living in rural areas were 5% less likely to survive cancer. That figure may sound small, but behind that figure were real people whose lives could have been saved with earlier diagnosis. In Northern Ireland, around 36% of the population lived in rural areas. For many of them, especially farmers, life presented unique challenges. Farmers often put their livestock, crops and family responsibilities first with their own health often coming last. When symptoms appeared, many were hesitant to see a doctor until the disease was already advanced. According to clinicians, that was becoming a serious concern, whilst some of the evidence was anecdotal the trend was clear, later diagnose meant poorer outcomes. Living in the countryside brought many joys but often challenges when it came to accessing healthcare. Rural dwellers especially farmers and agricultural workers faced difficulties getting GP appointments that fitted around their long working hours. Alderman McIlveen alluded to transport challenges, distance, costs, travel times and limited availability of services in isolated services as some of the barriers, along with language and cultural barriers for migrant workers who made up part of the farming workforce.

Alderman McIlveen highlighted the impact a cancer diagnosis had on a farm, that did not just affect the individual, it could affect the entire family business, the welfare of livestock, housing arrangements and the future of the farm.

Early diagnosis saved lives, as an example for bowel cancer, if caught at stage one survival rates were as high as 98% but if diagnosed at stage 4 the survival rate dropped to 8%. Alderman McIlveen stated that was the stark difference that awareness and early action could make. He urged anyone within farming communities to nip it in the bud, to recognise the signs and symptoms and to seek medical advice immediately.

The campaign provided practical resources, materials for agribusinesses, community groups, schools and local employers. Those focused on cancers that particularly affected farmers such as skin cancer, prostate cancer and lung cancer. The campaign also highlighted support available for migrant workers who may struggle to navigate complex medical systems in a second language. In Northern Ireland, the campaign was being led by Katrina Crawford, a qualified radiographer alongside George Doherty who had lived through bowel cancer on three separate occasions. Their commitment, combined with the work of the volunteers across the UK, was making a real difference.

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Alderman McIlveen thanked George Doherty for reaching out to him, to raise this incredibly important issue with the Council and for sharing his personal story. By endorsing the campaign, the Council could raise awareness through its local media outlets, social media platforms and community events. Alderman McIlveen also encouraged Council officials to use and distribute the campaign's resources and speak directly with rural constituents reminding them that their health must come first.

Alderman McIlveen highlighted that the campaign was not just about distributing information, it was about changing attitudes, encouraging farmers not to view a doctor's appointment as a disruption but rather as an investment in their family's life and future. Alderman McIlveen stated that by working together, that could ensure that fewer people were diagnosed in the late stages, that more lives were saved and that rural communities could thrive. Alderman McIlveen called for the Committee to support his motion, to stand with the Farming Network and Macmillan Cancer, to raise awareness, to encourage early diagnosis and to help the rural communities nip cancer in the bud.

Having grown up on a farm Councillor Gilmour was aware how stubborn some farmers could be when it came to their own health and when there was difficulty to access health services that could compound the issue further. She welcomed the 'nip it in the bud' campaign. She highlighted that farmers were exposed to chemicals, machinery and differing situations on the farm. Whilst information regarding the handling of chemicals and equipment safely was now more readily available than years gone by, for some the damage had already been done providing a lasting impact on their health. Councillor Gilmour noted that getting a GP appointment was an issue. As Alderman McIlveen had stated a farmer's health had an impact on the business and the family. Councillor Gilmour welcome the motion.

Councillor Irwin added her support to the motion. She advised that when she had attended the opening of NFU Mutual as Deputy Mayor, there was a health bus available as they were aware how important it was for members of the farming community to get those health checks. The campaign was a very worthy cause and she hoped that changed attitudes within the community.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

b) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Boyle and Councillor Irwin

Ards and North Down Borough Council believes that young people deserve a say in who represents them, welcomes the UK Government's announcement to allow people aged 16 and 17 to vote in future Westminster, Assembly and Council elections, believes that this should be in place ahead of 2027 in time for the next Assembly and Council elections; calls on the First and Deputy First Minister to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ensure that any necessary UK legislation is passed to meet this timeline.

Councillor Boyle was admitted to the meeting – via zoom.

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Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Speaking to the motion, Councillor Boyle highlighted that young people were already active in politics - they marched, they organised, and they campaigned for change. Young people cared deeply about the future, and he felt they were often ahead of politicians on major issues like climate and equality.

Councillor Boyle believed that letting young people vote could shift politics to better reflect their needs and priorities. Scotland and Wales had already led the way and he believed it was time that Northern Ireland caught up. He felt that the Executive should seek the powers to make this change now. He believed the biggest reason for lowering the voting age was for the young people themselves.

Young people cared deeply about the world around them and about the biggest social, economic and justice issues of the day. On all progressive causes, they were all too often four or five steps ahead of where politicians of the day were. Young people would be forced to live with the consequences of today's decisions and had often known little else but instability in politics and skyrocketing costs of housing, transport and basic essentials. All those challenges were in the context of an uncertain future.

There were so many young people in this generation who, instead of stepping back from politics, had stepped up and stepped into politics. They had found campaigns on everything, from youth mental health to poverty. They organised in their communities and in their schools, protested for their own rights and for the rights of their peers.

They cared about the future and they cared about each other. Councillor Boyle highlighted that these young people could work, pay tax, serve in the armed forces and get married and therefore they should have a right to have a say in the future.

Councillor Boyle felt that they had a right to help shape that future through voting. He thought that if young people were able to vote, politics may take more notice of them and their needs. For anyone who opposed this step, Councillor Boyle felt it was worth looking back at the debate when the age was lowered from 21 to 18. Some would say that 16 was simply too young, but there was no one age, as the expert panel in Wales found, at which rights were totally conferred. Therefore, why not let those capable, talented, motivated young people vote.

Councillor Boyle stated that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister should seek the devolution of the required powers to introduce the legislation. He wished to see this for every young person in the UK, and he hoped that the Prime Minister pursued with commitment to introduce the right to vote for 16 and 17 year olds. Lowering the age from 18 to 16 was the next staging post on the journey to expand the electorate and ensure that everyone had a say in the decisions that affected their lives.

Councillor Boyle felt that action needed to be taken in the interests of the 45,000 young people aged 16 and 17 in Northern Ireland by giving them the say that they deserved in their society and in democracy. Councillor Boyle asked Members to support the motion and called for a recorded vote.

Councillor Irwin thanked Councillor Boyle for his comments which she was in agreement with. As a young person in politics, voting for those aged 16 and 17 was something that she felt strongly about. It was not just about being politically engaged it was about everything else that came with that, building communities, building confidence in young people and building resilience, so much of that came from being politically engaged.

She referred to the arguments around young people not being politically engaged enough, mature or responsible enough. She felt that so many of those arguments could be combated by giving young people a vote to enable them and allow them to participate. Those young people were already paying taxes therefore why should they not have a say on how those taxes were used. Scotland and Wales were leading the way.

The Electoral Commission had stated that it would be unlikely to have the change in place by 2027. The motion called for action to be taken to ensure that was in place for 2027 and bring Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the United Kingdom. Councillor Irwin hoped Members could support the motion.

Councillor Moore reiterated the opportunity for Northern Ireland to extend the voting to 16 and 17 year olds in the local and Assembly elections and she viewed that as hugely valuable development. In respect of engaging young people for a life of political and social participation she highlighted the importance of the curriculum to support them and engage them in a range of topics and the skills to allow young people to involve themselves.

Alderman McIlveen recalled when he was 16 he was very politically engaged and his school supported him through a current affairs society. There was nothing to inhibit 16 and 17 year olds learning and engaging in the political process. Alderman McIlveen stated that he had consistently disagreed with extending the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds and that view remained. He explained that was not out of disrespect for those young people but he felt that childhood should be cherished. He viewed such decisions at this, as forcing young people to grow and burdening them with the responsibilities of adulthood. Instead the time and space should be allowed for them to develop as individuals. The matter had been debated on a number of occasions and Alderman McIlveen felt it was worth reiterating that there were number of things that 16 and 17 years olds could not do. A 16 and 17 year old could;

- join the Armed Forces, but only with his or her parents' permission and if he or she was a member they could not see active service until they were 18.
- marry, but only with his or her parents' permission.
- work and pay taxes however could not work more than 8 hours per day or 40hrs per week.
- donate their organs but only with his or her parents' permission.
- drink beer and wine in a licenced premises but only if accompanied by an adult and with a table meal.

A 16 and 17 year old could not;

- Buy or drink alcohol in licensed premises (pubs and bars).
- Buy or process tobacco products.

- Get a tattoo.
- Enter into contracts, such as buying a property or taking out a mortgage as you were considered to not have complete contractual capacity.
- Buy lottery tickets or place bets.
- Serve as a Juror.
- Open a bank account or get a credit card without parental consent.
- Make a Will.
- Leave home without parental consent.
- Be questioned by police without a parent or guardian.
- Buy fireworks.
- Join the police or the fire service.

Alderman McIlveen stated that this was an extensive list and questioned if this list applied or was it only the voting age and if so why. The labour government had announced its intent to lower the voting age, he did not agree with that and could not agree with the motion. Kids should be left to be kids and they should not be burdened with additional responsibilities. Alderman McIlveen stated that he did not fear the lowering of the voting age but felt it was forcing young people to grow up too quickly.

Councillor S Irvine agreed with letting kids be kids and stated that he was uncomfortable with the motion.

Alderman Graham believed that young people matured at different speeds. He was aware of some young people at 16 years of age who had a fascination for aspects of the far-right politics and found that to very disturbing and dangerous. Some young people were immature, they had not had the life experience and they felt that some things were a good idea when in fact they were a very bad idea. Whilst there could be young people who were ready to vote at 16 years of age, it was unwise and would have its pitfalls. He agreed with letting kids be kids. Alderman Graham did have concerns regarding children discussing such voting in school and felt that could cause friction. He did not doubt the sincerity of the motion however did not believe it was a good idea.

Alderman Smith felt a lot of the arguments in the remarks from Councillor Boyle could be argued for allowing 15 year olds to vote and he questioned where to stop and start. Alderman McIlveen had listed a range of things which 16 and 17 year old could and could not do and he believed that to be impactful. Only 9 countries in the world, allowed voting for those under the age of 18 years of age and the reasoning for that was that the vast majority of countries had an age for adulthood and the consensus for that was the age of 18. Alderman Smith fully supported greater engagement with young people in education around politics. Any research that had been undertaken in Great Britain, showed that over half of 16 and 17 years olds did not want to vote.

Alderman McRandal did not agree with the argument that childhood was being taken away. It was not compulsory for anyone to vote, it was about providing a choice for those young people who were politically engaged. He disagreed with some of the arguments against and believed that if 16 and 17 years old were able to vote there would be more of a focus on the needs of young people and they were the future. Alderman McRandal was in support of the motion.

Councillor Chambers stated that having listened to the arguments, he appreciated the arguments on both sides. As an advocate for young people, he felt he could support 16 and 17 year old voting to provide a voice. He had been involved with the youth forum and through his own work he spent a lot of time with young people. Councillor Chambers believed that there had to be changes to the school curriculum to include more political education including the different voting systems and he felt that should occur first with lowering the age broached again in the future.

Councillor Boyle expressed his disappointment with some of the remarks. He felt there was a fear of voting for other parties and that was a reasoning for not allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote. He was disappointed and found it unfortunate with the negative views, though was not surprised and described that as another ‘ballygobackwards’ approach.

A recorded vote was undertaken and resulted as follows:

FOR (4)	AGAINST (10)	ABSTAINED (0)	ABSENT (1)
Alderman McRandal	Alderman Brooks Graham McIlveen Smith		
Councillors Irwin McBurney Moore	Councillors Chambers Cochrane Gilmour Irvine, S Kennedy Thompson		Councillor McCracken

NOTED.

(Councillor Boyle withdrew from the meeting)

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

Reports for Approval

14. APPOINTMENT OF ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EDRMS) PROVIDER

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Council was asked to approve the tender award for the provision of an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS).

The recommendation was to award the contract to LocalGov Improve (LGi).

15. EXTENSION OF AGENCY WORKERS CONTRACT

*****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 contract for the Provision of Agency Workers to Ards and North Down Borough Council was awarded for the two-year period 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2025 and included an option to extend for a further three x twelve month-periods, to be reviewed annually and subject to satisfactory performance.

The initial two-year period is due to expire on 31 October 2025. Following a satisfactory service review, Officers wish to extend the contracts for a further twelve months from 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2026, subject to ongoing satisfactory performance.

It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

16. SEXTON'S COTTAGE, 266 MAIN ROAD, CLOUGHEY (Appendix XIV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

The Council was asked to consider a number of options in relation to the future of this property. It was recommended that the Council proceeds with option 1 as detailed in the report.

It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

17. RENEWAL OF LEASE AT COOK STREET JETTY, PORTAFERRY
(Appendix XV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

The Council was asked to approve the renewal of a lease of land at Cook Street Jetty, Portaferry.

It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

18. LAND AT INVERGARRY AVENUE, HOLYWOOD - TITLE AND DISPOSAL OF PART
(Appendices XVI, XVII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

The Council was asked for approval to proceed to establish title to open space at this location and also to accede to a request from NIE in relation to the land.

It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

19. TENDER FOR PROVISION OF VALUATION SERVICES

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

The Council was asked to approve the appointment of the contract for the provision of valuation services following a tender exercise.

It was recommended that Council approve the appointment of the company that secured first place in the tender exercise.

20. ESTIMATES 2026/27 BUDGET STRATEGY (FIN169)

(Appendix XVIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:4 - INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS.

The new absence dashboard developed with the aim of providing information in a more concise and graphical format to aid understanding was attached to the report as an appendix by way of an update for Q1 2025/26.

Reports for Noting

21. ABSENCE REPORT Q1 2025-2026

(Appendix XIX, XX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:4: INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS.

The new absence dashboard developed with the aim of providing information in a more concise and graphical format to aid understanding was attached to the report as an appendix by way of an update for Q1 2025/26.

It was recommended that Council noted the update.

RE-ADMITTANCE 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 8.50 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Alderman McRandal	
Alderman:	Adair Cummings	Brooks (Zoom)
Councillors:	Boyle Chambers Cochrane Douglas Hollywood	S Irvine McBurney McClean McKee (Zoom) Moore

Officers in Attendance: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Falkner), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill - Zoom), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Acting Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development (G Kinnear), Head of Finance (S Grieve from 8.30pm) and Democratic Services Officer (R King).

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Alderman McRandal) sought apologies at this stage and noted none had been received.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chair noted that this was the final meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee prior to its transition to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee. He welcomed Adele Falkner as the newly appointed Director of Active and Healthy Communities and extended his congratulations on her recent appointment.

It was further noted throughout the discussion that, from October 2025, under the recent directorate restructure:

- The current Director of Community and Wellbeing would assume the role of Director of Environmental Services.
- The Head of Parks and Cemeteries would report to the Director of Environmental Services.

The Chair also congratulated the Head of Leisure Services on his upcoming retirement at the end of September, acknowledging that this would be his final

meeting. He expressed thanks for the officer's years of service and wished him well in his retirement.

Alderman Adair joined the Chair in congratulating the new Director of Active and Healthy Communities and extended his thanks to the retiring Head of Leisure Services, along with best wishes to officers moving to the new directorate.

Councillors Boyle and Chambers echoed those sentiments, with Councillor Chambers paying tribute to the retiring Head of Leisure Services, acknowledging his support for Liverpool Football Club by concluding with: "You'll Never Walk Alone."

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Councillor Douglas – Item 9 – Arts and Heritage Grant Schemes.

Alderman Brooks – Item 7 – Britain in Bloom Awards 2025 (declared at 8pm).

NOTED.

DEPUTATIONS

3. SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD NI

(Appendix I)

Rosalind McClean, a parent and spokesperson for Smartphone-Free Childhood NI, referred to the attached slides, highlighting concerns over children's smartphone use, describing it as a new parenting challenge that the organisation referred to as 'the new frontier of parenting'. Ms McClean referred to Ofcom data showing that 24% of UK children aged 5–7 owned smartphones, rising to 89% by age 12, despite 94% of primary school parents believing they were harmful.

Ms McClean emphasised adolescent worries, noting two-thirds of 16 -18-year-olds saw smartphones as harmful, with half feeling addicted to social media. Peer pressure and online communication made resisting smartphones difficult. Tech companies profited most, she argued, and studies linked early use to poorer mental health. Data from Northern Ireland showed a sharp rise in suicide ideation among girls.

She referenced high rates of exposure to explicit content, with 51% of UK children aged 11-13 having viewed hardcore pornography, which nowadays was violent, misogynistic and degrading to women. She felt that needed to be highlighted further

in society and provided further statistics of many young smart phone users receiving unwanted explicit images.

Smartphones were "addictive by design," leading British 12-year-olds to spend 29 hours weekly on their devices and young teens to spend over seven hours online daily.

NHS statistics showed outdoor accidents had dropped while self-harm had surged. Ms McClean reflected on her own active childhood and questioned whether children were now overprotected physically but under protected online. She acknowledged parents' dilemmas and urged community action while noting slow governmental progress.

Smartphone-Free Childhood encouraged delaying access to smartphones until age 14, promoting simpler devices instead. The movement attracted about 300,000 UK parents, including nearly 3,000 children in Northern Ireland. Ms McClean concluded by seeking Council support to raise awareness and distribute information to more families.

Members raised a series of questions. Councillor Cochrane, expressing alarm at the statistics, asked for examples of other councils that had participated in the Smartphone-Free Childhood initiative. In response, Ms McClean explained that Barnet, a London borough, was the first to go smartphone-free, with a move towards use of only brick phones. She also noted collaborative efforts in Greystones, Co Wicklow, where schools had collectively advised parents against purchasing smartphones, and remarked that school principals in North Down had been supportive of the scheme. She also felt that the Members of this Committee, as Councillors, were well placed to spread the message.

Councillor Chambers highlighted the negative impact of smartphones on children's temperament and mental health, observing that such challenges began at home with adult behaviour. He suggested that the campaign could be extended to reduce adult screen-time habits. Ms McClean acknowledged this idea, referring to her own practice of leaving her phone downstairs at night and raising the potential for parent-focused healthy technology programmes. She understood the challenges though for parents in terms of wanting their child to fit in with a smartphone rather than a brick phone. She further suggested that the Council could support or even lead on parent education campaigns which would be valuable.

Councillor McBurney, expressing concern at the statistics presented, sought further details on how the Council might support the campaign, suggesting it could encourage donations of brick phones.

Ms McClean would welcome that and she mentioned an example of a school in Sevenoaks, where every P6 (equivalent to P7 in NI) child received a brick phone, and suggested that Council funding for flyers could help engage families and raise awareness. She recounted her involvement with primary schools and a presentation to North Down principals, hosted by MP Alex Easton and the PSNI, that had advocated smartphone-free approaches. She further encouraged increased funding for youth work initiatives including youth spaces, community centres, and play parks.

Councillor McClean asked if the presentation slides could be shared with the public, believing the statistics would be alarming to a wider audience. He also raised questions about empowering schools and parents to take action, the possibility of achieving strong parental support, and why more schools had not participated.

Ms McClean replied that primary schools had been supportive and distributed materials, and pointed to St Albans in Wicklow as an example where schools had taken a firm approach. She felt that the responsibility for achieving smartphone-free status rested with secondary schools and that the solution had to be parent-led. She called for Council assistance in reaching families and stressed that a public health campaign and a society-wide effort were necessary.

Councillor Hollywood, noting that his question had already been asked, thanked Ms McClean for the presentation and added that, as a parent, he had found the information valuable and informative.

The Chair thanked Ms McClean for attending and she returned to the public gallery.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor McClean, that officers bring back a report based on the matters raised in the deputation in terms of how this Council can support Smartphone Free Childhood for the safety and wellbeing of all our children.

Councillor Cochrane explained that he had been moved by the campaign and the statistics presented, and he wanted to bring forward this proposal to look at how the Council could assist.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor McClean, that officers bring back a report based on the matters raised in the deputation in terms of how this Council can support Smartphone Free Childhood for the safety and wellbeing of all our children.

4. U3A – UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

(Appendix II)

The Chair welcomed Valerie Dickson, Valerie Goodchild and Mary Cromeey representing North Down and Ards University of the Third Age (NDA U3A).

The Committee received a presentation from Ms Goodchild outlining the background, structure, and activities of the University of the Third Age (U3A), both nationally and locally. U3A was described as a self-help educational organisation for those no longer in full-time employment, promoting informal learning within a social context. Membership was open to all, regardless of age or employment status.

Founded in France in 1973 and introduced to the UK in 1981, the UK model was based on three principles: Third Age, Self-Help Learning, and Mutual Aid. The Third Age was defined as the life stage following reduced career or family responsibilities but preceding older age and infirmity. U3A was non-religious and non-political.

Nationally, the Third Age Trust supported over 1,000 U3As and 430,000 members. In Northern Ireland, 24 U3As served over 8,000 members, with North Down and Ards U3A—established in 1997—among the largest, with approximately 1,300 members.

North Down and Ards U3A operated as a registered charity, funded primarily through membership fees (£15 per person), with occasional grant support. It offered over 100 interest groups across a wide range of topics, most led by volunteers, with some physical activities facilitated by paid instructors. Group formation was member-driven, with recent additions including psychology and astronomy.

The organisation was managed by a 10-member committee and likened to a small government department. Members were encouraged to contribute, even in small roles, and new members were informed of this expectation.

Ms Goodchild shared her personal experience of joining U3A following bereavement, describing it as a lifeline. She highlighted the group's social ethos—reflected in its motto “Learn, Laugh, Live”—and its wide-ranging activities, including themed events, concerts, quizzes, and an intergenerational programme supporting local schools and youth initiatives.

She expressed appreciation for Council support, including subsidised venue access and grant guidance, and proposed further collaboration to reach underrepresented groups. She suggested displaying U3A posters in community venues to raise awareness and described U3A as one of the UK's best-kept secrets.

The presentation concluded with photographs showcasing U3A activities, including painting, nature walks, Canasta, ukulele performances, and the new psychology group.

The Chair invited questions from Members and Councillor Hollywood queried the group's existing use of venues.

In response, Ms Cromey explained that smaller U3A groups often met in members' homes. The organisation also utilised public spaces such as libraries, but the majority of its activities took place in council-owned venues with Hamilton Road Community Hub in Bangor one of their most frequently used facilities.

Ms Cromey noted that there were approximately 34,000 retired individuals in the Borough and expressed surprise that U3A had not been more actively consulted in local strategy development. With over 3,000 members across Holywood, Ards Peninsula, and North Down, she emphasised that U3A represented a significant demographic and could offer valuable input. She recommended that future workshops and consultations include the organisation's perspective and questioned the effectiveness of recent engagement efforts, citing a Department for Communities consultation that had received only 91 responses across Northern Ireland.

Councillor Boyle commended the work of NDA U3A and remarked that the organisation appeared to be in capable hands under the leadership of the three

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representatives. He had understood that the group operated with limited grant support and asked whether there was a specific annual figure required to sustain itself.

In response, Ms Cromey advised that the oversight group the U3A Trust recommended maintaining six months' running costs, estimated at £6,000 to £7,000. She confirmed that current membership fees were sufficient to meet this target. The organisation was managed efficiently, with minimal expenditure, and membership income was primarily used to fund equipment and support group activities.

NDA U3A had invited its activity groups to request support for equipment needs, with a modest fund set aside for that purpose. Ms Goodchild referred to the bridge and Canasta groups, whose shared tables required refurbishment, and outlined plans to explore repair options through an upcycling centre. Ms Cromey said that contributions toward such improvements would be welcomed.

Councillor Douglas raised a query around a U3A group in Comber and asked about its involvement with NDA U3A. Ms Goodchild explained that Comber was part of Ards Peninsula U3A and referenced a regional group covering Ards and North Down. Ms Cromey added that the Chair of North Down and Ards U3A also chaired the local U3A network, which included Comber, Ards Peninsula, Belfast, Lisburn, and North Down. The network facilitated the exchange of ideas and best practice, with Comber recently contributing a new approach to language learning.

Councillor McClean expressed appreciation for the presentation and remarked that more meetings should begin with contributions from local groups working to combat isolation. He described U3A as one of the UK's best-kept secrets and was struck by the scale and dedication of its membership. He suggested the Council go beyond permitting posters in community halls by actively monitoring their visibility and considering further strategic support for the organisation.

In response, Ms Goodchild highlighted ongoing frustrations with posters being removed from halls and suggested that formal Council permission might help address that. She acknowledged the Council's support at Hamilton Road Community Hub but noted that the U3A message board had been relocated to a poorly visible location.

The Chair thanked the deputation and both Ms Goodchild and Ms Cromey returned to the public gallery.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, acknowledged the impressive scope of the organisation's activities, noting that despite operating primarily on membership fees, it delivered a wide range of classes and events with consistency throughout the year.

Councillor Moore proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that officers bring back a report to consider how the Council could support the work of U3A.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, spoke of the importance of the Council engaging with North Down and Ards U3A as a valuable community resource. She emphasised that the older population represented a significant demographic within

the Borough and cautioned that, without collaborative efforts to reflect their needs and expectations, the Council risked missing a vital opportunity.

She requested that the forthcoming report consider ways to strengthen partnership working and explore how the Council could benefit from the extensive knowledge and expertise held within NDA U3A.

The seconder, Alderman Adair, praised the organisation's work and noted that Ards and North Down had the highest proportion of older residents in Northern Ireland. He stressed the value of initiatives that encouraged community engagement among older people and looked forward to the forthcoming report.

He was particularly moved by the personal account shared by Ms Goodchild, who had found support through U3A following bereavement. He remarked that many of his constituents who were elderly, bereaved, or experiencing loneliness could similarly benefit from the organisation's work.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Alderman Adair, that officers bring back a report to consider how the Council can support the work of U3A.

5. ITEM WITHDRAWN

6. NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH PROPOSED PLANNING APPLICATION (FILE CW30) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that after the planning application for a proposed greenway along the North Down Coastal Path (LA06/2020/0530) was withdrawn in February 2023, the 'North Down Coastal Path Task & Finish Working Group' was established to look at the approaches to addressing issues on the path including maintenance, signage, promotion and future options surrounding its use.

Officers from Parks & Cemeteries had supported the Working Group, which had made some proposals to address issues identified. One such project had been prioritised, and to progress it, there was a need to submit a planning application. This project would have addressed the section which had been agreed by the group as a priority in terms of needing remedial work to ensure that the path was more usable and provided better connectivity between Royal Belfast Golf Club and Seahill.

Drawings had been prepared, and these had been presented and circulated to the members of the Working Group for consideration. Any proposed amendments were to be discussed and incorporated where possible before the drawings were finalised. The proposal would have covered the section from the bridge at Seahill to the Royal Belfast Golf Club, approximately 2km long. This section was particularly narrow, uneven underfoot as the gravel had been periodically washed out, exposing kerbs etc., had overgrown verges, and the section along the Royal Belfast Golf Club was at

risk of collapse given that the rock armour underneath it had slipped, leaving the path unsupported in places.

Discussions were required with the respective landowners prior to the submission of the planning application. Certain surveys were required, and these were being explored. It had been proposed by the Working Group that photomontages were incorporated alongside the planning drawings so that the proposed improvements could be clearly understood. These were the minimal interventions to ensure the durability of the path and improve its condition only; however, they would still have required planning permission given the designations along the coastline. The majority of the path was in the coastal flood inundation zone, and in places it was considered prudent to create a raise in freeboard/levels by approx. 300mm to raise it slightly out of the inundation zone to ensure the durability of the path.



Proposed extent of the planning application



Example of the proposed drawings, Section 1 along Royal Belfast Golf Club (Path as existing, proposed verges cleared, path resurfaced, and rock armour reinforced.

Funding sources and landowner permissions would be investigated as part of the next stage of this project development process.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves further development of the details of this proposal with the working group and the eventual submission of a planning application pertaining to the section as outlined in the above map.

Councillor Chambers proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Chambers felt that the proposed path improvement project was an essential piece of work. Councillor McKee agreed, stating that while no one wished to see actions that might cause friction, it was vital to preserve the uniqueness of the path and strike the right balance. He emphasised the importance of learning from previous issues, maintaining clear communication with the public, and ensuring that the project's objectives and outcomes served both the community and the environment.

Councillor Hollywood enquired about the next steps in the path improvement project, specifically regarding funding sources, landowner permissions and timescales.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that funding had been allocated within the Council's budget to support a portion of the path improvement works. However, the exact costs remained uncertain and he explained that groundwork could be complex and unpredictable, and the Council was currently undertaking survey work to inform the next steps.

In terms of timescales, it was anticipated that the path would need to be closed for several weeks during the works. That temporary closure was considered essential to safeguard the long-term future of the path, which had been significantly undermined and would likely require permanent closure in the coming years if repairs were not undertaken.

The Chair explained he was very familiar with that particular section of the coastal path and was pleased that the project was moving forward, noting that it was in clear need of repair.

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

(Alderman Brooks, attending remotely, declared an interest in Item 7 and was excluded from the meeting at 8pm)

7. BRITAIN IN BLOOM AWARDS 2025 (FILE PCA121)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Donaghadee was representing Northern Ireland in the Small-Town category of the 2025 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Britain in Bloom competition.

Britain in Bloom was one of the largest horticultural campaigns in Europe, was run by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and worked year-round to create a cleaner and greener Britain through community action. As well as celebrating horticultural excellence, Britain in Bloom promoted cleanliness, sustainability and community participation.

As such, the campaign complimented several council initiatives and strategies aimed at enhancing the visual appearance and sustainability of the Borough.

In preparation for the RHS Britain in Bloom judging visit, Officers from the Parks and Cemeteries Service had worked in close partnership with Donaghadee Community Development Committee and local volunteer groups to present the town befitting of the Britain in Bloom campaign criteria.

Judging took place on Monday 1st August 2025 when the judges were taken on a guided tour of the town to assess under the marking criteria of Horticultural Achievement, Environmental Responsibility, and Community Participation.

The announcement of the results was to be held at a ceremony in the Royal Horticultural Society in Brighton on 31st October 2025 between 12pm and 5pm. An invitation had been received for up to 5 persons to attend the Award Ceremony, and it was proposed that the Mayor, one Council Officer and three members of Donaghadee Community Development Committee would attend the ceremony. It was envisaged that the cost for five persons to attend this prestigious event would be approximately £600 for flights.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves attendance at the Britain in Bloom Awards ceremony in London of the Mayor, one Council Officer and three members of Donaghadee Community Development Committee.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

At the outset, Councillor Cochrane noted that the ceremony was taking place in Brighton and not London as stated in the recommendation. He reflected on his attendance at the In Bloom Judging Day on 1st August, alongside several other councillors from the DEA. He commended the strong sense of community spirit and praised the efforts of Donaghadee Community Development Association and local residents in showcasing the town to the judges. He described Donaghadee as a fantastic coastal town and remarked that it was truly “blooming” and extended his best wishes for the awards ceremony.

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

(Alderman Brooks was returned to the meeting – 8.03pm)

8. HYGIENE BANK AT ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL LEISURE SITES (FILE LEI23)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Hygiene Bank (THB) was a registered UK Charity (1181267) who stated they were a grassroots people-powered charity grounded in their community and totally managed in Northern Ireland by dedicated volunteers. They believed that everyone deserved to be able to care for themselves and their

family, and they believed that access to hygiene products was critical for people to maintain their health and wellbeing. Their purpose was to ensure no one was held back from participating in society because of hygiene poverty. They believed in building stronger, resilient communities by working together to shape a more just society.

The charity placed collection points for hygiene products in locations that the public had access to. These locations included shops, pharmacies etc. throughout Northern Ireland. The donated products were then collected and distributed by partner foodbanks, charities and some schools.

There were fourteen similar schemes throughout Northern Ireland run by volunteers and project coordinators. These were proving a success, and it was proposed that a scheme coming to the Borough would expand this provision for residents within the Ards and North Down Borough. This proposal, however, would be unique in Northern Ireland in that it would involve a collaboration between a local authority and the charity, with local authority sites being utilised as potential collection locations for the charity.

Proposal to Establish Collection Points within the Borough

The Hygiene Bank NI were proposing to enter into a collaboration with Ards and North Down Borough Council. They had proposed establishing collection points at the Council's centres where members of the public could leave hygiene products. These products would then be collected by THB NI volunteers and donated to distribution partners within the community. All donated products would remain within the Borough.

The Community Partners who were registered with THB NI within the Borough were:

- Newtownards Foodbank
- Belfast Central Mission based in Newtownards
- Bowtown Community Development Group Newtownards
- The Warehouse (ND Community Works) Newtownards
- The Storehouse Bangor
- Bangor Foodbank and Community Support
- Bangor Sure Start
- Belfast Central Mission based in Bangor
- St Mary's PS Comber
- St Malachy's PS Bangor
- Kilcooley Women's Centre Bangor
- Hollywood Family Trust Hollywood
- Kiltonga Christian Centre, Conlig

Operationally, their local volunteers would call regularly to collect any donations. Initially, they intended to visit sites and empty donation boxes every 2–3 weeks. At the time of collection, the volunteers took a note as to how full the boxes were in case the frequency of collections needed to increase. In addition, THB NI also had their mobile number written on the inside of the box if it was filling up quickly, and Council colleagues could call the local coordinators to prompt a pickup.

It was proposed that initially a few facilities would be selected by THB NI and donation points would be established at those sites by way of a trial. Over time, the scheme, if successful at these sites, would be extended to other sites across the Borough to facilitate more access to donation points and ultimately more support for those in the community who would benefit from this support.

RECOMMENDED that Council engages with The Hygiene Bank to provide collection points at some Council facilities throughout the Borough and if an initial trial period proves successful Officers and THB NI would expand the scheme across other suitable Council sites across the Borough.

Councillor Douglas proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Douglas stated that while access to basic hygiene products was often taken for granted, many residents in the borough were forced to choose between such essentials and food due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. She emphasised that the scheme would provide vital support to those facing financial hardship.

Councillor Hollywood expressed his support for the initiative and enquired about how its success would be measured and the proposed duration of the trial.

The Head of Leisure Services confirmed that the initiative would be assessed by THB NI, who had prior experience in delivering similar schemes. Success would be determined by levels of public uptake and donations received. The trial was expected to run for a period of three to six months.

Councillor McBurney also voiced her support, describing it as deeply unfortunate that individuals continued to rely on hygiene banks in 2025. She called for greater support through the welfare system to address the underlying issues.

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

(Councillor Douglas withdrew from the meeting having a declared an interest in Item 9 – 8.03pm)

9. ARTS AND HERITAGE GRANT SCHEMES (FILE ART 14 2026/27, ART 06 2026/28, ART 14 2026/27, ART 14 2026/27 and HER 01 2026/27)

(Appendix IV – VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Arts and Heritage Service operated a number of grants programmes.

Attached were application forms and guidance criteria for five of these programmes.

Arts Project Grant Application and Criteria 2026–27 – Appendix 1

The aim of the Grant was to support community-based arts projects, events or activities taking place in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. A maximum of £1,000 could be awarded to support groups undertaking creative activities per annum.

Multi-Annual Arts Grant Application and Criteria – Appendix 2

The Multi-annual Arts Grant scheme was open to constituted arts organisations in the Borough who met the eligibility criteria. The scheme opened every two years and awarded a grant of up to £5,000 for Core funding or up to £4,000 for an annual one-off Arts Festival.

Youth Art Training Grants 2026–27 – Appendix 3

The aim of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Youth Arts Training Grant was to help support young people (aged 11–21 years) in their artistic development through training and development opportunities. The Fund was available for training and residencies up to £250.

Individual Artist Grants 2026–27 – Appendix 4

The annual Individual Artist Grant scheme was open to professional artists working and living in the Borough to apply for support towards training costs and artistic residencies. The Fund was available for training and residencies up to £250.

Heritage Project Grants 2026–27 – Appendix 5

The annual Heritage Project Grant scheme was open to professional artists working and living in the Borough to apply for support towards training costs and artistic residencies. The Fund was available for training and residencies up to £250.

Under the new Grants Policy, these schemes required approval from Council prior to launching.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the schemes for the listed grants programmes and as detailed in the appendices to this report.

Councillor Moore proposed, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, expressed support for the grant scheme. She queried the youth, individual, and heritage grant categories, noting that the £250 maximum award was modest given rising costs. She asked how recipients typically used the funding and whether the scheme could be restructured to offer fewer but larger awards, maintaining the overall budget while increasing impact. She also queried the current level of demand for the grants programme.

The Head of Community and Culture explained that the types of projects varied widely. The funding served as a contribution toward the artist's total costs and she clarified that the Heritage category allowed grants up to £500, not £250 as stated in the report. While a restructure to increase individual awards was possible, she explained that the application process was already oversubscribed and she went on to provide a breakdown of the total funding available for each category.

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

(Councillor Douglas returned to the meeting – 8.08pm)

10. REQUEST TO SUPPORT A BLUE PLAQUE TO HONOUR WILLIAM SHARMAN CRAWFORD (FILE HER 06 09/25)

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ulster History Circle had approached Officers to request that Ards and North Down Borough Council support the proposal of a Blue Plaque to William Sharman Crawford (1780–1861) of Crawfordsburn, a leading advocate of tenant-right land reform in the mid-1800s. The Ulster History Circle had identified a possible location in Crawfordsburn village as a site for the plaque and was seeking approval from the owners.

A number of years ago, an informal commitment had been made by Ards and North Down Borough Council to support one blue plaque per annum in the Borough. Most recently, a plaque in honour of Viscount Castlereagh had been unveiled in Newtownards in 2023. No request had been made in 2024.

The cost to Council would be £1,300 to cover the fabrication and installation of the plaque and a small reception with catering to mark the unveiling.

It was proposed that the plaque be unveiled in the autumn of 2025.

A biographical note on William Sharman Crawford was attached at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that Council support the erection and unveiling of an Ulster History Circle Blue Plaque in honour of William Sharman Crawford.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Adair welcomed the recommendation, emphasising the importance of preserving the history and heritage of Ards and North Down. He praised the Ulster History Circle's decision to honour William Sharman Crawford with a blue plaque, noting that such tributes celebrated personal stories that resonated with the public. He hoped to see more plaques erected across the Borough in future.

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

11. PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY 2024 (FILE CW98)

(Appendix X)

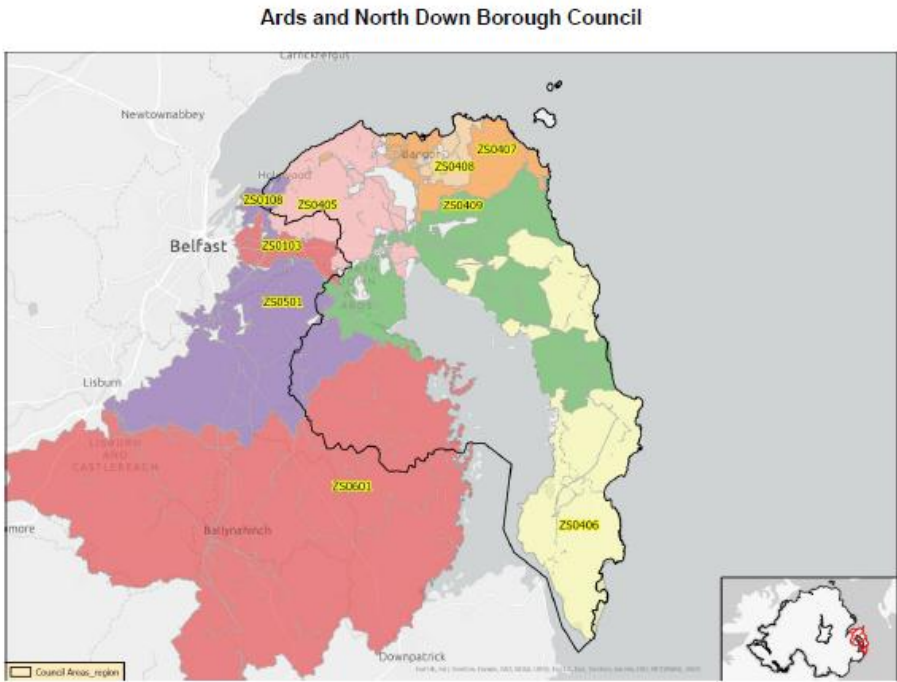
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching the Drinking Water Quality Report produced by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area for 2024. The report indicated a 99.9% level of compliance with an extensive array of drinking water quality parameters as laid down in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, as amended in 2018.

One serious water quality failure had been recorded for the Borough during the year. This failure had been caused by algal blooms in Lough Neagh, which provided a small proportion of the water supply for the Borough. The algal blooms had caused a significant deterioration in the raw water quality in Lough Neagh. This was classed as a 'taste and odour' event, rather than a safety failure, as algae produced compounds detectable at very low limits, which could give water an earthy/musty flavour and odour. NIW had undertaken work at Castor Bay Water Treatment Works to help improve removal of these taste and odour-related chemicals. An enhanced sampling and monitoring programme for these compounds, in both the raw and treated drinking water, was in place.

There had been five significant drinking water quality events that impacted the Borough, all relating to raised levels of aluminium in the water supply at Drumaroad Water Treatment Works. Aluminium could occur naturally in water within certain catchments. However, aluminium compounds were used in the treatment process to help remove impurities. Any aluminium compounds added during the treatment process were removed before the final treated water left the treatment works. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) had enforcement measures in place to deal with aluminium contraventions at Drumaroad WTW by September 2025. The Environmental Health, Protection and Development Service would write to DWI in September to ask for an update on progress on this matter.

A number of minor water quality events impacting the Borough were contained within the report, broken down by water supply zone.

The map below showed the various supply zones for Ards and North Down, as well as compliance levels from 2019 onwards.



Percentage Compliance at Customer Tap (including Supply Points)

	Target	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Northern Ireland Compliance	99.7%	99.8%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%
Ards and North Down Compliance	99.7%	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%

2024 water supply zones wholly or partially within the council area:

Zone Code	Zone Name	Zone Code	Zone Name
ZS0108	Belfast Purdysburn	ZS0408	Drumroad Bangor East
ZS0405	Drumroad Ards West	ZS0409	Drumroad Ards East
ZS0406	Drumroad Portaferry	ZS0501	Drumroad Lisburn
ZS0407	Drumroad Bangor West	ZS0601	Drumroad Ballynahinch

RECOMMENDED that Council note the report.

The Acting Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development referred Members to page 1 of the report, which referenced a serious water failure that had impacted some properties within the Borough. He clarified that the DWI had stated following further investigation, that it was confirmed that the affected supply was not serving this Borough at the time, and therefore, there had been no local impact.

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

12. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (FILE SD155)

(Appendix XI – XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ards and North Down Sports Forum administered grants for sporting purposes on behalf of Council under the Council's Grants Policy agreed in 2024.

£70,000 had been allocated within the 2025/2026 revenue budget for this purpose.

During August 2025, the Forum had received a total of 36 applications: (6 Goldcards and 30 Individual Travel/Accommodation).

A summary of the 26 successful applications was detailed in the attached 2025/26 Successful Goldcard and Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

2025/26 Budget £70,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded August 2025	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£2,000	£0	£500.00
Coach Education	£3,000	£0	£2,275.00
Equipment	£22,000	£0	£8,276.70
Events	£10,000	£0	-£1,085.43
Seeding	£2,000	£0	£1,192.09
Travel and Accommodation	£28,000	*£4,950.00	-£3,110.45
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£660.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000	£0	£2,000
2 Goldcards Awarded in August 25 (16 Goldcards in total during 2025/26)			

The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of -£3,110.45 was based on a proposed award that month of £4,950.00.

The proposed remaining budget for 2025/26 was £10,707.91 (85% of the 2025/26 budget spent).

Noting the high volume of grant applications received thus far in 2025/26, with 85% of the budget allocated in the first five months of the financial year, Officers had carried out a forecasting exercise utilising expenditure to date in 2025/26 and the last two financial years.

Considering the remaining seven months of the financial year, including soon-to-be-released tranches for sports equipment and sports events, Officers advised Members that it was possible an additional sum of circa £12,000 could be required above the £70,000 budget agreed for 2025/26 to meet the expected level of applications if the current trend continued.

It was proposed that this funding be financed from the additional income at ABMWLC to ensure Council continued to fund this grant programme. The leisure team were confident that sufficient additional income to cover all predicted applications would be available at year end based on the current sales figures from ABMWLC. It was also proposed to seek additional funding in the 2026/27 rate-setting process to ensure Council continued to support the sport development grants programme, which provided essential assistance to the sporting community as they represented the Borough on the sporting stage.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached report and the reallocation of £12,000 to the grant fund by officers to support the ongoing demand for sports grants.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Boyle felt that the allocation of 80% of the Ards and North Down Sports Forum funding within five months reflected the strong demand and success of sport and physical activity in the Borough. He therefore welcomed the reallocation of additional funding.

He also considered the recommendation as a reflection of the success of Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex - both in terms of financial performance and its capacity to contribute £12,000 toward sports development, while continuing to operate effectively. He emphasised that this had been achieved under an in-house operating model, with the Council directly managing its own services.

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

13. BI-MONTHLY UPDATE ON PORTAVOGIE 3G, PENINSULA 3G AND PORTAFERRY SPORTS CENTRE FLOOR (FILE CW74)

(Appendix XIV – XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

“that Council notes the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns, recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks Officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term. As a matter of urgency Council tasks Officers to bring forward a bimonthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry Sports Centre and Portaferry 3G Pitch to this committee.”

This report provided the three updates requested on a bi-monthly basis, and for the two capital projects, in a ‘RAG’ format as further requested by the proposer in May 2024.

1. The update report for the Portavogie 3G project was attached at appendix 1.
2. The update report for the Peninsula 3G project was attached at appendix 2. A further report on financial matters had been provided for Members’ consideration in the ‘in confidence’ section of the committee’s agenda.
3. The status update for the defective floor at Portaferry Sports Centre was attached at appendix 3.

In addition, Council had made a further decision to seek the advice of a roads engineer with a view to challenging the Department for Infrastructure's requirements to enhance the access to the Portavogie pitch site. This had been duly commissioned, and a report was received in August 2025. The report was attached at appendix 4.

The conclusion of the expert was that the technical review of the comments provided by DfI Roads in the latest planning response had confirmed that the issues raised aligned with the current standards and requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). Also, the proposed parking provision complied with the Planning Service's Parking Standards guidance document. Therefore, it would have seemed unwise for the Council as the applicant to challenge the requirements as set out by DfI.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the three update reports and the Road Engineers expert opinion on the Departments comments on the planning application pertaining to access and parking.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that, while the report indicated no further progress regarding Portaferry Sports Centre, a recent call from the school principal confirmed that several preliminary surveys had been undertaken. Those included checks on the water systems to identify potential leaks and an assessment of the floor condition by the insurance company. One final survey remained outstanding. Although no physical works had commenced, these steps were ongoing, and it was hoped that progress would follow once the final survey was completed.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Adair expressed regret that, despite the appointment of a roads engineer and efforts to pursue all avenues, the Council was unable to challenge the Department for Infrastructure's objection to the Portavogie 3G pitch. He noted that the Department had initially raised no objection in November 2020 but later changed its position in October 2024. He attributed the setback to the Council 'dithering and delaying' over the project which led to the lapse of the original planning permission, requiring a resubmission.

Despite that, Alderman Adair highlighted progress made, including resolution of issues with Northern Ireland Water and near-final agreement with the Education Authority regarding water discharge. He stressed the importance of continuing momentum and noted that land acquisition would be essential to advance the project.

He also referenced the deteriorating condition of the Portavogie grass pitch, which he believed had reached the end of its usable life. Although Council staff had worked hard to maintain it, the pitch was unable to open in line with others, causing delays to the club's match schedule.

He concluded by welcoming the update on the Portaferry Sports Centre floor, describing it as another positive development for the Ards Peninsula.

Councillor Boyle seconded the proposal but expressed some disagreement with Alderman Adair's comments. He acknowledged the frustration around the report to challenge the Department for Infrastructure, but felt the report offered no new information and represented poor value for money.

He felt that DfI's objection appeared justified, particularly regarding the intensification of the site, which he felt had not been fully addressed in the planning process. Drawing on his own experience with similar applications, he stressed the importance of such matters and, referring to previous claims, did not believe the Council had 'dropped the ball.'

Councillor Boyle had requested clarity on the total costs incurred to date for both the Portaferry and Portavogie projects. He questioned whether the Portaferry pitch project could be scaled back, pointing to the limitations in altering the size of a full-size pitch.

Reflecting on the long history of the Portavogie project, he noted that initial expectations had been for a straightforward process including the resurfacing of an existing pitch but had since become complicated, particularly due to the need to acquire multiple areas of land. He sought confirmation on whether progress was dependent on securing agreement from all landowners.

The Director clarified that the original approach to land acquisition for the Portavogie 3G pitch was no longer viable. A second option was now being pursued, which depended entirely on the agreement of a single landowner. He explained that the new plot would connect to the site but from a different angle. While the Council had expressed interest, formal negotiations had not yet commenced, and it remained uncertain whether the landowner would agree to sell to Council. Should the land be acquired, an amendment to the existing planning application would be required, followed by consultation with the Department for Infrastructure.

In a final comment, Councillor Boyle welcomed the update regarding Portaferry Sports Centre. He acknowledged that it had been two and a half years though since the hall's closure and urged the Council to maintain momentum and continue applying pressure to progress the matter.

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

14. NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH WORKING GROUP MINUTES DATED 30 MARCH 2025 (FILE CW30)

(Appendix XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group was held on 30th March 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached minutes.

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

15. COMMUNITY TRAILS AND GREENWAYS REPORT 2025 (FILE CW30)

(Appendix XIX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of this report was to update Elected Members on the progress of the Community Trails and Greenways unit within the Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service. Members were aware that in 2024 Council had appointed a Development Officer (Community Trails & Greenways) with a clear role to:

- manage and support the development of active travel and outdoor recreation opportunities within the Borough;
- ensure a customer-focused approach by engaging with key stakeholders to identify and implement environmental and commercial measures and sustainable project solutions;
- develop, identify, and promote the appreciation and enjoyment of Council-owned Parks and other open space assets and resources across the Borough;
- seek external funding and commercialisation opportunities.

A suite of events listed in the attached appendix aligned closely with the overarching goals outlined in the Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2024–2028, which emphasised creating a 'sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive community', specifically:

- Developing the cultural and heritage assets of the Borough: such as the heritage and history walks on the North Down Coastal Path in partnership with the Council's Heritage Officer.
- Promoting Wellbeing and Quality of Life: Many events, such as outdoor walking and cycling festivals, seasonal walks, and biodiversity walks, supported physical and mental wellbeing by encouraging outdoor activity and community participation.
- Supporting a Green and Sustainable Environment: Activities like Tree and Plant ID, biodiversity walks, and Shorelife Festival directly contributed to environmental awareness and sustainability objectives.
- Encouraging Community Engagement and Inclusion: Events such as inclusive walks and cycling, Coastal Path monthly walks, and local primary school cycling to participate in the coastal BioBlitz. Seasonal

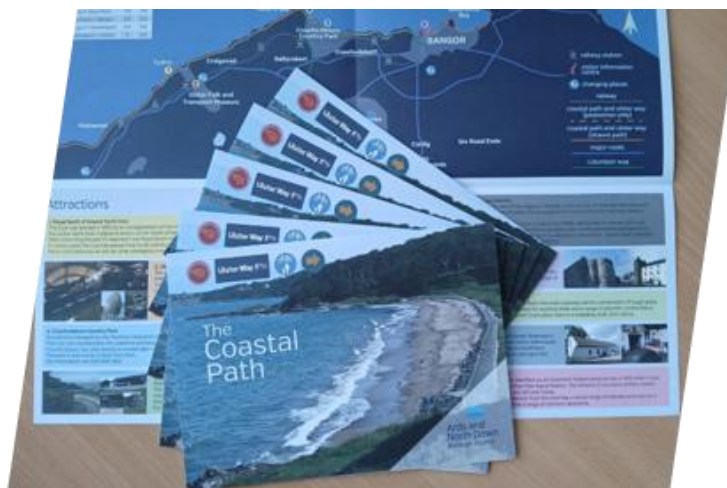
series of walks open to individuals helped foster active community involvement, promoting social cohesion and inclusivity.

- **Enhancing Education and Lifelong Learning:** Themed walks such as History and Heritage walks on the Coastal Path and specialist-led 'Talking Trees' walks in woodlands, as well as the Park Pedal initiative, reinforced the Council's commitment to lifelong learning and environmental stewardship.
- **Economic Vitality and Tourism:** Activity-focused festivals and large-scale events like Shorelife, Walking Week, and Bike Week attracted visitors, supported local businesses, and boosted the local economy.

In addition, the North Down Coastal Path Working Group had informed the development of several work streams along the path, including path maintenance; signage, promotion and engagement; celebrating the path; and path refurbishment works.



Information signs had been installed along the path,.



An information leaflet had been reviewed, updated and distributed by the Council to outlets across the borough.

Meeting the Service Plan for Parks and Open Spaces:

The events detailed in this report supported the core objectives outlined in the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan. They focused on getting more people into the Borough's parks through events and activities which aimed to maintain and enhance Parks and Cemeteries as accessible, safe, and vibrant community assets.

Enhancing Accessibility and Engagement:

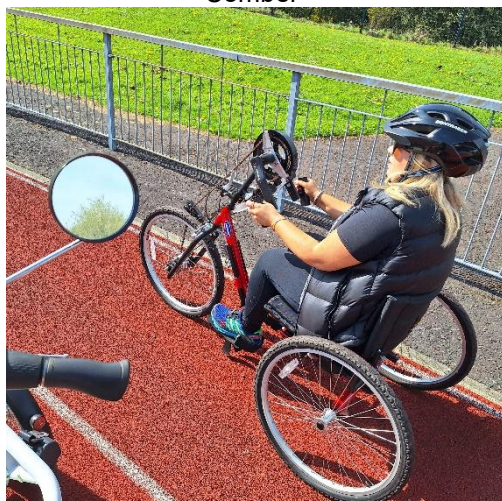
Events at various parks, trails, and open spaces—such as inclusive walks, biodiversity walks, inclusive cycling, and outdoor festivals of walking—encouraged community access and active use of parks and open spaces.



ShoreLife Festival 2024, Island Hill, Comber



Greenway meeting with local residents, PSNI and Councillors, Newtownards



Inclusive bikes at Bangor Sportsplex



Tale Trails map guide at Cairnwood

Promoting Health and Wellbeing:

Activities such as regular walking events, the creation of a children and young people's 'Tale Trail' at Cairnwood, and Walking Week and Bike Week events had promoted physical activity, contributing to healthier lifestyles.

Environmental Stewardship:

Bioblitz events and workshops, tree planting, and biodiversity activities had supported conservation efforts, aligning with Parks and Cemeteries' role in fostering sustainability.

Supporting Community Cohesion:

Provision of events across the Borough, inviting input from local experts and the community to lead events and volunteer opportunities, had fostered social inclusion and local pride, ensuring parks served as focal points for community life.

Embedding of the 5 Steps to Wellbeing into all aspects of events had been achieved, specifically:

- Take Notice – focused on biodiversity such as trees, coastal sea life, and wild plants on Borough community trails, parks, and woodlands
- Keep Learning – new skills had been developed through activities such as mindfulness, artistic printing, observing and drawing, and beach art, as well as specific knowledge provided by walk leaders, artists, and facilitators on regular walks
- Connect – by spending time with other people in the natural environment and outdoors
- Keep Active – participating in regular exercise which had been adjusted to suit all participants
- Give – sharing knowledge and asking questions, offering activities free of charge and open to all

An Active Role in Climate Recovery, Biodiversity Gain & Sustainability:

To enable increased activities such as cycling and sustainable travel, the following elements had been progressed and would continue to be developed to contribute towards a Cycling Friendly Borough:

- Worked with the Department for Infrastructure through participation in panel discussions on cycling in the Borough with the Department's Active Travel Team
- The Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan had been tendered and successfully commissioned, with work started in July 2025
- Worked with Sustrans on its National Cycling Network and Paths for Everyone Initiative
- The Council's Greenway network programme had developed activities and community links along the new Greenway corridor from Newtownards to Bangor
- The AND Greenways website link had been displayed as a QR code on all contractor (Charles Brand) Greenway signage, and the website had been updated

- The Cycle to Work Scheme audit had been completed by colleagues in Health & Wellbeing
- The Cycle Friendly Workplace Scheme had been promoted across the year and specifically during Bike Week
- Bike clinics for staff had been provided during Bike Week and monthly during daylight saving months
- A heritage walking and cycling trail of Bangor had been developed with partners, with the trail map printed and made available to the public across the Borough. Regular guided cycles had been offered by a local campaign group
- Cycling in the Borough had been celebrated with the first AND Bike Week, featuring seven events
- Inclusive bike fleet had been promoted and facilitated for public use at Bangor Sportsplex
- Monthly Park Pedal events had been developed with Cycling Ireland
- Installation of two cycle parking facilities within Ward Park had been managed
- Plans had been progressed to install cycle parking at Council offices and facilities to enable staff, guests, and the public to cycle for more local journeys
- Worked with colleagues to audit existing facilities



Ward Park cycle parking by bowling green and by the Castle Park Road entrance

The Community Trails & Greenways team had made significant progress in supporting Ards and North Down Borough Council's strategic vision of fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive community. Through a diverse and engaging calendar of events, the team had championed active travel, environmental stewardship, and community wellbeing. Events such as Walking Week, Bike Week, and biodiversity-focused activities had enhanced public health, promoted social inclusion, and reconnected residents with local green spaces and heritage.

These initiatives had directly contributed to key objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan and Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan, including enhanced accessibility, climate action, economic vitality, and community cohesion. Strategic partnerships with stakeholders such as Sustrans and the Department for Infrastructure had also strengthened the Borough's cycling and sustainable travel infrastructure, culminating in the commissioning of a Cycling Masterplan and increased cycling facilities.

By embedding the Five Steps to Wellbeing and prioritising inclusive, educational, and environmentally conscious programming, the Community Trails & Greenways team had elevated the role of Council in providing essential assets for community engagement and environmental action. This work had ensured that green spaces remained accessible, well-utilised, and central to the Borough's vision for long-term sustainability and quality of life.

Next Steps

Within the first year, the service had developed successful internal and external partnerships and had programmed a full year's worth of events while gaining an understanding of Council systems and departments. Communicating with Elected Members and working with internal and external stakeholders had been key to the delivery of the role.

There would be continued delivery of a calendar of events in the coming year, including:

- A series of walks on community trails across the Borough
- Monthly activities on the North Down Coastal Path
- Walking Week and Bike Week celebration events
- Implementation of the Paths for Everyone programme in 2026
- Implementation of the actions within the Cycle Route Masterplan in 2026

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the progress of the development of Community Trails and Greenways to date and future initiatives.

Councillor Moore proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, welcomed the report and thanked the officers involved. She noted that some residents had expressed concerns about the exposure of their homes to the Greenway, particularly at the rear of their properties, and commended the officers for their responsiveness and constructive engagement with those residents.

She acknowledged the range of ideas presented to enhance public engagement and expressed her personal enthusiasm for initiatives that promoted cycling.

Councillor McKee welcomed the report and the progress made. He noted the positive developments and commended the clear planning for the current year, highlighting the range of activities available to the public and promotion opportunities.

He felt the report demonstrated the value of expanding the Parks team, particularly through the introduction of a development officer role focused on community trails. Councillor McKee thanked the officers for their work and acknowledged their commitment to investing in new roles and innovative approaches.

Councillor McClean emphasised the need for a more strategic approach to how the Council promoted those activities through social media and other channels. He shared a personal example of discovering well-organised, family-friendly events that he felt should have been more widely publicised. While acknowledging that communications did not fall within the Committee's remit, he asked officers to ensure that teams received appropriate support in terms of communications.

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

16. UPDATE ON MAINTENANCE OF GRASS SPORTS PITCHES (FILE PCA131)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in September 2024 the following Notice of Motion (630) was agreed by Council:

“That Council notes the increasing complaints from local sports clubs regarding the poor annual summer maintenance of football pitches across the Borough and tasks officers to bring forward a report on options to improve the maintenance of our football pitches to ensure our pitches are maintained to a high standard to meet the sporting needs of local clubs and league requirements.”

Responses to the Notice of Motion had been tabled at the Community and Wellbeing meetings in November 2024 and June 2025. In June, Members had requested a further report to be presented in September 2025. This report provided an update on the completion and outcomes of the 2025 end-of-season maintenance programme for sports pitches across the Borough.

The 2025 maintenance season for bookable pitches had delivered notable improvements in both the quality and efficiency of works carried out. These improvements had been attributed to a combination of early planning, favourable weather conditions, and strategic investment in equipment and materials.

Contractors had been engaged well in advance, allowing for clear scheduling and timely completion of works, with the majority of activity concluded before the end of May, although maintenance and monitoring continued across the summer period. The weather—unusually higher temperatures and low rainfall—had played a supportive role, enabling uninterrupted progress across all sites.

A key development that season had been the Council's investment in a direct seeding unit, which had allowed in-house teams to carry out an early application of grass seed on all pitches prior to the contractor's arrival. This proactive approach had ensured seed was applied at the optimal time, reducing the risk of delays and improving establishment rates. The equipment had also enabled targeted reseeding of problematic areas, enhancing overall pitch quality. In addition, all pitches had been fertilised prior to handover to reduce stress on the sward and support healthy growth.

The procurement of high-quality sports seed had further contributed to improved germination and establishment times. Where pitches had required additional work beyond standard maintenance (as identified through specialist agronomist reports), partial remedial action had been taken. Agronomist reports had applied scientific principles to manage and improve the health and performance of turfgrass surfaces. These reports had focused on the interactions between soil, water, plants, and the environment to ensure optimal playing conditions and sustainability.

Engagement with local sports clubs had been another positive aspect of the programme. Officers from Parks & Leisure Departments had met with club representatives on several occasions to discuss maintenance plans and address ongoing concerns. This collaborative approach had significantly improved communication and site management. Clubs had also played an active role in stewarding pitches, helping to deter unauthorised play and address issues such as dog fouling. In one case, a club had even assisted with watering dry areas during a period of drought, demonstrating strong community partnership.

Despite these successes, several challenges remained. Unauthorised use of bookable pitches continued to disrupt seed establishment and top dressing. For example, portable goals had been placed on one pitch without permission, though this had been quickly resolved through engagement with the relevant club, who had issued a public appeal to deter unauthorised use and protect the surface.

Environmental factors had also presented difficulties. A dry spell early in the schedule had affected several pitches, particularly at Portavogie, which was known for its sandy, free-draining soil. Although reseeding had been required, it had been completed within the planned timeframe before the beginning of June. A wetting agent had also been used to help with the dry conditions and reduce the need for club watering. At Greyabbey, tidal water ingress remained a persistent issue, particularly in two corners of the pitch where high salt content and waterlogging hindered seed germination.

Increased usage of pitches continued to place pressure on older surfaces not designed for such high levels of play. While the success of local clubs was to be celebrated, it remained essential that pitches were given adequate rest periods to maintain their condition and ensure the effectiveness of maintenance efforts. In summary, the 2025 end-of-season maintenance programme had been successful, with all pitches available for booking from Saturday 9th August and in excellent condition. While some environmental and usage-related challenges persisted, the

Council remained committed to continuous improvement through ongoing investment, strategic planning, and strong engagement with stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Adair referred to the notice of motion he had previously brought forward, which had led to this report. He extended his thanks to the Head of Parks and Cemeteries and the wider Parks team for their hard work, particularly in maintaining pitches over the summer period.

He noted that the majority of the maintenance work had been carried out in-house by Council staff rather than by external contractors, and commended the team for completing the work on schedule. Alderman Adair highlighted that one of the football clubs in Greyabbey, which had previously been critical of the Council's efforts, had recently published a letter to the editor in the local press, praising the quality and speed of the work undertaken.

He thanked the Head of Parks and Cemeteries and a member of the Parks team called Ryan Wallace, on behalf of the clubs across the Ards Peninsula, acknowledging that all clubs had received a schedule of works which had been followed precisely. He did, however, raise the issue of the pitch in Portavogie, which had reached the end of its usable life and required significant upgrades. While Council staff had maintained the pitch as best they could, and despite great efforts from the committee at Portavogie Rangers, the match schedule had unfortunately been delayed due to the much needed improvements.

Councillor Boyle reflected on the previous year, noting that the officer had faced significant pressure but he had honoured a commitment and the changes had been positive.

In particular, he noted that members of the public had responded to new signage discouraging dogs from entering playing surfaces, and felt this demonstrated how effective those measures had been.

Following on from the proposer's comments, Councillor Boyle raised a query regarding the status of the existing pitch at Portavogie and asked for clarity regarding Alderman Adair's statement that the pitch had reached the end of its life.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that pitch maintenance involved consideration of the playing surface, drainage, and varying soil types. In Portavogie, a high sand content had made it particularly difficult for grass to grow and for the surface to be maintained effectively.

He advised that while sand-based pitches typically included watering systems to support grass growth, there were alternative methods available to manage such conditions. Sand was routinely added to pitches across the Borough, and a variety of grass types were used depending on the location and needs. He cautioned that one

particular grass species had the potential to overtake a football pitch and compromise its structural integrity.

To strengthen the playing surfaces, a specific type of seed had been used, along with herbicides to control weed growth. He also referenced future plans for Groomsport and Portaferry, noting that the Council had agreed to capital investment and also highlighted that revenue had increased in previous years, supporting ongoing improvements.

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

17. PCSP ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025 (FILE PCSP - ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025)

(Appendix XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council PCSP Partnership had been held in Londonderry Park Centre, Newtownards on 16th June 2025. At the meeting, the Partnership had approved the Annual Report for 2024–2025. The Code of Practice for the Exercise and Functions of PCSPs stated that Council was to receive a copy of the PCSP Annual Report each year (Appendix attached).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the PCSP Annual Report for 2024-2025.

Councillor Moore proposed, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, thanked the officers for their work and acknowledged the strength of the partnerships within the PCSP. She also commended the PCSP's responsiveness to specific incidents throughout the year.

Alderman Cummings praised the work of the PCSP and acknowledged the valuable contributions from the voluntary sector. He commended the Deputy Mayor for her leadership as Chair of the partnership and extended his best wishes to Councillor Wray in that role.

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

18. COMMUNITY & WELLBEING DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT - MARCH 2025 & JUNE 2025 (FILE FIN45)

(Appendix XXI – XXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that this report covered two periods for the Directorate. Appendix

1 (page 2) covered the 2024/2025 to March 2025. Appendix 2 (page 5) covered quarter 1 of 2025/26, to June 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing referred to Appendix 1, clarifying that while it was labelled as Quarter 1, the reporting period in fact covered the first four months of the year.

Councillor McBurney proposed, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore requested an update regarding the War Years Remembered project, referencing previous discussions concerning the building and involvement of Building Control. She also asked for a timescale in terms of opening.

In response, the Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that all necessary works had been completed that the grant had been awarded for. He advised that insulation in the roof had initially presented an issue with regards to Building Control compliance, and that was still to be addressed. It was a condition of the grant that the building was required to achieve building control approval before it could be opened to the public and the roof that was why that had not yet happened. The Department for Communities (DFC) had also been engaged recently, and regular contact had been maintained by Council officers. He would query the anticipated timescale with the relevant officer and report back.

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

19. NOTICES OF MOTION

19.1. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MCBURNEY AND COUNCILLOR MCCOLLUM

That this Council recognises the success of Love Ballyholme and thanks all involved for their hard work and commitment; further recognises the importance of community led initiatives to improve community cohesion, while supporting local businesses, and asks officers to bring back a report, which includes a plan and funding opportunities to support the replication of this community led model in the Rathmore area of Bangor.

(The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, joined the meeting remotely – 8.47pm)

Proposed by Councillor McBurney, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Councillor McBurney commended the success of Love Ballyholme, describing it as a fantastic initiative that had brought people together and fostered a strong sense of community. She praised the dedication of volunteers who had cultivated a collective

sense of belonging, resulting in inclusive events such as community fairs, sandcastle competitions, and Christmas lights switch-ons. She noted that local businesses had also benefited from increased footfall and extended opening hours during these events.

She extended her thanks to all those who had contributed their time, skills, and passion to the programme, acknowledging the challenge of building such a thriving and well-connected community in today's climate. She stated that Love Ballyholme had proven it was not only possible but worthwhile.

Councillor McBurney then turned attention to the Rathmore community, which she described as equally eager to foster a sense of belonging and support local businesses along Rathmore Road. She had joined a working group named Rathmore Together, formed through a series of conversations that reflected a shared desire to strengthen community ties.

She noted that Rathmore Primary School was already doing excellent work and that the group aimed to expand its reach through a series of events throughout the year. The initiative had received support from local churches, businesses, and hopefully political representatives, with the first event - a Christmas lights switch-on - planned for 25th November. She reported that preparations were well underway and that momentum among stakeholders was encouraging.

Councillor McBurney emphasised that such projects required nurturing and support to succeed. She called on the Council to assist Rathmore Together by providing officer guidance on funding opportunities and practical advice for organising and running events, acknowledging that this scale of activity was new to the group. She concluded by urging all Members to support the motion and help bring the Rathmore community closer together for the benefit of all residents.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, seconded the motion, reflecting on her personal connection to the Rathmore community. She recalled that when she first moved to Bangor West over 30 years ago, Rathmore became her home and she recalled walking through the area with her children, attending playgroups, Brownies, and Guides, shopping locally, and forming lasting friendships over coffee in the coffee shop.

She described Rathmore as being highly residential with a broad age range and diverse demographics, noting that the primary school, churches, and shops formed a vital hub that fostered a strong sense of community.

She welcomed the steps taken by the Rathmore Together group to formalise a community identity and praised the surge of enthusiasm that had met their early efforts.

Councillor McCollum emphasised the value of strong community identity, stating that it not only promoted cohesion but also helped deter antisocial behaviour, supported the local economy, and reduced loneliness and isolation. She highlighted the importance of health and wellbeing as a key outcome of such initiatives.

She expressed her hope that the group would receive full support from the Council, not only through funding opportunities, as referenced by Councillor McBurney, but also through officer guidance on event management, risk assessments, governance, and outreach. She commended the officers for their skill, motivation, and emotional investment in their work, and expressed confidence that they would help create something truly special in Rathmore.

Councillor McKee expressed support for the motion, noting a strong appetite among Rathmore residents to build a more structured and connected community.

He wondered how such an initiative had not been developed sooner and felt it appropriate for the Council's Community Development team to assist the volunteers involved, providing the same level of support and guidance they had successfully offered to other groups.

Councillor McClean also endorsed the motion, describing it as an excellent proposal.

In summing up, Councillor McBurney thanked the Mayor and Councillors McKee and McClean for their comments.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McBurney, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the notice of motion be adopted.

(The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, withdrew from the meeting – 9.54pm)

19.2. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN SMITH AND COUNCILLOR SMART

That this Council produces a report to scope the potential of introducing a public hire bicycle scheme similar to Belfast Bikes for use across the new Greenway network. That the report outlines the benefits, risks, costs, potential partnerships and any funding opportunities including those provided through DfI Active Travel to inform a Council decision on progressing such a scheme.

Alderman Smith was invited from the public gallery to propose his Notice of Motion.

Councillor McClean had initially rose to second the motion. However, he withdrew this when Councillor Smart was able to join the meeting remotely, following the resolution of technical issues.

(Councillor Smart, attending on Zoom, was connected to the meeting – 8.56pm)

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Alderman Smith outlined the motion, emphasising that while the request was for a report, he recognised the significant time and effort officers would invest in its preparation. He highlighted the Council's substantial investment in a new Greenway

network and stressed the importance of maximising its use for the benefit of the community.

He advised that he had consulted with officers, who had expressed interest in exploring the proposal further. The motion aligned with the Department for Infrastructure's Active Travel Strategy and supported the Council's transport objectives as outlined in the Local Development Plan.

Alderman Smith explained that the proposal was inspired by the Belfast Bikes scheme, launched in 2015 and recently re-tendered to a new operator, Beryl. He described how users accessed bikes via an app, with a pay-as-you-go model and discounted bundles available. He noted that Belfast had secured sponsorship and funding, including a £500,000 grant from DFI Active Travel to support the introduction of e-bikes.

He pointed out that similar cycle hire schemes operated in cities across the UK - including London, Manchester, Cardiff, and Glasgow - as well as in smaller towns such as Northampton, Southport, and Worthing. He believed there was strong potential to develop a comparable scheme in Ards and North Down.

Alderman Smith outlined a vision in which residents could use bikes or e-bikes to travel along the Greenway network, including potential partnerships with Belfast to enable travel along the Comber Greenway. He referenced a similar proposal recently submitted to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, suggesting regional collaboration could help build a broader network.

He concluded by asking Members to support the motion and instruct officers to investigate the feasibility of implementing a cycle hire scheme locally. While acknowledging that it may not be viable, he felt it was worth exploring and hoped Members would lend their support.

The seconder, Councillor Smart expressed support for the motion, noting that while the Council had long championed active travel, it was not sufficient to simply invest in infrastructure such as cycle shelters. He emphasised the importance of creating opportunities that enabled residents to fully engage with their environment.

He welcomed the substantial investment in the Greenway network, describing it as a transformative initiative that would appeal to both residents and tourists. While acknowledging that there were many details still to be worked out, he agreed with Alderman Smith that the proposal represented a significant opportunity for the Borough.

Councillor Smart highlighted the Council's broader responsibilities, including promoting the health and wellbeing of its residents. He stressed that initiatives like this could contribute meaningfully to helping people lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

He anticipated that the proposed report would involve engagement with manufacturers and service providers, as well as consultation with local groups. He believed the cycling community would be eager to contribute and hoped that

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Members would support the motion to help develop the initiative further across the Borough.

RECESS: The meeting went in to recess at 9.02pm and resumed at 9.12pm.

(Councillor Douglas withdrew from the meeting – 9.02pm)

Councillor McKee spoke in support of the motion, stating that it aligned well with similar initiatives being considered in Lisburn and Castlereagh. He emphasised that the Council would be remiss not to explore the proposal, given its potential to reduce car usage and promote healthier modes of travel. He welcomed the opportunity to investigate the feasibility of such a scheme.

Councillor McClean expressed support for the proposal and added a request that, in preparing the report, officers engage directly with local cycling groups.

He specifically referenced the Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign Group, describing it as a knowledgeable and well-respected organisation with a wide range of expertise. He believed the group would be willing to contribute valuable insights and skills to help shape the initiative.

Councillor McClean emphasised that the report should not simply conclude that the scheme was unfeasible due to the lack of economies of scale compared to larger cities like Belfast or London. Instead, he encouraged officers to explore alternative approaches by drawing on local expertise, ensuring the proposal was given the best possible chance of success.

Councillor Chambers spoke in support of the motion, stating that it was important for the Council to be seen to promote healthy and active lifestyles. He noted that cycling and the use of the Greenway network clearly aligned with this objective.

He expressed enthusiasm for the proposed scheme, suggesting it could prove highly popular if effectively managed and promoted. He was particularly interested in learning from other council areas - both within Belfast and across the UK - that had successfully implemented similar initiatives. He felt that understanding how such schemes were administered and maintained would be essential to ensuring success locally and also to avoid misuse and vandalism.

Alderman Cummings gave his full support, describing it as an excellent idea. He acknowledged that the Council had actively promoted the Cycle to Work scheme in the past and believed that this continued to be a valuable initiative.

In relation to the motion, he emphasised the importance of ensuring continuity of service - particularly in relation to the cycle paths and any associated services being proposed. He recalled feedback from users of the Comber section of the network, who had reported issues such as road narrowing and overgrowth along the path. He stressed that such concerns should be taken into account in the preparation of the report.

Alderman Cummings also raised the matter of procurement, suggesting that consideration be given to whether a separate tendering process would be required or whether the Council could align with the existing arrangements in place with Belfast City Council.

In summing up, Alderman Smith thanked Members for their positive contributions and concurred with Councillor McClean on the importance of consulting with relevant groups who could offer expertise to inform the next step.

He acknowledged the challenges posed by scale, noting that larger cities benefited from higher usage volumes, which may be more difficult to replicate locally. However, he maintained that the proposal was still worth exploring.

Referring to user data from Belfast City Council, Alderman Smith highlighted the variation in bike hire rates - ranging from up to 1,000 hires per day in central areas to as few as 20 - 30 in outlying districts. He stressed that the value of such schemes lay not solely in high usage but in providing accessible options and opportunities for active travel.

He concluded by expressing hope that the initiative would be investigated further and, if viable, taken forward. He thanked Members again for their support and looked forward to the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the notice of motion be adopted.

(Alderman Smith and Councillor Smart withdrew from the meeting – 9.22pm)

19.3. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN BROOKS AND COUNCILLOR CHAMBERS

That this Council notes the role played by Donaghadee Cricket Club in promoting sport, health, and community engagement in Donaghadee, particularly for our youth. Council further requests that officers prepare a report to look at how sports clubs like Donaghadee could be better supported by Council, particular through the lease charges levied against the clubs acknowledging the great community work these organisations do as well as the role they play in maintaining the facilities.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Alderman Brooks proposed his Notice of Motion, highlighting a Borough-wide concern regarding the revaluation of lease charges by the Land and Property Services (LPS). He explained that this issue was affecting sports clubs from Portaferry to Hollywood, placing significant financial pressure on organisations that provided substantial value to their communities in comparison to the amount of money that the Council was being asked to take under the reviewed lease charges.

He cited the example of Ards and Donaghadee Cricket Club, which had been based at Northfield since 1953. The Club had historically maintained the cricket square and wickets, with the former Ards Borough Council cutting the outfield during the season. In 1975, upon promotion to senior status, the club invested in its own grass-cutting machinery and assumed full responsibility for ground maintenance. A gentleman's agreement was established at that time whereby the club would not be charged for usage in return for maintaining the facility.

Alderman Brooks noted that the club had since requested a formal lease agreement, recognising the need to formalise the longstanding arrangement. He outlined the Club's ongoing financial commitments, including machinery upgrades, insurance, utilities, rates, and cleaning costs. He also acknowledged the voluntary contribution of members who dedicated approximately 20 hours per week to ground maintenance during the cricket season.

Over the past 50 years, the Club had invested more than £250,000 in the facility, excluding labour costs. He emphasised the Club's success, with three senior teams and a thriving youth programme involving over 40 children. He stated that the Council had acknowledged its own limitations in maintaining the ground and praised the Club's recent investment in new equipment.

Alderman Brooks stressed that many clubs across the Borough were making similarly valuable contributions, and that the lease charges being proposed represented a disproportionate burden. He argued that if the Council were to invest the equivalent amount directly into the community, the impact to Council would be minimal but it represented a massive amount of money to the clubs.

He concluded by encouraging Members to support the motion and to ensure it progressed through the Corporate Committee, where lease issues and LPS revaluations could be properly addressed. He called for a report that would seek to safeguard both small and large clubs across the Borough.

The seconder, Councillor Chambers added his support to the motion, emphasising that the request at this stage was solely for a report, rather than any immediate action. He clarified that the intention was not to place Donaghadee Cricket Club on a different footing from other clubs or organisations within the Borough, but rather to use it as a representative example.

He noted that the Club invested thousands of pounds annually in equipment and maintenance, much of which was carried out by volunteers. In addition, the Club paid lease charges for the use of its facility and contributed significantly to youth engagement and community development.

Councillor Chambers expressed concern that the Club, like others in similar circumstances, could face financial hardship due to rising costs, potentially leading to closure. He acknowledged that this was a realistic risk and stressed the importance of exploring how the Council could better support clubs that were relieving the Council of certain responsibilities and helping reduce its overall costs.

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Councillor Cochrane spoke in support of the motion, sharing his firsthand experience of engaging with Donaghadee Cricket Club and acknowledging the considerable challenges involved in running a local sports organisation. He reiterated that the motion was not intended to elevate Donaghadee Cricket Club above others, but rather to highlight the broader issue of the unfairness of lease charges and their impact on sports clubs across the Borough.

He noted that the concerns raised were applicable to many clubs and emphasised the importance of negotiating with Land and Property Services (LPS) regarding rate charges.

Councillor Cochrane questioned why the Notice of Motion had not been directed to the Corporate Committee, given it related to lease agreements. He noted that leases were regularly brought before that committee and suggested it may be a more appropriate forum for discussion. Secondly, he requested an update on the installation of larger netting.

The Head of Leisure Services acknowledged the difficulties that clubs were facing due to the issue around lease charges and the third party valuation that did not take into account the valuable work they did. He believed that Donaghadee Cricket Club was one of nine clubs affected in the Borough, pointing to other applications that were pending.

He reminded Members that they had worked on a Leisure Strategy and the issues raised in the notice of motion had been identified as a priority in Year One. While the motion would bring more emphasis, it was already in the strategy.

Regarding the cricket netting, he was unable to provide an update adding that this was likely delayed due to uncertainty over the Club's future at Northfield.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing noted that some Notices of Motions straddled multiple directorates. While this motion primarily concerned LPS valuations and lease agreements, it also related to the survival and support of sport in Donaghadee. He explained that in such cases, it was common for a motion to be heard by one committee and reported back to another, which may be the approach taken here.

Alderman Brooks, in summing up, explained that Donaghadee Cricket Club had requested a formal lease agreement, having operated without one for many years. He noted that the club was willing to pay a reasonable amount, but not the full sum currently being proposed, and clarified that they were not seeking to avoid payment entirely.

He added that the Director of Finance had advised the motion be brought to the Community and Wellbeing Committee due to its community-focused nature, though he believed it would ultimately return to the Corporate Services Committee for further consideration.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the notice of motion be adopted.

20. 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 Cummings, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

21. APPOINTMENT OF MOBILE SAUNA OPERATORS (FILE PC143)

****ITEM DELAGATED FOR APPROVAL****

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of this report was to update Members on the appointment of Mobile Sauna Service providers at various locations in the Borough and to seek approval to move forward following the recent expression of interest period.

Hosting the longest coastline of any Northern Ireland Council Borough and including a number of award-winning beaches and designated bathing waters, Ards and North Down had experienced an influx of residents and visitors enjoying the coastal facilities.

Parks Officers had advertised an expression of interest period of six weeks in local papers and Council communication channels including social media. The closing date for applications was 8th August 2025 at 16:00. Applications had been sought from suitably qualified Mobile Sauna Service providers for three of its visitor car parks for the period 1 October 2025 – 30 September 2026, with the option to extend for a further two one-year periods after review and on written consent of both parties. A total of 6 bids had been received from 4 businesses for locations assigned in the Mobile Sauna Services documents.

An evaluation panel of Council Officers had evaluated the applications. To ensure a best value approach, the award was based on a combination of quality and price criteria. To achieve this, evaluations were conducted using a 2-stage process

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the application for the provision of Mobile Sauna Services to the top scoring company.

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

22. SINGLE TENDER ACTION - WILLOW BEACONS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a Good Relations Strategy (2025–2028) had been agreed by Council in 2025. The Strategy informed an annual action plan, which was submitted to the Executive Office for assessment and approval. The Action Plan was based on the four key themes of the Executive’s Strategy Together Building United Communities:

- Children and Young People
- Shared Community
- Safe Community
- Cultural Expression

Under the Cultural Expression theme, the Good Relations team had managed the Cultural Expression Programme for Council, dealing with a number of bonfire festivals around the borough. As part of the Cultural Expression Programme, Council supplied, when requested by the community, alternatives to traditional bonfires (e.g. Willow Beacons).

Good Relations had received Expressions of Interest for a total of 7 alternative bonfires (e.g. Willow Beacons) as part of the Cultural Expression Agreement 2025. These requests often varied, largely depending on external influences.

RECOMMENDED that Council set aside the recommended procurement policy and approves the Single Tender Action award to awarded to the top scoring company as detailed in this report.

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

23. PSCP MINUTES (FILE PCSP MINS)

(Appendix XXIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:7: PREVENTION, INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION OF CRIME

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council PCSP Partnership was held on 16th June 2025

At the meeting on the 16th June, the PCSP Partnership approved the minutes of 19th May 2025.

The minutes were attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the minutes.

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

24. LEISURE CENTRES THREE YEAR FINANCE (FILE LS/LA 21)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware from budgetary reports of the ongoing financial growth delivered by its leisure services unit, and in particular the growth in participation of users and the resulting budgetary performance at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. This report aimed to set out in detail, for Members' information, the financial performance of its centres.

Financial Information

The tables below set out the financial performance for Council-run indoor leisure facilities, namely: Comber Leisure Centre, Portaferry Sports Centre, Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex, and Londonderry Park over three years—2024/25, 2023/24, and 2022/23.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.45pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	24 September 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place & Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Date of Report	05 September 2025
File Reference	TOTD187
Legislation	The Tourism (NI) Order 1992
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Request for Delegated Authority Tourism NI draft Corporate Plan 2025/28
Attachments	none

The Department for the Economy's Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan recognises the important contribution which the tourism sector can make to our region's economy. Tourism NI welcomes the ambition set out in the Plan and looks forward to playing its part in making this vision a reality over the next ten years and is therefore consulting on its Draft Corporate Plan 2025/28. Its Corporate Plan 2025/28 sets out how they propose to do this for this three-year period.

As responses are required to be submitted by 5pm on 22 October 2025, it is proposed that authority is delegated to the October meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee to agree a final Council response.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council delegates authority to the October meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee to agree a final response to the draft Tourism NI Corporate Plan 2025/26.

Unclassified

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ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	24 September 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	12 September 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Resolution - Funding Cuts by Arts Council to National Youth Choir (Correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter from the Chief Executive to the Chief Executive of Arts Council Appendix 2 - Response from Chief Executive of Arts Council to Chief Executive

Background

At the August meeting of the Council, consideration was given to a Resolution from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council on the funding cuts by the Arts Council to the National Youth Choir. The following decision was agreed:

“That Council responds with its support for the Motion and writes to the Chief Executive of the Arts Council along with the Communities Minister asking to find a way forward to prevent the collapse of this institution.”

On 4 September, the Chief Executive wrote to the Chief Executive of the Arts Council as well as the Minister for Communities. The Letter to the Arts Council is enclosed at appendix 1.

Not Applicable

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A response was received from Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council on 9 September and is enclosed at appendix 2 for Members information.

At the time of writing, a response from the Minister for Communities is still outstanding.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

4 September 2025

Roisin McDonough
Arts Council NI
Linen Hill House
23 Linenhall Street
Lisburn
BT28 1FJ

Sent via email only: chief@artscouncil-ni.org

Dear Roisin,

At a Meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council held on 27 August 2025, the Council requested that I write to you to outline their support and agreement with Newry Mourne and Down District Council in their disappointment and sadness at the funding cuts by the Arts Council to the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland.

The Council acknowledged the significant cultural impact the organisation has had on music in Northern Ireland. The National Youth Choir has been a platform for thousands of young singers from across Northern Ireland and a career platform for well-known performers many of whom who have gone on to represent Northern Ireland on the world stage.

I have also written to the Minister of Communities, asking to find a way forward to prevent the collapse of this institution and hope you will lend your support.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

From: Hanna, Shirley <S.Hanna@artscouncil-ni.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 9, 2025 2:22 PM
To: McCullough, Susie <Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Sent on behalf of Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive

Dear Susie

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 September on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council regarding the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland (NYCNI).

NYCNI did not receive funding from the Arts Council's 25-26 Annual Funding Programme. The decision not to fund the NYCNI this year was based on the assessment of the application against the programme criteria. The Arts Council cannot disclose specific information about the rejection of any application without explicit permission to do so from the rejected applicant.

Applications to the Annual Funding Programme were assessed in keeping with the criteria and process as published in the guidance notes which can be viewed at <https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/Annual-Funding-Programme-2025-26-Guidance-Notes.pdf>

Further to the release of the decision to the NYCNI in April, ACNI staff members provided the company with detailed feedback on their application and also discussed their immediate plans and future funding opportunities. Following the decision, a funding review process was also open to the organisation – as signposted in their rejection letter. NYCNI chose not to submit a funding review request. The organisation also chose not to submit an application to ACNI's next major funding round, which opened in May for awards up to £75k: the National Lottery Project Funding programme.

We recognise the vacuum created by the organisation's decision not to consider applying for other sources of Arts Council funding and we share your concerns. We aim to convene discussions with relevant stakeholders in the near future to assess alternative options

Yours sincerely
Roisin

Shirley Hanna
PA to Chief Executive

Web: www.artscouncil-ni.org

Address: Arts Council of Northern Ireland, The MAC, 10 Exchange Street West, Belfast BT1 2NJ



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	24 September 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	18 September 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Resolution - CAR - T Cell Therapy response from Health Minister NI and Health Minister ROI
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter from the Chief Executive to the Health Minister of NI Appendix 2 - Response from Health Minister of NI Appendix 3 Letter from the Chief Executive to the Health Minister ROI Appendix 4 Response from the Health Minister ROI

Background

At the August meeting of the Council, consideration was given to a Resolution from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, recognising the urgent need for patients in Northern Ireland requiring CAR-T cell therapy to have timely and compassionate access to treatment closer to home. The Department of Health in the Republic has an existing Memorandum of Understanding on All-Island Cancer Services, signed following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999 and renewed in 2021, which provides a framework for cross-border cooperation in oncology. CAR-T treatment will not be

Not Applicable

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available in Northern Ireland until 2030/31 at the earliest, and that access to St James’s Hospital, where CAR-T services are already in place, would allow patients to receive treatment within driving distance of home, with the vital support of their families.

Council agreed to support the Resolution and write to the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland requesting that the NI Department of Health immediately begin negotiations with their counterparts in the Republic to secure access to CAR-T therapy at St James’s Hospital for eligible Northern Ireland patients. As well as to the Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland requesting that the Irish Government support and facilitate this cooperation as a matter of urgency. The Chief Executive wrote both letters as agreed.

A response was received from Mike Nesbitt, Minister of Health for Northern Ireland on 16 September and is enclosed at appendix 2 for Members information.
 A response was received from Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, Minister for Health for Republic of Ireland at appendix 4 for Members information.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

4 September 2025

Sent via email only: mike.nesbitt@mla.niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

Re: Notice of Motion – CAR-T Cell Therapy

At a Meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council held on 27 August 2025, the Council requested that I write to you to outline their support and agreement with Newry Mourne and Down District Council to call upon the Department of Health to recognise the urgent need for patients in Northern Ireland requiring CAR-T cell therapy to have timely and compassionate access to treatment closer to home through access to services at St James' Hospital.

The Council acknowledges that the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland has an existing Memorandum of Understanding on All-Island Cancer Services, signed following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999 and renewed in 2021, which provides a framework for cross-border cooperation in oncology.

CAR-T treatment will not be available in Northern Ireland until 2030/31 at the earliest, and access to St James's Hospital, Dublin where CAR-T services are already in place would allow patients to receive treatment within driving distance of home, with the vital support of their families.

The Council therefore call on your Department to immediately begin negotiations with your counterparts in the Republic of Ireland to secure access to CAR-T therapy at St James's Hospital for eligible Northern Ireland patients.

The Council asks that you prioritise this issue within the NI Department of Health. I have written the same to the Minister for Health in the Dáil.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Susie McCullough,
Chief Executive,
Ards and North Down Borough Council
By Email
Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 90522556

Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: COR-1310-2025

Date ¹⁷ September 2025

Dear

Susie

Thank you for your correspondence dated 4 September 2025 regarding access to Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy (CAR T-cell therapy) at St James Hospital, Dublin, for eligible Northern Ireland patients.

I very much recognise the benefits of working jointly with the Republic of Ireland (RoI) on areas of health and social care where there are mutual benefits to be gained. As you are aware, an All-Island Cancer Consortium was established in 1999 as an output from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The consortium is a tripartite partnership involving Ireland, Northern Ireland and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the USA that aims to enhance cancer research and cancer care on the island of Ireland.

The Consortium is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ireland, Northern Ireland and the USA. The MoU was refreshed in 2021 and it is envisaged that it will provide high-level political endorsement for all-island co-operation on cancer research and care, serving as a background framework for further co-operation in this area.

Additionally, in March 2023, a North-South Cancer Policy and Strategic Group was established. This group brings together policy and operational staff from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to consider all aspects of cancer care and ensure that patients receive the best care possible across the island of Ireland.

Work to develop an adult CAR T-cell therapy service in Northern Ireland is currently linked to the planned development of the Haematology Ward at the Belfast City Hospital site. The business case for this planned development is currently being finalised for approval by Department officials. I am committed to working towards this planned development proceeding. I envisage that a CAR-T Cell therapy service could be operational in Northern Ireland by 2030-31.

Rol officials have indicated that their CAR-T Cell therapy service is currently operating at capacity and cannot support additional patients accessing these services from Northern Ireland on a cross-border basis at this time. To develop additional capacity would require significant capital investment and therefore take longer to implement than the proposed timeline to develop a Northern Ireland CAR-T cell therapy service. The current position where patients travel to Great Britain for CAR T-cell therapy remains the only viable option for adults from Northern Ireland requiring this treatment at this time.

My Departmental officials will continue to work closely with Rol cancer policy and clinical leads on the development of opportunities for cross-border services for new and emerging therapies and service demand consistent with the commitments of the MoU.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



MIKE NESBITT
MINISTER OF HEALTH



Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill
 Health Minister
 Department of Health
 Block 1, Miesian Plaza
 50 – 58 Lower Baggot Street
 Dublin 2
 D02 XW14

4 September 2025

Sent via email only: jennifer.carrollmacneill@oireachtas.ie

Dear Minister,

Re: Notice of Motion – CAR-T Cell Therapy

At a meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council held on 27 August 2025, the Council requested that I write to you to outline their support and agreement with Newry Mourne and Down District Council to call upon the Department of Health to recognise the urgent need for patients in Northern Ireland requiring CAR-T cell therapy to have timely and compassionate access to treatment closer to home.

The Council acknowledges that the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland has an existing Memorandum of Understanding on All-Island Cancer Services, signed following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999 and renewed in 2021, which provides a framework for cross-border cooperation in oncology.

CAR-T treatment will not be available in Northern Ireland until 2030/31 at the earliest, and access to St James's Hospital where CAR-T services are already in place, would allow patients to receive treatment within driving distance of home, with the vital support of their families.

The Council therefore call on your Department to immediately begin negotiations with your counterparts in the Northern Ireland Department of Health, to secure access to CAR-T therapy at St James's Hospital for eligible patients in Northern Ireland.

The Council asks that you prioritise this issue within your Department. I have written the same to the Minister for Health in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Yours sincerely,

Susie McCullough
 Chief Executive

Received by email

HEA-MO-06552-2025

23rd September 2025

Dear Ms. McCullough,

On behalf of the Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, I would like to thank you for your correspondence regarding a Car T-Cell therapy motion from Ards and North Down Borough council. Enhancing North-South cooperation is a priority for the Irish Government and the Minister is committed to working with partners in Northern Ireland to improve cooperation in health and social care where there are clear benefits for both jurisdictions and for patients across the island.

Car T-Cell therapy was established in Ireland at Saint James Hospital (SJH) Dublin for the first time to adults in 2021 and children in 2022. Capacity is however currently constrained by limited transplant beds and staffing shortages. The service is being expanded to University Hospital Galway (UHG) in Q4 2025. This site will provide CAR T-cell therapy for adult patients in the south and west of the country, which will increase capacity nationally. Over the coming months, CAR T-cell therapy at UHG will be in its early stages of development and the substantial portion of treatment will continue to be met by SJH for the foreseeable future, before an increase in capacity is expected to be fully realised.

There is a long history of cooperation between the Department of Health Ireland and the Department of Health Northern Ireland, with Senior Officials meeting regularly and working together to improve health and social care provision for the benefit of patients across the island. There are also a number of agreements in place covering specific specialist Cross Border initiatives that ensure that patients can receive a range of medical procedures/services as close to home as possible.

Ongoing engagement at official level continues and includes work on the exploration of those areas of health cooperation that could be further expanded to benefit residents on the island of Ireland on a cross-border basis.

Given the similar health challenges faced by each jurisdiction, working collaboratively to maximise the potential for service planning and delivery is of the utmost importance and, as such, enhancing North-South cooperation will continue to be a priority for the Irish Government.

I trust this of assistance to you,

Yours sincerely,

Eoghan Flynn

Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Unclassified

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ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	30 September 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks & Cemeteries
Date of Report	02 September 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Facilitating Natural, Low-Carbon and Sustainable Burials
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Resolution - Letter for Group Motion on Sustainable Burial Options

The All-Party Group on Climate Action (APG) has written to all Council's to request support in exploring and enabling more sustainable end-of-life options in Northern Ireland. The request can be found in Appendix 1. The Council Meeting held on 27th August agreed that Officers would prepare a draft response to the APG which would be presented to Council at their September meeting ahead of the submission deadline of 30 September.

Traditional burial and cremation have long been the default options for end-of-life care in Northern Ireland. However, these methods do carry significant environmental impacts from land consumption to high carbon emissions. Additionally, embalmed prior to burial is widely used in Northern Ireland. Embalming involves the use of chemicals like formaldehyde, phenol, and methanol, which are toxic and pose a considerable risk of leaching into groundwater and contaminating ecosystems. Despite most burials or cremations occurring within three days of death, when embalming may not be necessary, it remains standard practice in Northern Ireland.

Not Applicable

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The request from the All Party group is for each Council to specifically:

1. Examine the feasibility of providing sustainable burial options within existing or new cemeteries, including designated natural burial grounds or woodland burial areas; and
2. Report back to the All-Party Group on Climate Action if there are any legislative, planning, infrastructure, or regulatory barriers to delivering such options locally

As public awareness of these impacts grows, a new conversation is emerging around sustainable and dignified alternatives. Council acknowledges the environmental challenges associated with traditional burial and cremation practices, including high carbon emissions, chemical pollution from embalming, and long-term land use challenges. The alternative approaches such as natural burial which involves placing the body in a biodegradable coffin or shroud, without embalming, in a natural setting such as a woodland or meadow. Graves are often unmarked or identified with a tree and simple plaque or GPS coordinate. The aim is to allow the body to decompose naturally with minimal environmental disruption. In addition, other emerging methods, offer potential ecological benefits and align with the growing public interest in low-impact funerals are worth exploring.

The Council has set out its commitments to climate action through our Corporate Plan, draft Climate Action Plan, Roadmap to Sustainability, and Climate Adaptation Plan. We recognise that alternative, lower-impact burial practices could align with these commitments and may also provide wider benefits such as biodiversity enhancement and reduced long-term maintenance requirements. We note the potential for such practices to contribute, in a sensitive way, towards reducing environmental impacts, including carbon emissions and potential for sequestration.

At this stage, Council needs more time to assess the feasibility of introducing such options locally, including consideration of infrastructure requirements, planning matters, and any potential regulatory issues. Many of these issues are likely to apply across Northern Ireland and may benefit from a joined-up approach.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council welcomes the suggestion of the All-Party Group on Climate Action in commending natural, low-carbon and sustainable burial options, and responds to the attached letter to say it will in due course review sustainable end-of-life options for the Borough. Furthermore that Council recommends that a joined up approach across Councils to answer the questions should be instigated first to allow a collaborative review to be undertaken of the issues raised.

All-Party Group on Climate Action

Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Belfast



Date: 20 June 2025

**To: Chief Executives and Elected Members
All Local Councils in Northern Ireland**

Dear Colleagues,

RE: Facilitating Natural, Low-Carbon and Sustainable Burial Options

The All-Party Group on Climate Action is writing to request your Council's support in exploring and enabling more sustainable end-of-life options in Northern Ireland. As outlined in the briefing [Beyond Burial and Cremation](#), traditional burial and cremation practices carry significant environmental costs, including high carbon emissions, chemical pollution, and long-term land use challenges.

As public awareness of these impacts grows, so too does the demand for dignified, low-carbon alternatives such as natural (green) burial, tree pod interment, and other emerging methods. Natural burial - carried out without embalming, in biodegradable shrouds or coffins, and with minimal ongoing maintenance - offers a simple and ecologically restorative option already adopted in other parts of the UK.

We therefore ask each Council to:

- 1. Examine the feasibility of providing sustainable burial options** within existing or new cemeteries, including designated natural burial grounds or woodland burial areas;
- 2. Report back to the All-Party Group on Climate Action** if there are any legislative, planning, infrastructure, or regulatory barriers to delivering such options locally.

This initiative is in keeping with the rising public interest in low-impact funerals, particularly among younger generations and environmentally conscious individuals. It also offers Councils an opportunity to reduce long-term maintenance costs, enhance biodiversity, and show climate leadership at community level.

We would be grateful if responses could be submitted to the APG Secretariat (nichola@sustainableni.org) by 30 September 2025 if possible, so we may consider them collectively and engage further with Ministers and relevant departments. Thank you for your commitment to climate action and public wellbeing.

Yours sincerely,

Danny Donnelly
MLA for East Antrim

Chair, All-Party Group on Climate Action
Northern Ireland Assembly

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	10 September 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Responsible Head of Service	Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services
Date of Report	24 September 2025
File Reference	CW49
Legislation	Dilapidation Bill 2025 (as introduced)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Dilapidation Bill 2025 - Consultation Response
Attachments	Appendix 1 Dilapidation Bill (as introduced) Appendix 2 Draft Response to Dilapidation Bill

The Northern Ireland Assembly has opened a public consultation on the proposed Dilapidation Bill, led by the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The consultation period closes on 10th October 2025 and invites feedback from stakeholders on proposed legislative changes.

Development of the Dilapidation Bill began in 2012, following extensive engagement between DAERA, Councils, and key stakeholders. This process included two “Blight Summits” and led to responses to the Department of the Environment’s (DOE) Discussion Document in 2014, followed by a formal public policy consultation in 2016.

Earlier engagement identified several key issues that the Bill seeks to address:

- Consolidating and streamlining the various legislative regimes currently in operation in Northern Ireland.

Not Applicable

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- Introducing robust cost recovery mechanisms to support enforcement.
- Expanding the scope of powers to address legislative gaps compared to other jurisdictions.
- Enhancing protections for heritage buildings at risk of neglect or decay.

The Bill outlines a revised framework for how councils in Northern Ireland address issues of dilapidated and derelict buildings and properties. Key proposals aim to streamline processes and strengthen enforcement powers.

Key proposals within the Dilapidation Bill include:

- **Maintenance Notice:** A new power enabling councils to require remedial works on buildings or land that negatively impact the amenity of an area.
- **Dilapidation Notice:** Requires works to buildings that are *seriously* detrimental to local amenity. This mirrors existing provisions under Article 66 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (NI) Order 1978.
- **Dangerous Structure Notice:** Allows councils to mandate works on buildings deemed dangerous. This could significantly expand councils' enforcement responsibilities beyond current limits.
- **Defective Premises Notice:** Applies where a statutory nuisance exists, similar to powers under Article 65 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (NI) Order 1978.
- **Emergency Action Powers:** Enable councils to take immediate action to eliminate imminent danger.
- **Cost Recovery:** In all cases, councils may carry out necessary works and recover reasonably incurred costs either through the courts or by placing a charge on the property.
- **Heritage Sites:** Additional consultation is required with the Planning Service and the Department for Communities when dealing with listed buildings, conservation areas, or historic monuments.
- **Fixed Penalties:** A £500 fixed penalty may be issued for non-compliance with a Maintenance Notice or failure to provide requested information.

Due to the scope of the Bill, it will impact the work of several Council services, such as Environmental Health, Planning, Building Control and Regeneration. The consultation proposals are broadly welcomed, and officers support the introduction of a new legislative framework to address a wide range of issues. It is anticipated that, with strengthened powers and improved cost recovery mechanisms, councils could take a more proactive approach to tackling environmental blight. This, in turn, could deliver wider benefits across public health, safety, economic development, tourism, regeneration, and the reduction of anti-social behaviour.

However, concerns remain around the adequacy of council resourcing and the effectiveness of cost recovery provisions, which will be critical to successful implementation, and is reflected in the proposed response.

It is important to note that DAERA has not yet issued detailed guidance on the proposed provisions within the Dilapidation Bill. As a result, it is currently not possible to provide a fully informed response to the legal and operational implications of the new framework. Further clarity is needed to assess how the legislation will be

Not Applicable

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implemented in practice and what impact it may have on council responsibilities and resources.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agree to the draft response to the Dilapidation Bill being submitted.

Dilapidation Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE

At Introduction the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had made the following statement under section 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

“In my view the Dilapidation Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.”

Dilapidation Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

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- 2. Appeal against maintenance notice
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Dangerous structures

- 7. Dangerous structure notice
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SCHEDULES:

- Schedule 1 — Fixed Penalties
- Schedule 2 — Repeals

A

BILL

TO

Confer functions on district councils in connection with the dilapidation of buildings and other land.

BE IT ENACTED by being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and assented to by His Majesty as follows:

Detriment to local amenity

Maintenance notice

1.—(1) This section applies if it appears to a district council that a building or other land in its district is, because of its condition, detrimental to the amenity of a part of the council’s district or of an adjoining district.

(2) The council may serve a notice under this section (a “maintenance notice”) on any person with an interest in the land to require the person to take the steps specified in the notice for remedying the condition of the land within the period so specified.

Appeal against maintenance notice

2.—(1) A person on whom a maintenance notice is served, or any other person with an interest in the land to which the notice applies, may appeal to a court of summary jurisdiction against the notice.

(2) An appeal under this section may be brought only on the grounds—

- (a) that the condition of the land is not detrimental to amenity as specified in the notice,
- (b) that the condition of the land is attributable to, and of a kind which in the ordinary course of events results from, the carrying on of operations on the land or the use of land (in so far as not contravening Part 3 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011),

- (c) that the requirements of the notice exceed what is necessary for preventing the condition of the land from adversely affecting amenity as specified in the notice,
 - (d) that the period specified in the notice is unreasonably short, or
 - 5 (e) that the district council failed, before serving the notice, to have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department.
- (3) An appeal under this section may not be brought after the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice takes effect (see section 21(1)).
- (4) For further provision on appeals, see section 22.

10 **Breach of maintenance notice**

- 3.—(1) If the steps required by a maintenance notice have not been taken within the period for complying with the notice, the district council which served the notice may itself take those steps.
- (2) A person on whom a maintenance notice is served commits an offence if
- 15 the person fails to comply with the notice.
- (3) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (2) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

Serious detriment to local amenity

Dilapidation notice

- 20 4.—(1) This section applies if it appears to a district council that a building in its district is, because of its dilapidated condition, seriously detrimental to the amenity of a part of the council's district or of an adjoining district.
- (2) The council may serve a notice under this section (a "dilapidation notice") on any person with an interest in the building to require the person—
- 25 (a) to demolish the whole or part of the building within the period specified in the notice and to remove the material resulting from the demolition, or
- (b) if the council does not consider demolition necessary, to carry out the work specified in the notice as the remedial work which the council considers necessary in the interests of amenity, within the period specified
- 30 in the notice.
- (3) A dilapidation notice under subsection (2)(b) may inform the person on whom it is served that the person may apply in writing to the council for permission to demolish the building instead of carrying out the work specified in the notice; and, if the person applies for permission to do so, the council must
- 35 notify the person in writing of its decision on the application.
- (4) Where the council gives permission under subsection (3), the notification under that subsection may require the person—
- (a) to remove the material resulting from the demolition, and
- (b) to comply with such other conditions as the notification specifies.
- 40 (5) Nothing in this section exempts an interested person from the obligation to comply with any other statutory provision relating to the condition of the building.

Appeal against dilapidation notice

5.—(1) A person on whom a dilapidation notice is served, or any other person who has an interest in the building to which the notice applies, may appeal to a court of summary jurisdiction against the notice.

- 5 (2) An appeal under this section may be brought only on the grounds—
- (a) that the building is not seriously detrimental to amenity as specified in the notice,
 - (b) that the requirements of the notice exceed what is necessary for restoring the building to a condition such that it would not be seriously detrimental to amenity as specified in the notice,
 - 10 (c) in a case where the district council requires the demolition of the building, that it would instead be feasible to carry out works which would restore the building to a condition such that it would not be seriously detrimental to amenity as specified in the notice,
 - 15 (d) that the period specified in the notice is unreasonably short, or
 - (e) that the council failed, before serving the notice, to have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department.
- (3) An appeal under this section may not be brought after the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice takes effect (see section 21(1)).
- 20 (4) For further provision on appeals, see section 22.

Breach of dilapidation notice

6.—(1) If, on a complaint to a court of summary jurisdiction by a district council, it appears to the court that a person on whom the council served a dilapidation notice has failed to comply with the notice or with a condition specified in a notification under section 4(3), the court may order the person to comply with the notice or condition.

25 (2) Where a person on whom a dilapidation notice is served fails to comply with the notice or a condition specified in a notification under section 4(3), or with an order under subsection (1), the council may itself do whatever the notice or condition required the person to do.

30 (3) A person on whom a dilapidation notice is served commits an offence if the person fails to comply with the notice or with a condition specified in a notification under section 4(3).

35 (4) A person on whom a dilapidation notice under section 4(2)(b) is served commits an offence if the person demolishes the whole or part of the building in question without having obtained permission under section 4(3).

 (5) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (3) or (4) is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;
- 40 (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years (or to both).

Dangerous structures

Dangerous structure notice

7.—(1) This section applies if it appears to a district council that a building in its district—

- 5 (a) is in such a condition as to be dangerous, or
- (b) is used to carry such loads as to be dangerous.

(2) The council must, unless it decides to act under section 10 (emergency action), serve a notice under this section (a “dangerous structure notice”) on at least one person who has an interest in the building to require the person—

- 10 (a) to demolish the whole or part of the building within the period specified in the notice and to remove the material resulting from the demolition, or
- (b) if the council does not consider demolition necessary, to carry out within the period specified in the notice work necessary to remove or prevent the danger.

15 (3) A dangerous structure notice under subsection (2)(b) may inform the person on whom it is served that the person may apply in writing to the council for permission to demolish the building instead of carrying out the work specified in the notice; and, if the person applies for permission to do so, the council must notify the person in writing of its decision on the application.

20 (4) Where the council gives permission under subsection (3), the notification under that subsection may require the person—

- (a) to remove the material resulting from the demolition, and
- (b) to comply with such other conditions as the notification specifies.

25 (5) In a case within subsection (1)(b), a dangerous structure notice may also restrict the use of the building until the council, on being satisfied that the necessary work has been carried out, withdraws or modifies the restriction.

(6) Nothing in this section exempts an interested person from the obligation to comply with any other statutory provision relating to the condition of the building.

30 (7) The council may charge an interested person a fee, of such amount and in accordance with such procedure as the Department may by regulations specify, for exercising its power under this section.

(8) Section 30 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 (repair of dangerous structures etc.) ceases to apply in relation to a building within the meaning of this Act.

35 **Appeal against dangerous structure notice**

8.—(1) A person on whom a dangerous structure notice is served, or any other person who has an interest in the building to which the notice applies, may appeal to a court of summary jurisdiction against the notice.

(2) An appeal under this section may be brought only on the grounds—

- 40 (a) that the building is not dangerous as specified in the notice,
- (b) that the requirements of the notice exceed what is necessary for restoring the building to a condition such that it would not be dangerous as specified in the notice,

(c) that the period specified in the notice is unreasonably short, or

(d) that the district council failed, before serving the notice, to have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department.

5 (3) An appeal under this section may not be brought after the end of 14 days beginning with the day on which the notice takes effect (see section 21(1)).

(4) For further provision on appeals, see section 22.

Breach of dangerous structure notice

10 **9.**—(1) If, on a complaint to a court of summary jurisdiction by a district council, it appears to the court that a person on whom the council served a dangerous structure notice has failed to comply with the notice or with a condition specified in a notification under section 7(3), the court may order the person to comply with the notice or condition.

15 (2) Where a person on whom a dangerous structure notice is served fails to comply with the notice or a condition specified in a notification under section 7(3), or with an order under subsection (1), the council may itself do whatever the notice or condition required the person to do.

(3) A person on whom a dangerous structure notice is served commits an offence if the person fails to comply with the notice or with a condition specified in a notification under section 7(3).

20 (4) A person on whom a dangerous structure notice under section 7(2)(b) is served commits an offence if the person demolishes the whole or part of the building in question without having obtained permission under section 7(3).

(5) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (3) or (4) is liable—

25 (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years (or to both).

Emergency action

10.—(1) This section applies if it appears to a district council that—

30 (a) a building in its district is in such a condition or is used to carry such loads as to be dangerous, and

(b) immediate action should be taken to remove the danger.

(2) The council may take whatever steps are necessary to remove the danger.

(3) The council may not exercise its power under subsection (2) unless it has conducted an assessment of—

35 (a) the consequences of the building being dangerous,

(b) the likelihood of those consequences occurring, and

(c) the seriousness of those consequences if they were to occur.

40 (4) Before exercising its power under subsection (2) (and having conducted the assessment under subsection (3)), the council must, if it is reasonably practicable for it to do so, give notice of its intention to exercise the power to the owner and the occupier of the building and such other interested persons as the council considers appropriate.

(5) The council may charge an interested person a fee, of such amount and in accordance with such procedure as the Department may by regulations specify, for exercising its power under subsection (2).

5 (6) Within the period of seven days beginning with the date on which the council begins to exercise its power under subsection (2), the council must serve notice on at least one person who appears to have an interest in the building—

(a) specifying the immediate action which is being taken by the council to remove the danger; and

10 (b) advising that an appeal may be brought under subsection (8) to a court of summary jurisdiction against that action.

(7) Subsection (6) does not apply if the council cannot, with all reasonable endeavours, identify any person with an interest in the building.

(8) An appeal under this subsection may be brought only on the grounds that the council is not justified in exercising its power under subsection (2) as—

15 (a) immediate action is not required to remove any danger;

(b) the steps being taken by the council exceed what is necessary to remove any danger; or

(c) the council failed to have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department.

20 (9) An appeal under subsection (8) may not be brought after the end of 14 days beginning with the day on which the notice under subsection (6) takes effect (see section 21(1)).

(10) For further provision on appeals, see section 22.

(11) Where—

25 (a) a court of summary jurisdiction (whether on appeal under subsection (8) or on an application under this subsection) determines that a council is not justified in the exercise of its power under subsection (2); and

(b) an interested person sustains damage as a result of the exercise of that power,

30 the person is entitled to compensation.

(12) Any dispute as to the fact of damage or the amount of compensation is to be determined—

(a) by arbitration to a single arbitrator appointed by agreement between the parties, or

35 (b) if there is no such agreement, by the Lands Tribunal.

(13) This section does not apply to a building forming part of—

(a) a mine within the meaning of the Mines Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 (see section 156 of that Act), or

40 (b) a quarry within the meaning of the Quarries (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (see Article 2 of that Order).

Defective premises

Defective premises notice

- 11.—(1) This section applies if it appears to a district council that—
- (a) there are premises in its district which are in a defective state, but
 - 5 (b) there would be an unreasonable delay in remedying the defective state of the premises if the procedure under Part 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (statutory nuisance) were to be followed.
- (2) “Premises” has the same meaning as in that Part of that Act (see section 10 63(10) of that Act); and premises are in a “defective state” if they are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance.
- (3) The council may serve a notice (a “defective premises notice”)—
- (a) stating that it intends to remedy the defective state of the premises, and
 - (b) specifying the defects which it intends to remedy.
- 15 (4) A defective premises notice may be served—
- (a) if the defective state of the premises arises from a structural defect, on the owner, or
 - (b) in any other case, on the person responsible for the premises being in a defective state or, if that person cannot be found, on the owner or the occupier.
- 20 (5) After the end of nine days after a defective premises notice takes effect, the council may carry out whatever works are necessary to remedy the defective state of the premises.
- (6) If, within seven days after a defective premises notice takes effect, the person 25 on whom it was served serves a counter-notice on the council that the person intends to remedy the defects specified in the defective premises notice, the council may not take any action under that notice unless the person—
- (a) fails, within whatever the council considers a reasonable time, to begin to carry out works to remedy the defects, or
 - 30 (b) having begun to carry out works to remedy the defects, fails to make such progress towards their completion as the council considers reasonable.
- (7) Within the period of seven days beginning with the date on which the council begins to carry out works under subsection (5), the council must serve notice on the person on whom the defective premises notice was served advising that an 35 appeal may be brought under subsection (8) to a court of summary jurisdiction against the carrying out of the works.
- (8) An appeal under this subsection may be brought only on the grounds—
- (a) that the premises are not in a defective state;
 - (b) that the works being carried out by the council under subsection (5) exceed 40 what is necessary to remedy the defective state of the premises;
 - (c) that the council failed to have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department.

(9) An appeal under subsection (8) may not be brought after the end of 14 days beginning with the day on which the notice under subsection (7) takes effect (see section 21(1)).

(10) For further provision on appeals, see section 22.

5

Liability for costs, etc.

Costs of district council

10 **12.**—(1) Where a district council acts under section 3(1), 6(2), 9(2) or 10(2) (carrying out work), it may recover the costs which it reasonably incurs in so acting from such of the persons who at that time have an interest in the land in question as the council considers appropriate.

(2) In proceedings to recover costs under subsection (1), the court may consider whether a person other than the defendant ought to be liable for the whole or part of the costs; and the court may accordingly make such order in that respect as it considers appropriate.

15 (3) But the court may not make an order under subsection (2) unless it is satisfied that the other person has had due notice of the proceedings and an opportunity of being heard.

20 (4) Where a council acts under section 10(2), it may not recover the costs it incurs in fencing off the building, or arranging for it to be watched, in so far as those costs relate to a period—

(a) after the danger has been removed by the action the council took, or

(b) if an order has been made under section 7 for the purpose of removing the danger, after the order has been complied with or has been executed under section 9(2).

25 (5) In proceedings to recover costs reasonably incurred by a council in acting under section 10(2), the court must determine whether it would have been reasonable for the council to have acted instead under section 7; and, if the court determines that it would have been, the council may not recover the whole or any part of the costs.

30 (6) Where a council acts under section 11(5) or (6) (defective premises notice), it may, subject to subsections (7) and (8), recover the costs it reasonably incurs in so acting as if the costs had been incurred under section 67(5) of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

35 (7) In proceedings to recover costs by virtue of subsection (6), the court must determine whether the council was justified in serving the defective premises notice; and if the court determines that the council was not justified in doing so, the council may not recover the whole or any part of the costs.

40 (8) If the defendant in proceedings to recover costs by virtue of subsection (6) proves service of a counter-notice under section 11(6), the court must determine whether either of the conditions referred to in that provision was met; and if the court determines that neither condition was met, the council may not recover the whole or any part of the costs.

(9) A council may sell any materials (other than rubbish)—

45 (a) which it removes from land when acting under a provision referred to in subsection (1), and

(b) which the owner of the land does not, before the end of three days from the date of their removal, claim and take away.

(10) Where a council sells materials under subsection (9), it must pay the proceeds to the person to whom the materials belonged, after deducting the amount of any costs recoverable by the council from that person.

Charge on land

13.—(1) Any costs which a district council is entitled to recover under section 12 are, until they are recovered, a charge on the estate in the land in question of the owner and any person deriving title from the owner.

(2) A charge created under subsection (1) is enforceable as if it were a mortgage by deed granted to the council by the person on whose estate it has been created (with, where necessary, any authorisation or consent required by law).

(3) The council may accordingly exercise the powers under sections 19, 21 and 22 of the Conveyancing Act 1881 (power of sale, etc.) on mortgagees by deed.

(4) There is to be included among the matters required to be registered in the Statutory Charges Register—

(a) any charge created under subsection (1);

(b) a dilapidation notice.

(5) After paragraph 52 of Schedule 11 to the Land Registration Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (matters which require to be registered in the Statutory Charges Register), insert—

“52A. The following matters under the Dilapidation Act (Northern Ireland) 2025—

(a) any charge created under section 13(1) of that Act;

(b) a dilapidation notice.”.

Costs of interested person

14.—(1) Where a district council demands costs from a person (“P”) under section 12, P’s liability is limited to the total amount of the money which P has or has had in P’s own hands if P proves that P—

(a) is receiving the rent for the land merely as agent or trustee for some other person, and

(b) does not have in P’s own hands on behalf of the other person (and has not done so since service of the demand) sufficient money to discharge the whole demand.

(2) But the council may recover the whole or any unpaid balance of the costs from the person on whose behalf the agent or trustee receives the rent.

(3) Any sums which an interested person pays in response to a demand for costs under section 12 are treated as paid for the use, and at the request, of the person who caused or permitted the land to be in the condition in which it was when the notice concerned was served.

(4) Where a notice is served under this Act and a person who has an interest in the land to which the notice applies incurs costs in complying with the notice, the costs are treated as incurred for the use, and at the request, of the person who

caused or permitted the land to be in the condition in which it was when the notice was served.

Obstruction by occupier etc.

5 **15.**—(1) If, on a complaint by the owner of land to which a notice served under this Act applies, it appears to a court of summary jurisdiction that an occupier of the land, or another person with an interest in it, is preventing the owner from complying with the notice, the court may order the occupier or other person to permit the owner to do so.

10 (2) If, in a case where the notice served is a maintenance notice, an order under this section has not been complied with, the district council which served the notice may itself take the steps required by the notice.

(3) A person who occupies land to which a notice served under this Act applies, or who has some other interest in the land, commits an offence if the person prevents the owner of the land from complying with the notice.

15 (4) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (3) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

Miscellaneous functions of district councils

Information

20 **16.**—(1) To enable a district council to exercise a function under this Act in relation to land in its district, the council may by notice in writing require a person (“P”) who occupies the land, or who (directly or indirectly) receives rent for it, to give the council the information specified in the notice within the period so specified.

(2) The information specified in the notice must relate to—

- 25 (a) the nature of the interest which P has in the land,
 (b) the name, postal address or email address of any person known by P to have an interest in the land,
 (c) the purposes for which the land is being used,
 (d) the time when that use began,
 30 (e) the name, postal address or email address of any person known by P to have used the land for that purpose, or
 (f) the time when any activities being carried out on the land began.

(3) The period specified in the notice must be at least 21 days after the date on which the notice is served.

35 (4) A person commits an offence if, without reasonable excuse, the person fails to comply with a notice under this section.

(5) A person commits an offence if, in response to a notice under this section, the person knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material respect.

40 (6) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (4) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

(7) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (5) is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;
- (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years (or to both).

Consultation with planning department

5 **17.**—(1) Before issuing a notice under this Act in relation to a heritage site, a district council must consult—

- (a) the officers of the council who exercise the council’s functions in relation to heritage sites of the description in question, or
- 10 (b) in the case of a heritage site which is a historic monument, the officers of the Department for Communities who exercise that Department’s functions in relation to such monuments.

(2) “Heritage site” means—

- (a) a listed building (within the meaning of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011),
- 15 (b) land in a conservation area (within the meaning of that Act),
- (c) land in an area designated in a development plan as an area of townscape character or described as such in a direction under section 23(3)(f) or (g) of that Act,
- (d) land in an area designated in a development plan as an area of village character, or
- 20 (e) an historic monument (within the meaning of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995).

(3) “Development plan” means—

- 25 (a) a development plan prepared under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 before 1 April 2015 and adopted before, on or after that date, or
- (b) a local development plan prepared under Part 2 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 or a draft of such a plan.

(4) The Department may by regulations amend this section so as to change the definition of “heritage site” for the time being contained in subsection (2).

30 **Power of entry**

18.—(1) An authorised officer of a district council may enter land in the council’s district at any reasonable time, or at any time in an emergency, for the purpose of—

- 35 (a) determining whether a function of the council under this Act should be exercised,
- (b) determining whether a notice, condition or court order under this Act is being complied with,
- (c) carrying out an examination of the land or an article on it for the purpose referred to in paragraph (a) or (b),
- 40 (d) taking a measurement or photograph or taking and carrying away a sample or other article for examination, or

- (e) exercising the power of the district council under section 3(1), 6(2), 9(2), 10(2) or 11(5) (executing works required etc).
- (2) The power under this section (except in an emergency) is exercisable only with the consent of the occupier or—
 - 5 (a) if entry is sought only for the purpose referred to in subsection (1)(c) or (d), after giving at least 24 hours' notice in writing to the occupier or the owner, or
 - (b) if entry is sought for some other purpose, after giving at least six days' notice in writing to the occupier or (if known) the owner.
- 10 (3) In an emergency, the power under this section is, if need be, exercisable by force.
- (4) An authorised officer of a district council must, if required to do so, produce the officer's authorisation to act.
- 15 (5) In exercising the power under this section, an authorised officer must ensure that the land is not left less secure as a result; and the council must make good or pay compensation for damage caused to property in the exercise of the power.
- (6) A dispute as to the amount of compensation is to be referred to and determined by the Lands Tribunal.
- 20 (7) A person commits an offence if, without reasonable excuse, the person obstructs an authorised officer of a district council in the exercise of the power under this section.
- (8) A person who is guilty of an offence under subsection (7) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.
- 25 (9) A reference to an occupier or owner includes a reference to a person appointed in writing by the occupier or owner as a representative for purposes of this section.

Fixed penalty

- 30 **19.—**(1) This section applies where an authorised officer of a district council has reason to believe that a person has, in relation to land in the council's district, committed—
 - (a) an offence under section 3(2) (breach of maintenance notice), or
 - (b) an offence under section 16(4) (failure to provide information without reasonable excuse).
- 35 (2) The officer may give the person a notice (a “fixed penalty notice”) offering the person the opportunity to discharge liability for conviction for the offence by payment of a fixed penalty.
- (3) The amount of the fixed penalty is—
 - (a) for the offence under section 3(2), £500;
 - (b) for the offence under section 16(4), £500.
- 40 (4) The Department may by regulations amend subsection (3) so as to specify a different amount for an amount for the time being specified there.
- (5) Schedule 1 (which makes further provision about fixed penalties) has effect.

Guidance

20.—(1) In exercising or deciding whether to exercise a function under this Act, a district council or an authorised officer of a district council must have regard to guidance for the time being issued by the Department for the purposes of this Act.

(2) A draft of the guidance, or of a proposed revision of the guidance, must be laid before the Assembly.

(3) If the Assembly so resolves within the statutory period beginning with the day on which the draft is laid before the Assembly, no further proceedings may be taken in relation to the draft (but that does not affect the power of the Department to lay a new draft before the Assembly).

General procedural matters etc.

Notices

21.—(1) A notice served under this Act takes effect as soon as it is served or at such later time as the notice may specify.

(2) Subject to subsection (5), a district council which has served a notice under this Act may vary the notice (by, for example, extending the period for complying with the notice or amending the work required under the notice).

(3) Where a council varies a notice, the notice as varied takes effect in accordance with subsection (1); and the period within which an appeal may be brought against the notice as varied accordingly runs by reference to when the notice as varied takes effect, unless the overall effect of the variation is to reduce the burden imposed by the notice.

(4) Subject to subsection (5), a council which has served a notice under this Act may withdraw the notice.

(5) Subsections (2) and (4) do not apply to a notice under section 10(6) or 11(7).

(6) Service of a notice under a provision of this Act, or under a statutory provision repealed or revoked by this Act, does not prevent a subsequent notice under another provision of this Act being served in the case of land to which the earlier notice applies.

(7) In its application to this Act, section 24 of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (service) has effect as if the word “registering” were omitted from subsection (1); and a notice under this Act may, without prejudice to any method of service authorised by that section, be served by electronic means.

Appeal

22.—(1) Where an appeal against a notice is brought under this Act, the notice being appealed against is of no effect pending the final determination or withdrawal of the appeal.

(2) On the determination of an appeal under this Act, the court must give directions for giving effect to its determination.

(3) Where an appeal against a notice has been brought under this Act, neither the appellant nor any other person may claim in any other proceedings that the notice being appealed against was not properly served on the appellant.

(4) The appellant or the district council may appeal to the County Court against the decision on an appeal brought under this Act.

Offences: defendant

5 **23.**—(1) Where proceedings for an offence under this Act of failure to comply with a notice or condition have been brought against a person as the owner of land, but the person ceased to be the owner before the end of the period for complying with the notice or condition, the person is entitled to have brought before the court in the proceedings the person who then became the owner of the land.

10 (2) Where proceedings for an offence under this Act of failure to comply with a notice or condition have been brought against a person as the occupier of land, but the person ceased to be the occupier before the end of the period for complying with the notice or condition, the person is entitled to have brought before the court in the proceedings—

- 15 (a) the person who then became the occupier of the land, or
 (b) if nobody then became the occupier, the person who is the owner when the notice takes effect.

- (3) To exercise the entitlement under subsection (1) or (2), a person must—
 (a) lay a complaint to the effect that the person ceased to be the owner or occupier before the end of the period for complying with the notice or condition and that the person specified in the complaint then became the owner or occupier (as the case may be), and
 (b) give the prosecution at least three clear days’ notice of the person’s intention.

25 (4) Where it is proved that action required by the notice or condition in question was not taken within the period for complying with it and the original defendant proves that the failure to take that action was attributable, in whole or part, to the default of a person specified in the complaint under subsection (1) or (2)—

- (a) that person may be convicted of the offence in question, and
30 (b) the original defendant, on proving that he or she took all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the notice or condition, must be acquitted of the offence.

 (5) For the purposes of this Act, section 20(2) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (corporate liability for offences)—

- 35 (a) applies with the omission of the words “the liability of whose members is limited”, and
 (b) where the affairs of a body corporate are managed by its members, applies in relation to the acts or defaults of a member in connection with the functions of management as if that member were a director of the body.

- 40 (6) If an offence under this Act is committed by a partnership or proved—
 (a) to have been committed with the consent or connivance of a partner, or
 (b) to be attributable to any neglect on the partner’s part,

the partner as well as the partnership is guilty of the offence and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(7) “Partner” includes a person purporting to act as such.

Interpretation

Meaning of “interested person” etc.

24.—(1) This section applies for the purposes of this Act.

5 (2) A person has an interest in a building or other land if that person—

(a) is the owner of the land,

(b) is an occupier of the land,

(c) has a charge over the land or another financial interest in it, or

(d) has a responsibility for the management or maintenance of the land.

10 (3) A reference to an “interested person” in relation to land is, accordingly, a reference to a person with an interest in that land.

(4) “Owner”, in relation to land, means a person (other than a mortgagee not in possession) who, whether in the person’s own right or as trustee—

(a) is entitled to receive the market rent for the land, or

15 (b) if the land is not let at market rent, would be so entitled if it were so let.

(5) A reference to the owner or occupier in the case of a structure is a reference to the owner or occupier of the land on which the structure is situated.

Other definitions

25.—(1) This section applies for the purposes of this Act.

20 (2) “Building” includes any other structure; and a reference to a building includes a reference to—

(a) a part of a building, or

(b) anything fixed to or projecting from a building.

25 (3) A reference to “land” in a provision of this Act which relates to premises within the meaning of section 11 (defective premises notice) includes a reference to a vessel.

(4) “Authorised officer”, in relation to a district council, means an officer of the council authorised (whether in general or specific terms) to take action under a provision of this Act.

30 (5) “Use”, in relation to land, does not include the use of land for the carrying out of building or other operations on it.

Supplementary

Repeals and consequential amendments

26.—(1) Schedule 2 (which contains repeals) has effect.

35 (2) The Department may by regulations make provision in consequence of this Act.

(3) Regulations under this section may, in particular—

(a) amend, repeal, revoke or otherwise modify a statutory provision;

(b) include transitional or saving provision in connection with the commencement of provision made by the regulations.

5 (4) Regulations under this section containing provision which amends or repeals a provision of an Act of Parliament or Northern Ireland legislation may not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.

Savings

10 27.—(1) Where a notice has been given under a statutory provision before the repeal of that provision by this Act, the repeal does not prevent or restrict anything being done which may be done by virtue of the notice having been given.

(2) Where a district council has begun but not completed works under a statutory provision before the repeal of the provision by this Act, the council may, in spite of the repeal, complete the works and exercise any other rights which it would be entitled to exercise in that connection but for the repeal.

15 (3) Nothing in this section affects the generality of section 28 of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (general savings on repeal).

Regulations

28.—(1) Regulations under this Act may contain incidental, supplementary, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provision.

20 (2) Regulations which include provision under section 17(4) (definition of “heritage site”) or section 19(4) (amount of fixed penalty), whether alone or with other provision, may not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

25 (3) Subject to subsection (2) and to section 26(4), regulations under this Act are subject to negative resolution.

Final

General Interpretation

29. In this Act—

30 “the Department” means the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;

“statutory provision” has the meaning given in section 1(f) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.

Commencement

35 30.—(1) This section and sections 29 and 31 come into operation on the day after the day on which this Act receives Royal Assent.

(2) The other provisions of this Act come into operation on such day or days as the Department may by order appoint.

(3) The Department may by order make transitional or saving provision in connection with the commencement of a provision of this Act.

(4) An order containing provision under subsection (3) is subject to negative resolution.

Short Title

31. This Act may be cited as the Dilapidation Act (Northern Ireland) 2025.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1

Section 19(5)

FIXED PENALTIES

5 *Contents of fixed penalty notice*

1. A fixed penalty notice must—
 - (a) state the alleged offence, and
 - (b) give such particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information about it.
- 10 2.—(1) A fixed penalty notice must also state—
 - (a) the amount of the penalty and the period for its payment,
 - (b) the consequences of not paying the penalty before the end of the period mentioned in paragraph (a),
 - (c) the person to whom and the address at which the payment may be made,
 - 15 (d) the method by which the payment may be made, and
 - (e) the person to whom and the address at which representations relating to the alleged offence may be made.

(2) The person in sub-paragraph (1)(c) and (e) must be the district council for which the authorised officer was acting when giving the notice.
- 20 3. A fixed penalty notice must also—
 - (a) inform the person to whom it is given of the person’s right to be tried for the alleged offence, and
 - (b) explain how that right may be exercised.

Period for payment

- 25 4.—(1) The period for payment of the fixed penalty is 28 days beginning with the day on which the notice is given.

(2) But where the notice so provides, the amount payable is reduced by 25% if payment is made within the first 14 days of that period.

Effect of notice

- 30 5. Proceedings for the offence in respect of which a person was given a fixed penalty notice may not be brought against that person before the end of the period for payment of the fixed penalty, subject as follows.
 - 6.—(1) If the person to whom a fixed penalty notice is given makes a request to be tried for the alleged offence, proceedings may be brought against that person.
 - 35 (2) A request under this paragraph must be made—

(a) by notice given to the district council in question before the end of the period for payment of the penalty, and

(b) in the manner specified in the fixed penalty notice.

5 7. If the fixed penalty is paid in accordance with the fixed penalty notice before the end of the period for payment of the fixed penalty, no proceedings for the offence may be brought and paragraph 6 does not apply.

8. If proceedings have been brought following a request under paragraph 6, the proceedings may not be continued.

10 9. In proceedings for the offence in respect of which a fixed penalty notice was given, a certificate is evidence of the facts which it states if it—

(a) purports to be signed by or on behalf of the person responsible for the financial affairs of the district council for which the authorised officer who gave the fixed penalty notice was acting, and

15 (b) states that payment of the fixed penalty in response to the notice was, or was not, received by the end of the period within which that fixed penalty was required to be paid.

Receipts of penalty payments

20 10.—(1) Any sum received by a district council under this Schedule accrues to the council or to such other person (including the Department) as the Department may by regulations specify.

(2) The council may use any sums received by it under this Schedule only for the purposes of its functions under this Act or such other of its functions as the Department may by regulations specify.

25 (3) A district council must supply the Department with such information relating to its receipts of fixed penalties as the Department may specify.

Withdrawal of notice

11.—(1) A district council must, having received representations made by or on behalf of the recipient of a fixed penalty notice, decide whether to withdraw the notice.

30 (2) Where the notice is withdrawn under sub-paragraph (1)—

(a) the council must give notice of the withdrawal to the person to whom the notice was given,

(b) the council must repay any amount paid under the notice, and

35 (c) no proceedings may be brought or continued against the person for the offence in respect of which the notice was given.

Regulations

12.—(1) The Department may by regulations—

(a) provide that a fixed penalty notice may not be given in specified circumstances;

40 (b) provide for the form of a fixed penalty notice;

- (c) provide for the method by which a fixed penalty may be paid;
 - (d) provide for the keeping of accounts, and the preparation and publication of statements of account, relating to fixed penalties under this Schedule.
- 5 (2) Before making regulations under section 19 or this Schedule, the Department must consult district councils and such other persons as it considers appropriate.

SCHEDULE 2

Section 26(1)

REPEALS

	Short Title	Extent of Repeal
10	Belfast Improvement Act 1845	Sections 107 to 110 Section 174
	Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847	Sections 75 to 78
	Belfast Improvement Act 1878	Part 9
	Belfast Corporation Act 1911	Section 76
15	Londonderry Corporation Act 1918	Sections 168 and 169
	Belfast Corporation (General Powers) Act 1948	Section 11
	Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978	Articles 65 and 66
20	Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	In Schedule 3, paragraph 9(4)
	Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	In Schedule 6, paragraphs 19 and 20

Dilapidation Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

A Bill to confer functions on district councils in connection with the dilapidation of buildings and other land.

Introduced by: Mr Andrew Muir, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

On: 23 June 2025

Bill Type: Executive Bill

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS

**An Explanatory and Financial Memorandum is printed separately as
NIA Bill 21/22-27 EFM**



Northern Ireland Assembly

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ISBN: 978-1-78619-740-5

Clauses 1 to 3 - Detriment to local amenity

Clause 1 - Maintenance notice

Clause 2 - Appeal against maintenance notice

Clause 3 - Breach of maintenance notice

Information:

Clauses 1 to 3 allow district councils to serve a **maintenance notice** to require owners, occupiers and others with a relevant interest to take appropriate remedial action to deal with low level dilapidation and neglect. The clauses also deal with the appeals procedure and offences and penalties for breaches of a notice.

6. Do you agree that Clauses 1 to 3 will empower councils to tackle the issue of ‘detriment to local amenity’ (regarding buildings or other land in its district) that because of its condition is/are detrimental to the amenity of a part of the council’s district or of an adjoining district - If not, why not?

~~Yes~~ **No**

If no, please explain.

Response - It is recognised that it is the Department’s intent that such provisions should be used proactively by Councils, thereby ensuring that local areas are maintained to a higher standard than is presently legislatively required. Council comments that such efforts will require regulatory resources to successfully deliver these improvements. Whilst the legislation is written that Council ‘may’ take action and use discretion – in practice and with the interest of communities and other stakeholders, Councils are more likely to find that there is an expectation that action will be taken. Council would request that any new guidance reflects the discretionary nature of the legislation, and confirm that power will only be taken where the Council deems it expedient to do so.

The threshold for ‘detriment to local amenity’ must be clearly defined , otherwise this remains a subjective view that will be challenged and appealed as detailed in Clause 2 (2). Robust departmental guidance is required before legislation takes effect. Councils would welcome the opportunity to engage with The Department in the development of this guidance so as to be workable and effective.

It is envisaged that such powers on the lower scale could be used primarily for lower priority sites to require “proper maintenance of land”. The Council would welcome clarity from the Department on whether this could be used to address invasive plant species e.g. Japanese Knotweed, Buddleia, etc. which can adversely affect the amenity and property of a neighbour.

Clarity is required in circumstances where no Interested Person can be established.

Clause 1 (1) indicates ‘building or other land’ – Council requires clarification whether the definition of this includes other structures e.g. public facing retaining walls. The definition of ‘building’ would be welcomed. In relation to including a wide-ranging definition of “building”, while the Council accept that a definition may provide clarity, it is important to retain the flexibility already existing in the current Article 66 to enable enforcement action against any dilapidated man-made structure and not to restrict.

Clause 1 is very broad in its scope – there is potential for councils to get drawn into civil and domestic disputes i.e. boundary walls/fences between properties.

Councils would welcome clear guidance in how Clause 1 may be applied to ‘gap sites’, as these can regularly cause both urban and rural blight.

Definitions 25(2) – Building includes any other structure – what is meant by ‘any other structure’? Does this include freestanding walls and temporary or mobile structures for example?

Please provide comment on your understanding of ‘detriment to local amenity’ in the context of this Bill.

Response - Detriment to local amenity is interpreted as conditions that negatively impact the character, quality, and pleasantness of an area, making it a less attractive place to live or visit.

It is essential that ‘detriment to local amenity’ is clearly defined in guidance issued by the department

Please comment on the maintenance notice, the appeal and action for breaches as appropriate.

Response – Clarity is required on the recommended steps taken by Council as part of a graduated approach. For example, will Council be obliged to follow the Fixed Penalty Notice process prior to instigating action in the courts.

Council welcomes the inclusion of a fixed penalty notice as a means of discharging the liability. However, the level set at £500 may be significantly less than the cost of making a property/ building or piece of land good and not act as sufficient deterrent or trigger to move towards compliance with the Notice. Cases may arise that the penalty is paid, yet the issue remains, thereby leading to the need for costly and time-consuming Court proceedings.

A query remains, for example, where the interested party does not carry out works to remedy the issue and it continues, how then will a building remedied/ fixed? Council would be concerned that there is an expectation that council acts when owner does not in each case. Obligation then rests with council to ensure cost recovery through the courts – this has risk. Council would therefore support that court direct the owner to

comply with the Notice and remove need for Council to have to consider cost and expense of carrying out works at the cost to a ratepayer.

As maintenance notices involve land, it can be foreseen that this will involve overgrown vegetation that will grow back if not regularly maintained. Consideration should be given to need for recurring maintenance, in order to protect the Council against repeat offending that places additional pressure on authorities to incur legal costs or be expected to repeatedly act in default. This could be reinforced by court direction, as referred to above.

Clauses 4 to 6 – Serious detriment to local amenity

Clause 4 - Dilapidation notice

Clause 5 - Appeal against dilapidation notice

Clause 6 - Breach of dilapidation notice

Information:

Clauses 4 to 6 allow district councils to serve a **dilapidation notice** to require owners, occupiers and others with a relevant interest to take appropriate remedial action to deal with more serious dilapidation and neglect. The clauses also deal with the appeals procedure and offences and penalties for breaches of a notice or condition.

7. Do you agree that Clauses 4 to 6 will empower councils to tackle the issue of ‘serious detriment to local amenity’ (regarding buildings or other land in its district) that because of its condition is/are seriously detrimental to the amenity of a part of the council’s district or of an adjoining district - If not, why not?

Yes **No**

If no, please explain further.

Response - There needs to be a clear definition for ‘seriously detrimental to local amenity’ i.e. the tipping point to take action, otherwise this remains a subjective view that will be challenged and appealed as detailed in Clause 5 (2). This should not be a mechanism to resolve civil disputes between neighbours etc.

Clause 4 (1) indicates ‘building’ – does the definition of this include other structures e.g. public facing retaining walls.

It must be recognised that in the current financial climate, many properties and frequently those that are neglected, are under the control of persons other than the owner. A robust piece of legislation and associated guidance will deal with this by defining who is responsible for such properties and what circumstances. In the experience of Council, it is often possible to secure minor works such as boarding up on

such sites, but much more difficult to secure more extensive building or demolition works.

Please provide comment on the dilapidation notice, the appeal and action for breaches as appropriate.

Response – It is not possible to fully evaluate these matters without having knowledge of the definition of ‘seriously detrimental to local amenity’ and guidance to be issued by the Department.

The strength of cost recovery options will strongly influence the confidence of Councils in taking forward actions to address dilapidation / dereliction and neglected sites, as resources available are limited. Therefore, Council would welcome appropriate guidance and clarity on this aspect.

Clauses 7 to 10 - Dangerous structures

Clause 7 - Dangerous structure notice

Clause 8 - Appeal against dangerous structure notice

Clause 9 - Breach of dangerous structure notice

Clause 10 - Emergency action

Information:

Clauses 7 to 9 allow district councils to serve a **dangerous structure notice** to require owners, occupiers and others with a relevant interest to take appropriate remedial action to deal with dangerous buildings and structures. The clauses also deal with the appeals procedure, fee provisions and offences and penalties for breaches of a notice or condition.

8. Do you agree that Clauses 7 to 9 will empower councils to tackle the issue of ‘dangerous structures’ (apart from if Clause 10 Emergency Action is to be used) regarding a building in its district that is in such a condition as to be dangerous, or is used to carry such loads as to be dangerous - If not, why not?

Yes **No**

If no, please explain further.

Response - Can further clarification be given to the term “Building” and to the definition 25(2) relating to any other structure. This is extremely wide.

Clarification is required as to what structures are in scope. Particularly around the location of a building. For example a building may be at risk of falling, but not be a danger if that building is not presenting a risk to the public. This legislation should ONLY

consider structures to be in scope where the risk is presented to members of the public on a “Road, Footpath or Public Right of Way.” Unless the legislation is restricted to public safety it will leave councils open to unlimited liability in respect of things that are primarily ‘civil’ matters. This also effects the staffing requirement and cost of such a service.

7 (2)b – “Must” serve a notice- allows no discretion. Onus of describing works, and in fact all aspects sit with the Council. The onus should always be on the owner to take reasonable steps to secure their building and make safe.

How does council reconcile the issuing of a Notice for a specified period to demolish part of a building if this contravenes Planning legislation. There is a serious problem here, which required a facility for a “holding position”. This is required especially around the appeals period, where action by Council would be premature.

7 (2) should include a further option to allow “enclosure” as per the 1847 Act or section 30 Public Health act 1907 , to allow people to be removed from the danger in the short term, until all the relevant checks can be carried out.

7(8)- clarification required around how section 30 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 interacts with this legislation. Is it to be repealed?

We note that the 1847 # (Section 70) Act is to be repealed. Does this mean that the 1854 Act can still have effect/be used?

Please provide comment on your understanding of ‘dangerous’ in the context of this Bill.

Response – The Council would consider “dangerous” to mean presenting a real and imminent risk to members of the public. In order to be considered “dangerous” that risk would need to be in an area where the public are legally permitted to be, i.e. “a public road, footpath or Public Right of Way”.

Please provide comment on the dangerous structure notice, the appeal and action for breaches as appropriate.

Response - There needs to be a holding position to allow enclosure prior to the issue of a notice, to allow for appeal, and then action.

Clause 10 (Emergency action)

Information:

Clause 10 (Emergency Action) deals with a building which is considered by a council to be in such a state or is carrying such loads as to be dangerous and immediate action

should be taken to obviate the danger and allows a council to take the necessary steps for that purpose.

Clause 10 also requires that after seven days from the date when remedial works began, a council must give notice to at least one person with an interest in the building advising of the action being taken and that an appeal may be made to a Magistrates' Court against that action, stipulating the grounds for appeal.

Clause 10 also deals with cases where an interested person sustains damage as a result of the exercise of a council's power under clause 10 - in such cases the person is entitled to compensation if a Magistrates' Court determines that the council was not justified in its exercise of the power (whether on an appeal under clause 10 or by a separate application under clause 10). Any disputes around compensation shall be determined by the Lands Tribunal or by an agreed arbitrator.

Clause 10 also allows a district council to charge a fee for exercising its powers under the clause. The fees may be specified in regulations to be made by the Department.

9. Do you agree that Clause 10 will empower councils to tackle the issue of 'dangerous structures' requiring 'Emergency Action' regarding a building in its district that is in such a condition as to be dangerous, or is used to carry such loads as to be dangerous and immediate action should be taken to remove the danger, and that the council may take whatever steps are necessary to remove the danger - If not, why not?

Yes **No**

Whilst this bill empowers it creates a massive financial liability for Councils.

This Bill is structured in such a way as to make Councils responsible for enforcement, prosecution and resolution. The Department should be aware that Council cannot effectively deliver these emergency actions on its own. The DfI Roads service and PSNI should be written into this legislation to ensure that they activate to support Councils in emergency action, such as Road Closures and permissions, signage, public information etc as required.

DfI also should be active and proactive in relation to structures for which they have responsibility under The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

Please provide comment on any aspect of the Emergency Action powers provided for in Clause 10, including the assessment the council must conduct; the notice of its intention to exercise the power; the proposal of a fee; the appeal; and the timescales.

Response - Whilst this bill empowers it creates a massive financial liability for Councils.

This Bill is structured in such a way as to make Councils responsible for enforcement, prosecution and resolution. The Department should be aware that Council cannot effectively deliver these emergency actions on its own. The DfI roads service and PSNI should be written into this legislation to ensure that they activate to support Councils in emergency action, such as road closures and permissions, signage, public information etc as required.

DfI also should be active and proactive in relation to structures for which they have responsibility under The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

10(1) – Uses the terminology of “appears” which implies that visual inspection by a council officer is adequate. This is not always the case in determining greater structural defects that may need to be examined more closely. Access may be required and also support. Also the ability to require enclosure as a interim step would be of benefit here.

10(2) Initial steps to “remove the danger” may be fencing or hoarding to protect the public from danger. Close DfI support is required if the building is close to a road, and especially if the road is a busy or arterial route, and hence this should be stated in the Bill.

10(3)- While 10(1) states “appears” 10(3) states that an assessment must be undertaken. There is no detail over the depth or detail required in such an assessment. 10(4) then must notify the owner of actions and appeal. 10(9) gives an appeal period of 14 days, where the council can take no action. This delays emergency action. Enclosure as previously discussed would allow for safe determination of necessary action while protecting the public.

10(7) all reasonable endeavours to identify person of interest- this requires guidance or will be contentious.

10(8) grounds for appeal are wider here than in 10(1). This is problematic for councils

10(11) and (12) the position where compensation could be due to owners/persons with interest will influence and increase appeals against Notices, and will make Councils more cautious in issuing Notices. There is a concern that this may prevent effective enforcement.

The appeal and timescales are not conducive to emergency action or the practicalities of protecting the public in these situations. This needs to be fully reviewed.

If fees are to be considered they should be of sufficient value as to cover costs, but this is impossible to determine until after any action has completed. The time scales set out make the addition of an “enclosure power” within the legislation all the more important.

Clause 17 is not compatible with regulations 7,9 and 10 of this legislation draft. ‘Must consult’, offers no clarity about purpose or processes. It is for the building owner to ensure they meet ALL statutory obligations. This follows after the dangerous structure notice has been served, not before, or indeed imposes another ‘condition’ on the council, not the property owner. Particularly incompatible with reg 10.

Clause 11 - Defective premises

Clause 11 - Defective premises notice

Information:

Clause 11 allows district councils to serve a Defective Premises Notice in circumstances requiring rapid remediation (e.g. a building which had an incorrectly installed staircase). This is to be used where the premises appear to be in such a state as to be "prejudicial to health or a nuisance."

The building does not have to be dilapidated or dangerous, but the council considers the problem needs to be tackled quickly.

The council may serve a notice stating that it intends to remedy the defective state of the premises and specifying the defects which it intends to remedy. Nine days after the Notice takes effect, a council may carry out whatever remedial works are necessary.

Clause 11 also allows the person on whom the notice was served to serve a counter notice within seven days of the defective premises notice taking effect stating that they intend to remedy the defects themselves. In this case the council is prohibited from taking any action unless the person fails to remedy the defects within a specified time or to a specified standard.

Clause 11 further requires that after seven days from the date when remedial works began, a council must serve notice on the person who received the original notice advising that an appeal may be made to a Magistrates’ Court against the works, stipulating the grounds for appeal.

10. Do you agree that Clause 11 will empower councils to tackle the issue of premises in its district which are in a defective state, but there would be an unreasonable delay in remedying the defective state of the premises if the procedure under Part 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (statutory nuisance) were to be followed - If not, why not?

Yes **No**

Please provide comment on any aspect of the Defective Premises powers provided for in Clause 11, including the Defective Premises Notice, the timescales and the appeal.

Response – Council would welcome clear guidance on circumstances in which it would be appropriate to issue a defective premises notice.

It should be noted that the example of a defective staircase being addressed under nuisance procedures is legally inaccurate. The precedent set in *R v Bristol City Council, ex parte Everett* (1998) confirms that premises presenting a risk of accidental injury, such as a steep or defective staircase, do not fall within the scope of statutory nuisance provisions.

It is also important to note that Article 63 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 provides statutory powers to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to intervene where unoccupied properties pose a risk to occupied dwellings.

This legislation enables NIHE to serve notices requiring remedial action, undertake emergency works, and recover associated costs. These provisions are specifically designed to safeguard residents from the adverse impacts of neighbouring vacant or derelict properties.

In light of this, it is recommended that the proposed Dilapidation Bill be considered in conjunction with Article 63 to ensure legislative coherence and avoid duplication of responsibilities. A clear delineation of roles between NIHE and District Councils will be essential to ensure effective enforcement and resource allocation.

Clauses 12 – 15 Liability for Costs etc.

Clause 12 - Costs of district council

Clause 13 - Charge on land

Clause 14 - Costs of interested person

Clause 15 - Obstruction by occupier etc.

Information:

Clause 12 - Costs of district council - provides that where a district council has issued a maintenance notice, a dilapidation notice, a dangerous structure notice, a defective premises notice; or where a council has to take emergency action in order to remove danger, it may recover its costs from the relevant person where it has taken the necessary remedial action itself.

Clause 13 - Charge on land - provides for a district council to register a charge on the land in the Statutory Charges Register (Schedule 11 to the Land Registration Act

(Northern Ireland) 1970) in respect of any costs incurred under clause 12 until such costs are recovered. It also provides for councils to register a Dilapidation Notice in the Register - to allow a property to be sold “with information” and binding the purchaser to the terms of the original notice where works have not been carried out.

Clause 14 - Costs of interested person - provides that where costs have been demanded under clause 12 a person who is receiving the rent for the land on behalf of another person would not be pursued for costs as it is not likely that they could be deemed responsible for causing a relevant nuisance.

Clause 15 - Obstruction by occupier etc. - provides that a court order may be made in a case where an occupier is preventing an owner from carrying out works to comply with a notice. It also provides for the associated offence and penalty.

11. Do you agree that Clauses 12 to 15 will empower councils to recover the costs which it incurs in so acting under section 3(1), 6(2), 9(2) or 10(2) (carrying out work) of the Bill, from the persons (who at that time have an interest in the land in question) as the council considers appropriate - If not, why not?

Yes **No**

If no, why not

Response - 12 (1) - More guidance is required to clarify what may be included in suggested reasonable costs. Does this include staff time, structural engineer consultants, legal costs and all actual ‘works’ costs?

Council would request that the Department provide evidence from other jurisdictions as to the resource and financial impact of similar legislation. The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum that accompanies the Bill states that there will be no cost to the Department as a consequence of the Bill, but makes no reference to the cost to councils and ultimately the ratepayer

Please provide comment on any aspect of the cost recovery actions provided for in Clauses 12 - 15, including costs of the district council; charge on land; costs of interested person and obstruction by occupier.

Response –

Clause 12(4) – If a council fences off a dilapidated or dangerous building to protect public safety, and subsequently undertakes remedial works due to owner inaction, it is unjust to prohibit cost recovery. In cases where fencing remains necessary post-remediation (e.g. to secure a vacant site), councils should be entitled to recover associated costs.

Clause 12(5) - This clause may inadvertently restrict the use of emergency powers. Councils must retain flexibility to act swiftly in urgent situations without being constrained by procedural limitations that could delay intervention.

The Department should make a fund available to recompense Councils in situations where they have acted lawfully and have exhausted the legal process available in the bill/legislation to recover expenses, but have been unable to recover costs.

Clause 15 - Clarification is required on who brings this matter to the court. It is assumed that the person upon whom the notice was served applies directly to the court, rather than the Council acting on their behalf.

Clauses 16 – 20 Miscellaneous functions of district councils

Clause 16 - Information

Clause 17 - Consultation with planning department

Clause 18 - Power of entry

Clause 19 - Fixed penalty

Clause 20 - Guidance

Information:

Clause 16 – Information - gives district councils the power to require information with regard to ownership, other persons having an interest in the premises, use to which the property is being put, etc. The clause also provides for two offences and penalties.

Clause 17 - Consultation with planning department (Heritage Sites) and relevant officers of DfC if the Heritage Site is a Historic Monument - requires a district council to consult relevant colleagues before issuing a notice in relation to a heritage site. It also provides that regulations may be made by the Department amending the definition of “heritage site” in subsection (2).

Clause 18 - Power of entry - provides for occasions where an authorised officer of the council may enter land in the council’s area for the purposes of the Act. There are various notice periods provided for in the Bill. It also covers compensation and inserts a relevant offence provision of obstructing an authorised officer.

Clause 19 - Fixed penalty - provides for a discretionary £500 fixed penalty to be issued by councils to discharge liability for conviction for breach of a maintenance notice and for failure to provide information without reasonable excuse. The Department may amend the fixed penalty amount by regulations - Schedule 1 makes further provision regarding fixed penalties.

Clause 20 – Guidance - provides that a district council must have regard to any guidance issued by the Department.

12. Please provide comment on any of the miscellaneous functions of district councils to be found in Clauses 16 to 20.

Consultation with planning regarding heritage sites (Clause 16).

Response - This clause has been incorrectly titled in the consultation questions, as Clause 16 is titled 'Information'. The Council welcomes the provision to issue notices requesting information that will assist in the enforcement of these functions.

Response to Clause 17 - consultation with the planning department. Section 17 of the proposed Bill relates to the duty to consult the Planning Department.

Given that a Dilapidation Notice will require the landowner to 'demolish the whole or part of the building' or 'carry out remedial work,' it is of critical importance that the planning department is consulted.

In the case of Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape/village character, demolition consent is required, and the Council would need to be satisfied that the building or part of building to be demolished does not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. This can only be assessed in full through the submission of a Conservation Area Consent application.

Planning Service raise concern that the broad definition of 'dilapidation' used in the Bill ('detrimental to the amenity of a part of the Councils district or adjoining district') could be used as a means to make a case for otherwise unacceptable demolition as an alternative to sympathetic refurbishment, conversion and reinstatement with resulting irreversible loss in historic fabric.

Consultation with the Council Conservation Officer at an early stage offers the opportunity to examine alternatives to outright demolition and create a better outcome for all parties. It is well accepted historic buildings and streetscapes enhance the unique character of our settlements, create sense of place and are beneficial to tourism.

Operationally, the implementation of the costs aspect of the Bill appears similar to that for Urgent Works Notices. These can often be problematic for the Council to implement due to the difficulties of recouping costs associated with demolition works. An additional complication is added when the identity of the landowner is unknown or cannot be traced. It is likely that the same issues will hinder the full implementation of this Bill and not be resolved satisfactorily for Council in exercising its duties.

It would be advisable that the planning service is consulted on all potential dilapidation notices prior to issue and to ensure that each is screened for implication relevant to the heritage categories listed or if the case also needs to be forwarded on to DfC Historic Environment Division (HED), for example if the building is listed or is a historic monument.

It should be acknowledged that the additional work required to respond to case work as a result of Dilapidation Bill consultations and to carry out the appropriate research, site visit and desktop analysis to formulate an appropriate and time-sensitive response, will have resource implications for the Service.

The powers of entry or an authorised officer of a district council (Clause 17).

Response – This response has been incorrectly titled in the consultation questions, as Clause 17 relates to consultation with the planning department. A response to Clause 17 has been provided in the previous box.

Response to Clause 18 – power of entry. The power of entry can only be applied if the occupier provides consent, or with prior notice being given in writing. This power is already broadly available to Councils under Section 98 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. The clause does not provide clarity on the steps the Council should take if an occupier cannot be identified or located. It is common in cases of neglected buildings or sites for there to be difficulties in determining ownership, particularly if the land has not been registered with LPS. Will councils have the ability to identify the last known ratepayer?

The fixed penalty provided for in Clause 18 when an authorised officer of a district council has reason to believe that a person has, in relation to land in the council's district, committed an offence under section 3(2) (breach of maintenance notice), or an offence under section 16(4) (failure to provide information without reasonable excuse).

Response – This response has been incorrectly titled in the consultation questions, as Clause 18 relates to power of entry.

Response to Clause 19 – fixed penalty. In relation to offences under section 3(2), it would appear that no provision has been made for continuing offences. It is likely that as Schedule 1 states that court proceedings cannot be taken after a fixed penalty has been paid, there should be an option to issue a second fixed penalty notice to address continuing non-compliance, or amend Schedule 1 to give the option of proceeding to court if non-compliance continues after a set period of the penalty being paid. In its current format, Council would likely only take the fixed penalty option, if they had elected to carry out works in default. It would be useful to clarify whether payment of a fixed penalty notice has any impact on cost recovery.

The guidance for the time being issued by the Department for the purposes of this Act. A draft of the guidance, or a proposed revision of the guidance, must be laid before the Assembly.

Response – A final and comprehensive response from the Council will not be possible until the relevant guidance has been published by the Department.

The guidance should include template notices, including those for fixed penalty offences.

Councils would welcome the opportunity to engage with The Department in the development of this guidance so as to be workable and effective, before it is laid before the Assembly.

Clauses 21 – 23 General procedural matters etc.

21. Notices

22. Appeal

23. Offences: defendant

Clause 21 – Notices - provides for general issues relating to notices issued under the Act by district councils, such as variation and withdrawal.

Clause 22 - Appeal - provides that an appeal against a notice issued under the Act will suspend that notice being appealed until the appeal is concluded or withdrawn. However, this does not apply to an appeal against works under clauses 10 or 11. On the determination of any appeal under the Act, the court must give directions for giving effect to its determination. A subsequent appeal to the County Court may be brought against the original appeal decision.

Clause 23 - Offences: defendant - provides for the procedures in cases where proceedings have been brought but the defendant ceased to be the owner/occupier before the end of the notice period.

13. Please provide comment on any aspect of the general procedural matters provided for in Clauses 21 - 23, including notices served under this Bill (Clause 21); appeals against a notice brought under this Bill (Clause 22) and for the procedures in cases where proceedings have been brought but the defendant ceased to be the owner/occupier before the end of the notice period (Clause 23).

General procedural matters Clauses 21 - 23.

Response – Clause 21: Council would request that template notices be provided in the published guidance, when it becomes available.

Clause 22 (1) effectively means that if an appeal is taken, all works specified by the Notice will have to await the outcome of the court. This therefore means that the timely removal of dangers is subject to court efficiency. Please note that where there is a risk to public health, works requested on statutory nuisance notices issued under Section 63 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 are not suspended if an appeal is lodged. A similar process could be applied where there is a danger to the public.

Clause 23. In terms of offences, councils would support the compelling of those responsible to carry out the terms of the Notice and a daily fine to be applied for non-compliance, as is currently the case in relation to Article 66 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.

Clauses 24 – 25 Interpretation

24. Meaning of “interested person” etc.

25. Other definitions

Information:

Clause 24 - Meaning of “interested person”, etc. - provides for the definition of “interested person” and also defines “owner” in relation to land.

Clause 25 - Other definitions - provides for definitions in respect of “building”, “land”, “authorised officer”, “use” and “the Department”.

14. Please provide comment on any aspect of the interpretation clauses provided for in Clauses 24 and 25, regarding the meaning of ‘interested person’ and other definitions.

Interpretation Clauses 24 and 25

Response - 25 (2) – Building includes ‘any other structure’. It would be beneficial to provide clarity on what ‘structure’ may refer to, as it is potentially a very broad definition.

In the 25 (5), it states that land ‘use’ does not include building or other operations. The term ‘other operations’ may require clarification as could be interpreted very broadly.

The definition of “interested persons” is too difficult to determine on a time scale required when there is an imminent danger.

Clauses 26 – 28 Supplementary

Clause 26 - Repeals and consequential amendments

Clause 27 - Savings

Clause 28 - Regulations

Information:

Clause 26 - Repeals and consequential amendments provides for the repeals set out in Schedule 2 and allows the Department by regulations to make consequential amendments.

Clause 27 - Savings - preserves the effect of a notice served under any legislation being repealed by the Act, therefore allowing a district council to complete works which it has begun under such a provision before its repeal.

Clause 28 - Regulations - provides the Department with a power, when making regulations under the Act, to make incidental, supplementary, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provisions. Regulations under the Act will be subject to the negative resolution procedure unless they amend a fixed penalty amount or amend the definition of “heritage site” in which case they will be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

15. Please provide comment on any aspect of the supplementary clauses provided for in Clauses 26 to 28.

Supplementary Clauses 26 to 28.

Response – No comment on these clauses.

Clauses 29 - 31 General Interpretation, Commencement & Short Title

Clause 29 - General Interpretation

Clause 30 - Commencement

Clause 31 - Short Title

Information:

Clause 29 - General interpretation - contains general interpretation provisions.

Clause 30 – Commencement - concerns the commencement of the Act.

Clause 31 - Short title - provides for the short title of the Act.

16. Please provide comment on any aspect of Clauses 29 – 31 regarding general interpretation.

General Interpretation Clauses 29 – 31.

Response – No comment on these clauses.

Schedules

Schedule 1 Fixed Penalties

Schedule 2 Repeals

Schedule 1 - Fixed Penalties sets out the form and content, etc. of fixed penalty notices issued under clause 19. It also contains information regarding the use of fixed penalty receipts by district councils and gives the Department powers to make regulations regarding the use of receipts.

Schedule 2 – Repeals lists the necessary repeals.

17. Please provide comment on any aspect of Schedule 1 regarding the fixed penalties, fixed penalty receipts and the power to make regulations regarding the use of receipts.

Schedule 1

Response - In relation to offences under section 3(2), it would appear that no provision has been made for continuing offences. It is likely that as Schedule 1 states that court proceedings cannot be taken after a fixed penalty has been paid, there should be an option to issue a second fixed penalty notice to address continuing non-compliance, or amend Schedule 1 to give the option of proceeding to court if non-compliance continues after a set period of the penalty being paid. In its current format, Council would likely only take the fixed penalty option, if they had elected to carry out works in default. Does payment of a fixed penalty notice have any impact on cost recovery?

18. Please provide comment on any aspect of Schedule 2 regarding the necessary repeals.

Schedule 2

Response – No comment on these clauses

Unclassified

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ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	24 September 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	17 September 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ 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.

	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. The Chief Executive has now met with the Rory McIlroy Foundation and a proposal will be presented to them in due course.	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. Leasing application has been received from Comber Rec.	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 August 2025 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
525	Community & Wellbeing	24.08.22	Councillor Cooper, Councillor T Smith & Councillor Irvine	Amended 11.10.2022 Corporate Committee: That Council officers bring back a report on relevant Council policies with a view to withdrawing funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums, or competitions and such a report will be appropriately guided by legal advice in relation to this course of action	Council August 2022 Corporate Committee October 2022	Referred to C&W in 2024. Legal advice sought in 2024. Legal advice has been received April 2025. Report to June C&WC.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

529	Environment	22.08.22	Councillor Dunlop & Councillor Douglas	That this Council agrees: •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. Therefore, Council tasks officers to: •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	Letter sent to DfI (Mark McPeak) 11/01/23 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.	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	TO BE REMOVED ON THE BASIS OF THE RESPONSE FROM DFI
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. August 2025 - Advice now recieved on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
585	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.23	Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	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.		Report to C&W Committee in January 2025. Further report requested to future C&W Committee to include site visits to Causeway Coast & Glens and Newry Mourne and Down Distrcit Council as per amended recommendation at January C&W Committee. Since January C&W Committee a summer site visit has been organised. Report to be brought back to October 2025 C&W Comittee. Meanwhile beaches continue to be monitored on a proactive basis.	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. August 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. The Council's solicitor is chasing the other party's solicitor for an update again this week. We have stressed that the Council is keen to move this forward.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
595	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience.	Council 29.11.2023	Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee. Second report to June 2025 C&W Committee.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

599	Community & Wellbeing	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	“That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)	Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024	Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Next report will be to October 2025 Committee.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	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.	Council 27.03.24 Item 18.3 Environment Committee 10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 06.11.24 Item 3 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Item 3	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. 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. Agreed that the Council proceeds with the 'Phase 1' further investigation work regarding potential Donaghadee sea defence enhancements. Agreed that Council proceeds as proposed in section 4 of the report, with the outcome of engagement outlined being reported back to Environment Committee in 2025. Environment Committee April 2024 - Agreed to bring back a report.	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	August 2025 : Officers had a meeting with representatives of the Conlig Community Regeneration group in May. The group has now instructed an architect to complete technical drawings and to seek approval in principle from utility providers for the War Memorial site at Conlig Green, as required by NIHE as part of the application to acquire the land.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration) & Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets and Property)	
626	Community & Wellbeing	13.06.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	That the Council, following the 80th anniversary of D-Day, recognises the service of US regiment(s) stationed in Donaghadee prior to D-Day and tasks officers to bring a report back looking at ways in which our Borough could provide a lasting memory to them.	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&W committee. Report going to June 2025 C&WC.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
629	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clandeboye road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed."	Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3) September C&W Committee	Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage. Report to June C&W Committee with progress report as communicated to DEA members and local community in April and May 2025 on next steps and plans for enhancement of the site. Update to October 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. August 2025: Further meetings took place in June , report to follow when more information available.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.2) Environment Committee 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1) Environment Committee 7 May 2025 (Item 3)	Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Hollywood and Donaghadee HRCs Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Hollywood 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 October 2025 C&WC.	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	

638	Place & Prosperity	22.10.2024	Councillors Harbinson & McCracken	That this Council should: 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 disposal 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	Director of Place and Prosperity	
640		05.11.2024	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair	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. 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.	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.	Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.		

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 took place on 3 June 2025. A masterplan/feasibility study to be carried out.	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 P&P 6.11.25 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	Report presented to P&P 4.9.25 and agreed. Subject to ratification at Sept Council. Agreed at P&P 6.2.25	Director of Place and Prosperity	

653	Environment	21.01.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee	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.	Council January 2025 Environment Committee 05.02 25 Item 11.1 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Item 14	Letter from DAERA Minister dated 29.04.25 noted at June EC 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	Richard McCracken (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)	TO BE REMOVED
654	Place & Prosperity	20.01.25	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall	This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards. 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. 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 6.3.25 Council 26.02.2025	Report to P&P 9.10.25 Meeting arranged with Pipe Bands for 13.5.25 Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion	Director of Place and Prosperity	

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. August update: Report to follow in September.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	Report presented at September Corporate Committee. Actions agreed which officers will take forward. CLOSED and will be removed from Tracker after September 2025 Council.
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 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Council 25.06.25	Agreed the proposals in the update report in relation to Christmas Lighting in Bangor, utilising DfC funding wherever possible, with any shortfall coming from existing Christmas Lighting maintenance budgets. Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 02.04.2025. Report to future EC.	Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
659	Corporate Services	17.03.2025	Councillor Gilmour & Alderman Graham	That this council recognises the challenges faced by those who are blind and partially sighted and commits to working to make Ards and North Down a Visually aware Borough. This council recognises the expertise of the RNIB, their vision for a, world where blind and partiality sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life. Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.	Council 26.03.2025 - Corporate Services Committee 08.04.2025	Presented to 8.4.2025 CS Committee. August update - Report to be brought to Sept Committee.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	Report presented at September Corporate Committee. Actions agreed which officers will take forward . CLOSED and will be removed from Tracker after September 2025 Council.
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. Report going to corporate committee in September.	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. 30 June 2025 letters x 3 issued from CEX office. 30 July 2025 reply received from the Department of Communities. Response to NOM to Corporate September. Close after ratification		
665	Community & Wellbeing	15.04.25	Councillor Morgan and Councillor Ashe	We are all aware that dog ownership has increased significantly over the past years. There is fenced of area on "Muckers" in Comber, which is currently being used by NIW which when they have finished their work might lend itself to creating a dog park. This Council should bring back a report that explores the options for creating a dog park in Comber."	Council 30.04.25	Assigned to June 2025 C&W Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

667		23.04.25	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.	Council 28.05.25 and Corporate Committee June 2025	Minute to Head of Administration		
668		23.04.25	Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood	Council amends funding eligibility criteria to allow for voluntary dance groups to avail of grants within either the arts or sport funding streams. Council acknowledges the opportunities performance arts bring in terms of community wellbeing, education, tourism, and our local economy. Officers will provide a report on how Council can further grow performance art across Ards and North Down	Council 28.05.25 and Community and Wellbeing Committee 18.06.25			
669	Place & Prosperity		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.	P&P 12.6.25 (17.1) Council 28.05.25 and Place and Prosperity Committee 12.06.25	Report to be brought to future P&P Committee Agreed to adopt NoM at P&P 12.6.25 (17.1)	Interim Head of Economic Development	

670	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)	
671	Environment	20.05.25	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. The Council therefore resolves to: 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:	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.1	Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda	Richard McCracken (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)	

672	Place & Prosperity	20.05.25	Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson	Amendment to Notice of Motion 672 submitted by Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson "This Council welcomes the update on Marine Gardens provided by Bangor Marine on 13 August 2025 and agrees that: 1. Council officers should work alongside Bangor Marine to support public communication around this project. This includes inviting Bangor Marine to the next meeting of the Bangor CAG to update stakeholders, supporting the proposed public consultation hub led by Bangor Marine, and by holding regular meetings with Bangor Marine to ensure accurate and complementary messaging on respective websites, newsletters and social media. 2. Council should also work with Bangor Marine to support a commercial marketing plan with the aim of attracting investment for the further phases of Queen's Parade along with complementary investment that will support the ambitions of the wider City Deal. An initial outline should be brought to Committee in Q1 2026 with a view to approve draft marketing collateral that can be used at future property investment conferences in the UK and abroad."	P&P 4.9.25 Council 25.06.25	Agreed to adopt NOM at Sept 2025 P&P - subject to ratification at Sept Council	Director of Place and Prosperity	
673	Environment	21.05.25	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.	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.2	Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda	Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

674		11.06.25	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.	Heard at Council 25.06.25	Letter sent to DAERA Minister from CEX on 7 July 2025. Reply received 18 August 2025. Response to NOM to CS September 2025.		
675	Corporate Services	16.06.25	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.	Council 25.06.25 Corporate Services Committee - September	NOM added to the draft Corporate Services agenda -September 2025. Ratified minute to go to Communications & Marketing team.		

676	Community & Wellbeing	16.06.25	Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum	That this Council recognises the success of Love Ballyholme and thanks all involved for their hard work and commitment; further recognises the importance of community led initiatives to improve community cohesion, while supporting local businesses, and asks officers to bring back a report, which includes a plan and funding opportunities to support the replication of this community led model in the Rathmore area of Bangor.	Council 30.07.25 - Community & Wellbeing Committee	Assigned to September 2025 C&W Agenda		
677	Community & Wellbeing	24.06.25	Alderman Smith and Councillor Smart	That this Council produces a report to scope the potential of introducing a public hire bicycle scheme similar to Belfast Bikes for use across the new Greenway network. That the report outlines the benefits, risks, costs, potential partnerships and any funding opportunities including those provided through DfI Active Travel to inform a Council decision on progressing such a scheme.	Council 30.07.25 - Community & Wellbeing Committee	Assigned to September 2025 C&W Agenda		
678	Community & Wellbeing	21.07.25	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	That this Council notes the role played by Donaghadee Cricket Club in promoting sport, health, and community engagement in Donaghadee, particularly for our youth. Council further requests that officers prepare a report to look at how sports clubs like Donaghadee could be better supported by Council, particular through the lease charges levied against the clubs acknowledging the great community work these organisations do as well as the role they play in maintaining the facilities	Council 30.07.25 - Community & Wellbeing Committee	Assigned to September 2025 C&W Agenda		
679	Corporate Services	06.08.2025	Councillor Boyle and Councillor Irwin	Ards and North Down Borough Council believes that young people deserve a say in who represents them, welcomes the UK Government's announcement to allow people aged 16 and 17 to vote in future Westminster, Assembly and Council elections, believes that this should be in place ahead of 2027 in time for the next Assembly and Council elections; calls on the First and Deputy First Minister to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ensure that any necessary UK legislation is passed to meet this timeline.	Council 27.08.2025 - Corporate Services Committee	Assigned to September 2025 Corporate Services Committee		