ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

10 December 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, 17 December 2025 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Michael Steele
Acting 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 December 2025 (Copy attached)

6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 26 November 2025 (Copy attached)

7. Minutes of Committees

7.1 Planning Committee dated 2 December 2025 (Copy attached)

7.2. Environment Committee dated 3 December 2025 (Copy attached)

7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 4 December 2025 (Copy attached)

7.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 9 December 2025 (Copy attached)

7.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 10 December 2025 (Copy attached)

8. Consultations

8.1 DfE Public Consultation - A definition of Social Enterprise in Northern Ireland (Report attached)

9. Resolutions

9.1 PSNI Firearms online licencing system (correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council attached)

10. Social Supermarket Underspend (Report attached)

11. Nominations to Outside Bodies (Report attached)

12. Freedom of the Borough Update – Rhys McClenaghan (Report attached)

13. Sealing Documents

14. Transfer of Rights of Burial

15. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

16. Notices of Motion

16.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McRandal and Alderman McAlpine

That this Council notes with concern the signs of erosion which have arisen on Station Road, Craigavon in recent years and that this Council recognises that Station Road, Craigavad is an integral section of the North Down coastal path and the Ulster Way.

That this Council reassess whether it has responsibility for maintaining the road and for strengthening the sea wall and sea defences along the North Down coastal path section of Station Road, in view of:

the fact that Council was prepared to assume responsibility for the road and sea defences under the failed Greenway project;

the fact that this is a right of way as asserted by Council.

That a report is brought back to the relevant Committee, to include assessment of who owns or is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the sea wall and sea defences along Station Road.

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor Hennessy

That this Council returns a report researching paternity leave provision for Council employees including but not limited to: benchmarking of paternity leave provision against appropriate organisations; options to improve paternity leave policy for council employees; projected costings of these options; and anything else officers deem prudent.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Smart and Alderman McIlveen

In light of the recent difficulty of West Winds Community Church in accessing council facilities to provide their Christmas Day service of worship, we agree that the Borough community facilities will be made available on Christmas Day, only on the strict proviso that the relevant individual staff choose to work on Christmas Day and cannot be mandated to do so.

A review of this provision would then be included in the current and ongoing policy review relating to council community facilities.

16.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings

That this council is deeply concerned regarding the length of time that people battling with Motor Neurone Disease must wait to receive help through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Disabled Facilities Grant.

To write to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Minister for Communities to ask what the current length of time is for MND sufferers to have home adaptations completed and to ask them to implement a scheme to fast track these vital and much needed home adaptions.

16.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Chambers

Council acknowledges the vital role that our voluntary community groups play across the borough. Through our grants programmes these groups deliver initiatives such as community events, sporting activities, and festivals promoting tourism.
As we rely on these groups to continue this important work across the borough, we must ensure they are supported, and that the management of these grants is easy to navigate.

Advance payments are essential for small organisations who don't have large reserve sums of money in their bank accounts. Another complication for groups is being passed across various council departments during the delivery of their initiative.

In order to improve this process, Officers will bring back a report considering the implications of making the following changes:

• The advance payments available to groups is extended to 80%.
• If a group is successful in a funding application they will be allocated an officer within council who will act as the only point of contact between the group and Council.

16.6 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum

That this Council notes with concern the increased cost of living and the impact this has upon families and individuals within the Borough; further notes that the absence of a clear Anti-Poverty Strategy makes it challenging to understand and strengthen our role in alleviating poverty and reducing inequality and therefore tasks Officers with bringing forward proposals to enhance the effectiveness of Council's contribution to poverty alleviation, including but not limited to, funding allocated to volunteer led community groups involved in poverty alleviation work. This work should complement, and not duplicate, any borough-wide Anti-Poverty action planning being undertaken by external partners.

****IN CONFIDENCE****

17. Acquisition of land for Greenway - Comber to Floodgates (Report attached)

18. Delegated Authority to Place and Prosperity Committee 8 January 2026 – Variance Request (Report attached)

19. Proposed new listing within Ards and North Down Borough Council area (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

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

Monday 1 December

9.30 am Official Food and Drink Launch, Strangford Arms Hotel, Newtownards

1.30 pm Celebration Day – Linking Celebrations, Bramblewood Care Home, Bangor

Tuesday 2 December

6.45 pm Kircubbin Christmas Tree Lights Switch On, Maxwell's Courtyard, Kircubbin

Wednesday 3 December

4.00 pm Visit from Young World Champions in Tenor Drumming, Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Bangor

7.00 pm Cloughey Christmas Lights Switch On, Cloughey

Thursday 4 December

6.45 pm Ballywalter Christmas Tree Light Switch On, Ballywalter Village Hall **(DEPUTY MAYOR)**

Saturday 6 December

11 am Hyrox Team Relay Event, Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex

2.30 pm Donaghadee Santa Visit, Donaghadee Harbour

4.45 pm Conlig Christmas Tree Light Switch On, Conlig

6.15 pm Millisle Christmas Light Switch On, Millisle **(DEPUTY MAYOR)**

Sunday 7 December

7.00 pm Donaghadee Christmas Light Switch-On, Donaghadee

Tuesday 9 December

11.30 am Ards Guitar Festival 2026 PR Photo, Ards Arts Centre

12.30 pm Sports Development School Series, Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex

2.00 pm Step into Christmas with the Mayor, Queen's Hall, Newtownards

Wednesday 10 December

10.00 am Photo – Belonging Candle, Makin Scents, 92 High Street, Newtownards

4.00 pm Orchardville Charity Concert, Bangor Elim

6.00 pm Women's Aid Candlelight Vigil, Bangor Castle

Thursday 11 December

11.15 am SureStart Family Christmas Event, Bangor Sure Start

12.30 pm Photo – Jingle Bell Trail, Walled Garden

7.00 pm Music at Christmas Event, City Hall, Bangor

Friday 12 December

9.30 am Senior Citizens Event with Ballyholme Primary School, Ballyholme Primary School

Saturday 13 December

4.00 pm Polish Association in County Down Christmas Celebrations, Kings Church, Seacliff Road, Bangor **(DEPUTY MAYOR)**

6.30 pm Christmas at the Kelly, Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat, Donaghadee **(DEPUTY MAYOR)**

Tuesday 16 December

6.30 pm Carol Service by Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, City Church, Main Street, Bangor

Thursday 18 December

5.15 pm Helen's Bay Christmas Tree Lights Switch On, Station Square, Helen's Bay

Friday 19 December

10.00 am Bangor Academy Prize Day, Bangor Academy

Saturday 20 December

1.30 pm Truck and Tractor Run, Ballyblack Church

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor McCollum)

Aldermen:

Adair
Cummings
Graham
McAlpine
McRandal
McDowell (Zoom)
McIlveen
Smith

Councillors:

Ashe
Blaney
Boyle
Brady
Cathcart
Chambers
Cochrane
Douglas
Edmund
Gilmour
Harbinson
Hennessy
Hollywood
S Irvine
W Irvine
Irwin
Kennedy
Kendall (Zoom 7.02pm)
McBurney
McClean
McCracken
McKee (Zoom)
Moore
Morgan
Thompson
Smart
Wray

Officers: Acting Chief Executive (M Steele), Acting Director of Corporate Services (C Jackson), Director of Environment (G Bannister), Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning (A McCullough – Zoom 7.19pm), Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services (G Kinnear), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor McCollum) welcomed everyone to the meeting and commenced with the Director of Environment reading the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Aldermen Armstrong-Cotter & Brooks

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made. The Mayor reminded everyone that Declarations of Interest could be made at any point in the meeting should the need arise.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor indicated that she wished to put on record on behalf of the Council, her sincere condolences to the family and friends of Stephen Cooper, former Councillor, on his sudden passing last week. She was aware that the Deputy Mayor and others were in attendance at his funeral held earlier that day in his hometown of Comber. Stephen had served as a Councillor for Comber DEA, representing the Borough for many years. The Mayor added that her thoughts were with his loved ones during this difficult time and asked members to stand for a minute's silence at this stage.

NOTED.

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

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- List of Mayor's/Deputy Mayor engagements for the Month of November.

The Mayor spoke with enthusiasm on a number of engagements which she had attended and had enjoyed and highlighted some of the engagements which she had attended during November ably assisted by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore:-

- Royal British Legion Remembrance Services throughout the Borough
- Bangor Royal British Legion Centenary Curry Lunch
- Bangor Business Awards
- Pride of Place Awards, Limerick attended with representatives of Donaghadee Community Association
- Mayor's Installation Dinner
- St Columbanus Week
- Bangor Christmas Light Switch On

At this stage the Mayor also reported that Bangor Horticultural Society had raised approximately £3,000 for the Mayor's Charities through produce sold in the Walled Garden of Bangor Castle.

Continuing the Mayor also referred to her Belonging Afternoon Tea series which was continuing with further slots available in the diary for those who may be interested in making a nomination.

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

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 29 OCTOBER 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Planning Committee dated 4 November 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Item 5 - Draft Response to DFI Consultation on Planning Fees

Councillor Morgan proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council approves the attached response to the DFI Consultation on Planning Fees to be submitted by the closing date of 23 December with the exception of including charges for TPOs (Tree Protection Orders,) objections to planning applications, and the submission of enforcement complaints.

The proposer Councillor Morgan commented that she had expressed her view at the Planning Committee that she had no problem with charging appropriate planning fees to ensure a well performing, sustainable planning service. However, her issue was that she would very much like to see clear evidence of a proactive improvement plan which addressed the whole system, which sadly to date had been lacking. She stated that increasing charges must not be just about revenue raising but instead should be all about improving the service. To that end she believed that it would be prudent for the Council to review the proposal for charging for TPOs and associated works, objections to planning applications, and for the submission of enforcement complaints. While she accepted there were costs associated with those services, she feared that introducing charges would be unfair and a retrograde step and would not improve the planning performance.

In respect of TPOs Councillor Morgan stated that trees were hugely important in the landscape and the urban environment. As such she believed everyone should want

to protect trees, particularly those fine specimens which became features in their own right. Councillor Morgan indicated that her initial reaction to the proposal for TPOs was that the Council charged for a planning application so why not a TPO. However, on reflection she commented as follows:

- We should want more TPOs not less and we should want more biodiversity not less.
- We should want trees with TPOs to be particularly well cared for.
- There was a substantial public benefit from trees with a TPO as opposed to a house extension or a new shed which were generally for more private benefit.

Continuing Councillor Morgan stated that to charge for TPOs and associated works could well be a retrograde step, and a further obstacle in looking after the very best of the trees in the Borough. Her view was that trees needed more protection not less and charging for TPOs and associated works would not help or improve the service. As such she believed the Council should oppose this suggestion.

In respect of objections to Planning applications Councillor Morgan accepted that there was a cost to processing objections to planning applications. Officers suggested that the system could be misused, however she had seen little evidence of this, and none had been presented. Instead, she stated that in her experience:

- The vast majority of objections to planning applications for example were overlooking, concerns about increased traffic, along with scale and massing issues which were genuine concerns from locals living nearby. In all but the very exceptional case the issues that were raised were issues that a Planning Officer would consider in any event.
- Sometimes as a result of the objections an application could be modified to address those concerns, and this was a very positive result.
- On occasions an application went to Committee because of the number of objections and while there was an additional cost to this, it also showed the planning process to be open and transparent. Councillor Morgan believed that was a good thing.

Continuing, Councillor Morgan believed objecting or even supporting an application was part of democracy and could improve the planning process. She added that the Council should not be aiming to restrict objections and therefore should not be charging for planning objections.

In respect of the Submission of Enforcement Complaints, Councillor Morgan noted that enforcement was about policing the planning system and frequently the public were the eyes and ears of the system. She did not believe that it was appropriate to charge anyone for asking for an investigation into a possible planning infringement particularly as you would not even consider paying an extra charge to ask the police to investigate a crime. She added that it was quite conceivable that the person making the enforcement complaint was the victim. Continuing Councillor Morgan acknowledged that an enforcement service was needed as otherwise the planning system would fall into disarray. As such she suggested that perhaps the Council should be thanking those who made enforcement complaints as opposed to charging

them. Enforcement of the planning system was she added a public service for everyone.

Commenting as seconder Alderman McIlveen noted this was a consultation and questions from the Department and he understood why officers had suggested that charges were introduced in some cases. However, he was also aware that some people had used objections to their favour, and he was of the opinion that charging was not a means to deal with ongoing issues. In respect of enforcement matters he believed that the Enforcement Team should be appropriately funded to carry out its role. He reiterated his support for the proposal.

At this stage Councillor McKee indicated that he was happy to support the proposal and welcomed the cross-party support which it had received. He added that it was his view that to introduce charges would be a backward step.

Also rising in support Councillor Cathcart reminded members that this was a Consultation response and as such the Council had no authority or ability to charge. As such he believed some of the comments which had been made were misleading and that was regrettable. Continuing he stated that DfI was considering Planning reform and while the Council would not support the introduction of charges, there was an issue with it not having enough involvement with certain elements of Planning. As such Councillor Cathcart believed that a wider reform of Planning was to be welcomed in order to make the system more efficient.

Councillor Kendall also expressed her support for the proposal adding that charging would not be in the public interest. She added that to do so would negatively impact those on low incomes and detrimentally affect them.

Expressing his thanks to Councillor Morgan for bringing the proposal forward, Alderman Smith indicated that he too was happy to support. He added that a key point within the Consultation was the need for increased fees.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council approves the attached response to the DFI Consultation on Planning Fees to be submitted by the closing date of 23 December with the exception of including charges for TPO's (Tree Protection Orders,) objections to planning applications, and the submission of enforcement complaints.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the minutes as amended, be approved and adopted.

7.2. <u>Environment Committee dated 5 November 2025</u>

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 6 November 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor McCracken proposed, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

At this stage Councillor Thompson noted that he had not be marked in the minutes as being in attendance and asked for that to be amended accordingly.

The Director of Place and Prosperity advised that during the meeting an unknown Samsung mobile device had been noted as being in attendance, but officers had not been aware that it was Councillor Thompson as the camera function had been switched off. Therefore, he could not be recorded as being in attendance at the meeting.

Councillor Thompson thanked the Director for his clarification.

Noted.

Item 5 - Estate Development Project Board - Feasibility Studies

Councillor Boyle indicated that he wished to raise this matter which had been considered 'In Confidence'.

The Mayor indicated that the matter would be considered when the meeting went 'Into Committee'.

Noted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the minutes with the exception of Item 5 to be considered in the exclusion of the public/press be approved and adopted.

7.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 11 November 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 12 November 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 19 - Origins Gymnastics

Alderman McIlveen indicated that he wished to raise Item 19 which had been considered 'In Confidence'.

NOTED.

Item 17 – Leisure Services – Procurement Exception and Capital Funding Approval for Essential Work

Councillors McClean and W Irvine both indicated that they wished to raise Item 17 which had also been considered 'In Confidence'.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes with the exception of Item 17 and 19 to be considered in the exclusion of the public/press be approved and adopted.

8. DEPUTATION REQUESTS

8.1 Deputation Request – Donaghadee Community Development Association

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that a deputation request had been received from John Caldwell BEM of Donaghadee Community Development Association.

The request was in relation to the Donaghadee Ulster-Scots Festival which the Association successfully organizes.

The request was for the deputation to be heard at the Place and Prosperity Committee.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Hennessy, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the Council accedes to the request and the deputation be heard at the Place and Prosperity Committee.

9. RESOLUTIONS

9.1. Caoimhe Law (Received from Mid Ulster District Council) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence from Mid Ulster Council detailing a the passing of a motion relating to the recording, sharing, and circulation of images and videos taken at the scenes of fatal or critical road traffic collisions. The

correspondence sought the support of other Councils for the proposed Caoimhe's Law.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this correspondence.

Councillor Chambers proposed, seconded by Councillor Brady, that this Council supports the motion that was agreed at Mid Ulster District Council. Further, that it writes to the Department of Justice , calling on the Department and the Northern Ireland Executive to prioritise the introduction of Caoimhe's Law into legislation.

The proposer Councillor Chambers commented that he had been in touch with a number of charity organisations to discuss this matter, as well as lobbying a number of Elected Members throughout Northern Ireland to bring forward motions to their respective Councils. At this stage Councillor Chambers provided some background to Caoimhe's Law, commenting that he found it disgusting that there were some people whose first instinct was to capture a photograph or video on their mobile phones of critical or fatal road traffic collisions. He believed that the families of any victims deserved dignity and privacy and as such this Law was about giving families time and space to learn of the truth in private.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Brady expressed his thanks to Mid Ulster District Council for bringing this Motion, adding that he found it disheartening that media in Northern Ireland were engaging in this also. Continuing he referred to the obstruction of paramedics in what could be a life or death situation adding that this was already an offence under legislation. Councillor Brady expressed his deepest sympathies to those families who had been affected by this behaviour and as such he was more than happy to support the proposal.

At this stage Councillor Wray stated that this practice was nothing more than a very sad reflection of society which needed to stop. Continuing he referred to one further issue having discussed the matter with the police and that was there were now so many taking photos and video that was not being handed over as evidence to the police, as the assumption was that it was available online. However, the quality of that evidence often became distorted from being shared on many occasions online and he encouraged that footage instead be sent to directly to the police rather than being shared online.

Councillor Gilmour also rose in support, believing that the issue really was one of human decency, adding that no family would wish to learn of such tragic news via social media. Continuing she added that she believed that notion of human decency needed to be spread out to other areas such as mental health crisis and suicide. While mobile phones were undoubtedly great, she reiterated that they should not be used for this purpose.

Councillor Kendall indicated that she was incredibly content to support this and agreed that it was not appropriate for such images to be shared on social media. She added that she had one question around dashcam footage which could be invaluable to the police and whether or not that would be impacted if legislation was brought in which made it illegal to record. Councillor Kendall acknowledged that may

be something which could be given consideration in due course and in summing she expressed her gratitude for what was being proposed.

At this stage the Mayor thanked members for their compassionate and sensitive comments made on this matter.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Brady, that this Council supports the motion that was agreed at Mid Ulster District Council. Further, that it writes to the DOJ, calling on the Department and Northern Ireland Executive to prioritise the introduction of Caoimhe's Law into legislation.

9.2. Unauthorised Recording, Searching and Circulation of Images and Videos taken at Road Traffic Collisions (Received from Derry City & Strabane District Council) (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council detailing a the passing of a motion relating to the recording, sharing, and circulation of images and videos taken at the scenes of fatal or critical road traffic collisions. The correspondence sought the support of other Councils for the proposed Caoimhe's Law.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this correspondence.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the correspondence be noted.

10. TOBACCO AND VAPES BILL CALL FOR EVIDENCE (FILE CW 99 and CW 14) (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services stating that the Tobacco and Vapes Bill was currently being considered by Parliament. The Bill would help achieve the UK Governments' ambition for a smoke free UK and protect future generations from the harms of tobacco and risks of nicotine addiction.

The Bill would enable the UK Government to:

- create a smoke-free generation, gradually ending the sale of tobacco products across the country and breaking the cycle of addiction and disadvantage
- strengthen the existing ban on smoking in public places and introduce vape and heated tobacco-free places to reduce the harms of passive smoking in certain outdoor settings, particularly for children and vulnerable people
- stop vapes and nicotine products from being deliberately promoted and advertised to appeal to children to stop the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine through restrictions on product features, ingredients and flavourings, among other things
- provide powers to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and nicotine products in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (the

Scottish Government is improving the current register for the retail of these products in Scotland)
- strengthen enforcement activity to support the implementation of the above, including through introducing a new product registration scheme in the UK

The Bill formed part of a wider package of work and government priorities which would help the Government to meet their objectives to:

- discourage uptake of smoking and tobacco consumption and to create a smoke-free generation
- support people who already consume tobacco to quit, including through evidence-based quit-aids
- discourage vaping by children and young people
- enforce legal requirements and protect public health

This would support the overall goal to move the focus from sickness to prevention and reduce the burden on the NHS and the economy.

To support policy development on potential future regulations the UK Government had opened a 'Call for Evidence' led by UK's Department of Health and Social Care. The call for evidence closed on 3 December and requested views and evidence from stakeholders on:

- substances and ingredients used to create flavours in products, such as vapes and nicotine products, and associated emissions from these products
- levels of nicotine that should be permitted in nicotine-containing products, such as nicotine pouches
- size and shape of vapes, vape-like devices and tanks, as well as the role of technology in these devices
- proposal to introduce a new licensing scheme for the retail sale of products including tobacco, vaping and nicotine products in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (the Scottish Government is improving the current register for the retail of these products in Scotland)
- proposal to introduce a new product registration scheme in the UK which could require a producer or manufacturer to provide details on products such as tobacco, vaping and nicotine products before they can be supplied to the UK market

A separate consultation would be launched at a later date on proposals for:

- smoke-free, vape-free and heated tobacco-free places
- rules on the display of products
- restrictions to elements of devices such as branding and colour
- the packaging of tobacco products
- the packaging of vape and nicotine products

The Consumer Protection and Tobacco Control teams within Environmental Health and Regulatory Services had drafted the attached response to the call for evidence and saw this as an opportunity to shape and influence proposals for the new legislation. This draft would be submitted with the caveat that it was subject to

Council approval, and it would reserve the right to withdraw or amend the response subject to Council's decision.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the submission of the attached response to the Tobacco and Vapes Bill Call for Evidence.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman McIlveen indicated that he wished to make a slight tweak the proposed consultation response. He was mindful of the concerns of parents around the selling of vapes in sweet shops and as such suggested that a line was inserted around Location to acknowledge those concerns.

The Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services concurred with the member's comments adding that officers would share those concerns of parents and as such that would be taken on board and included in the response.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Harbinson also agreed with those sentiments adding that as such he was happy to support Alderman McIlveen.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted with the inclusion of a line in Location acknowledging the concerns of parents around the selling of vapes in sweet shops.

11. UPDATES TO THE REPORT TEMPLATE FOR COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL MEETINGS (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Chief Executive stating that following the agreed phase one restructure of the Council, the Council and Committee report template was updated to reflect the new Director and Committee titles. At the same time, officers also undertook to do a full review of the template, its relevance and functionality.

Proposal
The most significant changes proposed would require authors to consider the following matters when preparing reports:

- Resource Implications (budget, staffing, legal services, contractual, other)
- Screening Requirements
- Link to the Corporate Plan Priorities and Outcomes

These additions should help enable a clear understanding and emphasis of any implications and consequences to allow Members to make the most informed decision. As well, it was a prompt to ensure Council was continuously working towards the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

Additional, inconsequential tweaks were also done elsewhere in the report:

- Addition of a multiple option for the Exemption Reason.
- Default legislation listed as the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 with the option to free text any other legislation.
- Standardisation of sub-headings.
- A structured Recommendation section.

Key Issues
Desktop research was conducted including a review of the report templates of other Councils in Northern Ireland. Of the 10 other Councils, nine publish copies of their reports on their website.

Eight of those nine Councils included reference to resource implications and screening requirements in some way in their templates. The remaining Council did include reference to resource implications and screening requirements ad-hoc in reports but did not appear to be a mandatory field in the template. Two of the nine Councils made reference to the Corporate Plan in their template.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree to the updated report template at Appendix 1.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCracken referred to reports included with Committee papers and expressed the view that it would be useful for reference to be made to previous papers. As such he believed that the inclusion of a Background Section on the report template would be useful for all, particularly those new Elected Members to Council.

Concurring with the previous speaker the Mayor added that would be particularly useful for matters reported to the Planning Committee.

Councillor Kendall also agreed asking if it would be possible to include the names of the author of reports.

In response to Councillor Kendall, the Acting Chief Executive advised that each Head of Service was responsible for the signing off of all Committee reports but acknowledged that on occasions they were not always the author of the report. As such he agreed to give the matter further consideration.

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

12. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Chief Executive stating that places on Working Groups were filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and were thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a

position became vacant, it reverted back to Council to nominate a Member to fill the place rather than the Party Nominating Officers.

Following the resignation of Stephen Hollywood from the Council (Bangor West DEA), nominations were sought to fill each of the below positions for the remainder of the term as necessary:

1. Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)
2. Body: North Down Development Organisation Ltd – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)
3. Body: Somme Advisory Council – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)
4. Body: National Association of Councillors – 8 Places (4 Year Appointment)
5. Body: PEACE PLUS – 11 Places (4 Year Appointment) – Please note, this Membership was to be allocated on the basis of d'Hondt plus one so nomination should be sought from the UUP Nominating Officer for this position.

The below tables reflected the current membership of the above working groups:

1. Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)

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

2. Body: North Down Development Organisation Ltd – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	**2023/27**
1	Councillor Dunlop	Councillor McCracken
2	Alderman M Smith	Councillor Cathcart
3	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Hollywood

3. Body: Somme Advisory Council – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman M Smith	Alderman Cummings
2	Alderman Keery	Councillor Hollywood

4. Body: National Association of Councillors – 8 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Boyle
2	Alderman Wilson	Alderman McDowell
3	Councillor Boyle	*Vacant*
4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor S Hollywood
5	Councillor Thompson	-
6	Alderman Carson	-
7	Alderman Keery	-
8	-	-

5. Body: PEACE PLUS – 11 Places (4 Year Appointment) (appointed by d'hondt + 1)

	2022/23	New Appointment – 2023/27
1	Councillor Adair	Alderman McIlveen
2	Councillor Thompson	Alderman Adair
3	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Thompson
4	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
5	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Boyle
6	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor Irwin
7	Alderman McRandal	Alderman McAlpine
8	Councillor Smart	Alderman McRandal
9	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Morgan
10	Councillor McKee	Alderman Brooks
11	Councillor Boyle	Councillor Hollywood

Outstanding Positions
Following the resignation of Linzi McLaren (Holywood and Clandeboye DEA) from the Council, which had subsequently been filled by Stephen Hollywood, a number of positions on Working Groups would be required to be filled.

It is recommended that nominations to these positions were deferred until the vacant seat (Bangor West DEA) was filled. They were as follows:

6. Body: Elected Member Development Steering Group – 7 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor McLaren
2	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Smart
3	Alderman Keery	Councillor Moore

4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor McAlpine
5	Councillor Thompson	Alderman McIlveen
6	Alderman W Irvine	Alderman Graham
7	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor Cochrane

7. Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)

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

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

	2024/25	**2025/26**
1	Councillor Thompson *(Replaced Councillor MacArthur April 2024)*	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
4	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings

Nominations were sought from Council to fill the above places (1-5) for the remainder of the term as necessary and agree to defer the nominations of positions for 6-8.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

(a) Nominate a Member(s) to the bodies as outlined as 1-5 above; and
(b) Defer nominations on bodies 6-8 until the remaining seat in Bangor West DEA is filled

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor Hollywood replaces himself on those bodies outlined in 1-5 of the report.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that Councillor Holywood replaces himself on those bodies outlined in 1-5 of the report.

13. SEALING DOCUMENTS

Alderman Graham proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the seal be affixed to the documents listed.

The proposer, Alderman Graham welcomed the sealing of the Order as this was an issue which had been continuously raised with him over a long period of time. He thanked all of those involved with the work which had went into this matter.

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

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

(a) Grant of Rights of Burial D41116 – D41162
(b) The Dogs on Leads (North Down Coastal Path) Order 2025

14. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Whitechurch cemetery section L grave 22
Robert Mckee – Kyla Smyth

Ballyvester cemetery section H grave 2 – Ballyvester section NVWE grave 57 G/1 (new grave allocated)
William Arbukle

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the Transfers of Rights of Burial be noted.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix VII)

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

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

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

That this Council pledges to oppose the introduction of any Digital ID system that would be mandatory or linked to essential services.

We resolve to write to the Prime Minister urging the Government to abandon any Digital ID initiative and calling for a full public consultation to take place on the subject prior to any future proposals being brought forward.

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

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers

This Council notes the Ulster Farmers' Union's unprecedented motion of no confidence in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), which reflects deep and widespread frustration within the farming community.

This Council recognises the unrelenting pressures faced by family farmers across Northern Ireland, including:

- the unresolved and escalating crisis surrounding Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB);
- uncertainty regarding future Inheritance Tax arrangements for farm succession;
- continued planning paralysis affecting essential agricultural development; and
- increasing policy and regulatory pressures, with little meaningful assurance, progress, or action from DAERA to address these challenges.

This Council further acknowledges that family farmers are the backbone of Northern Ireland's agri-food sector, sustaining rural communities, underpinning the regional economy, and serving as essential custodians of our environment and biodiversity. This Council therefore calls on the Minister for DAERA to move beyond an "open door" approach and to actively engage, listen, and deliver tangible action in partnership with the Ulster Farmers' Union. Family farmers must be treated as key stakeholders in shaping policy that secures the future of the agri-food industry, protects our environment, and sustains rural livelihoods.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall

This Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support.

This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include:

1. The potential introduction of stricter controls on the sale and importation of fireworks, limiting use to licensed, organised displays only.
2. Enhancing PSNI and Council enforcement powers to tackle illegal and antisocial firework use, and increasing the regulatory powers of the Department of Justice as the primary authority responsible for oversight and enforcement of fireworks legislation in Northern Ireland.
3. Establishing Northern Ireland–wide time restrictions to reduce unexpected noise and protect animals.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee.

Circulated for Information (Appendix VIII)

(a) EONI Chief Electoral Officer 24-25 Web Accessible

(b) Causeway Coast Dog Rescue

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the information be noted.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC/PRESS

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

7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 6 November 2025

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

Item 5 - Estate Development Project Board - Feasibility Studies

Exemption Reason: 4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

SUMMARY

This relates to the second feasibility study concerning the 'right of way' that the Council currently has to the site. An unclassified report may unduly impact the feasibility study's progress in understanding potential options. Officers are aware of the right of way arrangement and will include this in any future decision-making process.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 12 November 2025

Item 17 – Leisure Services – Procurement Exception and Capital Funding Approval for Essential Work

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

Councillor McClean indicated that one of the six questions he had asked on this item had been missed in the minutes and he felt that it was important for that to be recorded.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that it would be recorded that Councillor McClean had raised his version of what had taken place at the Committee meeting.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen acknowledged that there were recordings of Committee meetings which he presumed were kept until the minutes were ratified. As such he believed that it should be relatively easy to check the exact wording. He added that the issue Councillor McClean had raised around the fact that something was missing from the minutes which he believed was important and should be included in the minutes.

The Mayor acknowledged it was important that this was an agreed record of the minutes of the meeting and as such she believed the matter would need to come back to next month's meeting of the Committee in order to make that clarification.

The Acting Chief Executive agreed to check the recording.

Councillor W Irvine stated that given what had come to light since the meeting he would propose that this matter went back to the December 2025 meeting of the Committee.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that this matter went back to the December 2025 meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that that the matter be referred back to the next meeting of the Committee and that a Special meeting of the Committee be convened prior to 10 December 2025 to consider the matter, if the diary permits.

(Aldermen Adair & McAlpine and Councillor Brady left the Council Chamber at this stage – 8.27pm)

(Aldermen Adair & McAlpine and Councillor Brady re-entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 8.31pm)

Item 19 - Origins Gymnastics

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

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Council does not agree to the transfer of soft play facilities at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex to Origin Gymnastics.

Alderman McIlveen asked for a Recorded Vote to be taken.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Edmund, with 23 voting FOR, 11 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 4 ABSENT, that the Council does not agree to the transfer of Ards Blair Mayne's soft play facilities to Origin Gymnastics.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Active and Heathy Communities Committee, as amended, be approved and adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.03pm.

ITEM 7.1

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 December 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine
McDowell
McIlveen
Smith

Councillors: Cathcart
Hennessy
Kendall
Smart
Wray

Officers: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning and Building Control (A McCullough), Principal Planner (G Kerr), Senior Planners (J Hanna & A Todd) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors Harbinson, McCollum, McKee and Morgan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was made but Members were reminded of their ability to declare at any time throughout the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 4 NOVEMBER 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2025/0623/F – 1-15 (ODDS SKIPPERSTONE PARK, 11-33 SKIPPERSTONE GARDENS, AND 100-122 (EVENS) BLOOMFIELD ROAD SOUTH, BANGOR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: An application in the Major category of development
Proposal: Demolition of existing dwellings, erection of supermarket, provision of access, car parking, landscaping, and associated site works (Relocation of existing Lidl supermarket from No 97 Bloomfield Road. Existing building to be retained but retail use to be extinguished).
Site Location: 1-15 (odds) Skipperstone Park, 11-33 (odds) Skipperstone Avenue, 1-6 Skipperstone Gardens, and 100-122 (evens) Bloomfield Road South, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Principal Planner explained that the proposal was for the Demolition of existing dwellings, erection of a discount supermarket, provision of access, car parking, landscaping, removal of a bus lay-by, relocation of the bus shelter and relocation of the pedestrian footway between Bloomfield Road South and associated site works. The existing Lidl was to be relocated from No 97 Bloomfield Road to the west of Bloomfield Road South and South of Skipperstone Park. The retail use at the existing Lidl building at 97 Bloomfield Road was to be extinguished.

There were 13 objections from four addresses to the proposal received from when the application was submitted through to today – all submissions had been thoroughly assessed with relevant consultees being contacted where appropriate. Consultees were all content with the proposal and the recommendation was to grant planning approval subject to execution of the legal agreement.

Members were asked to note that there were speakers in opposition and in support this evening and representatives from DFI Roads were also in attendance for any queries.

The application site was located within the settlement limit on lands south of the Bloomfield Road roundabout west of Bloomfield Road South whilst the site where the supermarket was to be located was approximately 1.15 hectares with vacant residential properties on site. Single storey dwellings along Skipperstone Park and Skipperstone Avenue overlooked the site, with shared communal amenity areas to the rear of the properties.

There were grassed areas with trees between the dwellings and South Circular Road. To the east of the site, on the opposite side of Bloomfield Road South, there was an off-sales, public house and car wash.
The site was located on land shown as whiteland in the extant North Down and Ards Area Plan (NDAAP) and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP).

Members were shown the site to the south outlined in red, including the roundabout works required and the site of the existing Lidl store as well as images of the surrounding areas.

The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application identified the constraints which currently limited expansion on the existing site and opportunities that would be provided by moving to the new site some of which included:

- A larger store with products stacked at lower density, making them more accessible to all, including the elderly and mobility impaired;
- Additional storage space ensuring deliveries were kept to a minimum thereby improving sustainability of the store;
- Set-back from Bloomfield Road South allowing sufficient room for access;
- The store roughly followed the existing building line along Bloomfield Road South with crisp modern appearance at a lower level so as not to be prominent;
- 147 car parking spaces, 2.7m wide, larger than standard (2.4m wide) to ensure good accessibility;
- Disabled spaces in close proximity to the proposed store entrance and other access feature such as dropped kerbs, level accesses and pedestrian crossings;
- 2no. electric vehicle charging spaces and 8no. cycle spaces;
- The provision of over 100 new trees and new hedging and shrubs;
- Roof-mounted PV panels to generate renewable energy.

Members were shown the proposed building and its location within the site and associated car parking. The design was contemporary, with a mono-pitched roof finished with metallic cladding and PV panels to the rear part of the roof. The height of the proposed building increased from approximately 5m at the rear to 7m at the front. The front, rear and southern gable were all finished with painted render to the walls, broken up with some windows. The northern boundary was proposed to be entirely glazed, with floor-to-roof glazed panels increasing in height from the rear to the front. The proposal included cutting into the site and lowering the ground level with tree and shrub planting around the boundaries and within the car park. The location of the proposed building was such that it maintained the existing building line of properties facing onto Bloomfield Road South.

A detailed landscaping scheme was submitted with the proposed development. The landscaping plan showed landscape buffers along the boundaries of the site comprising native species of hedges, trees and shrubs. The landscaping was conditioned which would ensure the site would soften the appearance of the built form and to help create an attractive urban environment.

Members were asked to note that there was already an existing retail use in an out-of-centre location in respect of the existing Lidl store. This proposal was to transfer this use to the opposite side of the roundabout with an proposed increase of 562sqm of convenience goods and an increase 183sqm of comparison floorspace in relation to the existing store. In total, there would be a gross internal floor area of 2,560sqm and a net sales area of 1,742sqm of which 1,463sqm was for the sale of convenience goods with 279sqm for the sale of comparison goods, as was shown in the slide image by way of a table.

Paragraph 6.283 of the SPPS required:

"All applications for retail or town centre type developments above a threshold of 1000 square metres gross external area which are not proposed in a town centre location and are not in accordance with the LDP should be required to undertake a full assessment of retail impact as well as need"

All required assessments as required by the SPPS were undertaken by the agent with the Planning Service appointing an independent retail consultant, Nexus, to assess the following areas as required by policy:

- the impact of the proposal on trade and turnover for both convenience and comparison goods traders, and the impact on city centre turnover overall for all centres within the catchment of the proposal;

- the impact of the proposal on existing committed and planned public and private sector investment and investor confidence in the town centre/s;

- the impact of the proposals on the delivery of the planned/allocated sites and the LDP strategy;

- the impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres including consideration of the local context. This should take into account existing retail mix and the diversity of other facilities and activities;

- Cumulative impact taking account of committed and planned development, including plan commitments within the city centre and wider area; and, a review of local economic impacts.

It was acknowledged the impact on Bangor City Centre was finely balanced. However, taking the review carried out by Nexus into consideration and having considered all available evidence, it was concluded that the proposal, either individually or in combination with other developments, was unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on Bangor City Centre.

With regard to traffic - a Travel Plan Framework, Transport Assessment (TA), a Transport Assessment Scoping Study and a Service Management Plan were submitted with some amendments being requested by DFI Roads during the assessment of the application.

Amended access/road layout drawings and supporting technical information were submitted, with DfI Roads advising that it had no objections to the proposed development. A number of objections had been received raising concern regarding road safety and the potential traffic impacts of the proposed development. During the processing of the application, DfI Roads was asked to consider all the information submitted by the objector along with the rebuttals provided by the Applicant's Agent. DfI Roads confirmed that it considered all information provided and still had no objections to the proposed application.

The proposal included the provision of 147 car parking spaces, including eight accessibility spaces, six child friendly spaces and two electric vehicle charging

points. This equated to one car parking space per 17.5sqm. Provision was also made for eight bicycle parking spaces. The Parking Standards stated one car parking space was required per 14sqm Gross Floor Area (GFA) for retail food stores. Therefore, a total of 183 car parking spaces would be required in accordance with the Parking Standards guidance.

The agent explained the reasoning behind this level of parking within the submitted Transport Assessment. Justification for the deficit, in terms of the Parking Standards, included the likelihood of shared trips and parking due to the proximity to Bloomfield Shopping Centre. The Transport Assessment also stated the proximity to residential properties, and a school meant that there was an expectation of a high percentage of pedestrian trips to the supermarket. DFI Roads had considered the application and provided no objection in terms of parking.

In summary, all material planning considerations had been thoroughly assessed during the processing of this proposal, with an independent consultant reviewing the supporting information and providing comment. All consultees were content and material objections raised had been addressed. It was agreed that the sequential test in the Nexus Report had passed and that the proposal would not have a significant adverse effect on Bangor City Centre or any other protected centre. The proposal was a £7.5m investment in a new store that would materially benefit local shoppers, would regenerate a vacant site, provide better welfare facilities for staff and provide 22 new jobs.

RECOMMENDED that that the planning application should be APPROVED with delegated powers to finalise any planning agreement.

The discussion centred on the planning implications of Lidl's relocation and the associated retail use restrictions. Councillor Cathcart asked what restrictions applied in relation to the agreement of one site opening and the other closing. The Officer explained that planning approval would be accompanied by extinguishment of the retail use at the existing site, similar to the arrangement in Newtownards when Lidl had moved locations, and while nothing prevented someone from submitting a planning application for a particular use, it would have to go through the proper process.

Councillor Cathcart referenced the proposed site which, at the time of writing, had derelict houses upon it and asked whether the addition of a new unit would increase the commercial element, given that the existing site could potentially be used for other purposes. The Officer reiterated that retail use would be extinguished, though applications could still be submitted. Councillor Cathcart then questioned the city centre assessment, noting that the Flagship Centre had been considered. The Officer stated that it was the agent's responsibility to bolster any information submitted, and they had chosen to take account of the Flagship Centre. The required test had shown no significant impact on the city centre. She emphasised that Planning Service could not dictate where development should occur; it was for the agent to demonstrate why a site was or was not suitable. She noted that the Flagship Centre had not been available at the time of assessment, and the Dunnes Store location to its rear was deemed to lack sufficient footfall. Lidl's redevelopment strategy generally sought more sustainable sites with improved car parking.

Councillor Cathcart challenged this, pointing out that car parking already existed at the Flagship Centre and questioned whether Nexus' report accepted the reasons put forward, particularly as lack of footfall seemed an unacceptable justification. He stressed that the SPPS required town and city centre locations to be prioritised for retail expansion. The Officer responded that, as speakers would be presenting shortly in favour of the application, they could explain further but reiterated that it was not for Planning Service to decide which site was better. Lidl had wanted to proceed with expansion, and the Flagship Centre had not been available at the time of the assessment. Nexus had reviewed the material twice and concluded that, taken as a whole, there would be no negative impact on Bangor City Centre, which the Planning Service accepted.

Councillor Cathcart was curious as to whether it would be reassessed based on current availability. The Head of Planning confirmed that there were to be plans for an alternative use forthcoming from another source for the Flagship Centre that could not be fully discussed at the time of the meeting, but that they would require community consultation before a planning application could be submitted.

Alderman McIlveen noted that Nexus had been engaged by the Council as an independent body, separate from the applicant, which had submitted its own retail assessment. While there had been some disagreements between the two assessments, both ultimately concluded that there was no alternative appropriate site available under the sequential test. The Principal Planner explained that Nexus had been thorough in reviewing the listed points, though it had not agreed with the applicant's quantitative assessment of need. Despite this, the conclusion reached was that there would be no negative impact on the city centre, given the site-specific location.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether the Council was satisfied with Nexus' work. The Principal Planner confirmed that they were, explaining that retail planning was a highly specialised field and that the Planning Service had wanted an independent body to fully assess the submitted information. Nexus was based in England and had provided clarification and additional detail on both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Alderman McIlveen requested that the sequential test process be explained to the Committee to ensure every Member was familiar with its process. The Principal Planner outlined that retail applications must demonstrate consideration of sites in sequence, beginning with city centre locations before moving to out-of-town or out-of-centre sites. She explained that assessments had been carried out for the city centre and other retail centres, with reasons provided as to why those sites were not suitable. The size of the proposed unit was a factor but given that the current retail unit was already located outside of the city centre, Nexus had nonetheless reviewed city centre options and was satisfied that the sequential test had been properly undertaken.

Alderman McAlpine raised a query regarding access and ingress, referring to pages 45-46 of the report, and asked for clarity on how the new roundabout would be used given the complexity of the existing roundabout layout. The Principal Planner

responded that, as noted in her speaking remarks, amendments had been requested to provide a left-in, left-out arrangement, which would be more beneficial and safe.

Mr Rice, a representative from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI)(Roads), advised that discussions had occurred with the DfI Network Planning Manager and Traffic Management Unit. It had been agreed, as the Principal Planner had stated, to have a left-turn in, left-turn out arrangement with the right-hand turn into the proposed area from the roundabout. This would avoid conflict between anyone exiting Lidl and turning right.

Alderman McDowell asked for clarification on the definition of “white land,” noting that pensioners’ bungalows, though vacant now, had existed on the proposed site. He questioned whether residential developments in towns were deemed as white land if it was possible for anything to be built there and expressed concern that it seemed wasteful to lose those houses given the significant housing shortages in the Borough.

The Head of Planning explained that, technically, the site would be considered brownfield, but “white land,” referred to land not designated or zoned for any specific use. She stated that it was not protected for housing, nor allocated for any purpose in the draft BMAP, adding that the Council had no control over the site being purchased and the bungalows being demolished thereafter, as it was not within a designated area of townscape character or a conservation area. Consequently, the site could be cleared without the need for planning permission.

Speaking against the application, Mr Andy Stephens entered the Chamber alongside his colleague, Mr Simon Warke (via Zoom) and was invited to speak for five minutes on the matter.

Mr Stephens highlighted a series of objections and concerns regarding the application. It was explained that the proposal had initially been withdrawn from a previous Committee schedule due to a detailed transport objection and an inadequate description that failed to include works to public infrastructure. Although the applicant later remedied this, Mr Stephens argued that it vindicated the objectors’ point and raised concerns about the haste with which the application was being determined.

On transport and traffic, Mr Stephens criticised DfI Roads for failing to engage with the detailed submission made by SW Consultancy on 6 October 2025, noting that its response on 10 November 2025 simply stated it had nothing further to add. This was described as unacceptable given the evidence presented and the defects in the applicant’s Transport Assessment. The addendum report was said to have erroneously claimed that DfI Roads had reviewed the technical objections, with no such review available on the Planning Portal. Further rebuttal points raised on 18 November 2025 had not been consulted upon. Mr Stephens referenced case law, including Clare McCann v Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (2022), to stress the duty of Planning Officers and Committee Members to interrogate all evidence rather than accept consultees’ advice uncritically. A recent High Court decision in England was also cited to reinforce the requirement to properly consider material considerations.

Mr Stephens warned that Members were exposed on this issue as DfI Roads did not attend Planning Committees. Parking provision was said to remain below standard, with cumulative impacts from other applications at the Bloomfield District Centre not properly considered.

Concerns were raised about the speed of determination, with reference to FOI/EIR information suggesting pre-determination and bias in favour of the applicant, reinforced by their purchase of an out-of-centre site in January 2023.

Mr Stephens also argued there had been a failure to comply with Section 42 of the 2011 Act, which required notification of interested parties. Clear Channel was identified as such a party due to a previous bus shelter application, yet this had been overlooked despite repeated objections and an amended description in November 2025.

On retail impact, need and sequential assessment, Mr Stephens described Lidl as a deep discounter with smaller product lines, serving predominantly basket shopping. He argued that Nexus and Planning Officers had failed to properly interrogate the applicant's claim that the existing store was trading 30% above company sales density, noting that his site visits did not support indicators of overtrading such as congestion, queues, or lack of parking. The sequential test was said to be flawed, with sites such as Springhill and Clandeboye either wrongly assessed or ignored.

Mr Stephens dismissed the purported economic benefits as immaterial, since they could be delivered at a sequentially preferable site or through expansion of the existing store. He added that the dereliction of the site was of the applicant's own making, as it had been purchased from social housing use and could have been redeveloped for that purpose.

Mr Stephens reserved the right to make further written objections in response to any addendums to the Case Officer's report, explaining that complaints dated 18 November 2025 had been ignored and he cited established case law on administrative fairness to support this position.

Councillor Cathcart understood the concerns of Retail NI whom Mr Stephens was representing. He recalled Mr Stephens' mention of the city centre being vulnerable and so queried why Mr Stephens had spent time discussing Clandeboye and Springhill which were out-of-town retail centres. Mr Stephens said he had originally raised the Flagship Shopping Centre location in his objections and included floor plans but neither of these were included in the applicant's submissions of alternative sites. Mr Stephens advised it was the duty of applicants, not objectors to undertake such work which was the first oversight. Mr Stephens raised concerns about issues such as visual prominence and the presence of trolleys and stated that even if the Flagship Centre was discounted in the sequential assessment, the next step should have been to consider other existing areas within centres. He highlighted that District Centres had not been included in the assessment, noting that the Nexus report had failed to consider them despite having done so in Antrim and Newtownabbey. He pointed out that Springhill was an established District Centre with five available units located together and argued that, with some flexibility, the applicant could have

accommodated the store there. He also referred to Clandeboye, where a site existed that, when taking SPPS into account, should also have been assessed. This had not been identified by Council or Nexus. If the Flagship Centre were not an option, there were two other areas in the sequential test that could have been selected.

Councillor Kendall asked about the DfI Roads' assessment and the traffic issues arising from the site being adjacent to a busy area. Mr Stephens explained that traffic congestion at the roundabout was a daily occurrence, with queues forming throughout the day. He criticised the applicant's Transport Assessment for relying on data from Castlereagh Road Lidl store, which he argued bore no resemblance to the traffic conditions at Bloomfield Road. He noted that the roundabout was a protected route already congested during peak hours, and moving the Lidl store across would concentrate traffic on one side. He added that no assessment had been carried out on the cumulative effect, and there had been little engagement from DfI Roads on these points.

Alderman McIlveen raised the issue of prematurity, asking whether Mr Stephens was suggesting that no decisions should be made until the consultation process for the draft Plan Strategy was completed, and adopted which could take at least two years. Mr Stephens advised that he was not suggesting a blanket delay, but referred to SPPS paragraphs 5.72 and 5.73, which required careful consideration of out-of-centre developments. He questioned why there was a rush to grant permission for a new site when vacant retail buildings already existed at Springhill and Clandeboye.

In response, Alderman McIlveen noted that the principle of prematurity only applied when a Plan was at a very advanced stage, which was not yet the case. Mr Stephens maintained that the issue was engaged, pointing to policies already in place and a retail study released by Nexus in October which he had yet to read. He argued that refusal on grounds of prematurity could be justified, stressing that granting permission for an out-of-centre site would set a baseline for future retail assessments.

Alderman McIlveen explained that the existing Lidl store at the roundabout was being relocated, with what would be its old use extinguished, and questioned whether this should be taken into account given that both the applicant and an independent expert had concluded the sequential test was met. Mr Stephens advised that the report did not refer to all sequential sites, and that the original store had been approved in 2000 under different policy circumstances. Current SPPS policy required consideration of alternative sites given Bangor's vacancy levels, and that the new site was clearly out-of-centre rather than a District Centre like Springhill or Bloomfield. He disputed the applicant's claim of 30% overtrading, citing his own observations of car parking, till tests, and customer flow, and noted that Nexus had identified Bangor centre as being vulnerable by 2%.

When Alderman McIlveen pointed out that Nexus was independent, Mr Stephens acknowledged that was the case but referenced that it had been engaged by the Council which could mar its independent status. Mr Stephens cited correspondence he had obtained through FOI requests that suggested alternative sites had been overlooked. Alderman McIlveen noted that Lidl's traffic already existed at the roundabout, albeit on the other side. Mr Stephens responded that he had taken

extensive photographs showing the area could not cope with current traffic levels, and warned of the cumulative impact of the proposed relocation.

Mr Stephens returned to the public gallery as was Mr Warke to the digital gallery. Mr Stewart Beattie KC, Ms Emma Greenlees and Mr Dermot Monaghan were invited to join the chamber, speaking in support of the recommendation.

Mr Beattie KC advised that he had four points to cover, the first of which regarded a point of law in a late submission on 02 December at 1300hrs, followed by the sequential test, need and transport. On the legal point, it was noted that a query had been raised regarding Clear Channel not being served notification. As an advertising company rather than a person, it was argued that the legislation did not apply in the same way. DfI and Translink had been on notice and had already met, with further meetings scheduled.

In relation to the sequential test, it was explained that the town centre-first approach did not include District Centres within its scope. Planning Officers had confirmed that the primary retail core, edge-of-centre, and out-of-centre sites were the relevant categories, and that Clandeboye was not considered a District Centre even under the draft BMAP. Regarding the suggestion of Dunnes Stores as a location, Nexus had not identified footfall as an issue but had acknowledged in its report that surface-level car parking and street frontage were significant factors. The suggestion that access via a tunnel to a first-floor flyover car park not being acceptable was considered a valid point.

Regarding retail need, Mr Beattie KC explained that there was sharp disagreement with Nexus' quantitative assessment, but both Nexus and other independent analysis had found evidence of overtrading. He recalled that Alderman McIlveen had asked previously whether moving the store across the road was a material consideration. Mr Beattie KC confirmed that it was. The issue of prematurity was raised, but it was argued that refusing development at this stage on that basis was entirely not justified, as the Plan was not at an advanced stage.

Concerns were expressed about the cumulative impact not being fully assessed in relation to transport. It was stated that the site would be considered on its merits, whether for housing or retail, and that the applicant would need to demonstrate that roads issues were acceptable. While it was suggested that DfI Roads had not assessed the matter, it was confirmed that it had been consulted on several occasions and had concluded it had nothing further to add. Its methodology and comparison with Castlereagh were considered appropriate, and as a matter of law, consultees' views were entitled to be attributed weight.

Alderman McIlveen observed that much of the decision rested on the sequential test and asked which sites had been considered. Mr Beattie KC explained that the methodology and a ten-minute catchment area had been independently assessed, with the bedrock methodology itself subject to review. He noted that the Flagship Shopping Centre had been examined along with other areas, including Springhill Shopping Centre, which had been addressed in May 2025. His own assessment was that Springhill was not a relevant consideration, and he invited his colleague Mr Monaghan (planning agent) to expand further.

Mr Monaghan referred to the SPPS, which set out the sequential test covering the primary retail core, town centre, edge-of-centre, and out-of-centre locations. In this case, the catchment was Bangor city centre, with the existing store on Bloomfield Road. Given that presence, he explained it was appropriate to confine the search to city centre and edge-of-centre sites, with District Centres not included. He stated that all development opportunity sites in the draft BMAP had been reviewed: four sites were identified, three of which were too small, while site BR44 had already been developed for alternative uses and was therefore unsuitable. Within Bangor city centre, the TK Maxx ground floor unit (Main Street) was considered too small. At the edge of Bangor, the SPPS referred to a default distance threshold of 300 metres from the town centre boundary, but no suitable or viable sites were found. Nexus had agreed that the search parameters were reasonable. Mr Monaghan added that the Dunnes Store location had also been considered but was set back from the building with no visual presence from the road and was therefore not deemed suitable.

Councillor Cathcart questioned why a surface-level car park was preferred over the multistorey facility at the Flagship Centre. Mr Monaghan explained that food shopping involved purchasing many items, and customers wanted to return quickly to their cars to load them. He noted that other food stores, including the current Lidl, had adjacent flat car parks, and Lidl's own car park had only a 2% gradient, avoiding the difficulty of pushing trolleys across steep areas.

Councillor Cathcart pointed out that the Flagship Centre had a lift and suggested that if the Dunnes location was extended into the Argos unit, the store would have a presence on the High Street. Mr Monaghan responded that Dunnes was located at the back of the Flagship Centre, with no visibility from the road network or adjacency to a car park. He contrasted this with the existing Lidl store, which had strong visual presence, visibility, and a flat surface car park. He argued that the current site by comparison was better, but Lidl was overtrading, and relocating to the Flagship would not be as effective or reasonable.

Mr Beattie KC added that the existence of the current Lidl across the road from the proposed site was a material consideration that should carry weight. He explained that assessments had been carried out separately by his client's retail consultant and by Nexus. They had not been aware of discussions about proposed development at the Flagship Centre until that evening's meeting, which he considered should also be given weight.

Councillor Cathcart asked why the new, larger site was considered good for Bangor when there was no clarity about what would happen to the existing site. Mr Beattie KC replied that the critical factor was ensuring the retail use at the existing site was extinguished, removing any risk of duplication. He stressed that any future application for the site would have to be considered through policy frameworks and would remain under the Planning Committee's control. He noted that Officers had described the site as brownfield, previously used, and that whatever proposal came forward would be determined by the Council. On retail impact, he highlighted that Nexus had assessed the effect on Bangor city centre as 0.9%, compared to the applicant's figure of 2%, and that both had confirmed there would be no significant

impact. He defended Nexus' independence and expertise, stating that its findings had been tested to ensure objectivity.

Mr Monaghan concluded by reaffirming that Nexus had confirmed under SPPS that the proposal would not affect the city centre, agreeing with their finding of a 0.9% impact and no adverse effect.

Councillor Kendall raised a concern about the apparent contradiction between the need for car parking and the reasons given for the Flagship Centre being inappropriate. She noted that a large food store such as Lidl would inevitably have customers arriving by car with significant amounts of shopping, which seemed to undermine the justification for a car park deficit. Mr Monaghan explained that the proposed site did not have a deficit, as 147 spaces were planned, which was larger than the existing provision and considered adequate to meet demand.

Ms Greenlees (Transport Consultant) explained that traffic surveys had been carried out at different stores, specifically the larger formats during weekdays and Saturdays to calculate maximum demand per square metre. She stated that while Parking Standards guidance had not been updated and still suggested one space per 14 square metres, the surveys showed a maximum of one space per 23 square metres. For a store of this size, the standard requirement would be 183 spaces, but in practice this was more than necessary. She said the proposal of 147 spaces was realistic, allowing for seasonal peaks, with maximum demand estimated at 111 spaces.

Mr Beattie KC emphasised that the balance of judgement, including DfI Roads' input, was whether the assumptions were robust and valid. He acknowledged that there was a risk of inconsistency but stressed that statutory consultees' views were extremely important. DfI Roads had reviewed the process twice and considered it sufficiently robust.

Councillor Smart asked about the consideration of Springhill and Clandeboye. Mr Beattie KC explained that Springhill was designated as a District Centre in the draft BMAP, which many continued to ascribe weight to. He noted that while DfI Planning had indicated publicly that it might still be adopted, it had not been. Springhill had been considered but was unsuitable due to covenants and other limitations. Clandeboye, however, was not considered as it was not a draft District Centre and therefore not part of the sequential test. He added that it was outside the centre and did not apply.

Alderman Graham asked about the importance of visibility for Lidl's marketing strategy and whether Lidl intended to own and design the site themselves. Mr Beattie KC confirmed that Lidl placed strong emphasis on visibility and frontage presence, which they considered a significant factor when selecting sites. He acknowledged that this was their perspective, but Nexus, as independent assessors, had also recognised visibility and surface-level car parking as material factors to be weighed when considering alternative sites. He argued that Lidl's current site was better than that of the Flagship Centre whilst the proposed site offered better street frontage and was therefore preferable. He added that Lidl planned to invest £7.6 million in the development, with their own store design already discussed and

approved by Officers. The store would follow Lidl's standard floor plate size, with materials subject to discussion, and Lidl would own the site outright.

With no further questions from Members, Mr Beattie KC, Mr Monaghan and Ms Greenlees returned to the public gallery.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether Clandeboye and Springhill were relevant sites that should have been considered in the sequential test, noting Mr Stephens' earlier comments. The Principal Planner confirmed that she was satisfied with the information submitted and that a satisfactory sequential test had been carried out, which had been independently verified.

Alderman Graham raised concerns about traffic, observing that congestion at peak times in the area was already severe, and asked whether the road system could cope with additional retail space on the opposing side of the road. Mr Rice explained that the matter had been discussed extensively with the Traffic Section and the Network Planning Manager on several occasions. He reported that the Traffic Section was content with the assessment. While acknowledging that congestion did occur at times, he stated that this was similar to other locations across the Borough and that the Department did not believe the proposal would cause any significant difference. He added that traffic generation figures for both the existing store and the proposed site had been reviewed and that the Roads authority was satisfied with them.

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

Alderman Smith reflected on the debate, acknowledging the points raised by objectors but concluded that both Nexus and the applicant could not all be wrong. He stated that while he understood the concerns, the independent assessment had demonstrated that the impact would be minimal and that there were limited alternative sites. On that basis, he was content to support the application.

Alderman McIlveen agreed that the matter had been well discussed and felt that the points raised were outweighed by the independent assessment and the traffic assessments carried out and reviewed. He noted that although there had been divergence of opinion on the sequential test, the applicant's representatives had addressed the issues raised. He accepted that there would be some impact on Bangor city centre but emphasised that the reports showed this would be small. He also gave weight to the fact that the existing Lidl site was very close to the proposed new location.

Councillor Cathcart accepted the principle of Lidl operating at its current site but maintained that the new proposal represented an out-of-town development. He expressed concern that there was no clarity about the future of the existing site and highlighted the significant vacancies already present in the city centre. He acknowledged that Lidl would not move into the Flagship Centre but stressed that town and city centre sites should be prioritised. As other options had not been fully ruled out, he stated that he had no option but to oppose the recommendation and proposal.

Councillor Kendall agreed with Councillor Cathcart, noting the difficulty in weighing up the issues. She accepted that Officers had taken DfI Roads' opinion into account but argued that comparisons with Castlereagh's Montgomery Road location were not like-for-like. She questioned whether moving Lidl to another out-of-centre site would impair viability more than at present. She also raised concerns about insufficient parking spaces, particularly given increasing car use, and said this should be given weight. She disagreed with the loss of Policy OS1 public value open space and felt the intensification of road use was significant. For these reasons, she could not support the proposal.

Alderman Graham stated that he was content to support the application, though he admitted to mixed feelings. He believed the impact on the town and city centre would be minimal, given the already depleted footfall. He acknowledged that out-of-centre shopping had harmed town centre retail but felt that this trend was already established. He argued that if retailers were prepared to invest significant sums of money, their market research should be respected, and provided the proposal complied with planning policies, it should be accepted.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 7 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (7)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
Graham	McDowell		
McAlpine			
McIlveen			
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Hennessy	Cathcart	McClean	Harbinson
Smart	Kendall		Kerr
Wray			McCollum
			McKee
			Morgan

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

4.2 LA06/2019/0888/F – LANDS AT TULLYNAGARDY AVENUE TO WEST OF 46-54 TULLYNAGARDY LANE 30M SOUTH OF TULLYNAGARDY ROAD NORTH OF 21-25 VALENCIA WAY NORTH AND 17A-21 GALLAWAY, NEWTOWNARDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: Development in the Major category of development
Proposal: Residential development comprising the erection of 62 No. dwellings (mix of detached and semi-detached) with access via Tullynagardy Avenue, associated site works and landscaping.
Site Location: Lands off Tullynagardy Avenue to the West of Nos. 46-54 Tullynagardy Lane, 30m south of Tullynagardy Road and North of Nos. 21-25 Valencia Way North and 17a-21 Galla Way, Newtownards
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Principal Planner explained that Item 4.2 was before Members as it was an application in the major category of development and which also had a number of objections contrary to the Officer's recommendation.

In total, 22 objections from 13 separate addresses had been received since the application was first submitted in 2019 with five of these received following publication and notification of the last set of amended plans and information. Members were asked to note that this application had gone through alteration in layout and design with a reduction in the number of objections submitted as a result of these alterations.

All representations made had been fully addressed and detailed in the Case Officer Report. The recommendation was to grant planning permission

The application site comprised of two agricultural fields of approximately 3.2 hectares at the western side of the overall designation. There were also a significant number of mature trees within the northern end of the site, the majority of which were subject of a Tree Preservation Order. The topography of the site sloped with the highest part of the site at the northern end. The ground fell steadily across the first field in a south easterly direction by approximately 10m.

In the second field, the ground rose steadily in a south easterly direction by approximately 7m towards a peak in the centre of the eastern boundary of the field and then fell again quite steeply in a south westerly direction towards the south-western corner of the site by approximately 16m. The site had good natural boundaries on all sides, consisting of mature hedgerows and trees.

Entry to the site was via an access to the apartment development at Tullynagardy Green. Access to the proposed housing development would be through the existing residential development already constructed via Tullynagardy Avenue off the Tullynagardy Road.

The site lay within the settlement limit of Newtownards on lands zoned for housing under Proposal NS 27 in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The site also lay within Designation LLPA 2 – a Local Landscape Policy Area 'Lieutenant Hill, slopes and properties on Belfast Road'.

Within the Plan there were a number of Key Design Considerations for the zoning relating to upgrading of junctions, footways, right hand turning lane etc., the majority of which had been already complied with through a previous permission granted on 1 March 2012 under planning ref X/2010/0054/F for 106 dwellings of detached, semi-

detached, townhouses and apartments with open space landscaping, access and right turn lane on Crawfordsburn Road which meant the housing zoning had already been substantially developed with the application site representing the last area of the zoning to be developed.

The overall layout of the development respected the characteristics of the site and its setting. All housing fronted the roads and open space within the development with 'double fronted,' design houses positioned as feature buildings on corner sites.
The development would link with the existing dwellings through to the Tullynagardy Road via a vehicular and pedestrian access from Tullynagardy Avenue and also a pedestrian access from Tullynagardy Grove providing a good level of permeability at both ends of the site.
The development would be accessed off Tullynagardy Avenue with the exception of two dwellings which would be accessed off Tullynagardy Grove.

A car parking schedule was submitted with the application which demonstrated compliance with the standards set out in the Creating Places guidelines. A minimum of two in-curtilage spaces had been provided for each dwelling. In addition, there were 45 on-street visitor parking spaces provided.

DFI Roads had been consulted on the application and, having reviewed both the submitted Transport Assessment and Junction Assessment, raised no concerns in terms of impact on road safety or traffic progression subject to standard conditions. All roads within the development were to be adopted.

The retention of existing trees and hedges within and along the boundaries of the site including an additional landscaped buffer along the western boundary of the site would also help to mitigate the visual impact of the development on this elevated site.

Due to the elevated nature of the site, it was acknowledged that the development would have the potential to be visible from longer distance views within the surrounding area, one of which was from the Hardford Link area as had been shown on the slide. When reviewing the proposal, Officers requested the scheme to reduce the finished floor level and overall height of some of the proposed dwellings to lessen the potential for the development to appear overly prominent.

The next slides showed how the scheme was amended. Streetscapes one and two were the identified areas of the site that were considered to have the biggest visual impact from wider areas whilst the next slide provided views of the original height of proposed dwellings. These were followed by slides that showed the amended proposal with reduced height and the original height outlined in red.

Examples of some of the proposed house types were shown. The proposed dwellings represented a similar scale and massing to existing adjacent dwellings.

There would be approximately eight house-types within the scheme, each plot would offer varied palettes of materials, alongside variations to the form and massing of dwellings to produce a scheme that offered a bespoke approach to dwelling design per plot.

The design, scale and massing of the proposed housing was very similar to that already developed on the previously approved section of the zoning while also respecting its setting within the LLPA. The proposed house types were reflective and complimentary to existing development in scale, proportions, massing and appearance of the dwellings which respected the established character of the area.

The proposal would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on amenity by way of loss of light, loss of privacy or an overshadowing/overbearing impact due to the proposed separation distances and landscaped buffers proposed between all of the existing and proposed dwellings.

The development had been designed to respect the topography of the site with the height of dwellings at the edge of the proposed development since reduced to mitigate any potential prominence. Taking account of the undulating nature of the site, the layout had been designed so that the dwellings would step down to the south and west in line with the natural topography of the site. Private amenity space was in excess of recommendations set out in Creating Places with a variety of plot sizes provided.

The majority of trees surrounding site would be retained and integrated into the development. A significant number of the trees within the northern section of the site were protected by a Tree Preservation Order. A tree survey and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment submitted detailed that four trees within the site should be removed due to poor condition along with five additional trees lying within the site to accommodate the development – with there being a total of 80 existing trees within the application site, the removal of only nine trees in total (four of which were dying or dead), their removal is considered to be acceptable. The Council's Tree Officer was consulted on the proposal and as a result conditions were recommended for inclusion in any decision notice.

All development including utility apparatus, was located outside of the root protection areas of existing trees to be retained, with protective fencing to be erected prior to commencement of development with a negative condition to be attached to any decision for additional detailing relating to the construction of fences and other structures within the root protection area of trees to be retained. The methodology would include details of foundation depths and mitigation measures to ensure that there would be no contamination of the soil and what measures would be taken if they were encountered.

Public open space was required for a development of this size which had been assessed and was considered as being acceptable in meeting requirements set out in Creating Places Guidelines and also met policy requirements contained within Policy OS 2 of PPS 8. There were a number of pockets of communal open space proposed throughout the site. In total, these provided an area of approximately just over 4000sqm. As the site was 3.2 hectares, this open space provision would exceed the required 10% (3200sqm).

The following slides showed the three areas of open space provisions; the northern portion of the site which would tie in with existing open space to the east which was

part of the existing housing development. The next portion was in the central portion of the site and a larger area of open space was located to the southern end with the ground levels to be raised and levelled to make the area accessible.

In conclusion, having assessed all material planning considerations as detailed in the Case Officer Report and in the presentation, all concerns raised by objectors had been fully considered and were dealt with in detail in the Report with the agent working with Planning Officers to reach an acceptable scheme with amendments to dwellings to respect the levels on the site.

RECOMMENDED that Council grants planning permission.

Alderman McDowell questioned whether the proposed location for a playground was the best choice and asked what would happen to the two badger sets. The Principal Planner explained that developments of this size required open space. It was not a large playpark and separation distances between existing and proposed development had been considered with no negative impact being anticipated. She reported that works had already taken place with the badgers, which had been relocated, and noted regular badger activity across the site. There was a single, active social group as evidenced by well used trails whilst steps were being taken to move them as construction progressed. Badger protection fencing needed to be installed, and as the location of the main set had been confirmed, the necessary exclusion licences would be granted. She added that all measures were set out in the submitted badger management plan, that there was no evidence of heavy or habitual resourcing, and that no setts would be lost to the development. It was therefore considered unlikely that the badgers would be harmed or disturbed during construction.

Alderman McDowell further remarked that playgrounds often became a source of antisocial behaviour during the summer months, noting that phone calls were frequently received about such issues. He expressed concern that a small piece of land could give rise to similar problems.

Mr Philip Stinson and Mr Stephen Villiers were invited to join the chamber speaking in support of the application.

Mr Stinson welcomed the opportunity to discuss planning in relation to the second phase of the development. He stated that the quality of homes would be carried through as per the first phase of the development and explained that work had been undertaken with Officers to minimise the impact on surrounding properties. This included amendments to design and height, which had resulted in a development that did not compromise residential amenity for existing dwellings and provided a good living environment. He added that he had worked closely with the Tree Officer to ensure integration and that new planting was proposed, which would further enhance the quality of the scheme.

Councillor Smart noted that playparks could present their own issues and asked whether there was any plan for maintenance and management post-construction. Mr Stinson responded that a balance had to be struck in locating the playpark to serve both existing and proposed dwellings. He confirmed that open space would be

managed as part of the plan and that consideration was being given to appointing a company to oversee its upkeep.

Alderman McAlpine asked who would pay for the ongoing maintenance. Mr Stinson explained that the responsibility would lie with the developer and was likely to be funded through an ongoing service charge. He stated that the applicant would set up and maintain the arrangements, which were proposed through the application.

Alderman McDowell referred to page 40 of the documentation and raised questions about surface water and drainage. He highlighted a blue line on the left side of the site and asked whether this was being connected to the existing sewage system or the surface water system. He also mentioned that there had been the existence of a pond and that there had been reference to contamination on the site and expressed concern that water would eventually find its way to Kiltonga, He stressed the importance of water management to ensure contaminated water did not reach the Kiltonga area. Mr Stinson confirmed that the system would be connected into the sewage and pipe facility to ensure there would be no fouling of watercourses. Alderman McDowell further raised concerns about the development bounding existing houses and the potential for overflow to cause problems for adjoining residents. Mr Stinson assured Members that measures would be taken to alleviate any potential risk of such issues occurring.

With no further questions, Mr Stinson and Mr Villiers returned to the public gallery.

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

Alderman Smith stated that the development was of good quality and confirmed that issues relating to trees and site access had been addressed. He indicated that he was content with the proposals.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the area was zoned for development and the principle of development had been established. He explained that concerns raised in the original application regarding visual impact had been dealt with and, as the scheme was an extension of a pre-existing development, he did not see any issues that would justify opposition.

Councillor Kendall advised that she could not support the application on the basis of PPS 2 – Natural Heritage. She argued that there would be harm to badgers and, while she acknowledged the proposed mitigations, she did not agree with them. She could not see how temporarily moving a sett could avoid impacting badgers, emphasising that they were a protected species and reaffirmed her stance was to oppose the application.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 8 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (8)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**

Graham	McDowell		
McAlpine			
McIlveen			
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Cathcart	Kendall	McClean	Harbinson
Hennessy			Kerr
Smart			McCollum
Wray			McKee
			Morgan

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

RECESS
The meeting entered into recess at 20:58 and recommenced at 21:14.

4.3 LA06/2022/0262/F – APPROXIMATELY 200M SE OF 110 KEMPE STONES ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards
Committee Interest: Called in from Delegated List
Proposal: Retention of private amenity/shelter building made from sustainable recycled materials, wildlife hide, timber footbridge and associate landscaping and planting (Retrospective)
Site Location: Approximately 200m SE of 110 Kempe Stones Road, Newtownards (with existing access to Greengraves Road
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (J Hanna) explained that Item 4.3 was a full application that sought the retention of a private amenity/shelter building made from sustainable recycled materials, wildlife hide, timber footbridge and associated landscaping and planting. The application had been called in from the delegated list for consideration for Committee. The recommendation of Officers was to refuse planning permission. No objections had been received in relation to the application and statutory consultees were all content with the proposal.

The site was located to the south of the Kempe Stones Road with an access off an existing laneway which joined the Greengraves Road. The site was located within the countryside as per the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The surrounding area was predominantly agricultural with the nearest residential receptor located at 110 Kemp Stones Road approximately 200m to the north west.

As could be seen in the site layout plan, the development hugged the western edge of the pond with the amenity area to the north and a large grassed area and wildlife

hide to the southeastern end. Adjacent to this was a bridge which connected to the larger island within the pond.

Using orthophotography, it was shown that the pond had been in existence for some time, with the land on which the development is situated appearing to be part of a larger field. Enforcement action had been ongoing relating to the development on-site since August 2020 with the current application being a result of this. Members were shown slides that evidenced the amenity building which was erected in 2021 as well images of the features under consideration in the application.

Members were asked to note that there were some additional elements to the development which were not under consideration within the current application but fell under the ongoing enforcement investigation which would be highlighted to Members throughout the presentation.

Images from Kempe Stones Road showed that the development was largely obscured and would not be perceptible to most passing traffic and another image was shown of the approach from the Greengraves Road. The access lane to the site ran through the trees and there were no views of the development due to its siting within the topography. Officers were content that the development integrated within the landscape and, with adequate separation distance, there was not an adverse effect on residential amenity.

The access into the site was on an informal track through trees with fencing at the site. The main area was enclosed by a metal fence forming a compound with planting in front of it while the entrance to the compound was through a pergola attached to the wildlife hide.

Members were provided with views of the floorplans and elevations of the hide and pergola. The hide itself was a metal container with timber cladding on two sides and there was also a platform area encroaching on the pond. This had not been indicated on any of the provided plans and did not form part of the application. Members were asked to note that on a site visit, the hide appeared to be used for storage, holding items such as a lawnmower.

The bridge element of the application was shown with associated fencing alongside it and gates to restrict the access. A further slide provided another view of the bridge onto the central island with picnic tables for use.

Images were shown of the floorplans and elevations of the amenity building. It was a sizeable building at 204sqm. The two store areas that could be seen were in fact shipping containers contained within the structure. There was an external covered porch and a large central area. Officers were of the view that this was the main element of development on site and the other aspects were ancillary to its use. With regard to the main compound, there was an amenity building within and other elements nearby and with the appearance of a large garden area.

An image was presented to Members that showed an extensive seating area in front of the amenity building. This was not included within the application.

Views were shown in the opposite direction from the compound. There was a steel framed swing set and another shelter building to the right. These were not included within the application. A further shelter structure was situated in the corner of the compound which again did not form part of the application.

Returning to the amenity building, an image showed the side of the building fronting the pond and it was noted that there was additional seating and storage. The next image indicated the development at the corner of this side where there was again what appeared to be a seating area while there was also a platform which extended outward to the pond.

In the area to the rear of the building, one of the containers could be seen which made up the storage space along with additional fencing. A view of the extent of the covered porch area was shown to Members and, in the final slide, a view of the internal space of the building was shown. Supporting information provided with the application indicated that the building was intended to be used as a shelter with some basic facilities such as toilets, viewing gallery, exercise equipment etc. It was quite a large space with a large number of sofas and a bar to the rear. It would appear that it was mainly in use as an entertaining area.

Officers were recommending refusal as the proposal was contrary to the SPPS and CTY 1 of PPS21 in that there were no overriding reasons why this development was essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.

Members were shown details from the SPPS in regards to the countryside. This was a material consideration of the application and aimed to protect the countryside from inappropriate development to facilitate sustainable development.

Policy CTY1 was material and set out a range of types of development which, in principle, were considered to be acceptable in the countryside. In considering the policy, the first question that needed to be asked was what development was being proposed.

As had been shown in imagery and, given the scale of the amenity building, this was a large area which appeared primarily to be used as one would use their back garden. Normally such uses were associated with the curtilage of a dwelling house. In this instance however, the applicant did not live on-site and this was not in association with any dwelling. In this respect, it did not meet an instance where development would be acceptable.

As Officers had considered this as more akin to a domestic back garden, it did not engage any of the other instances. This was not the end of the consideration however, as the policy did allow for other types of development provided that there were overriding reasons why that development was essential and could not be located within a settlement. No evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that the development was essential and subsequently the proposal failed to comply with CTY1.

In consideration of the application, the applicant had put forward the argument that the proposal should be considered under the instance for outdoor sport and

recreational use in accordance with PPS8. Policy OS3 of PPS8 would be relevant in this case and was shown to Members. The justification and amplification of OS3 provided examples of types of development which were considered under the policy. These included golf courses, driving ranges, equestrian uses, noisy sports and temporary recreational uses such as clay pigeon shooting. Again, the question had to be asked, what was the development being considered. Officers were of the opinion that the use of the development was as a private amenity space and did not fit within the scope of Policy OS3.

Further justification of the development was put forward, arguing that more intensive developments such as glamping schemes or fishing would be approved. An example of an amenity building granted under LA06/2020/0014/F at Movilla Road for an angling club was cited, arguing that it "*would be neither rational, logical, nor policy compliant to refuse a modest recreational proposal which is only for personal enjoyment when other more intensive uses of the facilities would most likely be acceptable under other rural policies*"

Officers had noted that this more intensive use had resulted in the creation of 147sqm of floorspace in comparison to this proposal creating 219sqm. It was important to note that each application was judged on its own merits. Other types of development allowed under CTY 1 contributed to the aims of managing the countryside in a sustainable manner in different ways.

It was also argued that there would be no precedent set by the development. It was worth noting that the Planning Committee had to be consistent in its approach to decision making and blurring lines between private amenity space and outdoor recreation would have implications in potentially setting a precedent.

In summary, it was considered that the proposal did not accord with the SPPS or Policy CTY1 and was recommended for refusal for the stated reason within the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council refuses the planning application.

Alderman McIlveen referred to Policy OS3 under PPS8 and queried why it had been ruled out, asking if it were that the site was considered private amenity rather than recreational use. The Officer confirmed that, when Officers had visited, the space appeared more akin to the use of a back garden. He explained that it was a large entertaining area capable of accommodating many people. Although the application suggested the area had been intended for enjoyment of natural wildlife, Officers had judged it to resemble a private garden rather than an outdoor recreational facility. He noted that under Policy OS3, the definition of outdoor recreational use was a matter of judgement, but in this case the presence of a 204sqm building on the site, which was the primary function around which all activity related, meant the space was not necessarily outdoor recreation. The Officer further addressed Criterion 6, which required ancillary buildings to be of a high standard. He observed that the enjoyment of a pond necessitating two shipping containers and a 204sqm building ultimately reinforced the view that the site was a private amenity space rather than outdoor recreation such as horse riding or hiking.

Alderman McIlveen queried whether a wildlife hide pagoda could be considered part of outdoor pursuits. The Officer acknowledged that, in principle, a wildlife hide could be regarded as such. However, in this case the facts showed otherwise: the site was sizeable, but the hide formed only a small part of it and was not being used as a hide. Instead, it contained boxes and a lawnmower, and functioned as storage. He explained that the large building dominated the site and was used as an entertainment area, with all activity relating back to it. While wildlife hides were typically located away from developments to encourage wildlife, here the amenity building and the hide were situated only about 30 metres apart, which Officers considered to be an unusual arrangement.

Mr David Donaldson was invited to the Chamber, speaking in support of the application.

Mr Donaldson advised that the application had been submitted nearly four years earlier. Unfortunately, the applicant was abroad for that evening's meeting and a request to postpone consideration until February's Committee had been declined.

The proposal involved the creation of a wildlife retreat, constructed from recycled materials during the Covid period, intended for the applicant, family, and friends to enjoy. The retreat was located on low-lying land, screened from public view, and accompanied by the planting of 5,000 trees on a former landfill site.

It was argued that the development fell within PPS 8 provisions for open space, sport, and recreation. The policy was positively worded and permitted outdoor recreational use. The Committee report had accepted that there would be no adverse effect on nature, no loss of farmland, no impact on residential amenity or farming operations, and no impact on the road network. Officers had acknowledged that the wildlife hide could be considered recreational but had concluded that the overall site functioned as a garden area and therefore did not fall within policy.

Mr Donaldson disputed this interpretation, emphasising that recreation was broadly defined. Reference was made to the Cambridge Dictionary definition of recreation as "a way to enjoy oneself when not working," and to the SPPS introductory text, which described opportunities to participate in sport or outdoor activity and to have contact with nature. It was argued that the development delivered precisely this, promoting active and healthy lifestyles, conservation of biodiversity, and passive enjoyment of natural areas. Open space, including inland bodies of water, was cited as part of the policy framework.

Mr Donaldson contended that the development was clearly recreational, particularly given its location with a wildlife point. He questioned the logic of refusing a modest facility when more intensive uses were permitted under PPS8, citing examples such as Movilla fishery with a dwelling building and noted that the applicant's site could potentially support fishing, stabling, or glamping pods, all of which would fall under the policy. He stressed that the proposal caused no harm, was not a household development, and, if Members remained in doubt, the applicant would welcome a site visit.

Councillor Wray asked what Mr Donaldson's view was regarding the shelter being perceived as the main element of the application. Mr Donaldson did reference the building as sizeable but explained that it consisted of three shipping containers arranged in a U-shape, with a roof over the central area. He noted that the structure had been clad with timber to integrate with its surroundings and described it as a sustainable development. The shelter provided indoor space for the applicant and family during poor weather and outdoor space during better conditions. The outdoor area was associated with the woodland and pond. These features had attracted wildlife such as Irish black bees and swans on the lake. The development had been geared around enjoyment of the lake and walks, while also providing space for barbecues and seating areas, created for the applicant and his extended family.

Councillor Cathcart remarked that photographs of the indoor space suggested it was extensive and not merely a shelter, noting that it even contained a bar. He raised concerns that the development appeared to be a private amenity space and questioned whether it might set a precedent, particularly in light of references to glamping and similar uses. Mr Donaldson explained that the wildlife pond had been the stimulus for the project, alongside woodland planting, and that the shelter had further enhanced the site to provide covered facilities for the applicant and family to use during summer days. He stated that the indoor space was not particularly large, being confined to the area within the U-shaped containers. He added that the site contained a significant amount of sporting equipment used by the family for exercise and enjoyment, as well as walks and activities around the lake.

Alderman Smith expressed concern about the definition of recreation, noting that it could encompass so many different things, even a bowling alley. He questioned the purpose of the development, acknowledging Mr Donaldson's explanation but pointing out that the amenity site measured 12 by 17 metres, equivalent to the size of the Council Chamber they stood in, and therefore represented a sizeable footprint. He warned that Officers had interpreted the development as not constituting outdoor recreation and that similar projects could create a precedent if permitted, as anyone could purchase land in the countryside and undertake such works. Mr Donaldson reiterated that the purpose of the development was to enable the applicant to enjoy the natural asset of wildlife. He highlighted the woodland track to the pond and the planting of 5,000 trees to facilitate that enjoyment and explained that the building had not been constructed as a conventional 200sqm structure but had been created in a sustainable manner to provide facilities for family enjoyment of wildlife and walks. He argued that, had the lake not existed, Alderman Smith's point would be valid, but in this case, the definition of recreation was wide. He made a distinction between Alderman Smith's reference to a bowling alley, which would not be considered as outdoor recreation, and fishing, which would be, noting that there were numerous examples of developments using containers that had been approved. He suggested that, hypothetically, if the site were presented as an amenity around a fishing lake, it would become a fishing habitat and the associated facilities would be acceptable.

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

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be refused.

Councillor Kendall stated that she had read the justification and amplification under policy and had taken under consideration its key points on contribution to the rural economy, promotion of tourism, and provision for the local population. She expressed the view that the Officer's interpretation; that the proposal was not permissible due to being a personal, private space, was correct under policy. She acknowledged that Mr Donaldson had suggested that, if the use were different, it might be considered otherwise, but she noted that this was not the matter before Members and therefore accepted the Officer's position.

Alderman McIlveen disagreed, arguing that the justification acknowledged the contributions such developments could make, but did not require them as a fundamental necessity, pointing out that the key aspect was the countryside being available for recreation. If the proposal constituted a recreational pursuit, then the wording of the policy supported such facilities. He pointed out that the policy did not specify any exclusion of private recreational use and therefore did not accept that this aspect should be ruled out.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 8 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (8)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McAlpine	Graham		
McDowell	McIlveen		
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Cathcart		McClean	Harbinson
Hennessy			Kerr
Kendall			McCollum
Smart			McKee
Wray			Morgan

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

4.4 <u>LA06/2025/0564/F – 16 THE BRAE, GROOMSPORT</u>

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee
Committee Interest: Called in from delegated list
Proposal: Extension to rear raised terrace (retrospective) with new steps
Site Location: 16 The Brae, Groomsport, BT19 6JQ
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (A Todd) explained that Item 4.4 had been recommended for approval and was being presented this evening as it had been

called in by a Member of the Planning Committee requesting further consideration of the impact of the development on the privacy of the adjacent dwelling at No. 14 The Brae.

The site was located within a well–established residential area of Groomsport. The Brae rose steeply from west to east and was characterised predominantly by single storey and split level dwellings which respected the rising topography.

The property at No. 16, was single-storey, occupying almost the full width of the plot. To the rear was a small garden area with a sunroom and the recently constructed, unauthorised terrace. The proposal sought retrospective permission to extend the original raised terrace located off the conservatory at the rear of the dwelling. Members were shown an image of the original site layout and a photograph of the original raised terrace and steps. While the existing sunroom and the original raised terrace did not have the benefit of planning permission, both had been in situ for a considerable time since at least 2014 according to orthophotography records and were therefore immune from enforcement action.

The next slide showed the proposed extended terrace and steps. The extension was considered to be small in scale adding an additional 0.9m in length to the original 1.5m deep terrace. A higher 1.2m obscure screen was also proposed to replace the original 0.9m high fence around the terrace which would provide improved screening to the neighbouring property at No. 14 when the terrace was being used as a seating area. Four letters of objection had however been received from the occupant of No. 14 The Brae in relation to the proposal with the main concern being loss of privacy to rear facing rooms and the rear garden area.

By way of the background to this application, the Planning Service had received a complaint in December 2024 in relation to the construction of a terrace extension at the property. Following investigation by the Council's Planning Enforcement Team, a retrospective application for the extension was submitted in February of this year under reference LA06/2025/0095/F. Members were shown images which outlined the extent of the retrospective terrace proposed under this application and as constructed on site. This application was recommended for refusal by the Planning Service on the grounds of an unacceptable loss of privacy and the potential for an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance to No. 14 given the scale of the terrace and then was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant.

The current application under consideration was submitted in June of this year and proposed a scaled back version of the previous proposal. Should this current proposal for a smaller extension be approved, the additional unauthorised terrace area on site would need to be removed, and it had therefore been recommended that this was secured by way of a planning condition requiring removal of the unauthorised area within eight weeks of the date of any permission.

The size of the terrace extension proposed under the current application had been reduced significantly from 2.7m in depth to 0.9m as shown on the comparative floor plans, constituting only a small increase to the original 1.5m deep terrace. Policy EXT1 of the Addendum to PPS7 required that proposals should not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents, however the policy also recognised

that except in the most isolated rural locations, few households could claim not to be overlooked to some degree. The test was therefore not that there should be no overlooking at all between properties but that the extent of overlooking should not be of an unacceptable degree. This required the application of judgement taking account of relevant material planning considerations including the existing extent of overlooking experienced and the potential overlooking from development which could be constructed under Permitted Development (PD) rights.

The original terrace would have been large enough to accommodate a couple of chairs for sitting out. The small extended area would allow a small table and possibly a couple of extra chairs to be located on the terrace which would not be considered to result in any significantly greater impact by way of overlooking or noise and disturbance. A 1.2m high obscure screen was proposed which would be high enough to prevent views towards No. 14 when the terrace was being used as a seating area. This was considered to be a betterment, providing a greater degree of screening than the original 0.9m high fence which would have still allowed direct views towards No. 14 from a seated position. Any planning approval would be subject to a condition requiring erection of this screen within eight weeks of the date of decision as well as the works to remove the remaining unauthorised terrace area.

Photographs taken on site by the Case Officer were shown to Members of the view from the terrace towards No. 14. The first photograph was taken from the position of the original terrace adjoining the conservatory and the second photograph from 0.9m beyond this in the position of the proposed extended area of terrace. These photos clearly demonstrated that the difference between the two viewpoints towards No. 14 was negligible and as such, it was considered that the proposed extended area would result in no significantly greater impact by way of overlooking towards the rear of No. 14.

Further photographs taken from the rear garden of No. 14 prior to construction of the extended terrace clearly demonstrated the extent of original views towards the rear of No. 14 from the conservatory, terrace and steps. It was not considered that the small 0.9m extension to the original terrace would result in any greater degree of overlooking than this original long established arrangement which must be taken as the baseline for consideration of the current proposal.

The current views from the rear windows of No. 14 towards No. 16 were presented in the slides. At present, the larger unauthorised terrace extension was visible from each of these windows, however these views were from an oblique angle rather than directly facing these windows. The proposed, reduced terrace with obscure screen would be set 1.8m back from the unauthorised terrace which would further reduce the extent of views towards these windows. The reduction in the overall scale would also reduce the potential for the terrace to be used as an outdoor entertainment space, reducing the number of people that could be accommodated and the potential for an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance.

When assessing the impact of development proposals on adjacent properties, one of the material considerations that must be taken into account was the extent of potential development that could be erected under PD rights without the requirement for planning permission. In this instance, the applicant would be able to erect a larger

fully glazed conservatory within only 2m of the party boundary as delineated in blue in imagery. It was considered that this larger conservatory in much closer proximity to the party boundary would be likely to result in a greater impact on the privacy of the rear windows and amenity space of No. 14 than the existing conservatory and proposed extended terrace positioned approximately 5m away from the party boundary.

In summary, the Planning Service had carefully considered the impact of the extended terrace area proposed under the current application. While the previous proposal for the larger terrace was considered to be unacceptable given its scale and potential to accommodate a much larger number of people, it was not considered that the current proposal for a small extension of 0.9m would result in any significantly greater impact on the privacy or amenity of No. 14. This smaller area would be just large enough to accommodate a small table and chairs and proposed an obscure screen which would prevent overlooking when the terrace is being used as a seating area. Most importantly, when considered against the potential impact of development that could be erected by the applicant under PD rights, it was not considered that the current proposal would result in any significantly greater impact. Taking account of all these material factors, it is recommended on balance, that planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions set out in the planning report.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Cathcart queried PD rights allowing the extension of a conservatory. The Officer explained that an extension to the rear would be measured from the original elevation of the dwelling. She confirmed that it would be possible to remove the existing conservatory and construct a larger one, provided it was within two metres of the party boundary.

Mr Colin Taylor, speaking against the application, was invited to the Chamber to speak on the matter.

Mr Taylor stated that both he and his wife were opposed to the proposal on the grounds of invasion of privacy, explaining that it overlooked their entire back garden. He recalled that on the second site visit, an Officer had waved across from the application site which exampled the privacy levels. He had been surprised and disappointed that the second proposal was recommended for approval and argued that, regardless of the size of the decking, the same principles should apply. He noted that while the original structure had been deemed immune, its lawfulness was questionable, and he criticised the merits of using something already wrong as a legitimate baseline. He referred to the original report, which had stated that the proposal would make a bad situation worse, and asserted that approval of the latest proposal would do exactly that.

Mr Taylor explained that the limited size of the original structure realistically meant it could only be used for garden access, and if this were not the case, then any extension would not have been necessary. He highlighted the back return of the property and its windows, stating that ideally, he would like to see a return to the

status quo, though he acknowledged this seemed unlikely. Despite this, Mr Taylor and his wife wanted to be reasonable and reach a fair resolution.

He acknowledged that the fence had been raised to 2m but argued that this had no real impact, as it would need to be at least 4m high to be effective, which would be impractical and unsightly. Instead, he proposed that the westerly side be fitted with 1.8me obscured glass panels, facing both their garden and that of their neighbours, who had also objected on grounds of invasion of privacy. The proposed 1.2me panel offered no privacy for anyone. In support of this, he referred to the statement in the original report, which had suggested that a 1.8me screen on the terrace and obscuring the side of the conservatory would mitigate overlooking. In conclusion, Mr Taylor believed that their proposed compromise would not resolve the issue entirely but would prevent it from being exacerbated, while still allowing neighbours to retain their terrace and views.

Councillor Cathcart noted that, as the existing structure was immune from enforcement, the debate concerned a 0.9me extension. He asked whether, notwithstanding Mr Taylor's preference for higher screening, he was content with the 0.9m extension. Mr Taylor confirmed that he would be fine with this.

Councillor Hennessy asked whether Mr Taylor accepted that a degree of overlooking always occurred between houses, and Mr Taylor agreed. Councillor Hennessy then asked for clarification on whether the large conservatory resulted in overlooking, to which Mr Taylor also agreed. When asked to what degree the extension would make matters worse, Mr Taylor stated that it would extend the overlooking aspect. Councillor Hennessy further queried whether the 2m fence erected by neighbours had any real impact. Mr Taylor explained that the fence had originally been five feet high and, even when raised to 2m, the base of the deck remained higher than the fence and that when standing on the deck, occupants were still above the fence line, meaning it made no difference to the overlooking issue.

With no further questions, Mr Taylor returned to the gallery.

Mr Paul Lavery, speaking in support of the application, attended via Zoom and was asked to speak on the matter.

Mr Taylor advised that he was a Chartered Surveyor by profession, affirmed that he and the applicant had worked with Planning Officers to achieve a solution that was acceptable for the site and consistent with policy requirements. He stated that his client's intention was to complete the process with the Planning Office as soon as possible and within the timeframes set out in the conditions of the recommended approval.

As Members had no questions, Mr Taylor returned to the digital public gallery.

Councillor Cathcart raised the issue of obscure glazing, asking why the proposal specified a height of 1.2m rather than 1.8m. The Officer explained that the 1.2m height had been put forward by the agent and would be sufficient to prevent anyone sitting from viewing over it. She noted that it was a matter of what was reasonable to

insist upon, given the extent of views already available from the fully glazed conservatory and the potential views that could arise under PD rights.

Councillor Cathcart queried the size of the proposal and the reference to sitting positions. The Officer responded that if standing, one would normally see over a 1.2m screen, whereas 1.8m was above the average eye level of 1.7m and was therefore the usual requirement. She emphasised that the assessment had to take into account the existing situation and how the proposal compared to what could be achieved under PD rights.

Councillor Cathcart felt that the proposal would overlook into the kitchen and, as it was a balcony, it could be used for recreational purposes rather than being limited to sitting. The Officer acknowledged that people could stand there, but considered it more likely to be used as a sitting-out area. She questioned whether the impact of someone standing on the balcony would be greater than that of someone standing in the conservatory or in a larger structure that could be built under PD rights. She concluded that it was a matter of judgement, but on balance, Officers recommended approval after considering all factors.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether the Committee could impose a condition requiring 1.8m panels, given that only 1.2m had been proposed. The Head of Planning clarified that the Committee could not change the proposal itself, but as Officers were already recommending a reduction, a condition could be attached requiring a higher screen.

Councillor Kendall sought clarification on something being built under PD rights that would be worse than the current proposal. The Officer confirmed that this was correct, explaining that the blue line on the plans indicated roughly what could be built. She stated that a single-storey extension could project 4m beyond the original wall, no higher than 4m, and within 2m of the boundary. If within that distance, the eaves would have to be 3m, but there would be no restriction on windows. The Officer emphasised that, given the nature and topography of the site, overlooking would always occur, even with a large rear window providing direct views into the garden. She concluded that the key consideration was whether the proposal would make the situation significantly worse to the extent of causing sufficient harm to warrant refusal. In Officers' judgement, it would not, though she acknowledged it was ultimately a matter of judgement. Councillor Kendall asked about the height of glass and the Officer confirmed that the obscured glass on the balcony was 0.9m.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that planning permission be granted with conditioning for the 0.9m obscured glass to be replaced with 1.8m obscured glass.

Councillor Cathcart suggested his proposal would move toward a compromise on the issue of overlooking. He stated that he would be concerned if it were his own home and believed it was within the scope of the Committee to require obscure screening. He added that he would have preferred to see the conservatory itself obscured but acknowledged that this was not enforceable. Councillor Cathcart surmised that, had the conservatory been subject to a planning application, Officers would likely have recommended obscure glazing at the outset. Given the nature of the site and its

views into a neighbour's kitchen, he considered that a condition requiring higher, obscure panelling would be a reasonable step.

Alderman McIlveen recognised the potential impact and expressed concern about the adverse effect on private amenity space. He described the neighbour's willingness to accept a 1.8m screen as a generous compromise and stated that he was happy to second this proposal. He added that, having heard the discussion, he would not have supported granting planning permission without such an amendment.

Councillor Hennessy stated that he could appreciate the elevated position of the site, which already resulted in significant overlooking. He noted that some amendments had been made to reduce the scale of the proposal but argued that a 1.8m screen on a small terrace would be out of place and unreasonable. He reminded Members that, even if a conservatory were permitted, it could be constructed with any type of glazing. He concluded that, as the site was already overlooked and the proposal had been reduced slightly, the situation was not ideal for neighbours but he did not agree with the amended proposal.

Councillor Smart expressed understanding of the attempt to find a compromise but agreed with Councillor Hennessy that there was little point in imposing further conditions. He sympathised with all parties but observed that the topography of the site was the underlying cause of the situation. He remarked that the existing conservatory was fully glazed, and it seemed peculiar to permit visibility through one window but not another.

Alderman McDowell agreed with the previous speakers, stating that a 1.8m obscured glass screen would look out of place and would not provide an attractive solution to the problem. He confirmed that he could not support the proposal.

Alderman Graham also appreciated the attempt to reach a compromise but noted that a 1.8m screen, equivalent to 70 inches, would only be surmounted by a very tall person. He suggested that people were more likely to sit on the terrace than stand for long periods. While he understood the effort to find a solution, Alderman Graham stated that he would not be content with it.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared FAILED with 3 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (3)	AGAINST (5)	ABSTAINED (3)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McAlpine	McDowell	Graham	
McIlveen	Smith		
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Cathcart	Hennessy	Kendall	Harbinson
	Smart	McClean	Kerr
	Wray		McCollum
			McKee
			Morgan

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

Alderman McIlveen stated that the proposal did not fall within PD rights, noting that if it had, an application would not have been required. He explained that the measurements went beyond what was allowable under PD rights. He recalled the comment made by others of obscure glass in one part not being appropriate when combined with clear glazing elsewhere, which he felt created contradictions. He concluded that he did not agree with the proposal and maintained that it represented an excessive level of interference with private amenity space.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 5 voting FOR, 4 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (5)	AGAINST (4)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McDowell	McAlpine	Graham	
Smith	McIlveen		
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Hennessy	Cathcart	McClean	Harbinson
Smart	Kendall		Kerr
Wray			McCollum
			McKee
			Morgan

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

4.5 LA06/2025/0544/F – LOWRY'S WOOD, DONAGHADEE ROAD, GROOMSPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee
Committee Interest: Land in which Council has an interest
Proposal: Replacement field gate and upgrade of mown grass trails to compacted gravel trails, with trail infrastructure including signage, wayfinding and seating.
Site Location: Lowry's Wood, Donaghadee Road, Groomsport
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Officer (A Todd) explained that Item 4.5 had been recommended for approval and was being presented to Planning Committee as it was located on land in which Council had an interest.

The site consisted of a small, wooded area on the southern side of the Donaghadee Road just under a mile outside the settlement limit of Groomsport. It was surrounded

by agricultural land, Portavoe Reservoir to the south and several dwellings to the north and east.

The woodland was managed by the National Trust, had grassed trails around the perimeter and was currently accessible from the Donaghadee Road via a metal field gate. Some of the existing paths within the site as well as existing access and National Trust signage were shown to Members.

The agent was commissioned by the Council to conduct a feasibility study into the development of a community trail at the Wood as part of a community trail development program funded by the DAERA Environment Fund Strategic Strand. These community trails were intended to help deliver on the new Outdoor Recreation Indicator in the Programme for Government Wellbeing Framework by increasing the percentage of households in NI with accessible natural space within 400 metres.

Members were shown the proposed layout of the paths and location of the various benches, way finders and information panels proposed. The paths would primarily follow the existing trails on the site and would be laid with a compacted gravel surface providing a more accessible trail that could be used by the local community all year round.

Plans for the proposed seating and picnic benches, the proposed information panel, way finders and timber access gate were shown on screen. With the proposal involving works to existing open space, the application had been assessed against the policies contained within the SPPS and Planning Policy Statement 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. Ease of access to open space for everyone was recognised within the Regional Development Strategy alongside a commitment to safeguard and enhance existing outdoor recreational space within the countryside which this proposal would support.

Policy OS3 of PPS8 set out a presumption in favour of proposals for outdoor recreational use in the countryside subject to compliance with various criteria. These had been considered in detail in the Case Officer's Report, and the Planning Service was content that the proposal would comply with all of the listed criteria. These included visual impact on the character of the area, impact on natural and built heritage, impact on residential amenity and traffic impact. The proposed works were considered to be minor in nature, enhancing an existing open space facility. Statutory bodies consulted on the application included NIEA Natural Heritage and DFI Rivers. An Ecological Survey was submitted with the application and considered by NIEA who had confirmed it was content that there was unlikely to be a significant impact on protected or priority species and habitats as a result of the proposal.

DFI Rivers had advised that reservoir inundation maps indicated that the site was in a potential area of inundation emanating from the Portavoe Reservoir with the overall hazard rating considered high. While Policy FLD 5 of PPS 15 stated that there would be a presumption against any development located in areas where it was indicated that there was the potential for an unacceptable combination of depth and velocity, only a small area in the south eastern corner of the site lay within the predicted inundation area as was shown on the slides. The Planning Service also considered that determining weight should be afforded to the established outdoor recreational

use already at this site with the proposal enhancing the existing facility rather than proposing any extension or significant intensification of use. Therefore on balance it was considered that the proposal was acceptable in this regard and would not result in any increased safety risk at this location.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposals for the enhancement of the existing facility were in compliance with the relevant planning policies and will contribute positively to the offering of outdoor recreational facilities in this part of the Borough. No objections from any third parties had been received and it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

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

4.6 LA06/2025/0104/F – PARKING BAYS TO FRONT 22 FRANCES STREET, NEWTOWNARDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Parking bays to front 22 Frances Street, Newtownards
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Manager explained that LA06/2025/0104/F was a full application that sought the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before Committee as the Council was the applicant.

No objections had been received in relation to the application. Environmental Health was content with the proposal however DfI Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence and sat outside the remit of planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of 22 Frances Street, Newtownards, and had been in place following a grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the town centre as designated under the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. The parklet itself was located on parking bays in front of the Ulster Bank. There were no residential receptors in proximity of the development and it was considered that there would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measured 11m x 2m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blended into its set back position from the road. It had been constructed so that it was level with the existing footpath.

HED was consulted in respect to the nearby Town Hall however, was content the Town Hall had a sufficient presence in situation and scale to be unaffected by the proposal.

There were no direct policy provisions for such development, however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre.

The proposal would result in the loss of two parking spaces, however the development had been in place for a period of time and there had not been a significant adverse impact while there was provision of parking elsewhere within the town centre. The proposal should not prejudice road safety or the flow of traffic.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the parklets had been in place for some time, explaining that their main purpose had been to provide outdoor space during Covid, but that they had been approved after the pandemic. He questioned how often they were used, observing that two parking spaces had been lost as a result. The Officer stated that there were no measurements or figures available on usage but reported that, during a site visit, he had observed the parklet being used early in the morning in the rain. He acknowledged that he was unsure of usage levels at different times of day but confirmed that the parklets were being used as street furniture.

Alderman McIlveen recalled the installation of tables and chairs, including chess boards in Conway Square since the parklet was introduced and asked if this had been weighed against keeping the parklet in place. The Officer confirmed this and emphasised that such spaces were important, particularly for people with limited mobility. He referred to research suggesting that opportunities to stop regularly increased accessibility. He acknowledged the loss of parking spaces but argued that the provision of parklets was a positive step in building vibrant town centres.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether any assessment had been made of whether the parklet was in the right location or whether a better site could have been chosen. The Officer advised that nothing had been put before the Planning Service in this regard. Alderman McIlveen recalled that permission had been granted for a parklet further up the street at the same time as other permissions, but that it had not been erected. The Officer confirmed that another parklet had been installed further down the street toward the bakery.

Alderman McIlveen expressed doubt about whether the current location was appropriate, given the loss of two spaces in the middle of the town. Alderman McDowell responded that such questions about whether parklets should be located

elsewhere were matters for the Place and Prosperity Committee. He argued that it was unfair to raise issues that had not been discussed with the relevant information provided. He concluded that the present discussion was about whether the parklet should be granted planning permission again, and that questions of location should be addressed in the appropriate forum.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared PASSED with 6 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 6 ABSENT.

FOR (6)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (6)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McAlpine	Graham		
McDowell	McIlveen		
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Hennessy	Cathcart	McClean	Harbinson
Smart			Kendall
Wray			Kerr
			McCollum
			McKee
			Morgan

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

[Councillor Kendall left the meeting at 22:33]

4.7 LA06/2025/0102/F – PARKING BAYS TO FRONT OF 44A-46 HIGH STREET, NEWTOWNARDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Parking bays to front of 44a-46 High Street, Newtownards
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (J Hanna) explained that LA06/2025/0102/F was a full application that sought the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before Committee as the Council was the applicant.

Two objections had been received in relation to the application. These raised issues were with regard to drainage infrastructure, loss of parking and the merit of parklets. Environmental Health was content with the proposal, however, Dfl Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence and sat outside of the remit of planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of 44a-46 High Street, Newtownards, and had been in place following grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the town centre as designated under the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. The parklet itself was located on parking bays in front of the UPS office. There were no residential receptors in proximity of the development and it was considered that there would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measured 11m x 2m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blended into its set back position from the road. It had been constructed so that it was level with the existing footpath.

An issue was raised regarding potential for localised flooding and drainage around the parklet. Officers had conferred with the relevant section within Council and were aware of the issue. They had confirmed that the installation of a new drain hadalready been added to DfI's programme of works. In this respect, it was not considered to require a condition.

There were no direct policy provisions for such development however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that Planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre. The proposal would result in the loss of three parking spaces however the development had been in place for a period of time and there had not been a significant adverse impact while there was provision of parking elsewhere within the town centre. The proposal should not prejudice road safety or the flow of traffic.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted with the addition of condition requiring drainage works.

Alderman McIlveen explained that drainage had been a constant problem, having been reported to the Department for Infrastructure on several occasions with repeated promises of action that had not yet been undertaken. He acknowledged the indication that works would be carried out but stated that he preferred a condition to be imposed. He highlighted that, during heavy rainfall, the construction over the gulley redirected water toward nearby shops, and he stressed that this issue needed to be addressed.

Councillor Smart agreed, noting that there had been many promises regarding drainage and encouraging that the matter be conditioned to ensure resolution.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted with the addition of condition requiring drainage works.

4.8 LA06/2025/0101/F – PARKING BAYS TO FRONT OF 63-65 HIGH STREET, BANGOR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Parking bays to front of 63-65 High Street, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer explained that LA06/2025/0101/F was a full application that sought the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before Committee as the Council was the applicant.

No objections had been received in relation to the application. Environmental Health was content with the proposal however DfI Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence and sat outside of the remit of Planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of 63-65 High Street, Bangor, and had been in place a following grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the town centre as designated under the North Down and Ards Area Plan and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. There were some residential receptors in proximity of the development nearby, however it was considered that there would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measured 11m x 2m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blended into its set back position from the road. It had been constructed so that it was level with the existing footpath.

The site was within the proposed Bangor Central ATC. The proposed development however was not considered to have any material impact on the key features of the ATC.

There were no direct policy provisions for such development, however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre. The proposal would result in the loss of two parking spaces, however the development had been in place for a period of time and there had not been a significant adverse impact while there was

provision of parking elsewhere within the town centre. The proposal should not prejudice road safety or the flow of traffic.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

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

Councillor Cathcart was content with the locating of parklets in the area but asked that it be noted for the matter of maintenance to be raised given the current state of parklets.

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

4.9 LA06/2025/0100/F – PAVED AREA TO FRONT OF 78-80 MAIN STREET, BANGOR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Paved area to front of 78-80 Main Street, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer explained that LA06/2025/0100/F was a full application seeking the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before Committee as the Council was the applicant.

No objections had been received in relation to the application. Environmental Health was content with the proposal, however DfI Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence and sat outside of the remit of planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of 78-80 Main Street, Bangor, and had been in place following grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the town centre as designated under the North Down and Ards Area Plan and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. There were no residential receptors in proximity of the development nearby, and there would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measured 7m x 3m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blended into its set back position from the road. It had been constructed so that it was level with the existing footpath.

The site was within the proposed Bangor Central ATC. The proposed development however was not considered to have any material impact on the key features of the ATC.

There were no direct policy provisions for such development, however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre. The proposal was located on the pavement so would not impact on the flow of traffic.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

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

Again, Councillor Cathcart was content with the locating of parklets but asked that the issue of their maintenance be raised. This particular parklet was better situated as, being on the pavement, there were no loss of parking spaces.

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

4.10 LA06/2025/0099/F – PARKING BAYS TO FRONT OF 117-119 HIGH STREET, BANGOR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Parking bays to front of 117-119 High Street, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer explained that LA06/2025/0099/F was a full application that sought the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before Committee as the Council was the applicant.

No objections had been received in relation to the application. Environmental Health was content with the proposal, however DfI Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence and sat outside of the remit of Planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of 117-119 High Street, Bangor, and had been in place following grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the

town centre as designated under the North Down and Ards Area Plan and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. There were some residential receptors in proximity of the development nearby, however it was considered that would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measuresd11m x 2m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blended into its set back position from the road. It had been constructed so that it was level with the existing footpath.

The site was within the proposed Bangor Central ATC. The proposed development was not considered to have any material impact on the key features of the ATC. There were no direct policy provisions for such development, however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that Planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success.

While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre. The proposal would result in the loss of two parking spaces, however the development had been in place for a period of time and there had not been a significant adverse impact while there was provision of parking elsewhere within the town centre. The proposal should not prejudice road safety or the flow of traffic.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

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

4.11 LA06/2025/0105/F – PAVED AREA TO FRONT OF ST MARY'S PAROCHIAL HALL, 24 THE SQUARE, COMBER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Comber
Committee Interest: Council Application
Proposal: Permanent retention of parklet (consisting of public seating and planting)
Site Location: Paved area to the front of St Mary's Parochial Hall, 24 The Square, Comber
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer explained that LA06/2025/0105/F was a full application that sought the permanent retention of a parklet. The application was before committee as the Council was the applicant.

No objections had been received in relation to the application. Environmental Health was content with the proposal, however DfI Roads had offered objection. This related to the granting of a licence for the parklet and sat outside of the remit of planning. No issues regarding road safety were raised.

The site was located to the front of St Mary's Parochial Hall in the Square, Comber, and had been in place following grant of temporary permission in September 2022. It sat within the town centre as designated by the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and was in an area characterised by its commercial use. The parklet itself was located on the public footpath outside the Parochial Hall. There were no residential receptors in proximity of the development and it was considered that there would not be an adverse impact on residential amenity.

The parklets provided seating and were finished in a timber cladding and planters around the edge. It measured 7m x 3m. The parklet had a low profile in the context of the street and blends into its set back position from the road.

There were no direct policy provisions for such development, however the SPPS acknowledged it was important that planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. While a parklet would not ordinarily be considered a main town centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS given its location, would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS and would be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre. The proposal had been in place for a period of time and there had not been a significant adverse impacts.

In summary, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met the relevant planning policy requirements contained within the SPPS. Therefore, on this basis it was recommended that permission should be approved.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted.

Alderman McIlveen recalled that the matter had previously been discussed during the Covid period, when questions had been raised about responsibility for cleaning and maintenance. He referred to the example in Comber, noting that it had not been maintained well, with cracks evident, and asked whether there was any suggestion that such structures would be upgraded or whether the current existing one would simply be permitted to remain in situ. The Officer confirmed that, for the structure already in place, there was no proposal for upgrading, and that maintenance responsibilities fell to the Council.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether there had been any reports of antisocial behaviour associated with the development. The Officer advised that Planning Service had not received such reports, acknowledging that many developments carried that risk but explained that responsibility for ensuring such spaces were not misused lay with the PSNI. He added that the site benefitted from its location on the square, with active surveillance from surrounding businesses, which he hoped would discourage antisocial activity.

Alderman McIlveen referred to reports of damage, including graffiti, at the Comber site and expressed surprise that this had not been investigated. He suggested that such issues would be a material consideration if a proposal were likely to attract antisocial behaviour. The Officer reiterated that Planning Service had not received these reports. Alderman McIlveen asked whether Environmental Health had raised any concerns. The Officer confirmed that Environmental Health had not objected.

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

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared PASSED with 8 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (8)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McAlpine	Graham		
McDowell	McIlveen		
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Cathcart		McClean	Harbinson
Hennessy			Kerr
Kendall			McCollum
Smart			McKee
Wray			Morgan

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

[Please note, Item 4.11 had been heard between Items 4.4 and 4.5 which is why Councillor Kendall was in attendance and able to propose and vote on the item.]

5. DFI CONSULTATION ON SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing to the Council a publication by the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) entitled: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in New Housing Developments.

The consultation sought views on the development of policy relating to the future regulation and use of SuDS in new housing developments in Northern Ireland.

It also aimed to explain the main considerations, as well as gathering essential information and opinions on key policy areas, potential implementation challenges, and opportunities to promote the wider uptake of SuDS.

The consultation document was available for comment and response for a period of 12 weeks from 22 September 2025 to 19 December 2025.

Background
Members would have been aware of the issue of new surface water connections to combined sewer networks being restricted by Northern Ireland Water since 2016 and only being permitted in exceptional circumstances.

Typically, separate storm drainage systems for new housing involved rainwater being collected in gullies and pipes and carried to the nearest sewer or river. There were, however, still many locations where storm sewers connected downstream into older combined sewer networks. That meant that much of the rainwater collected was ultimately being mixed with foul sewage and was having to be pumped and treated and could cause sewage spills and pollution when the combined sewers were overwhelmed.

Developers could achieve a reduction in discharge rate by incorporating underground storage such as tank sewers (oversized pipes) or concrete or geocellular tanks at the end of the piped network to attenuate and store rainwater temporarily before releasing it to the receiving river or storm sewer at the approved discharge rate. Those Structural Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) were commonly referred to as 'Hard SuDS', and new legislation was introduced in 2016 to allow them to be incorporated into the public sewerage network.

The primary legislation enacted in 2016 allowed for 'the use of landscaping, natural features or any other kind of arrangement' to manage surface water in new developments. Those were collectively known as nature-based SuDS (or Soft SuDS) and included natural features that managed water on the surface including raingardens, swales and detention basins.

Purpose of the Consultation
DFI's 'Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage' consultation of March 2022 included a consideration of future powers to specify design and maintenance requirements for SuDS and whether the guidance should be in the form of regulatory legislation or non-statutory guidance. The Council's May 2022 response to that consultation was attached to this report.

Unlike Structural SuDS, there were currently no formal arrangements for approval or for agreeing the ownership and management responsibility of nature-based SuDS.

Delivery of those nature-based projects had been perceived as challenging for the developers involved and had carried considerable risk, given the current absence of an approval body and regulated maintenance regime.

The Report at Item 5c was a research paper presented to the NI Assembly dated October 2025 and explored the operation and performance of SuDS through a desk-based review of academic, industry and governmental literature.

The focus of the current consultation was on developing and implementing new policies and regulatory arrangements to ensure nature-based SuDS were provided in new housing developments in the future.

The consultation posed the following questions:

1. Do you agree that nature-based SuDS should be a requirement in all new housing developments?
2. Do you agree that the SuDS Management Train approach should be the preferred drainage solution for new developments?
3. Do you agree that new regional guidance on the design and maintenance standards of nature-based SuDS is required?
4. Which organisation should be responsible for approving the design and construction of nature-based SuDS proposals?
5. How should the costs of administering any new nature-based SuDS Approval Body be met?
6. Which organisation should be responsible for the future maintenance of nature-based SuDS features in new housing developments?
7. Who should pay for the future maintenance cost of nature-based SuDS features in new housing developments?

Members would have been aware of the LDP's approach towards SuDS as set out at Policy FLD 6 of the recently published draft Plan Strategy.

A draft response was attached for Members' approval further to input from Planning and Building Control officers.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the draft response to DFI.

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

Councillor Smart asked for clarification on the consultation response regarding the new drainage body and requested an update on what had been meant by this. The Head of Planning explained that she was seeking an independent body with expertise in construction, management, and maintenance of drainage systems.

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

6. STREET NAMING – THE DIARY, CLOUGHEY

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Council granted planning permission under LA06/2019/0634/F for a residential development of 34no. dwellings (in substitution of previous approval X/2007/1259/F) in September 2021 on lands at the junction of The Square and Portaferry Road, Cloughey. Construction was due to start.

The developer had requested the name, 'The Dairy,' due to the history of the site once being a working dairy farm. The developer's family would have bottled milk on the site for delivery in Cloughey and the surrounding area for decades and their family continued producing milk on the farm until 2008.

The name, 'The Dairy,' was in keeping with the guidelines of the street naming policy. The statutory basis for the street naming function was contained within Article 11 of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the name as detailed for this development.

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

7. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing:

Appeal Decisions and New Appeals
There had been no PAC decisions issued for any ANDBC appeals since the last report.

No new appeals in relation to ANDBC cases had been received since the last report. Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings could be viewed at www.pacni.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

8. PERFORMANCE REPORTING APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members would have been aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have arrangements in place 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 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 April to September 2025 (H1) was attached.

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

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who had opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- Members of the public and stakeholders could contribute to planning decisions through submission of representations
- The Planning Service processed 375 applications in the local category of development with an average processing time of 15.4 weeks
- One application in the major category of development was approved in 89.4 weeks as follows:

LA06/2023/2314/F Proposed Park and Ride Facility including tarmacked parking area (452 spaces), landscaping, boundary fencing, cycle shelter building, relocation of existing playpark within the site and associated development.
Lands bounded by William Street, Hardford Link, Corry Street and to the rear of 23-49 and 51-53 Corry Street and 18-58 William Street, Newtownards

Processing time was affected by insufficient information being initially submitted to address DFI Roads requirements; an update to the Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment and soil waste classification was submitted seven months into the process which required to be reconsulted upon, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment was only completed by the Council by the Shared Environmental Service in December 2024 further to additional information being required from the applicant.

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:

- Not meeting statutory performance indicators for planning applications;
- Enforcement performance indicator falling below 70% of cases being concluded within 39 weeks
- Shared Environmental Service no longer accepting work outside of statutory consultation on planning applications – potential impact on LDP in terms of Sustainability Assessment

Action to be taken/undertaken:
- Introduction of Validation Checklist – staff to be trained, planning agents to be made aware and public website/guidance updated accordingly for introduction from January 2026
- Restructure of Development Management Service Unit into specific teams to respond to particular categories of applications:
    - Majors & Investment Projects
    - Applications contributing to non-domestic rate base
    - Grant funding dependent
- Liaison with LDP teams in other Councils to determine appropriate response to Sustainability Appraisal at Focussed Changes stage of LDP – and appropriate budget being bid for through Estimates Process
- Active focus on reducing number of legacy enforcement cases which had had resultant impact on performance indicator. Cases linked to retrospective planning applications had also impacted on conclusion times. Due to a long running vacancy, caseloads per officer had been higher than sustainable to ensure effective case processing.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

9. PLANNING SERVICE BUDGETARY REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Planning Service's Budgetary Control Report covered the 6-month period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025. The net cost of the Service was showing an underspend of £111.7k (11.7%) – box A on page 2.

Explanation of Variance
The Planning Service's budget performance was further analysed on page 2 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£171.0k favourable	**2**
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£2.4k favourable	**2**
Report 4	Income	£61.7k adverse	**2**

Explanation of Variance
The Planning Service's overall variance could be summarised by the following table: -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(171.0)	There were vacancies within the Service for the first 6 months but these have now been filled.
Goods & Services	(2.4)	Range of small underspends.
Income	61.7	Mainly Planning application fees.

REPORT 1	BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
	Period 6 - September 2025					
		Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
		£	£	£	£	%
	Planning Service					
5302	Planning Service	846,349	958,000	(111,651)	2,122,600	(11.7)
	Total	846,349	958,000	A (111,651)	2,122,600	(11.7)
REPORT 2	PAYROLL REPORT					
		£	£	£	£	%
	Planning Service - Payroll					
5302	Planning Service	1,139,009	1,310,000	(170,991)	2,619,300	(13.1)
	Total	1,139,009	1,310,000	(170,991)	2,619,300	(13.1)
REPORT 3	GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
		£	£	£	£	%
	Planning Service - Goods & Services					
5302	Planning Service	160,642	163,000	(2,358)	492,400	(1.4)
	Total	160,642	163,000	(2,358)	492,400	(1.4)
REPORT 4	INCOME REPORT					
		£	£	£	£	%
	Planning Service - Income					
5302	Planning Service	(453,302)	(515,000)	61,698	(989,100)	12.0
	Totals	(453,302)	(515,000)	61,698	(989,100)	12.0

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Alderman McIlveen stated that the report showed as adverse in relation to planning fees and asked whether an upturn was anticipated, or what considerations had been made in terms of budget assessment and whether this might stifle growth. The Head of Planning explained that the budget had been set based on earlier, more successful, years when application fees had been forthcoming. She noted that the Service would manage the situation going forward in terms of achievable targets. She added that if some large applications were received, the budget position would return to surplus, and confirmed that the Planning Department would be pressing the Department for Infrastructure for another uplift in planning fees, with the hope of being in a better position in future.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether there were planning applications in the pipeline or others being lined up. The Head of Planning confirmed that there were, including some majors anticipated.

[Alderman McDowell left the meeting at 22:58.]

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

10. DFI CORRESPONDENCE RE PLANNING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – UPDATE OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN PRACTICE NOTES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence from DFI.

RECOMMENDED that the letter be noted.

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 22:59.

ITEM 7.2

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Kendall

Aldermen: Adair, Cummings, McAlpine

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom), Boyle, Blaney, Brady, Cathcart, Douglas, Edmund, Harbinson, Wray

Officers in Attendance: Director of Environmental Services (G Bannister), Head of Estates (P Caldwell), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Head of Waste and Cleansing (K Patterson), and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau).

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies at this stage and those were noted from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and Councillor Irwin.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and none were notified.

NOTED.

3. NOTICE OF MOTION 673 EXTENSION OF PUBLIC TOILET OPENING HOURS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in September 2025, the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council:

"*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."

The report dealt with the public toilet opening hours aspect of the Motion.

Currently there were 24 toilet blocks that covered the entire Borough. Those facilities were covered by four mobile toilet cleaners, two working out of Balloo ERC and two out of North Road Depot. One member of staff for the AM shift and one for the PM shift from each Depot.

During the months October to April, the afternoon/evening shift commenced at 12.30 pm to 8.30 pm. During the months May to August, the afternoon/evening shift commenced at 1.30 pm and finished at 9.30 pm.

The toilet blocks were locked in a specific order and during the summer months, the first toilet was given a final clean and locked at 7.00 pm. Of those serviced from Balloo the two toilets at Ballyholme were normally locked around 8.00 pm/8.15pm. The last toilet to be locked was at Groomsport, normally around 9.00 pm. Of those serviced from North Road, the toilets at coastal areas such as Ballywalter, Millisle and the Commons Donaghadee would be closed last, between 8.00 pm and 9.00 pm.

The manned toilets at South Pier, Bangor and The Parade, Donaghadee, were open until 9.00 pm during the months of July and August. In addition to that, there were four automatic public conveniences that could be accessed 24/7 at a cost of 20 pence per visit. Those were hired out from a company which carried out all the maintenance and cleaning. Those were located at South Pier, Bangor, Kircubbin, Cunningburn on the Portaferry Road and in Portaferry town centre. Should there be a desire to install more of those APCs, the cost would be approximately £25,000 per annum based on leasing two or more units over a 15-year contract.

Out of the 24 public conveniences, 19 of those facilities were accessible 24/7 using a RADAR key for vulnerable people or those with disabilities. Anyone who required access to those facilities could purchase a RADAR key from City Hall and Church Street reception and they were widely available from various suppliers online. The five toilet blocks that it did not apply to were Castle Park Bangor, Cairn Wood, Craigantlet, and Kiltonga Duck Pond, Newtownards. The remaining two blocks were South Pier, Bangor and The Parade, Donaghadee, where they were only accessible during opening hours (note those were open until 9.00 pm during the summer months of July and August).

Options
If the Council was to pay in-house to lock the facilities from 9pm in the summer months, it would be at a cost of £83.30 for one member of staff for a four-hour shift. However, the cost for Sundays and Bank Holidays would be £111.06. Two members of staff would be required, one based at Balloo and one at North Road. That would equate to £1,166.20 per week on a standard week. If that was done in house, there could be health and safety restrictions regarding the working time directive and legal driving hours. Staff would be finishing around 11.00 pm and starting their substantive post at 7.00 am the next morning. Alternatively, the Council could look

at employing seasonal agency staff, if suitable ones were available, however that would cost more as the Council must pay agency fees.

In addition, there were the continuing issues surrounding antisocial behaviour, where facilities were vandalised and members of staff had been abused physically and verbally. Such incidents tended to be at coastal areas such as Millisle, Seapark, Holywood and the two toilet blocks at Ballyholme. In 2023 there were approximately 43 reports of vandalism, 2024 approximately 33, and in 2025 approximately 50 reports of vandalism. Those issues cost the Council thousands of pounds in repairs each year. As a lot of the vandalism occurred in the evening, extending the opening hours may increase those costs.

In 2018 Council agreed to investigate whether or not local businesses would be willing to make their toilet facilities available to members of the public through a community public convenience scheme, in order to extend the Council service to the public. Unfortunately, the uptake on that was quite low with only two businesses availing of the offer of a grant to offset their maintenance costs and to provide facilities on behalf of the Council.

In summary, the Council was asked to note that:

1. A number of coastal public conveniences were already available to the public at Ballyholme, Groomsport, Ballywalter, South Pier Bangor, Donaghadee and Millisle until they were closed between 8.00 pm and 9.00 pm.

2. Automatic facilities were available at Portaferry, Cunningburn, Portaferry and South Pier, Bangor 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

3. If all facilities were to be kept open until 9.00 pm in the summer, it would require a closing schedule to commence at 9.00 pm costing around £1,166 per week for a standard week, with some not being closed until between 10.30 pm and 11.00 pm.

4. Introducing longer opening hours increased the risk of antisocial behaviour and risks to operatives.

5. There was a low uptake of the community public convenience scheme when first delivered in 2018, but that had since gained better traction in other areas.

RECOMMENDED that the Council did not amend the closing hours for public conveniences at this time but redevelops and relaunches a community scheme in order to increase provision for the public during the summer months, and reviews its impact in order to bring an update report back to the Council after a period of review.

Councillor Cathcart asked to make an alternative proposal which was seconded by Alderman Adair.

‘That the Council notes the report and brings back a report on costs and options on extending the summer opening hours to cover April and September as well as May to August, redevelops and relaunches a community scheme to increase provisions

for the public during the summer months and reviews its impacts in order to bring a report back to Council after a period of review'.

Councillor Cathcart explained the background to his proposal in terms of the complaints he had been receiving from constituents, many of which were focused on the opening times during the Easter period. He believed that was more of a pressing issue than late night opening during the summer months.

He highlighted the need to extend opening times beginning in April and running through to September, particularly for toilets located at beaches. He stated that opening times should be dictated by daylight hours. He expressed disappointment that Ballyholme and other facilities closed early despite good weather in April and May. While acknowledging the considerable cost of extended opening he believed a report should be brought back attempting to find an alternative and cheaper solution than that being proposed.

He went on to say that he was happy for the community scheme to proceed and encouraged the Council to use alternative solutions where possible. He considered toilet facilities to be a human right and remarked on the closing of many facilities in England, for example, in an attempt to cut costs. He hoped that within Ards and North Down facilities could remain in places where people spent time and should be kept open as long as possible to reflect the weather and daylight.

Alderman Adair agreed with the sentiments expressed and believed the Council should adopt a "can do" approach. He noted that often that was not the case, whereas other councils such as Causeway Coast and Glens had managed to provide facilities for residents and visitors. He pointed out that in rural areas visitors often had no other facilities available other than what was provided by councils and he encouraged the Council to take a proactive approach to the matter.

Councillor Boyle stated that he would be happy to support the proposal but doubted that an improved situation would result without a hefty price tag. He noted that the hours covered satisfied the majority of people and supported the proposal with a degree of reluctance.

Alderman McAlpine sought clarity on the matter asking if the months of April to September should also be considered for extended or normal hours (open to 9 pm) at the cost quoted in the report. Councillor Cathcart confirmed that consideration should be given to the two additional months at extended hours.

Councillor Wray stated that he was largely happy to support the proposal but was not convinced that anything different would be achieved, as beaches did not have the necessary facilities. He felt that the amendment was worth pursuing if the position could be improved and asked about the additional staff required. The Head of Waste and Cleansing said that seasonal staff could be used, which added further costs to facilitate extended opening hours across seven days. Councillor Wray felt that was excessive and believed it could be managed more cost effectively and asked for the financial figures to be examined in greater detail.

Councillor Blaney asked the Council to consider using the same teams that locked the local parks in the hope that could be an economical choice when combined with the locking of toilets. The Director pointed out that a contractor locked some parks but that all the options available would be considered for the report.

In summing up, Councillor Cathcart clarified that his proposal was to extend the summer months to include April and September. He hoped the shift length would remain (starting one hour later and finishing one hour later) so that additional costs were not incurred for that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the Council notes the report and brings back a report on costs and options on extending the summer opening hours to cover April and September as well as May to August, redevelops and relaunches a community scheme to increase provisions for the public during the summer months and reviews its impacts in order to bring a report back to Council after a period of review.

4. NOTICE OF MOTION 632 HRC PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TRIAL 2025

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the following Notice of Motion was approved by the Environment Committee in October 2024.

That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other Council areas in Northern Ireland.

The Council subsequently agreed to a trial scheme involving Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs. The introduction of a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) pedestrian access trial was primarily driven by the need to improve accessibility for residents who did not have access to private vehicles.

Stages of Development
Donaghadee HRC and Holywood HRC were selected for the trial due to the large number of residential properties within walking distance of the two sites.

It was agreed that the trial would run during the full months of July, August and September 2025 between 8.00 am – 9.00 am and that there would be no vehicles permitted on site during the pedestrian access only time slots.

- Monday – Holywood HRC
- Tuesday – Holywood HRC and Donaghadee HRC
- Wednesday – Holywood HRC and Donaghadee HRC
- Thursday – Donaghadee HRC

Booking still required – online or by telephone

The trial was heavily publicised using the Council's social media platforms and the Bin-ovation app.

Outcomes – Before and After

Donaghadee HRC
The table below showed the number of completed visits to the recycling centre per month in **vehicles** between 8.00 am – 9.00 am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays prior to the trial and subsequent slot usage percentage.

Apr-25	20		Apr-25	8%
May-25	18		May-25	8%
Jun-25	29		Jun-25	13%
Total	**67**		**Average**	**10%**

The table below showed the number of completed **pedestrian** visits to the recycling centre per month between 8.00 am – 9.00 am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays during the trial and subsequent slot usage percentage.

Jul-25	35		Jul-25	13%
Aug-25	24		Aug-25	11%
Sep-25	5		Sep-25	2%
Total	**64**		**Average**	**9%**

Holywood HRC
The table below showed the number of completed visits to the recycling centre per month in **vehicles** between 8.00 am – 9.00 am on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays prior to the trial and subsequent slot usage percentage.

Apr-25	40		Apr-25	10%
May-25	32		May-25	9%
Jun-25	24		Jun-25	7%
Total	**96**		**Average**	**9%**

Excludes Monday 30 June

The table below showed the number of completed **pedestrian** visits to the recycling centre per month between 8.00 am – 9.00 am on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays during the trial and subsequent slot usage percentage.

Jul-25	9		Jul-25	2%
Aug-25	4		Aug-25	1%
Sep-25	5		Sep-25	1%
Total	**18**		**Average**	**1%**

Includes Monday 30 June

The top five most common waste streams disposed of during the pedestrian visits was as followed:

1. Cardboard
2. Appliances
3. Non-recyclable waste
4. Mixed dry recyclables
5. Garden waste

Conclusion
Donaghadee HRC performed well in the first two months of the trial during July and August, then significantly dropped off during the third month of September. That represented only 9% of the available booking slots being used compared to the baseline of 10% made by visitors in vehicles during April, May and June.

Holywood HRC was poorly attended during the three months of the trial with a total of 18 completed visits. That represented only 1% of the available booking slots being used compared to the baseline of 9% made by visitors in vehicles during April, May and June.

It was also important to note that four of the five most common waste streams that were brought in by pedestrians could be disposed of using the Council's kerbside bin collection.

RECOMMENDED that the Council does not continue with the pedestrian access arrangements in their current form. Furthermore, that officers investigate other means of safely providing pedestrian access to HRC sites alongside vehicular access and reports the outcome of this to a future meeting.

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

Councillor Boyle noted that what had been asked for had been delivered within the report, and the findings of the results told their own story. The usage was far lower than expected, and while he had thought there might have been a strong case for continuing pedestrian access slots, the evidence showed the opposite. He concluded that the scheme was not viable and should not be continued.

Seconding the recommendation, Councillor Harbinson agreed with Councillor Boyle, stating that it had been tried but that the demand was simply not there.

Councillor Cathcart reminded Members that the aim of the Council was to assist residents. He acknowledged that there had been a practice of walk-in facilities in Holywood previously but stressed that the Council was not avoiding this out of choice but rather with regard to health and safety issues which needed to be considered. He expressed support for a further report, being conscious that access to HRCs was currently limited to cars only and that excluded some residents so he asked officers to consider alternative options.

The Chair shared Councillor Cathcart's concerns and agreed that the trial had been restrictive in that it was very early in the day. She felt that the timings and numbers were negligible, and therefore welcomed the idea of a further report to explore alternatives. She asked when this could be expected and was informed that officers would aim to come back to the Committee with it in March

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

5. REPLACEMENT SKIP STRATEGY
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in order to provide a robust and sustainable operational and financial planning environment, management were continuing a strategy of developing replacement and maintenance strategies for Council assets. The latest strategy was for skips to service the household recycling centres.

Key Elements
The key elements of this short strategy were set out below:

Objectives
- To ensure a reliable stock of skips and containers that is fit for purpose
- To ensure a reliable stock of skips and containers that is legal and road safe
- To evenly distribute the capital expenditure on new skips and containers to avoid "spikes" in capital demand
- To enable the appropriate types of skips and containers to be purchased considering modern day innovations, safety standards and exposure levels
- Increase customer satisfaction with reduced complaints regarding the capacity of skip and container space on site

Methodology
A two-stage process would be followed involving both supervisors and management to review and assess the condition of skips and need for replacement. In addition, a robust inspection and maintenance schedule would be established.

Financing
Based on research, management had established that around £55k was required on an annual basis to undertake this replacement programme plus £5k for inspection and maintenance. A bid would be made in the estimates process for that modest funding to be built into recurring budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves this strategy, subject to funding approval as part of the estimates process.

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

Councillor Cathcart reported that the community still remembered and reported to him the mistakes that had been made under North Down Borough Council in respect of skips and he hoped that this Council would ensure that the correct skips were bought.

Councillor Blaney thought that there was too little information on the report to allow him to support the recommendation. He could not support a proposal without having an awareness of what had taken place previously and if the suggestions being made now were good financial sense.

The Director explained that there was currently no strategy in place but that what was being proposed was intended to smooth the budgeting for the Council overall to reduce peaks and troughs of spending and was considered to be a better way of managing finances.

Councillor Blaney said that he would abstain since there was not enough information in the report for him to say that this was a better way compared to what had been done previously.

The Chair continued the questioning asking if the proposal was related to increasing the level of operational efficiency. The Head of Waste and Cleansing confirmed that this was about planning ahead and anticipating changes needed over the period of a year and was based on research carried out over a typical Council replacement period of time. He said that was similar to other capital items such as planned vehicle replacements.

Councillor Edmund said part of the problem was that, to date there was no benchmark and this gave an opportunity to provide that and spending would not be made where it was not needed.

When put to a vote 10 voted FOR, 2 voted AGAINST and the Chair abstained so the recommendation was CARRIED.

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

6. NOTICE OF MOTION 629 CLANDEBOYE PARK AND PITCH UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in September 2024 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council.

"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."

A report was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing Committee in January 2025, with a number of options and a recommendation. Elected Members decided to progress an option to reinstate the football pitch to intermediate dimensions with full size goal posts. A budget was agreed separately and within the 2025/6 financial year.

Programme of Works for the Pitch
A programme of works was reported and agreed at the June 2025 Council meeting to proceed with the project. The timescale for the programme of works was to prepare the pitch for an opening at the start of the football playing season i.e. August 2025 and in line with other Council maintained pitches across the Borough.

As per the agreed programme, the following works were completed.

- Full-size goalposts and sockets were purchased and installed
- The playing surface was overseeded with a sports grass seed
- Verti-Draining and sand dressing (30 tonnes) was completed
- The playing surface was treated to suppress weed growth
- Ball stop fencing was installed behind the new goalposts
- Football line marking was introduced and regularly updated
- An independent assessment of the playing surface was conducted by sports turf specialists iTurf, which determined the long-term maintenance plan for the surface
- Regular fertilizer was applied with continued application in line with maintenance of other grass pitches
- Regular grass cuts are ongoing throughout the growing season
- The pitch has now been added to the annual maintenance programme

Clandeboye Park Wider Engagement Plan
In June 2025 it was agreed to carry out a wider Engagement project to consult the local community regarding the long-term maintenance and future enhancement of Clandeboye recreational area. The current position of the recreational area consisted of a Play Park, a MUGA and a non-bookable grass pitch. Open greenspace around those facilities equated to approximately 4500m2 with pedestrian access between Avonlea Park and Chester Park. There was an active community group representing the area, as well as a Primary School, nursery schools, churches and a sports club with youth teams.

Groups identified for Engagement

- Clandeboye Primary School
- St Andrews Presbyterian Church
- Bangor Football Club
- Snuggles Day Nursery
- Clandeboye Community and Village Association
- Bangor Abbey Pre-School
- St Malachy's Primary School and Nursery Unit
- Little Acorns Pre-School

Parks and Cemeteries officers met with Clandeboye Village Community Association and a representative of North Down Community Network to outline that engagement approach on 21 May 2025. The engagement approach was accepted at that meeting.

Results from the engagement project identified some common themes and areas residents would like to see improved:

- Provision of toilet facilities for visitors to the facilities
- A fenced-off area for dog walkers to exercise their dogs to avoid dog fouling on the football pitch
- Provide outdoor growing and learning experiences
- Provide wildlife/nature areas

Given the locality of the pitch to established football clubs, a focussed engagement was carried out to specifically discuss sporting needs. The feedback showed that:

- There would be interest in using the pitch for intermediate level football if it met the appropriate standards of minimum 90m x 55m. The current pitch was not wide or long enough for this standard of football. For intermediate level football, it would need to meet IFA and new FIFA standards when published and include a boundary wall/fence at least 2m high.
- For youth teams, the pitch would need to be smaller for 7–8 a-side games.
- Changing facilities and toilets on site would be needed for organised sport.
- Storage for equipment etc would be needed.

Parks and Cemeteries officers met with Clandeboye Village Community Association and a representative of North Down Community Network on 8 October 2025 to discuss the findings of the community engagement.

Parks and Cemeteries officers outlined potential projects that could be delivered through 2026/2027 to create areas for outdoor learning experiences, wildlife and nature areas, as part of a wider engagement project providing growing spaces in local communities. Clandeboye Village Community Association advised, that until the pitch was widened to 55 metres, it would not be in a position to support any other projects. The current width was 46 metres and was in line with other amateur league sized football pitches, the current length was 88 metres (a shortfall of 2 metres) but would require adjusting the current path network.

At present the current layout of the site included large underground water infrastructure, with access chambers visible above ground, running parallel to the pitch. To achieve a pitch width of 55 metres, the infrastructure would need to be adjusted and re-aligned.

The grassed area between the pitch and the MUGA and play park slopes significantly. To achieve a pitch width of 55 metres, construction works would be required to raise the slope to the level of the pitch and to install an appropriate retaining wall to enable levels to be met. To accommodate those works, the MUGA entrance would require moving.

The works required to widen the current pitch to 55 metres were significant and would require technical input, as well as permissions from other organisations, such as Northern Ireland Water. Given that, a feasibility study was commissioned in August 2025 to further investigate the construction requirements and estimated costs of completing those works.

To increase the pitch width to 55 metres, it would be necessary to raise ground levels along the northern side of the pitch. Achieving the maximum possible width would also require the construction of a small retaining wall to maintain stable margins and adequate run-off distances.

Additionally, the two existing manholes located on this side would need to be lowered to suit the revised formation levels, which would require permission from the relevant asset owner or authority prior to any alteration. In that case permission would be sought from Northern Ireland Water.

The feasibility study further identified the following works as being required to complete the construction:

- Strip topsoil from bank and part of run-off and store.
- Construct retaining wall.
- Import appropriate sandy loam subsoil.
- Lay 70mm layer of sports sand (matching existing pitch profile)
- Return topsoil to a minimum consolidated depth of 60mm.
- Surface renovation
- Sand amelioration as part of renovation.
- Post construction maintenance.

Following completion of the construction phase, there may be a requirement for irrigation during prolonged dry periods to support grass establishment.

That option would result in the pitch being out of use for approximately 12 months post-completion to allow for full establishment of the playing surface.

The cost of completing those works was estimated at £98,500, this costing did not include:

- Project Design fees

- Professional fees
- Planning and SAB – application and approval
- Irrigation (if required)
- Move MUGA entrance
- Adjust path network
- Internal Staffing Costs

The Council would envisage further costs to implement the above of approximately £30,000. While offering the potential to achieve intermediate level football size dimensions, those works would involve significant construction input, including ground regrading, retaining structures, and manhole adjustments. The works would require a long construction programme, a 12-month establishment period, and a higher capital cost. A capital budget for the entire site was agreed in 2025/6 for £42,000.

Given the informal nature of the pitch, officers did not feel that extending the pitch width to 55 metres or length to 90 metres provided value for money and was not justified by a strategic need to meet intermediate level football size compliance or accommodate higher-level competition. Furthermore, the leisure strategy implementation group would be carrying out a facilities need audit after which time the position could be re-examined.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes

1. the work completed to ensure a community pitch is in place at Clandeboye and the future works to ensure the pitch is maintained in line with other Council owned grass pitches.
2. the engagement with local residents and the inability to successfully progress new projects while the pitch widening issue is outstanding.

It is further recommended that the Council do not progress a business case at this time to widen the pitch given the likely scenario that it would not provide value for money and wait until the completion of the leisure strategy facilities review before reconsidering this position.

Councillor Cathcart proposed an alternative recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Brady.

‘That the Item be deferred to allow officers to set up a meeting as soon as possible between:

- Council officers,
- CVCA, and
- interested environment committee & Bangor West DEA elected representatives’.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the progress that had been made since previously the condition of the pitch had been unacceptable and he praised that and reported what appeared to be a dispute between what had been asked for and what had been delivered. He thought the pitch was an excellent community asset for that area.

Councillor Brady acknowledged the strength of feeling locally and some thought that the report was skewed and the information gave a false impression of what had happened. He recognised that he, along with many other Members did not know the full history but local reports seemed to suggest that the community had been promised one thing and something else had been delivered with the contracted pitch being slightly shorter than required. He wondered if a compromise could be found.

Councillor Harbinson stated that he was not against a deferral but wondered if the pitch was to be used at intermediate level how feasible would it be to change. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries reported that there would be a number of elements required such as toilets, fencing off areas and those would require considerable infrastructure changes and the Council did not believe that that was what was required. The pitch had never been used as a proper full sized football pitch and was currently mainly used for children under 12. The need would be considered by the Council more widely within the leisure strategy implementation groups facility provision review.

Councillor Boyle was aware of discussions in relation to this which had been ongoing for a considerable period of time, and he suggested that that was an overspill from a failed North Down Borough Council project. He questioned if the desire of the community was the same as the need within it and called for fairness across the Borough in what could be provided. He also recognised that the time period of developing further could be lengthy and asked for the matter and the way forward to be considered deeply.

Further discussion continued and so the Chair considered there was disagreement on need and hoped that the deferral would allow further discussion to take place so that an agreement could be reached.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the Item be deferred to allow officers to set up a meeting as soon as possible between:

- **Council officers,**
- **CVCA, and**
- **interested environment committee & Bangor West DEA elected representatives'.**

7. NOTICE OF MOTION 644 BOWTOWN PLAY PARK UPDATE

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in February 2025 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council.

"That Council notes the poor condition of the Bowtown children's Play Park and its poor provision of accessible play equipment and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children."

It was agreed at the April 2025 Community and Wellbeing Committee that the Director and Head of Service would visit the site. A meeting on site took place in June 2025 and a number of issues were raised. In order to address the concerns of the local community in relation to the accessibility of the site, Council officers requested a design for a replacement play park from existing play park contractors. The design was attached and demonstrated that a new Tier 2 play park could be accommodated in the existing space which met all of the criteria stipulated in the Play Strategy. It was also proposed to create a totally level site so the area was not split over different levels and therefore all equipment would be easily accessible. The design was indicative at this stage. It would be proposed that as per recent practice Council officers would need to conduct engagement with a local primary schools to offer choices between themes and equipment.

As previously reported Ards and North Down Borough Council produced a Play Strategy for the period 2021 to 2032 which recommended that a Play Park refurbishment budget be allocated to enable Play Parks to be updated each year. Those Play Parks scoring the lowest within the Annual Independent Inspectors Report would be prioritised for refurbishment. A report was submitted to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in March 2025 and subsequently in April 2025 noting the lowest scoring Play Parks for refurbishment within the agreed budget allocated and officers had been progressing that within the 2025/6 period. The Bowtown Play Park had not yet featured as one of the lowest scoring play parks, therefore it could not be refurbished until it was identified as one of the lowest scoring play parks.

As reported in April 2025, the list of the lowest scoring play parks as identified in the last Annual Independent Inspectors Report were as followed:

Location	Score
1. Ballyholme, Bangor	37.00
2. Beechfield, Donaghadee	41.56
3. Seafront, Groomsport	43.38
4. Springwell, Groomsport	43.82
5. Parsonage Road, Kircubbin	44.37
6. Banks Lane, Bangor	45.25
7. Tullymally Road, Portaferry	46.80
8. Lawson Park, Portavogie	47.95
9. North Street, Greyabbey	48.55
10. Northfield, Donaghadee	49.40
11 The Commons, Donaghadee	50.34
12 Bangor Sportsplex	50.53
13. Glenford, Newtownards	50.59
14. Islandview, Greyabbey	51.06
15 Abbots Estate (Bowtown), Newtownards	52.35

As previously reported, Ballyholme and Banks Lane were included in the Bangor Waterfront project so would not be refurbished at this time. Also as previously reported, in order to spread out refurbishments, given budget limitations, the

Seafront in Groomsport was currently being refurbished (with Springwell, Groomsport being left for now), Island View, Greyabbey would be refurbished before March 2026 (with North Street, Greyabbey being left for now), Northfield, Donaghadee would be refurbished before March 2026 (with Beechfield being left for now).

Parsonage Road, Kircubbin was being left for now given the Tier 1 upgrade to The Green, which had been completed (as well as the new Multi Use Games Area at The Green), Tullymalley. Portaferry was being left for now given the refurbishment of Castle Park, Portaferry and Lawson Park was being left for now given the refurbishment of New Harbour Road, Portavogie. Glenford, Newtownards was linked with the new Park and Ride facility, so would be left for now. The remaining lowest scoring play parks therefore were The Commons, Donaghadee, Bangor Sportsplex and then Abbots Estate (Bowtown). Therefore, pending this year's Annual Inspectors Report remaining broadly similar, it was likely, although not guaranteed, that the Bowtown would be amongst the lowest scoring in the next Financial Year or the one after.

It should also be noted that a Business Case was being submitted as part of the budget setting process to obtain a budget to resurface the Multi Use Games Area adjacent to the Bowtown (Abbots Estate) play park.

Parks and Cemeteries officers further engaged with representatives of Bowtown Community Association on 8 October 2025 to discuss the land surrounding the community centre and MUGA, to explore how that may be best utilised to enhance community space provision.

The group raised concerns that the existing play park was too small to meet the needs of the estate and suggested relocating it to the left-hand side of the MUGA to create a better link to the adjacent woodland, which they hoped to enhance for biodiversity with NIHE's permission. The land beside the MUGA was currently used for community events and fun days, though accessibility improvements such as dropped kerbs were needed to make the area more inclusive.

The Association was also waiting on final permission from NIHE to use an enclosed site at Abbot Gardens for a community growing space or allotments, which had already received strong resident support. Additionally, they had identified a potential site in their community office, opposite their community garden for a Men's Shed/Hen's Shed, with a focus on inclusivity and supporting participation by people with disabilities. Discussions were ongoing with NIHE regarding permissions and next steps. The Group had received funding from Live Here Love Here for a polytunnel.

Parks and Cemeteries officers would continue to engage with the Association to explore how it could be supported through projects such as PEACEPLUS - Your Place, Reimaging Our Space, Ards and North Down In Bloom as examples.

RECOMMENDED that the Council continues to support Bowtown Community Association through the delivery of a Community Growing Space in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

It is further recommended that when Bowtown Play Park falls within the lowest scoring play parks, as per the Independent Inspectors Annual Report, it is prioritised for refurbishment in line with the approach currently being followed as outlined in the Play Strategy.

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

Alderman Adair was happy to propose the recommendation on behalf of his colleague Alderman McIlveen, who had first brought the matter to the Council's attention. He regretted that Bowtown had been in such a poor condition and noted that progress toward a new playpark now lay ahead. He emphasised that the underlying issue was the Council's failure to investigate adequate funding for these facilities and hoped that that would be remembered going forward since playparks were of utmost importance to constituents.

He had a question arising from the list of fifteen playparks where it appeared that Ballyhalbert and Ballywalter had been omitted, and why they had dropped off the list given the great need in those areas.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that the list had come from the previous year's report and that a new report was due to come before the Council when the rate was struck early in the new year. He added that an extra budget if approved would allow for more refurbished playparks. He agreed that Ballyhalbert did have needs but that the scoring had been based on the previous year's assessment, with the next one due in the new year.

Alderman Adair then asked about provision for older children, specifically the multi-use games area in Greyabbey. The Director replied that there had been many moving parts and several representations made, and that a report would be brought early in the new year. The Alderman also questioned why sites such as Tullymalley, Parsonage Road, and Portavogie would not be considered despite low scoring, and why Tullymalley, a rural hamlet, would not be refurbished. He asked how that decision aligned with the Rural Needs NI Act 2016 which stressed that rural communities should not be overlooked. He noted that Tullymalley had been fenced off for some time and lacked the necessary repairs, while Seapark had been upgraded when it appeared to be in perfect working order.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed he would look at the Tullymalley site to identify the issues there and he explained that more funding had been requested but currently resources did not add up, though he looked forward to redeveloping low-scoring sites.

Alderman Adair stressed that any surplus that could be found should be directed to playparks because of the great need for them.

Councillor Edmund was happy to second the recommendation and congratulated Alderman McIlveen for bringing it forward. He welcomed the inter-agency

collaboration and highlighted Ballyhalbert's growing population and the possibility of a second playpark there.

Councillor Cathcart agreed with his Council colleagues, noting that Skipperstone was in a horrendous state but strangely did not even reach the top fifteen for refurbishment. He supported raising Ballyhalbert's case particularly, pointing out its difficult access with the main road on one side and the sea on the other side. He emphasised that residents were raising these concerns with elected Members and the Council must listen and make investment where people wanted it. He expressed enthusiasm for the new playpark in Ward Park and looked forward to working on it as part of the restructured Committee.

Councillor Blaney echoed those points, drawing attention to Bangor Central's lowest-scoring playparks. He asked officers for a timeline on the Bangor waterfront project, noting that the playpark there would form part of the development. He hoped collaboration with other entities would prevent delays, stressing that it was unacceptable to wait five years for a new playpark when the current one was ranked so poorly.

Councillor Wray also raised concerns about the Tullymalley Road playpark, stating that it was not possible to access it and questioning how it had been scored. He asked how it could be linked to Portaferry, which was a completely different rural location, and noted that some other parks were even closer. He mentioned Greyabbey and said all Peninsula Councillors agreed on that town's direction, with everything pointing toward a multi-use games area.

Councillor Wray expressed satisfaction with the progress made in Bowtown and asked if he could view the full scoring table and suggested inviting independent reviewers to explain how the sites had been marked. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries responded that an independent report had been submitted to the former Community and Wellbeing Committee in April 2025, and that a full report was produced each year covering playparks and maintenance schedules.

Councillor Brady stated that everything he had wanted to ask had already been covered. He thanked officers for the report and the attention being given to the playparks, and noted that Whitehill had also been asking extensively for an upgrade.

Councillor Boyle welcomed the report and sought clarification on Tullymalley Road, Portaferry. He recorded his thanks to Adele Trainor for her work and stressed the importance of Ballygalget, urging that it be looked at too. He noted that Peninsula Councillors and Village Partnerships were well represented and vocal about their areas.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that usage varied by location and changed year to year, citing Londonderry Park as an example of a heavily used playpark.

Alderman McAlpine praised the report but expressed concern that substitutions meant some sites were not being upgraded. She was unconvinced that upgrading one playpark meant all children of an area would be able to use it, citing that she had

heard that the playparks were often divided along socio-economic grounds and often family circumstances dictated where children were taken to play. She stressed that good play was very important and that substitution needed to be given careful consideration, as one site was not necessarily a substitute for another.

The Chair concluded by expressing her gratitude for the repairs that had been undertaken at the Redburn playpark and had witnessed first-hand a young child peering longingly in to that park while it was out of use during the refurbishment works.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION 585 MAINTAING BEACHES AND OUR COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in November 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council:

"*That Council recognise the value of our beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DAERA 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 DAERA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments*."

In January 2024 a further decision was taken in relation to this issue as follows:

"that Council notes the ongoing work to deliver appropriate sustainable management of our beaches and coastal environment including proactive and reactive cleaning in line with all existing regulations and furthermore that this Council tasks officers to bring forward a report on the possible installation of Beach Bio Security Sanitation Units including any potential funding opportunities for them and possible locations. The report should also explore how the equipment in these stations could be used to clean our beaches mechanically to comply with DAERA regulations, ensuring that beaches continue to be clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments."

Members would be aware that a report was submitted to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in January 2025 in response to the above decision. A further recommendation was agreed as below:

"That Council commits to improving the management of our amenity beaches in line with our Bio Diversity and Tourism Strategies by tasking officers to organise a fact finding study to beaches in both Causeway Coast and Glens Council & Newry Mourne and Down Council to explore options for best practice in maintaining our beaches in line with DEARA regulations presenting a report to Council with options for tangible improvements including consideration of providing bio cleaning stations

on a cluster phased approach in our Borough to ensure our beaches are clean safe attractive and well managed coastal environments."

Ards and North Down had a geographical area of 228 square miles and a coastline of 115 miles along two loughs and the Irish Sea. Strangford Lough was one of the highest ranking marine environmental sites in Europe, with almost three quarters of all Northern Ireland's marine species recorded there. Accordingly, it had been afforded European level protection (RAMSAR), was made Northern Ireland's first Marine Nature Reserve and was both an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and an Area of Special Scientific Interest. Strangford Lough also held designations of Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA)

Aughnadarragh Lough held a designation of an SAC and lay partially within the boundary of the Borough. Other SPAs include – Outer Ards SPA, Copeland Islands SPA and that related to Belfast Lough SPA. At national designation level there were a number of Areas of Special Scientific Interest in the Borough – listed below:

- Outer Ards
- Inner Belfast Lough
- Outer Belfast Lough
- Copeland Islands
- Whitespots
- Strangford Lough
- Ballymacormick Point
- Lough Cowey
- Scrabo
- Ballyquintin Point
- Craigantlet Woods

Coastal and marine habitats were increasingly understood to have great benefits to humans in a multitude of ways. Those 'ecosystem services' included improved water quality, sequestration of carbon, provision of seafood and other products, recreation, flood and erosion risk reduction, health and wellbeing benefits, and cultural services. Those complex ecosystems, when allowed to function naturally without excessive pollution or physical modification, would process and remove nutrients and other pollutants from the water.

The Council was responsible for cleaning amenity and recreational beaches under their ownership. Managed beaches require to be cleaned of litter and other materials harmful to the environment. Litter was picked regularly by Parks and Cemeteries staff as well as groups of willing volunteers across the Borough.

On 27 August 2025, a group of Elected Members and Parks and Cemeteries officers visited Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to meet with officers with responsibility for managing and maintaining beaches in that Council area. Beaches visited included Portrush East Strand Beach and White Rocks.

During the visit it was evident that Portrush East Strand was being mechanically cleaned. Advice was provided by managing officers that the cleaning was targeted

towards removal of small litter items, such as plastics, and was not to remove seaweed build-up. This beach was not an ASSI and therefore legislative requirements were significantly different to those that governed the Ards and North Down coastline.

The visit to White Rocks presented no signs of mechanical cleaning with small amounts of seaweed visible. That beach did fall within the Whiterocks ASSI. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council was currently engaged in a project of enhancing the dune system there by installing new planting of Marram grasses. Managers of those areas shared their experience that planting of Marram grasses needed to be in carefully chosen areas, so the new installations were not affected by tidal flows and given the best chance to establish.

On 3 September 2025 the same group of Elected Members and Parks and Cemeteries officers visited Newry Mourne and Down District Council to meet with officers with responsibility for managing and maintaining beaches in that Council area. Beaches visited included Cranfield and Tyrella.

During the visit to Cranfield, it was evident that no mechanical cleaning was taking place. That was confirmed to have ceased for approximately ten years by the managing officer, due to legislative requirements. The beach was maintained through a process of manual litter picking as required. Regardless of the lack of mechanical cleaning and the stoney nature of the beach, it was utilised by residents of a large holiday home site and the Mae Murray Foundation. The beach fell within the Carlingford Lough ASSI.

At Tyrella Beach it was evident that no mechanical cleaning was taking place. That was also confirmed to have ceased for approximately ten years by the managing officer due to legislative requirements. Large amounts of seaweed were visibly deposited on the sand. The local Council had undertaken a project on site to protect and restore the dune system through the planting of coastal vegetation such as Marram grass. That beach fell within the Tyrella and Minerstown ASSI.

Evidence gained from those visits would lead officers to the conclusion that beach maintenance in neighbouring Boroughs was in line with the maintenance approach applied in Ards and North Down, when considered against legislative requirements.

It should also be noted that approaches could vary at different locations given the variety of coastal conditions. A variety of rough seas, tide and wind strengths could cause varying amounts of marine material such as seaweed to get temporarily washed up on beaches. Warmer seas could also be a contributory factor; the Marine Conservation Society had said UK sea temperatures had risen 2°C in the past 40 years. Research suggested that cold water seaweeds were moving further north where it was cooler, while the range of warm water species was expanding.

The definition of litter did not apply to seaweed, and the presence of seaweed was beneficial to beach ecology. Mechanical cleaning of beaches carried out near sand dunes or other sensitive beach areas could have significant impacts on the habitats and species supported there.

All maintenance activities on these foreshores was restricted under legislation and governed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The NIEA was an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). In addition, The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) placed a statutory duty on all public bodies (including the Council) to "further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any function."

While NIEA could support mechanical cleaning of amenity beaches in Ards and North Down, that would require adherence to bio-security measures, given the ASSI legislation. Biosecurity referred to measures aimed at preventing the introduction or spread of harmful organisms (e.g. viruses, bacteria, plants, animals etc.) intentionally or unintentionally outside their native range or within new environments. Strong biosecurity measures were an essential element of an ecosystems management plan where the seaweed along a coastline was being disturbed through mechanical cleaning.

A bio-security station was essentially an area where machinery could be fully washed before entering and again before exiting each beach location to avoid contamination. To effectively wash machinery of that size, a water source alone would not suffice but would instead require provision of power washing. Given the infrastructure around the amenity beaches, that would require a mobile unit at a cost of approximately £55,000. There would be a further requirement to purchase a new mechanical beach cleaner given the period of time the approach had not been undertaken. The approximate cost of the machinery was £70,000. There would also be additional cost consideration for additional staffing and vehicle maintenance.

The need for effective communication and education on the subject of our coastal environment was recognised through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and by Council officers. It was important that residents understood the reasons for the current approach to maintenance, the environmental benefits it provided and what they were physically seeing when visiting local beaches.

On 16 October 2025 the Council hosted an initial Coastal Conference at Portavogie Community Centre. The free event provided an evening of expert talks, practical insights, and community action opportunities to understand, enhance and protect the local coastline. Residents were invited to hear from expert speakers in coastal science, conservation, and dune management and how groups could work together to care for the coastline through knowledge, connection and local action.

Experts at the event included Natural Science NIEA, Wild Ireland and AONB and Geopark Officer for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, supported by Parks and Cemeteries Officers. Further events of that nature would be held at other locations across the Borough over the next number of months.

Parks and Cemeteries arranged a number of community-based activities across the Borough, over 90 within the last calendar year, with many focussed on education and promotion of the local environment. Following the Coastal Conference, a hands-on afternoon exploring and restoring Portavogie Beach was held. That special event combined a 'Mini BioBlitz' with a community dune restoration activity, offered a chance to discover local wildlife and help protect the coastline. Participants worked

alongside local experts and organisations to learn about the plants and animals that called those beaches home and then got hands-on with a Marram Grass planting session to strengthen and stabilise the dunes.

The event, coupled with the Coastal Conference, was seen as a starting point to similar projects across the Borough. Parks and Cemeteries officers were currently exploring opportunities for those projects in conjunction with local representatives and expert organisations.

That educational approach was essential to overcome the misconception that beaches that contained seaweed or coastal grasses were not clean or safe. Coastal grasses and seaweed formed an integral part of a beach ecosystem, providing food and stability to the sand structure. Grasses and seaweed were natural components of the ecosystem. The coastal zone must also be considered as a living and natural environment and not only as a recreational asset to be kept tidy. Thus, the management of grasses and seaweed on the beach should be sensitive to both visitor needs biodiversity.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Alderman Adair proposed an alternative recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Wray.

‘That Council agrees in principle to the purchase of a mobile bio beach cleaning station and relevant machinery to ensure that our beaches are properly maintained in a clean, safe and attractive way in accordance with environmental laws. That the purchase of this machinery will be subject to the estimates process’.

Alderman Adair welcomed the report and said that he had been highlighting the poor condition of the Borough’s beaches. He reported that residents and tourists alike had raised issues relating to cleanliness, maintenance and environmental protection of beaches. He said that report after report had been brought and that very little progress had been made.

He commented on the fact finding mission that had been undertaken with a visit of some Members to other areas such as Causeway, Coast and Glens and Newry, Mourne and Down. He paid tribute to those Councils who were managing to maintain their coastline well. He appreciated the environmental protection being provided with Marram grass at Portavogie and the dunes were a wonderful natural resource which was a huge benefit to local communities providing a boost to the health and wellbeing of residents and tourists.

He thought that a bio cleaning station to be used on the Borough’s beaches would be excellent and cleaning could be carried out in line with environmental regulations. The beaches of the Borough were a unique selling point to the area and he explained his passion on the issue and his regret that he had needed to bring the matter to the Chamber for its attention so many times. He asked the Council to show to residents and tourists that it was listening to their concerns. He referred to the incident of cleanliness at Millisle which had received negative publicity recently

and urged their protection and preservation for years to come and asked Members to support the recommendation.

Councillor Wray fully agreed with the proposal and he and other Peninsula Councillors were on the same page on that and had enjoyed the fact-finding mission to the other Council areas. He stated that there was no doubt the initiative had represented good value for money in cleaning and making the beaches more attractive. He emphasised that the beaches were the area's greatest asset, providing stimulus to the local economy, and described the proposal as a step forward. He asked that the Council proceed sensibly and learn from other areas.

Councillor Edmund thanked Alderman Adair for bringing forward the matter and taking a lead on it. He also thanked the Head of Parks and Cemeteries for keeping the process moving, noting that the outcomes had been better than expected.

Councillor Harbinson thanked officers for the report but stated that, in good conscience, he could not agree with the amendment. He described the beaches as a natural jewel and argued that mechanical cleaning had been damaging to the environment and also carried a cost to the ratepayer. He highlighted that Areas of Special Scientific Interest had long contained seaweed, which had been present for generations, and stressed the importance of biodiversity in the natural environment. He concluded that the environment did not need to be destroyed in order to clean it up and encouraged fellow Members to contribute to beach cleans.

Alderman Adair requested a recorded vote and reminded Members that the Council had carried out beach cleaning work up until 2018, and that erosion had only started when the cleaning had stopped. He pointed to further environmental damage, such as swallowing flies which were a concern to visitors and emphasised that amenity beaches represented only 10% of the coastline and that seaweed needed to be cleaned where necessary. He warned that rats had been present and that the Council could not turn a blind eye to the matter.

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

FOR (8)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (3)
Aldermen	**Councillor**	**Alderman**	**Alderman**
Adair	Ashe	McAlpine	Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings	Harbinson	**Councillor**	**Councillor**
Councillors	Kendall	Brady	Irwin
Blaney			
Boyle			
Cathcart			
Douglas			
Edmund			
Wray			

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the Council agrees in principle to the purchase of a mobile bio beach cleaning station and relevant machinery to ensure that our

beaches are properly maintained in a clean, safe and attractive way in accordance with environmental laws. That the purchase of this machinery will be subject to the estimates process.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION 581 CEMETERY MAINTENANCE SIX MONTH REVIEW

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in September 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council:

"That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones."

A response was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing meeting in December 2023, and Elected Members requested that a further detailed report be presented on tangible options to improve the maintenance of cemeteries. A further report was submitted in June 2024, January 2025, and June 2025. It was further agreed by the Council that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council reviewed the matter in six months.

Service Overview
The Parks and Cemeteries Service had responsibility for the maintenance and development of over 300 hectares of parks and other open spaces including responsibility for burials in twelve active cemeteries and the maintenance of a total of nineteen cemeteries, spread across the Borough. In the management of the nineteen cemeteries the operational Parks and Cemeteries team carried out service activities regarding the burial process and overall cemetery grounds maintenance. That was currently delivered by a multidisciplinary skilled team which worked to a suite of Standard Operating Procedures. The burial service was dictated by the Burial Grounds Regulations 1992 (NI) and all service elements were carried out in line with that legislation.

All gravedigging was carried out by skilled in-house teams. Working to the Standard Operating Procedures, that element of the service included the opening and subsequent closing of graves along with the interment service. The Council's team had made significant progress in ensuring that its cemeteries wre safe, tidy and well-maintained.

The report outlined current operational practices and explained how they had been adapted to drive continuous improvement, address identified issues and respond to the impacts of climatic conditions. In addition, the Parks and Cemeteries Service had been implementing a transformation process with significant structural changes throughout the whole service area. Through effective teamwork and communication, the Council had streamlined its maintenance processes, allowing it to address tasks more efficiently and thoroughly. That collaborative approach had created a positive

work environment and enhanced the Council's overall productivity by utilising both Parks and Cemetries operational staff to cover busier times and areas.

Team	Cemeteries Covered	Staff Composition
North Cemeteries	1. Clandeboye 2. Bangor New 3. Ballyvester	• Area Manager • Assistant Area Manager • Cemetery Team Leader • Senior Gravedigger x 6 • Assistant Gravedigger x 4
South Cemeteries	1. Movilla 2. Comber 3. Loughview 4. Redburn 5. Priory 6. Kircubbin 7. Kirkistown 8. Greyabbey 9. Whitechurch	• Area Manager • Assistant Area Manager • Cemetery Team Leader • Senior Gravedigger x 6 • Assistant Gravedigger x 3

The service had successfully integrated new staff members and resources into its maintenance operations. Those additions had provided the necessary support to manage workload effectively. The utilisation of those resources had enabled the Council to maintain high standards of care and attention to detail across all cemetery sites.

The introduction of PSS Ultimate monitoring system software had been successfully trialled; that software tracked progress and ensured the effectiveness of the Council's maintenance efforts and allowed for identifying areas for improvement. The continued positive feedback the Council had received from visitors was a testament to the team's hard work and dedication. Cemetery visitors had complimented the current upkeep, noting the noticeable improvements in the appearance and safety of the Council's cemeteries. The software had allowed us to:

- Centralise and streamline the scheduling, tracking, and management of maintenance tasks across all cemeteries.
- Improve accountability by providing real-time updates on task completion and staff assignments.
- Enable data-driven decision-making by integrating historical and current maintenance records into a single platform.

The phased rollout of PSS Ultimate was well underway, all locations now showing results of improved coordination among maintenance teams and a reduction in response times for urgent tasks.

Maintaining safe and well-kept cemeteries continued to be a key priority. The team had updated all Risk Assessments and Standard Operating Procedures to promote safe, consistent, and efficient working practices. Regular inspections were

undertaken to identify any issues and ensure they were addressed quickly. The Council had also strengthened its approach to general upkeep to provide a calm, respectful and welcoming environment for all visitors.

A range of infrastructure upgrades were planned across cemeteries this year. At Comber Cemetery, resurfacing works would progress using funding already secured within an existing business case. At Loughview Cemetery, a new visitor shelter was currently in the design stage and would be installed later in the year.

Significant progress had also been made at Whitechurch Cemetery, where development of a new section had begun. The Council aimed to complete the area during this financial year. Key design elements included improved drainage to prevent flooding, increased spacing between plots to reduce ground damage, reinforced pathways to minimise the impact of machinery, and concrete strip foundations to support the safe and efficient installation of memorial stones.

At Kirkistown Cemetery, planned upgrades included new benches, an additional water tap, and relocation and rebuilding of the gravediggers' storage facility. Those improvements would enhance the overall look, functionality and comfort of the site for visitors.

All of those initiatives had been informed by feedback from residents and Elected Members, demonstrating the Council's commitment to listening to all its stakeholders.

To further support maintenance efforts, the Council had invested in new equipment for all cemetery areas. That included path sweeping machinery which would be utilised in smaller areas where the contractor could not access. The aim was to replace some outdated plant equipment in the year 25/26 through the machinery replacement strategy to ensure burial services were carried out efficiently with up-to-date modern equipment. The Council was also researching options for up-to-date shoring equipment to assist in areas where cave-ins were likely, to help reduce the impact for staff and grave owners.

Although significant progress had been made, several ongoing challenges remained. Those included environmental pressures, high burial demand and the recruitment of seasonal staff. The Council was continuing to manage and mitigate those issues through ongoing improvement initiatives, supported by strategic planning and effective resource allocation, to ensure cemeteries remained safe, well-maintained and welcoming for all visitors.

Those efforts aligned with the Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan, which emphasised the importance of creating a sustainable, well-maintained, and welcoming environment for all residents and visitors. Specifically, the maintenance activities supported the Council's goals of enhancing community wellbeing, promoting environmental stewardship and ensuring the efficient use of resources.

Now in the fourth report since the original Notice of Motion, the Council was pleased to outline the substantial progress that continued to be made. Ongoing commitment

from the team had led to clear improvements in both the presentation and safety of cemeteries, with these enhancements reflected in the positive feedback received from visitors.

In conclusion, the combined efforts of the cemetery team, the effective deployment of existing and new resources and the focus on continuous oversight had strengthened cemetery maintenance operations. The Council remained committed to sustaining those high standards and ensuring cemeteries continued to provide a safe, well-maintained and welcoming environment for all.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council continue with the six month cycle of cemetery reviews.

Alderman Adair commended the progress made in cemetery maintenance, noting that the number of complaints had reduced significantly from well over one hundred to very few at the present time. He expressed appreciation for the hard work of staff and acknowledged the improvements in the condition of cemeteries. He appreciated the site visits and the facilitation of new benches emphasising that cemeteries were special resting places and should be treated with respect.

Councillor Douglas confirmed her support for the recommendation and thanked staff for their professional handling of recent issues. She highlighted the resurfacing works at Comber Cemetery and enquired about the visitor shelter at Lockview Cemetery. In response Members were informed that drawings had been prepared and a contractor was being appointed. Councillor Douglas also reported on a meeting held with undertakers and funeral directors, noting that minutes would be circulated and the next meeting scheduled on a six-monthly basis. She raised concern about delays in grave openings and asked for clarification on that. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries undertook to investigate that and provide details at a future meeting.

Alderman Cummings expressed appreciation for the report and acknowledged the progress that had been achieved. He referred to a recent technical issue at Comber Cemetery and thanked staff for their swift response at that time. He enquired about the introduction of new grave-digging equipment, and officers confirmed that procurement was underway with staff training scheduled to be completed by the end of March. The Alderman also noted that 24-hour security was in place and that no further issues had been reported.

Councillor Cathcart reported that he had received very few complaints overall about cemeteries but raised concern about Bangor New Cemetery. He observed that older sections were deteriorating, with fewer relatives visiting, and that weeds were growing around graves. Members were advised that the cemetery remained active with burials continually taking place and that independent surveys of approximately 8,000 graves were carried out annually within the Borough with action taken where safety issues were identified. Weed control was undertaken around grave surrounds, but families were responsible for maintaining individual plots.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that procurement of new machinery was progressing and that staff training would be completed by the end of March. He noted that collapses had lessened and reiterated his commitment to investigate the delays in grave openings and report back.

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

10. QUARTERLY SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE 2025-26 Q2

(Appendix IV)

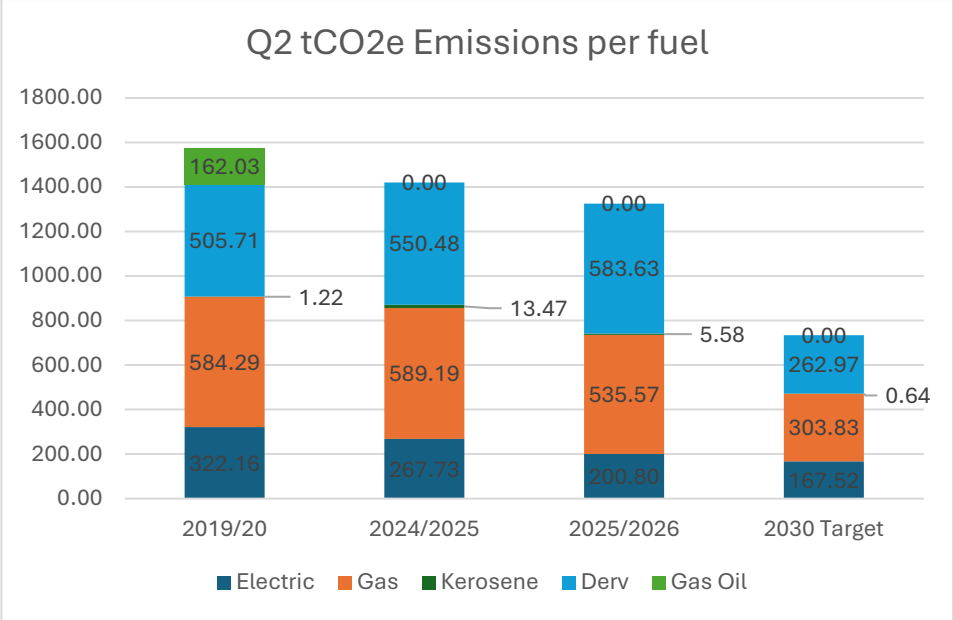
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in June 2024 the Council agreed the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan. One of the actions within the Plan was to "Improve governance arrangements to ensure that energy management had effective 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 the 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 Q2, showing an 25% decrease compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a reduction of 66.93 tCO_2 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, Q2 also demonstrated a significant improvement, resulting in a 37.67% reduction in carbon emissions, equivalent to 121.36 tCO_2. 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 decreased by 9.1% in Q2, compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year, resulting in an estimated 53.62 tCO_2 reduction in emissions.

Relative to its baseline year, Q2 also showed continued progress, with an 8.3% decrease in gas consumption, equivalent to a 48.72 tCO_2 reduction.

A comparison of Q2 weather trend data for 2024/25 and 2025/26 showed broadly similar temperature and climate conditions. The reduction in consumption was therefore likely attributable to heating controls in some buildings automatically switching to a "summer profile" via the Building Management System (BMS). Previously, the process was manually managed within each building, which could be overlooked or overridden by operators. The automation of that function had allowed

for temporary system shutdowns in certain buildings during warmer periods, leading to improved energy efficiency.

In addition, the Council had been assessing the rollout of new BMS installations and optimising existing BMS controls across selected sites to further enhance operational efficiency and performance.

Looking ahead, further action would be required to reduce gas consumption across the estate. Gas remained the Council's second-largest source of carbon emissions and addressing that was critical to achieving its 2030 emissions reduction targets. Planned measures included:

- Reviewing and lowering existing heating control set-point temperatures to optimise energy use.
- Assessing the operational efficiencies of leisure centres with swimming pools. Those were the Council's largest gas consumers and carbon emitters. This assessment should identify opportunities for further savings through behavioural change and system optimisation.
- Reviewing and lowering swimming pool temperatures where operationally feasible.
- Automating heating controls and expanding remote management capabilities to enhance control and consistency.
- Transitioning to electric heating systems, supported by solar PV and other low-carbon generation technologies, to support long-term decarbonisation.

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. In some instances, depleted stocks were also replenished in Q2 where oil prices had shown further reductions over the summer period. 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 58.57% in Q2 compared to the same period in 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a 6.5 tCO_2 emissions reduction.

A comparison of Q2 weather trend data for 2024/25 and 2025/26 indicated broadly similar temperature and climate conditions. Therefore, the observed reduction in consumption could reasonably be attributed to depleted fuel stocks being replenished in Q1.

Consistent with the gas consumption analysis above, the reduction may also reflect heating controls in some buildings automatically switching to a "summer profile" via the Building Management System (BMS). Previously, the process was manual, which increased the risk of being overlooked or overridden by operators. The automation of those controls had enabled temporary system shutdowns during warmer periods, thereby improving energy efficiency.

In addition, the Council had been progressively deploying new BMS installations and optimising existing controls across selected sites to further enhance operational efficiency and performance.

Historical data from 2019/20 suggested that six 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.

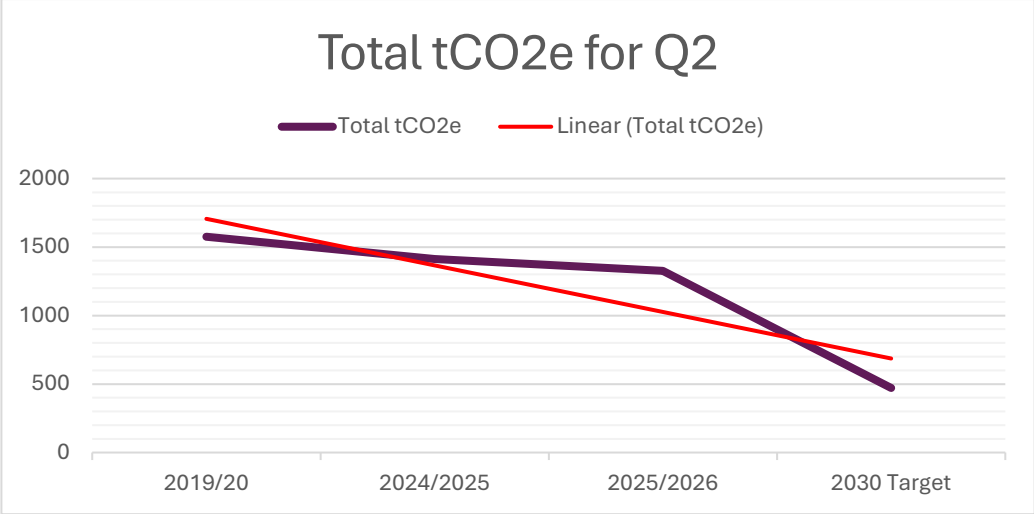
As a result, kerosene stock data however showed an apparent increase in kerosene purchased in Q2 compared to the baseline 2019/20 year, for the reasons outlined above.

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 Q2 diesel emission, in line with the 2022 reform on red diesel usage.

Considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage had decreased by 12.59% in Q2, leading to a reduction of 84.1 tCO_2 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 Q2 had increased compared to the same reporting period in 2024/25. That was primarily due to decreased operating efficiency across several vehicle types, including sweepers, rear-end lorries (RELs), refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), MacPac units and 4x4s. Although the fleet covered 12,121 fewer miles during this reporting period, an additional 6,475 litres of diesel were consumed. Carbon emissions had increased by 33.2 tCO_2 in this reporting period compared to last year, which equated to a 6.02% increase.

Targets and Trends
The graph below illustrated our 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 we were currently behind the linear trendline target, with continued efforts particularly regarding transition to a greener fleet, officers believed that the long-term targets would 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 2 Utility/Fuel Type	2019/20 Costs £(NET)	2019/20 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)	2025/26 Costs £(NET)	2025/26 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)	Projected Cost of 2019/20 Usage at Current Unit Rates £(NET)	Projected Cost Saving Between 2025/26 and 2019/20 Usage at Current Unit Rates £(NET)	Percentage Cost Difference Between 2025/26 and 2019/20 Usage at Current Unit Rates
Electric	£149,319	£0.12	£234,938	£0.21	£261,011	£26,073	10% decrease
Gas	£154,365	£0.05	£162,999	£0.06	£176,944	£13,945	8% decrease
Kerosene	£204	£0.42	£1,103	£0.50	£242	-£861	356% increase
Derv	£194,027	£1.03	£242,985	£1.11	£208,340	-£34,645	17% increase
Gasoil	£33,338	£0.57	N/A	N/A	£42,632	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	**£531,254**	**-**	**£642,025**	**-**	**£689,169**	**£47,144**	**7% decrease**

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Delivered this Reporting Period

List below of recent energy saving initiatives:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO_2e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)

Signal Centre – LED Lighting Upgrade	4,837 kWh	0.86	£1,015
North Road Depot – Upgrade windows to UPVC double glazing (Partial)	17,172 kWh	3.14	£1,030
North Road Depot - Install Solar PV	81,358 kWh	14.4	£20,340
TOTAL	**103,367 kWh**	**18.4**	**£22,385**

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 Environmental Resource 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 & 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 Ballygowan Community Centre

List below of planned works for Q2-Q4:

Description	**Annual energy saving estimate**	**Annual tCO_2e reduction estimate**	**Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)**
Queen's Leisure Centre – LED Lighting Upgrade	11,977 kWh	2.12	£2,515

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 Sportsplex LED Lighting (Outdoor Floodlights)	11,866 kWh	2.1	£2,966
Bangor Waste Transfer Station Solar PV	81,358 kWh	14.4	£20,340
Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre LED Lighting upgrade	37,739 kWh	6.6	£9,057
North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station LED lighting upgrade	17,860 kWh	3.2	£4,338
Bangor Waste Transfer Station LED lighting upgrade	7,523 kWh	1.3	£1,805
TOTAL	**424,367 kWh**	**75**	**£117,173**

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

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

Councillor Brady asked if the Council had considered trying to heat the pools using geo thermal technology and urged them to consider it in the next round.

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

11. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, APRIL TO JUNE 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the official waste management statistics for the first quarter of 2025/2026 (April to June 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.

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 in 2021-22. Furthermore, they indicated that the Council recorded the highest household waste recycling rate of all Northern Ireland Councils during the quarter.

The Council's residual (non-recycled waste) was now disposed of via a new residual waste treatment contract. During the quarter 31.2% of the residual waste was sent for energy recovery. That compares to 40% in the preceding quarter.

Summary Table of Key Changes Q1 2025-26 vs Q1 2024-2025

	Q1 2024-25	**Q1 2025-26**	**Change**
Household Waste Recycling Rate (KPI(a2)) (National recycling performance indicator)	59.8%	63.1%	↑ 3.3%
Waste from Households Recycling Rate (Official UK recycling measure)	59.7%	62.7%	↑ 3%
Recycling Rate Ranking	3rd	1st	↑ 2 places
Composting Rate	38.8%	37.3%	↓ 1.5%
Dry Recycling Rate	20.6%	25.4%	↑ 4.8%
Total HRC Waste	5,769 t	5,824 t	↑ 1%
HRC Residual/Landfill Waste Received	1,474 t	1,364 t	↓ 7.5%
HRC Recycling Waste Received	4,295 t	4,460 t	↑ 3.8%

Proportion of HRC Waste Received for Recycling	74%	76.6%	↑ 2.6%
Total Kerbside Waste	16,109 t	15,610 t	↓ 3.1%
Kerbside Residual Waste Received	6,029 t	5992 t	↓ 0.6%
Kerbside Recycling Waste Received	10,080 t	9,618 t	↓ 4.6%
Proportion of Kerbside Waste Received for Recycling	62.6%	61.6%	↓ 1%

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

i. The Council's household waste recycling rate rose by 3.3% compared to the same quarter last year, from 59.8% to 63.1%
ii. The Council's household waste recycling rate of 63.1%, was 9.1 percentage points higher than the NI average of 54%.
iii. The Council was ranked first out of the eleven Northern Ireland Councils for its household waste recycling rate, up two places from the same quarter last year.
iv. The Council's household waste composting rate fell by 1.5% compared to the same quarter last year - from 38.8% to 37.3%. The household waste dry recycling rate rose by 4.8% compared to the same quarter last year - from 20.6% to 25.4%.
v. The Council's household waste composting rate of 37.3% was 6.6% higher than the Northern Ireland average of 30.7%.
vi. The Council's household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 25.4% was 2.4% higher than the NI average of 23%.
vii. The Council's kerbside recycling capture rate of 80.6% for household compostable waste materials compared to a NI Council average of 72.2%.
viii. The Council's lowest kerbside capture rate for recyclable materials was for mixed plastics, at 18.7%.

Kerbside Capture Rate for Recyclable Waste Types – Q1 April to June 2025		
Recyclable Material	**Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %**	**NI Average Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %**
Glass	60.1	49.6
Paper & Card	64.5	53
Mixed Metals	37.5	32
Mixed Plastics	25.4	23
Organic/Compostables	80.6	72.2

ix. Ards and North Down Borough Council ranked third in the Council performance table for 'dry' recycling rate and first for composting rate.
x. The Council received 47.6% less residual (non-recycled) waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other Councils, compared to 10.6% less during the same period the previous year.

xi. The Council received 5.6% less total waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other NI Councils; during the same period the previous year it received 20.1% less HRC waste per capita than the other NI councils.

xii. The proportion of waste collected at the HRC sites for recycling was higher than the average for other Councils – 76.6%, compared to an average rate of 65.6% for other Councils. During the same quarter the previous year, the HRC recycling rate of 74.5%, compared to an average of 65.6% for other Councils.

xiii. The Council collected 3.9% more waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils. During the same period the previous year, it collected 5.8% more

xiv. The Council collected 22.9% less residual/landfill waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils. During the same period last year, it collected 21.4% less.

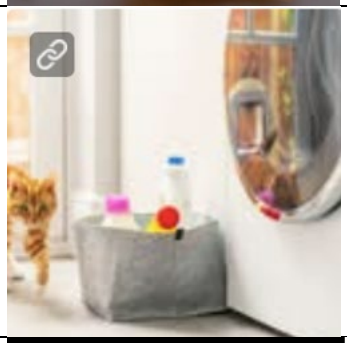
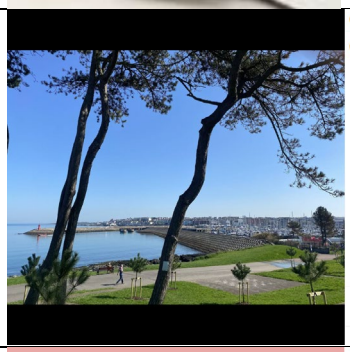
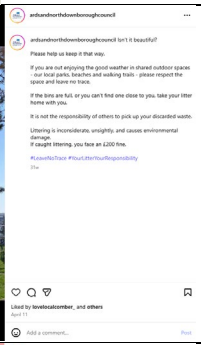
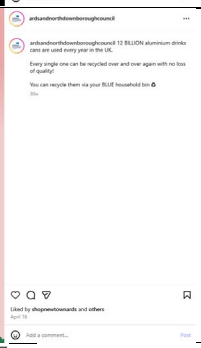
xv. The proportion of waste collected for recycling through the kerbside bin collection system was higher than the average for other Councils – 62.6%, compared to an average of 49.5% for other Councils.

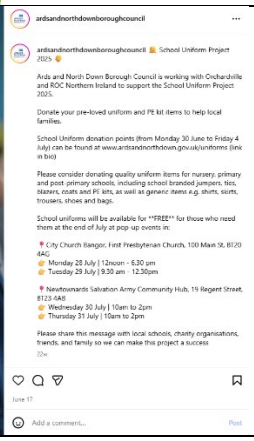
Operational Performance Improvement Measures
Marketing and Communications Indicators

MC1 – 41 social media posts were issued on Facebook, Instagram and X. Those represented a mix of educational and operational messages including food waste/caddy promotion, the reuseable nappy scheme and school uniform project, anti-littering messages, aluminium/foil recycling, vape disposal and recycling, soil disposal and temporary changes to bin collections (Bank Holidays) and facilities access (HRC sites and public toilets).

Examples included:

Launch of reusable nappy scheme / 1 April 2025	

Food Waste Recycling / 1 April 2025		
Spring clean – recycling cleaning product bottles / 9 April 2025		
Anti-littering message / 11 April 2025		
Aluminium recycling (Alupro) / 16 April 2025		
Bank Holiday arrangements / 16 April and 19 May 2025		

Rescue Me, Recycle, 10 May 2025	
School Uniform Project / 17 June 2025	
HRC Summer Opening Hours	

MC2 – Eleven Bin-Ovation 'News and Info' articles were published, eleven Bin-Ovation' push notifications' issued, and 2016 Bin-Ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered 17 community and engagement events, talking to 1290 people:

- 7 x schools
- 6 x Adult groups
- 3 x Events
- 1 x Scout group

Household Recycling Centre Indicators
HRC1 Volume of blue bin recyclable materials separated from mixed waste by residents on-site: 719,940 litres.

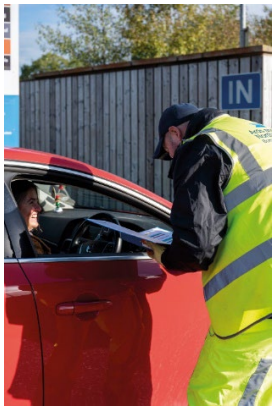
That equated to approximately 30 tons of blue bin waste. That material included recyclables removed from residual waste following intervention and engagement with HRC staff. The practice both increased recycling and provided an opportunity to engage with site users on the value of recycling – promoting more efficient separation of waste in the home and greater use of blue bins at the kerbside.

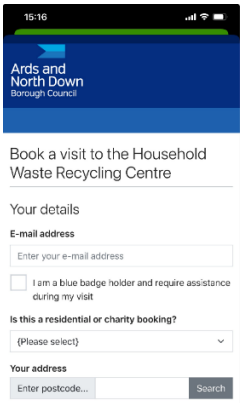
That represented just one type of recyclable waste category which was prevented from entering landfill skips at HRCs because of a more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access. Many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips as reflected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

HRC2 – Number of visitors turned away from site: 645

HRC2a – Number of HRC bookings: 80,136

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.11 (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 **37.7% decrease** in the total amount of waste received at the Council's HRCs, down from 9,350 tonnes to 5,824 tonnes.

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

- We experienced a **62.7% decrease** in the amount of residual (non-recycled) waste received at the Council's HRCs, down from 3,664 tonnes to 1,364 tonnes.

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

- We experienced an **21.6% decrease** in the amount of waste received for recycling at the Council's HRCs, down from 5,686 tonnes to 4,460 tonnes.

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

- We experienced a 15.8 percentage point increase in the proportion of all waste received at the Council's HRCs which was collected for recycling, up from 60.8% to 76.6%.

Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators

KSI – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 1938

KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 161

KS3 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 88

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

- The Council experienced an **1.4% increase** in the total amount collected at the kerbside, up from 15,389 tonnes to 15,610 tonnes.

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

- The Council experienced a **11.5% decrease** in the amount of grey bin waste collected, down from 6,772 tonnes to 5,992 tonnes.

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

- The Council experienced a **11.6% increase** in the amount of waste collected at kerbside for recycling, up from 8,617 tonnes to 9,618 tonnes.

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

- The Council experienced a **6.7% percentage point increase** in the proportion of kerbside waste that was collected for recycling, up from 55.9% to 62.6%.

Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 8 (October 2024 – December 2024	Monitoring Period 9 (January to March 2025	Monitoring Period 10 (April to June 2025)
MC1 Social media posts	53	83	41
MC2 Print press and online articles	1	6	0
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	13	9	17
HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres)	800,300	677,500	719,940
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	800	653	645
HRC2a No. of bookings	70,843	73,224	80,136
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	0.99	1.02	1.11
HRC3 Total HRC waste compared to same period 2021/22	↓ 33.7%	↓ 27.2%	↓ 37.7%
HRC4 Residual waste compared to same period 2021/22	↓ 54.3%	↓ 71%	↓ 62.7%
HRC5 Recycling waste compared to same period 2021/22	↓ 20.2%	↑ 3.8%	↓ 21.6%
HRC6 Proportion of HRC waste collected for recycling	↑ 12.2%	↑ 25%	↑ 15.8%

compared to same period 2021/22			
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	2187	1860	1938
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	154	145	161
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	76	71	88
KS4 Total kerbside waste compared to 2021/22	↑ 3.7%	↑ 13.3%	↑ 1.4%
KS5 Grey bin waste compared to 2021/22	↓ 2.9%	↑ 1.7%	↓ 11.5%
KS6 Kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	↑ 9.2%	↑ 26.4%	↑ 11.6%
KS7 Proportion of kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	↑ 2.8%	↑ 5.5%	↑ 6.7%

Summary Analysis of Indicators
Waste tonnages fluctuated across the year because of changes in demand for services and seasonal factors, for example, increases in garden waste during spring and summer. The report demonstrated continued improvement in recycling across all ANDBC waste and recycling services. Those improvements were the result of a combination of interventions including the design and delivery of a comprehensive kerbside recycling service, development and enforcement of policies to increase diversion at HRCs and coordinated communications and engagement with service users.

Ultimately, the success of ANDBC's recycling services was due to increasing positive engagement by residents. It was important therefore that the Council provided feedback to residents on recycling performance and the end destination for materials sent for recycling.

During the quarter April to June 2025, the Council recorded:

- An increase in the proportion of kerbside waste captured for recycling through blue bins and green/brown bins.

- An increase in the proportion of HRC materials diverted for reuse and recycling.
- A household waste recycling rate of 63.1%; the highest household recycling rate of the 11 NI Councils. That was an increase of 3.3% percentage points from the same quarter in 2024/25.

Significant, not incremental, change was expected to follow direction from the Northern Ireland Government. ANDBC, along with all Councils, eagerly awaited DAERA's response to its 2024 Rethinking our Resources Consultation and the anticipated launch of a Consultation on a new Waste Strategy for Northern Ireland. Those documents were expected to set out requirements to collect a consistent range of materials, inclusion of 'plastic bags and wrapping' from March 2027, and an opportunity to support local businesses and non-household organisations to improve or introduce workplace recycling. Together, those documents would provide a direction for future waste and recycling services and would allow the Council to update and progress its plans for future services.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Wray expressed his satisfaction with the strong figures from the Household Recycling Centres, noting that bookings remained high and overall waste through the centres had increased. He highlighted that that demonstrated the Council was improving its performance and doing things better, and he thanked the team for its efforts. He added that the Council was now close to the top of the league in recycling performance, which was a significant achievement.

Councillor Cathcart echoed those sentiments, welcoming the recognition of the Council as number one for recycling. Responding to a question on kerbside textiles recycling, the Head of Waste and Cleansing pointed out that markets remained difficult and progress had been slow. He stressed the importance of the capacity and machinery being in place to support kerbside collection, and stressed the importance of preparing for future implementation. He also referred to the recycling of soft plastics, referencing Arc21's letter to the Department about timescales, and noted a study in England that provided guidance for Councils, including the use of separate sacks for that material.

Alderman Adair had observed that a number of Councils already offered kerbside collection of small electrical goods, which allowed residents to deposit up to three items at a time. He suggested that was something worth exploring locally, since not all residents had the space to store such items. The Head of Waste and Cleansing emphasised the importance of maintaining the quality of collected items and noted that the Council was still awaiting confirmation from DAERA on what future collection schemes should look like before making further changes or investments.

The Chair raised the issue of plastic wrapping, asking whether producer responsibility had an impact and whether there were potential landfill savings if soft plastics were collected and recycled. She acknowledged the cost-benefit

considerations of recycling soft plastics and thanked officers for their explanations and figures. While noting that there was still some criticism of the booking system, she emphasised that the report contained positive statistics and reflected encouraging progress overall.

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

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

13. EXTENSION OF VARIOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT TENDERS

IN CONFIDENCE
****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the following report sought approval to extend existing essential contracts for the handling of nine streams of municipal waste arising at Household Recycling Centres.

RECOMMENDED that the Council

1. approves an extension of the following contracts for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option with no increase to cost.
   - Plasterboard
   - Scrap Metal
   - Batteries (Motor)
   - Paint
   - Oily Rags and Filters
   - Rubble
   - Cardboard

2. approves an extension of the contract for rigid plastics recycling at an increase in the contracted cost per tonne for hard plastics recycling to £330, effective from 1 April 2026.

3. approves an extension of the contract for timber recycling at an increase in the contracted cost per tonne for timber recycling to £81, effective from 1 December 2025.

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

14. EXTENSION OF TENDER FOR BITMACING WORK AT VARIOUS COUNCIL PROPERTIES

****IN CONFIDENCE****
****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Council Officers had previously reported on a tender exercise for Bitmacing Work at Various Council Properties, expiring on 31 December 2025 with an option to extend for a further two periods of one year, to be reviewed annually.

The contract had been operating successfully and Council officers had sought agreement from the contractor for extension for a period of one year as detailed in the original tender documents until 31 December 2026.

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

15. DEPOT RATIONALISATION: APPOINTMENT OF AN INTEGRATED CONSULTANCY TEAM – FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE FOR WASTE AND OPERATIONS DEPOT

****IN CONFIDENCE****
****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would recall that a report was prepared in April 2025, setting out the case for commissioning consultancy support to progress a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the Depot Rationalisation Project. To progress the work, a Depot Rationalisation Project Board was established with representation from relevant service areas. In the interests of cost effectiveness and programme efficiency, the Board agreed that the Council should proceed directly to an Outline Business Case (OBC), supported by two detailed Feasibility Studies. The approved maximum budget for the project was £110,000.

The OBC would be delivered in two stages – Stage 1 was to develop a Strategic Outline Case to establish a case for change and appraise options, and Stage 2 was to develop an Outline Business Case to be undertaken only if approved following a Gateway 1 (Business Justification) Review by the Council. A break clause between stages would allow the Council to pause or redirect the project if required, ensuring flexibility and best value for money.

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

16. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF MINOR EXTERNAL WORKS

****IN CONFIDENCE****
****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Council officers had sought tenders for the Provision of Minor External Works within the Borough of Ards and North Down Council.

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

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.59 pm.

ITEM 7.3

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 04 December 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McCracken

Alderman: Adair (Zoom, 7.56pm) McDowell

Councillors:

Blaney	Hollywood
Brady	McCollum
Edmund	Morgan
Gilmour	Smart (Zoom)
Hennessy (Zoom)	Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Economic Development Manager (K McGuckin), Capital Project and Programme Manager (J Kane) and Democratic Services Officer (R King).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter. An apology for lateness was received from Alderman Adair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations for interest were notified:

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum: Item 17 - Gp14 World Championships – Bid For Event 2026

Councillor Blaney: Item 13 - Go Succeed – Amendment to the Quarterly Update Report Of 6 March 2025 (declared at 8.22 PM)

3. CONSULTATION ON POLICY – THE STATUTORY REGULATION OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION (FILE TO/TD69)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Department for the Economy (DfE), in consultation with Tourism NI, was seeking to obtain the views of stakeholders, including industry groups, accommodation operators and the general public, on proposed amendments to the regulatory arrangements concerning the minimum quality standards and statutory requirements of Northern Ireland’s visitor/tourist accommodation sector. This

included Hotels, B&Bs and Self-Catering Establishments etc. Response to the consultation was to be submitted by 6 January 2026.

The last review of the existing regulatory arrangements for the certification of visitor/tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland took place in 2011. In addition to revising the statutory minimum criteria, the 2011 review also saw the creation of three additional statutory categories of tourist accommodation, i.e. Bunk House, Campus Accommodation and Guest Accommodation. These changes saw the total number of statutory categories of accommodation increase from five to eight. Since then, there had been significant changes in market trends regarding the types of visitor/tourist accommodation being provided by industry, e.g. the rise in new and alternative accommodation offerings such as budget hotels, aparthotels, windowless bedrooms and glamping pods, as well as a change to the minimum standards and offerings visitors expect.

DfE, in consultation with Tourism NI, had therefore undertaken a review of the statutory regulation of visitor/tourist accommodation, building on previous work and engagement with industry operators and stakeholders, which had identified that:

- statutory regulation should be retained as it had played an important part in improving the standard of visitor/tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland, as well as ensuring a minimum level of quality and consistency across the industry; and
- statutory regulation should be updated within the confines of DfE's and Tourism NI's statutory remits to address more appropriately the current and future needs of the industry and its customers, including reducing (where possible) the regulatory burden on operators.

Therefore, the consultation sought to obtain views on the proposed amendments to the regulatory arrangements and minimum quality standards of Northern Ireland's visitor/tourist accommodation sector. These proposals had been divided into four sections:

1. Proposed amendments and modernisation of the existing statutory minimum criteria;
2. Proposed creation of an additional statutory category of visitor/tourist accommodation – "Alternative Accommodation";
3. Proposed amendments to the regulatory requirements for keeping a "Visitors Register"; and
4. Proposed amendments to the regulatory requirements regarding the "Display of Charges".

The Tourism Service had compiled a draft response to the consultation, provided in Appendix 1. The response was based on a series of questions with 'agreement' or otherwise options. Commentary was included where relevant. The public consultation had been reviewed by the Head of Service team and had been actively promoted by officers via the Council tourism industry ezines.

Consultation on Policy - The Statutory Regulation of Tourist Accommodation

Summary of responses below

Q1 – Do you agree with proposed change/new criteria which shall be applicable to all accommodation establishments as set out in Annex A. Agree.

Amendments and modernisation of criteria affecting all accommodation establishments

Annex A contained proposed criteria which would apply to all accommodation establishments, regardless of the statutory category of accommodation they were certified under. Some of these proposals were already in place under the existing Categories Regulations but had been slightly amended to provide further clarity for operators.

Officers had reviewed the new minimum requirements e.g. around privacy, summoning assistance and the provision of safe access routes, appropriate and hygienic flooring, basic first aid equipment and effective means for the recycling of rubbish/waste etc. All were logical changes considering today's market.

Q2 – Do you agree with the new criteria/proposed changes to the existing criteria for the current eight statutory categories of tourist accommodation as set out in Annex B? Neither agree nor Disagree.

Amendments and modernisation of criteria affecting each individual statutory category of tourist accommodation

Annex B outlined where certain requirements were being removed or replaced with alternatives. Some of these proposals included allowing for "suitable equivalents" to be provided in place of the traditional furnishings and equipment required under the existing Category Regulations, e.g. bedside tables and dressing tables, whilst not compromising quality or standard visitor expectations; consulting on whether

- Wi-Fi should be provided (where connectivity allows) as standard in some of the statutory categories of accommodation, e.g. Hotels, Guest Houses and Hostels;
- strengthening privacy, safety and cleanliness requirements in visitor bathrooms;
- extending the list of essential amenities to be provided in certain statutory categories of accommodation;
- consulting on whether Bed and Breakfast Establishments (B&Bs) should be given more flexibility as to the type of breakfast they must provide (currently they must provide, at a minimum, a cooked breakfast); and
- requiring the provision of a window in visitor bedrooms for some of the existing categories of accommodation, whilst balancing the emerging trend towards windowless bedroom offerings, e.g. in Hotels and glamping style offerings, by proposing suitable mitigating requirements in such circumstances.

Officers were broadly in agreement with all proposed changes, however, wished to note that if B&Bs were afforded the flexibility to offer a cooked breakfast, this should be known at point of booking. A provision to allow hotel rooms with no natural light should be an option, but suitable lighting must be a provision and should be known at time of booking. Any requirement under Construction for Hotels was applicable to new build. Midday refreshments should be removed from hotel requirement. Also, that any means to afford greater accessibility to services would be welcomed. Officers wished to reiterate that the industry bodies and businesses were well placed to comment specifically on the ability to apply any additional requirement to their existing business models.

Q3 – Are there any other aspects of the current statutory minimum criteria, outside of the proposals set out in Annex A and B, which you consider should also be changed, modernised or added to? - No.

Q4 – Do you agree with the inclusion of Alternative Accommodation as a statutory category of tourist accommodation? – Yes**.**

Q5 – Have you any views on the indicative minimum criteria for Alternative Accommodation outline in Annex C? – Nothing further.

Q6 – Do you have any views regarding the naming of Alternative Accommodation category i.e. do you feel another name would provide a more appropriate description of the styles of properties/establishments proposed to be certified under it?

Covered a number of options but clarification would be helpful on those included and defined as 'other suitable alternatives'.

Q7 – Do you agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the keeping of a Visitors Register by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments as set out in Section 3 of this consultation and Annex D? - Yes.

Officers agreed that today's market warranted the changes as set out in Annex D.

Q8 - **Do you agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the Display of Charges by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments as set out in Section 4 of this consultation and Annex E?**

Officers agreed that today's market warranted the changes as set out in Annex E.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the Response to the Consultation on Policy – The Statutory Regulation of Tourist Accommodation as set out in Appendix 1 and returns the questionnaire to the Department by 6 January 2026.

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

Councillor Morgan felt that the response was sensible overall and welcomed the points made in relation to the importance of clarity during booking, particularly in terms of what was included. It was important to be clear on the type of breakfast included, for example, in order to avoid customer disappointment.

In a further comment, Councillor Morgan expressed concern that the term 'alternative accommodation' may carry negative connotations. She suggested that 'other accommodation' might be a more positive term to use instead.

The Head of Tourism would ensure that the importance of clarity during booking would be emphasised in the response and acknowledged the comment regarding 'alternative accommodation' and appreciated the feedback.

Councillor Gilmour raised concern that that the policy might not adequately address the Airbnb market. She pointed to impacts such as a reduction in housing available for residential use, permanent family accommodation for example, due to the conversion to short-term lets. She also noted Airbnb accommodation could be unsettling for neighbours due to noise and disruption caused by the nature of its use.

The officer clarified that in Northern Ireland Airbnb properties had to be registered and certified with Tourism Northern Ireland in order to operate as visitor accommodation. The organisation carried out investigations when unregistered premises were reported to them under their quality assurance protocols.

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

4. EVALUATION REPORT BANGOR OUTREACH PILOT MAY TO SEPTEMBER 2025 – VIC IN THE MARKET HOUSE, BANGOR (FILE TO/TIC4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that a report was presented to the Council in January 2025 noting that the Tourism service intended to pilot the relocation of the Bangor Visitor Information Centre (VIC) from Tower House to the city centre location of the Market House during the summer months. The preferred location was determined after a review of other central city options and the £500 per month rent was offset with a reduced retail budget making it cost neutral.

The pilot took place alongside outreach information stands at Pickie Fun Park and Bangor Castle Walled Garden when staffing and weather conditions were appropriate. The relocation was for the months May–August, however this was extended until 30 September due to customer and staff feedback in season.

The Market House on Main Street was a shared building and houses; Gifted Ltd, Bangor Chamber of Commerce, Barclays Bank, Santander and a Business Hub upstairs with co-working offices and hot desks available. The VIC with a large reception desk and small retail area was located in the entrance area.

Daily Activity

The team quickly settled into cohabiting with the other businesses. The open plan office, additional businesses, city centre location on Main Street all combined to provide a busy environment and greater passing footfall.

The information desk was branded to highlight the Visitor Servicing provision with display stands containing a variety of literature.

Enquiries at the new location, compared to Tower House, were up on the previous two seasons with an increase of 7% on 2024 and 2% on 2023, this excluded outreach. As anticipated, due to the smaller available retail area, sales decreased.

Total	May – Oct 2023	May – Oct 2024	May – Oct 2025
Enquiries	4188	3998	4292
Income	£8,497	£6,596	£3,554

Year	Footfall	Phone/ Email	TOTAL
2025	3625	667	4292
2024	3351	647	3998
2023	3626	562	4188

An exercise was undertaken to understand the footfall during this period at other city centre attractions/areas (those that record footfall). This demonstrated a mixed pattern with both North Down Museum and Pickie Fun Park experiencing both downward and upward trends depending upon each given month. People counters at the Bangor Promenade indicated a reduction in footfall as the season progressed.

Outreach
As the Market House was a ‘shared space’ with a continual flow of staff and clients to the other businesses, it allowed one staff member to manage customers at the VIC, whilst giving the opportunity for another Tourism Advisor to conduct outreach at the Walled Garden and Pickie Fun Park during July and August. This outreach allowed them to engage with a further 558 people providing visitor guides, maps of the region and assist with enquiries.

Craft Corner
In September, the team ran a ‘Craft Corner’ with local crafters, and workshops/demos each Saturday for two hours to animate the space. This was implemented to attract a new audience by offering an additional activity in Bangor centre. Over the month 110 participated in the workshops.

Research
During the pilot, research was conducted with 81 visitors.

Key results were below:

- 93% intended to visit the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) as part of their visit, highlighting a need for face-to-face information.
- 98% of visitors thought the VIC was in a good location within the city
- 98% visitor satisfaction as very good.
- 34% of respondents saw the Tourism signage.

- Demographic: 60's (43%), 70's (22%) and 40's (16%).
- 21% of visitors surveyed were from England, 16% from Europe and 12% from Rest of the World.

Conclusion
In summary, the pilot re-location was viewed by the Tourism Development and VIC team as successful. It enabled greater reach to more passing visitors with a central location and it was thought anecdotally that the proximity to Translink was an advantage. Overall, there was an increase in footfall in comparison to Tower House in the past two years.

The ability to deliver additional outreach at the Walled Garden and Pickie Fun Park were also seen as a beneficial outcome of the pilot. It enabled Tourism Advisors to reach additional visitors and local customers raising awareness of the VIC service, upcoming events and activity delivered by other council services.

Considering the overall feedback and benefits of the pilot it was recommended that the VIC service re-located for the same period (April – September 2026) to the same site and continued to use the existing VIC budget to cover the anticipated nominal monthly rent (estimated £500 per month) ensuring this remained cost neutral. A further desk top exercise of other sites, within the city centre, had been undertaken and no new site, at the time of writing this report, was identified as suitable for the service requirements.

It would be an aspiration of the team that a better retail area could be secured during negotiations for the new lease. Although secondary to visitor information, it was a complementary provision that the service provides within its visitor remit. Following the success of the 'Craft Corner' it was also anticipated that this would be implemented more frequently.

Completing a second season would enable Council to secure two years of footfall data at a central shared location assisting with future relocation site considerations.

To ensure a level of service at the Market House had remained during the low season Gifted Ltd staff had agreed to assist with restocking literature and signposting visitors who were seeking visitor information.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the re-location of the Bangor VIC service from Tower House to the Market House during April – September 2026, subject to:

1. agreement by both parties;
2. suitable negotiated lease arrangements, including rent and
3. no other alternative suitable site is identified by the Tourism service for visitor servicing requirements prior to end of January 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Gilmour pointed to the improved visibility and accessibility benefits at the Market House, noting that previous events and projects at that venue had been positive. It was also more noticeable to visitors arriving to Bangor by bus and train.

Councillor Hollywood noted that only 34% of surveyed respondents had noticed the tourism signage and suggested there was room for improvement. He queried the feedback from co-tenants at Market House with regards to the presence of the VIC.

The Head of Tourism acknowledged the signage matter and explained that efforts to address it were underway and that included the use of window space. She added that the feedback from other organisations using the shared space at Market House had been positive and the arrangement was viewed as a productive one for all occupants

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, expressed support for the face-to-face visitor information model and queried why the proposed arrangement was cost neutral.

The officer responded that this had resulted from less expenditure on retail as Market House had less retail space than Tower House. She further clarified that typical retail items included souvenirs, maps, booklets and gifts specific to Bangor. The range was much smaller at Market House, but officers were looking at how that element could be expanded to leverage more income.

The Mayor raised a further query, seeking clarity on the outstanding negotiations of the lease agreement and rent and the officer advised that those negotiations were yet to be finalised.

In response to a final query from the Mayor around the future use of Tower House and its prominence in relation to ongoing and future capital developments, the officer advised that the venue was still available and may factor into future development of the waterfront.

Councillor Morgan recognised that the Market House location would naturally attract higher footfall and noted the visitor research undertaken, recognising the importance of the face-to-face model for those people. However, she queried the cost effectiveness of maintaining a physical visitor information centre versus increased investment in digital/web-based resources.

The Head of Tourism explained that the running costs of the VIC only represented up to 3% of the overall costs. Realignment of staff could potentially have supported more digital content, but physical space and associated costs were relatively minor. The officer also highlighted that Tourism NI research supported in-person services and engagement.

The Director added that previous research had shown that face to face engagement remained valuable, especially for certain demographics and for building public trust.

Councillor Smart was supportive of the relocation to what would be a higher footfall area. He queried the interim use of Tower House and the flexibility of this

arrangement to allow future relocation, given that the waterfront development could affect visitor patterns.

The Head of Tourism explained the existing use of Tower House, advising that the lower portion was still used by the VIC though this represented only a minimal footprint of the building and the upper floors were used by tourism and event staff. The report covered the period from April to September 2026 and that would be reviewed before any future changes.

Councillor Edmund emphasised a strong preference for face-to-face engagement over an exclusive use of digital services, noting its personal touch for tourism. In a final query, Councillor Brady asked for clarification on whether tourism staff would continue to use the offices in Tower House and the officer confirmed staff would remain there.

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

5. PROPOSAL FOR THE NIE SITE, BANGOR (FILE RDP51)

(Appendix III - IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the former NIE site in Bangor was owned by the Council on a freehold basis. It was approximately 7.7 acres and included two buildings as illustrated in Appendix 1.

The site was located within Bangor's industrial and commercial area, and the subject lands were deemed 'whiteland' within the extant Local Development Plan (North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995) and designated as 'Existing Employment Land' in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015, which was a material planning consideration. The land would be suitable for industry and employment, with a particular focus in this location for innovation / light industrial units and / or business units with the aim of supporting economic regeneration growth.

The Borough Business Accommodation Review 2021 highlighted the site as a potential key driver in helping support business growth and recommended that the site should be developed to achieve maximum economic benefit including job retention and creation within the Borough.

NIE Site Development Objectives

As part of the Tender specification the following key objectives for the regeneration of the site were detailed as follows:

- To support the delivery of the Council's Corporate 2024-2028, especially around the Economic Priority by increasing the non-domestic rate base in the Borough and providing the facilities for business growth

- To support the delivery of the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development - Ards and North Down Borough Council ("the Integrated

Strategy" or "ITRDS") and the Ards and North Down Business Accommodation Review to develop the site to achieve maximum economic benefit, in particular:

- Job creation and job retention
- Increased productivity (GVA)
- To develop a viable and innovative mixed-use business accommodation offering that meets the needs of the Borough and responds to the findings of the Business Accommodation Review
- Significantly increase the level of non-domestic rate base to the Council

In March 2025 a Tender was issued on the etenders platform for the appointment of an Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) to progress a Development Proposal and Outline Business Case for the former NIE Site at Balloo Road, Bangor. The Tender was unsuccessful and received no submissions despite having interest from several potential interested parties. Procurement sought feedback from interested parties and some indicated that the available budget for the project in comparison for the scope of works as the reason for not submitting a proposal. It was the intention of Strategic Development to secure further funding to go back to market and procure the Integrated Consultancy Team with an increased budget and / or revised scope of works.

Update
The Council had been approached by a private sector developer who had submitted a proposal for the site, including an outline concept drawing of a potential development (attached at Appendix 2).

The proposal had been presented to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and discussed by the Estates Development Project Board with a broad consensus that the proposed site plan was of interest and would enable the achievement of the objectives for the site.

In parallel, the Strategic Development team had met with Invest NI to inform them of the proposal and potential next steps. Invest NI had expressed support for the preparation of a Development Brief, as a means to test wider market interest and to encourage innovative development proposals.

Proposed Approach
It was proposed that the Strategic Development team prepared a Development Brief for the former NIE site aligned to the NIE Site Development objectives as detailed. Upon internal agreement of the content of the Development Brief, Strategic Development would initiate a procurement process to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced developer.

The Council being in the process of purchasing circa 13 acres of industrially zoned land on the Comber Road, Newtownards. The purchase of this land had now been completed, and it was officers' intention to include the development of this site as part of this process as a 'Lot 2' in addition to the NIE Site (Lot 1).

Next Steps and Indicative Timeline

- Draft Development Brief prepared
- Market engagement and promotion
- Evaluation of submissions and reporting to Council

It was anticipated that this process could be completed by July 2026.

Financial and Resource Implications
Preparation of the Development Brief would be undertaken within the existing resources of the Strategic Development team with any additional costs for external consultancy support to be met from approved budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the update and approves the issue of a Development Brief as detailed above to the open market to seek proposals for the future development of the sites.

At the outset, the Director clarified that while the title of the report only referenced the NIE site in Bangor, this was just one element. He advised that the development brief would also incorporate adjacent Invest NI land (5.5 acres) and this brought the combined site coverage to around 13 acres. He also referred to the Comber Road site which consisted of 13.5 acres which the Council had acquired over recent months. Of this, one acre was allocated for the Greenway and would be used to create a car park and for purposes of tree planting, leaving 12.5 acres of the Comber Road site for development.

The report therefore sought development briefs for three potential lots. Lot 1: NIE/Invest NI combined site. Lot 2: The available portion of the Comber Road site and Lot 3: Both sites together as a single development opportunity.

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

Alderman McDowell voiced his strong support for creating much needed business accommodation within the Borough. He welcomed the coordinated approach of the development briefs for both Bangor and Newtownards and stressed the importance of having mixed unit sizes and in particular having the ability to subdivide large units in order to meet market needs. He also called for renewable energy features to be included within the developments in order to attract businesses and he noted that recent foreign investment jobs had been mostly office based. It was therefore important to factor in office space in order to attract high paying jobs. In a final comment, he highlighted the need for inclusivity for the smaller towns including Comber, Donaghadee and Portaferry, to ensure they were not left behind.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, added her support, recalling a recent visit to mark the expansion of Teleperformance at its new location at Strangford House, a prominent office building in Newtownards that was previously occupied by Hughes Insurance. The reimagining of that building had resulted in flexible office space to accommodate 300 jobs on that site. She sought assurances in terms of the two development areas, noting that Lot 3 was for a combined approach, and asked if officers would be proactive in connecting all interested parties. The Director indicated that was the intention.

Councillor Smart expressed his support for the initiative, noting that while a high number of highly skilled people resided in the Borough, a lack of good local jobs had been a long-standing issue, with many people having to commute elsewhere. He was pleased that the NIE site was intended to be used for businesses rather than new housing and he asked if the development brief would reinforce the town centre retail policy in terms of not extending retail beyond the town centre. He also queried the costs of the three sites involved.

The Head of Regeneration confirmed that 'Town Centre First' was a specific part of the proposal as informed by a business accommodation review. The Director added that there were no exact cost figures yet, but he estimated that the development brief would require a budget of around £20,000 to cover collaboration with LPS, SIB, Council solicitors and advertising and that would be met within existing budgets.

Councillor Blaney added his support believing that it aligned well with the Council's priority to increase its non-domestic rate income. As well as appealing to existing businesses he felt it was important to attract successful businesses back to the Borough and have a proactive approach in doing so.

Councillor Gilmour praised officers for the progress, noting previous difficulties due to land being held by Invest NI and usage restrictions that the organisation had placed on that land. She noted that there was still another plot of Invest NI land next to the Signal Centre that was being retained for future use and she asked if there had been any indications of Invest NI extending its boundary for redevelopment should this process be successful.

The Director reported that there was a new Invest NI officer who had been working closely with Council officers and he had found that relationship to be extremely positive. The Invest NI officer was very keen to work with Council to complete a masterplan for the 17 acres which also included Signal. The Director explained that if the Council agreed to the LEP action plan, then some of the funding would be used to explore and develop a masterplan and then subject to further agreement sections of that would be released for development briefs with a goal for accommodating a range of businesses. He explained that the North Down Development Agency could also potentially be included in the partnership due to previous interest in the land. He added that the aim was to facilitate business expansion and encourage occupants to move out to new larger premises and then encourage smaller businesses into those smaller units, allowing all to grow.

Councillor Morgan sought assurances that the current reduced budget would be sufficient, noting that previous attempts had failed with a higher budget. She also highlighted the importance of not overlooking other areas in the Borough such as Comber.

The Director clarified that the lower budget was due to private sector engagement, reducing the Council's financial burden to largely legal and assessment costs. Multiple firms had shown interest which he hoped would result in competitive offers for the Council.

Councillor Brady welcomed the strategy for providing larger business accommodation to enable growth. He asked whether there was hard data showing demand for that or a waiting list or if this was a 'build it and they will come' model.

The Head of Regeneration referred to a recent business accommodation review which was the evidence base for this. He also pointed to feedback from businesses which were moving outside of the Borough due to lack of suitable space within Ards and North Down.

In a further question, Councillor Brady wondered if officers were doing anything to encourage businesses on Bangor's High Street to expand into the larger units on Main Street.

The officer pointed to broader work being undertaken by the Council's Regeneration and Economic Development teams along with the Chambers of Commerce to engage with businesses in terms of development proposals.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair would take Items 6, 7 and 8 on block.

6. REGENERATION HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2025-26(FILE 160127)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will 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 will 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 April – September 2025 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to 3 outcomes as follows.

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who had opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.

Key achievements:
- C/TAGs reconstituted to Local Action Groups (LAGs)

During this reporting period the culmination of 2 years of research, engagement, and development of the Local Action Group Proposal had been completed and agreed by the Council. This lengthy process benefited from significant time invested by internal and external stakeholders to broaden the demographic representation of currently under-represented organisations to the groups. For example, it was hoped that representatives from Youth, Faith, Sport, Volunteers, Historical organisations, and others, would agree to be part of the LAGs and therefore add value to the existing positive work being achieved by the existing members of the groups. These progressive changes correlated strongly with Outcome 1 and would positively impact the design, delivery, and post project evaluation (PPE) of our projects. Additionally, external funders had noted that this positive change may have benefited future funding applications.

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:
- Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme

In response to the Economic priority detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, feedback from local businesses, Chambers of Commerce / Trade, and Elected Members, Regeneration officers had secured over £1M to fund the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme. The programme provided existing a multi-layered support model, with a focused approach aimed at revitalising our High Streets, regenerating empty properties, boosting footfall, and attracting new businesses to our High Streets. The programme was launched on Thursday 12th June 2025 and in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC), included a range of communications such as local newspaper PR, email outreach, chamber engagement, social media campaigns, a letter drop to every eligible business property, and additional targeted outreach efforts such as the Economic Development ezine to ensure a broad awareness and participation.

Strand 1 - Glow Up Grant

The Glow Up Grant was a capital grant scheme that would provide a one-off grant of up to £2,500 per property to support up to 90% of shopfront improvement costs. A 10% contribution was required from the applicant.

The Glow Up Grant scheme received funding of £500,000 from the Department for Communities and Regeneration provided an additional 10% (£50,000) to the funding pot, a total of 261 applications were received from the 4 urban areas of the Borough.

Strand 2 – Empty to Energised Grant
Strategic Development officers developed the Empty to Energised Grant Scheme. The scheme, the first of its kind in the Borough, sought to provide a positive intervention to address the issue of vacancy and dereliction within the Borough whilst simultaneously increasing the level of non domestic rate base received by the Council. Data demonstrated Bangor and Newtownards as being the areas of the Borough with the highest urban levels of vacancy and dereliction and therefore a pilot of the scheme would be completed in these areas first. After the pilot schemes completion and evaluation, it was officer's intention to initiate an expansion of the scheme to encompass other urban and rural parts of the Borough subject to funding. It should be noted that funding for this scheme had been approved from the Council's Tax Base Development Fund.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council was a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- The Regeneration Service Restructure

This reporting period had provided an initial timeframe to measure the short term impact of a restructure within the Regeneration Service completed in Q4 of 2025. The newly formed Strategic Development service unit had enabled the wider service to diversify into regeneration projects with strategic value aligned to the Corporate Plan's Economic priority, such as the Empty to Energised grant scheme, the development of the NIE site in Bangor, and other commercial development opportunities to be developed. As intended, this has enabled the Regeneration service unit to focus their efforts on positively contributing to the Corporate Plan's Environmental and Social priorities and various other Council outcomes. These could be demonstrated by the Glow Up Grant, the Urban Regeneration Programme 2025 – 2026, LAGs, and the 10 year Village Plans. These, and other operational and strategic examples demonstrate that the restructure within Regeneration had positively contributed to Ards and North Down Borough Council being a high performing organisation.

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:

- Organisational Redesign

As part of an ongoing organisational redesign within the Council the Regeneration and Economic Development Services would merge to become the Economic Growth Service. This process would understandably require a period of transition to be afforded to officers and other internal and external stakeholders of both services as they adjusted to the impacts of the redesign on personnel, processes, and projects.

Action to be taken:

- Ensure key stakeholders were part of the ongoing communication and various processes associated with the organisational redesign as / when appropriate to do so to provide as much continuity of service as possible.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
To develop a master plan and outline business case for the delivery of a business park at the former NIE site on the Balloo Road, Bangor	This is a Year End target however it is flagged as 'at risk' due to a previously unsuccessful Tender process	A new proposal is going through internal consultation and is planned to commence in January 2026 pending approvals	Strategic Development Manager	January 2026
Completion and evaluation of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme to include 5 capital schemes, 2 working-up schemes, and 2 grant schemes	This is a Year End target however it is flagged as 'at risk' due to an opportunity being identified to use an underspend in this funding on an additional and high priority project, therefore completion and evaluation of this programme may be delayed	Continue to work with internal colleagues and external funders to proceed with preparation works to complete the additional project within the funding timeframe	Regeneration Manager	January 2026

Development of a Motorhomes strategy	This KPI was recently delegated to Regeneration upon the changes to Regulatory Services as part of the organisational redesign	Continue with further research into UK Motorhome Strategies and engage with Assets and Properties who will lead on the implementation of the strategy. Input from other Services will be required	Head of Regeneration	January 2026

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

7. TOURISM HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2025-26 (FILE TO/MAR4/160127)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

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

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

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H1 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our 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 Tourism Events Service had continued to produce zero contamination as part of the active recycling initiative at events as well as free transport to Comber Earlies Food Festival, Tide and Turf and Armed Forces Day to encourage sustainable transport.
- Free water, a ban on single use plastic and the use of compostable materials at food stalls were adopted as event rules.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Total attendees had exceeded target at six Tourism Events in this period.
- 13 grant aided events had taken place with one remaining to take place in March 2026.
- Food and Drink providers continued to be supported by the Tourism Service with attendance at trade shows, event activity and assistance with award entries. To date, there had been an excellent return on awards in season. Taste at the Castle in late September attracted over 5,500 attendees despite challenging weather conditions on the Saturday.
- 70 participants from the local tourism business sector, Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI along with representatives from industry bodies attended the 'Storytelling' themed industry day on 14 October 2025.
- The Arts Service had delivered three themed festivals to date, with a further two taking place in October and November. An expanded Creative Peninsula in the Square attracted over 5,000 attendees.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

- Arts for Older People and Rural Arts Engagement Programmes had taken place in the community, contributing to the Beach of Dreams Celebration in Millisle in May. Highlighting climate change and the joys and challenges of coastal communities the project and event finale engaged over 100 artists, 100 volunteers and over 2,000 participants from the community.
- North Down Museum had welcomed more than 35,000 visitors to date and has provided 13 outreach programmes for the community with 193 individual engagements.

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:

- Long term absence in Service
- Weather impact ongoing for Events.

Action to be taken:

- Realignment of duties and support from other team members.
- Work with TNI, Local Government Events Managers Group to establish methods to weatherproof events.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% spend against budget	In season events spend	Monitor and control remaining budgets	Events Manager	December 2025

In preparation for the 2026/27 Service Plan Corporate Communications and Marketing had advised they would be reporting marketing KPIs in the future within their Service Plan. This would provide a level of consistency across the Council digital channels for the different services.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

8. STRATEGIC CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2025-26 (FILE 106127)

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

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

Reporting Approach

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

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H1 2025/2026 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to all outcomes outlined in our Service & Delivery Framework.

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who had opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.

Key achievements:

- **Ward Park:** The successful completion of the desilting works within budget, allowing progress to the next phase, where contractor procurement was progressed and on track for the larger Ward Park redevelopment.

- **Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment:** Significant momentum built across the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme and its constituent projects. Following the appointment of Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICT) for both BYC Watersports Centre (May 2024) and Pickie Fun Park (August 2024), both projects had now progressed to RIBA Stage 2. Public Information Sessions were held in September and October 2025, providing opportunities for citizens, businesses, and stakeholders to view concept designs, ask questions, and share feedback as part of the planning process. This proactive engagement ensured that local voices were shaping the future of the waterfront.
- **Bangor Castle:** Stakeholder engagement completed soliciting feedback on the options considered at business case stage had allowed for public feedback on the redevelopment proposals at this early stage of project delivery.
- **Newtownards Citizen Hub:** ICT appointed in February 2025 for the redevelopment of the Queens Hall. Following positive stakeholder engagement in June 2025 the consultants had produced a Stage 2 Concept Design which included Council's Arts Service an auditorium and an enlarged Library.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

Key achievements:

- **Newtownards Citizens Hub:** The design team had been appointed, and the project had achieved Stage 2 sign off for a Passivhaus hub.

- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** This remained a significantly important project with Passivhaus and net zero carbon targets written in to the established brief specification agreed with our partners DoF.
- **Bangor Waterfront:** Sustainability was embedded at every stage of the Bangor Waterfront Programme. All constituent projects were being designed to meet BREEAM standards and incorporate ambitious carbon reduction targets, in line with Council's net zero commitments. These requirements were written into the project briefs and consultancy appointments, ensuring that energy efficiency, sustainable materials, and low-carbon solutions were prioritised throughout. The design teams were tasked with delivering buildings and public spaces that minimised environmental impact and support long-term resilience for the Borough.

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:
- **Bangor Waterfront:** Significant momentum built across the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme and its constituent projects to deliver substantial economic benefits for the Borough with an overall investment of £72.8 million - following the appointment of Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICT) for both BYC Watersports Centre (May 2024) and Pickie Fun Park (August 2024), both projects had now progressed to RIBA Stage 2.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:
- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor**: Sections of the greenway were completed with handover now aimed for January 2026
-

Bangor Waterfront – The project brief was completed for the provision of two miles of coastline with high-quality public spaces and new leisure, tourism, and community facilities. Progress includes BYC Watersports Centre and Pickie Fun Park reaching RIBA Stage 2 and strong stakeholder engagement.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that were flourishing

Key achievements:
- **Social Value:** As part of the procurement process, we incorporated social initiatives in all our public tenders for construction and design services. These initiatives could help to promote community well-being, enhance social value, and support local development by:
    - Promoting & Creating Local Employment Opportunities
    - Supporting Skills Development through training & apprenticeship programmes
    - Encourage Social Inclusion

- Enhance Community Benefits by delivering additional benefits such as improved public spaces, community facilities, and services.

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:
- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:**
- circa 5km section of the greenway completed with handover now aimed for January 2026
- **Greenway Comber to Newtownards:** it had achieved planning permission and a 1km section of the route was completed as part of the above contract.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council was a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- **Cross Directorate Collaboration:** The successful ongoing initiative of the Capital Projects Advisory Group (CPAG), chaired by the Head of Strategic Capital Development, continued to enable comprehensive engagement, sharing best practice and synergy across all Council Services. CPAG facilitated the sharing of information about work at hand, and lessons learned on all current and planned Capital Works.

Emerging issues:
As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan 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:

1. **Significant delays in project delivery due to challenges posed by the Procurement, Planning, Land Acquisition and Stakeholder Engagement processes e.g. legal challenges and statutory consultee responses particularly on Portavogie 3G pitch planning, Greenways lincences, and Ward Park Procurement.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)
- Preparation of appropriate project information / documentation based on a clearly defined brief and business case in line with the Structured Project Delivery as detailed in our Service Objectives and Delivery Framework.
- Applying lessons learnt to ensure the planning application prepared by the ICT contains sufficient information to satisfy potential queries posed by Statutory Consultees. Proactively engage with statutory consultees to define requirements and future proof the planning process.
- Actively contribute to stakeholder engagement, transparent communication and community participation at an early stage.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements, processes, and procedures.
- Encourage pro-active tracking and timely actioning responses.

2. **Budget: Significant additional costs (forecast or incurred) due to rising inflation with potential impact on project delivery, benefits realisation, and Value for Money.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Apply internal governance procedures to monitor and report on identified issues.
- Regularly review and maintain Individual Project Risk Registers and Cost Report with regular reporting to the Project Board.
- Test investment decisions via business cases (OBC & FBC) & Implement 5 case model.
- Appropriately test Strategic Need and Economic Viability at an early stage.
- Regularly monitoring budgetary forecasts in conjunction with appointed design teams.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements and incorporate lessons learnt.

3. **Insufficient Resources: Inadequate staffing levels to maintain quality of Service Delivery resulting disruption to operations particularly in H1 of 2025-2026.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Capacity Planning – Regularly assess workload priorities and escalate matters to CLT. Ongoing discussion at organisational re-design meetings.
- Anticipate staffing needs based on projected workloads and upcoming projects to ensure resources are available and escalate matters to CLT.
- Continuous Professional Development - Identify training and upskilling opportunities for team members to retain and develop critical knowledge and skills and ensure that costs are included in the Capital Project Revenue Budget.
- Targeted recruitment processes to secure candidates with the necessary qualifications, experience, and expertise.
- Succession planning, encouraging professional development and career progression from within the service to retain institutional knowledge and skills. Encourage 1-2-1s and conduct appraisals in a timely manner.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
No KPI's considered at risk within 2025 - 2026				

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that items 6, 7 and 8 be noted.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, referred to Item 6, pointing to delays in forming the LAGs and the reported aims of trying to broaden the demographic of its membership.

She recalled that the TAGs, historically, had designated spaces for youth and faith representation but those positions had not been taken up with regularity. She wondered what was different here, noting that the composition of the LAGs had been confirmed a few months ago, in April 2025, she recalled.

The Mayor queried the outreach efforts to fill those designations, noting that groups such as Donaghadee Community Development Association had expressed frustration at not being given the opportunity to engage with the draft area plan. She feared that the delay was therefore impeding community engagement not just in Donaghadee but across the Borough.

She put this to the Head of Regeneration who acknowledged that progress had been slower than officers would have liked, but that outreach work was ongoing and he felt this process differed to the TAGs due to more tangible outputs and external funding that would incentivise engagement. He explained that some of the responses from groups had been slow but measured and that some were keen to get involved but then found out they did not have the resources. He added that there was also dependence on representatives to respond, however, he added that the first LAG meetings were anticipated in January 2026.

The Mayor strongly believed that the engagement was the Council's responsibility and it had to be proactive and engage rather than be passive and wait for representatives, who she recognised were mostly volunteers, to engage.

The officer explained that in terms of the outreach work, each LAG would have a dedicated webpage and dashboard to improve communication. This would be supported by the Council's Corporate Communications team and was aimed to provide a proactive approach.

In another matter, the Mayor asked for an update on the Covid Recovery fund underspend and if a use for it had been identified yet. The officer explained that this was intended for the Millisle environmental improvement scheme subject to underspend confirmation of other projects in January.

In a further query, the Mayor asked for further details on the Motorhome Strategy and the officer advised that this had come to Regeneration as part of the restructure, but it was ongoing but not expected to be finalised before the end of the financial year.

In relation to Item 8, the Mayor referred to cemetery provision and raised concerns regarding Redburn, noting that it was red flagged due to reaching its capacity. She asked for an update on the aims to increase cemetery provision, noting a business case, and the Capital Project and Programme Manager advised that Capital Projects had been asked to appoint a consultant. There had been two potential sites under consideration, but recently the site close to Green Road was found to be unsuitable following ground testing. The Director clarified that Movilla Cemetery in Newtownards was being extended as this was land that the Council already owned. He explained that the policy was to acquire a further large central site to serve the wider area rather than have a piecemeal approach. A full report on cemetery provision would be brought to the Environment Committee in due course.

Councillor Morgan returned to Item 6, and noted that the Glow Up grant figures looked good and asked if officers had expected that outcome. The Head of Regeneration explained that the team was delighted with this outcome and the majority of letters of offer had been issued and some payments already completed with feedback being positive. An evaluation exercise was now planned to document outcomes for future planning purposes.

In a further query, Councillor Morgan asked about plans for the opening of the Greenway from Newtownards to Bangor. She welcomed this and asked if a celebration type event had been planned and the officer explained that a formal ministerial event was planned to take place around February/March 2026.

Councillor Morgan asked when the Comber to Newtownards section would open and an update was provided. It was explained that an existing contractor had been asked to resurface a stretch along a floodwall pending negotiations with landowners and Council approval was required to enter into a lease agreement with those landowners to complete that process.

Councillor Morgan referred to Item 8, Outcome 7, and noted a list of action points and questioned whether it would be better to prioritise some of those to ensure that some could be realistically completed. She felt that it had read like a wish list.

The officer explained the project coordination process was undertaken through the Corporate Project Advisory Group (CPAG) which was a useful cross-directorate resource. She also highlighted the second phase of the Council's transformation plan which could result in additional staff for delivering what was an ambitious capital programme portfolio.

Councillor Brady queried how many of the Glow Up Grant and Empty to Energise applications had been successful and paid out. The Head of Regeneration would report back to the Member with those figures. Empty to Energise was in the middle of the information sessions which were being well attended and the application process was due to open on 5 January.

(Alderman Adair joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.56 PM)

Councillor Brady asked if a mechanism was in place to track the programme's success and the Head of Regeneration advised that Officers were engaging with other strategic partners who operated similar schemes to Empty to Energise within Northern Ireland to explore best practice.

On Item 7, Councillor Brady queried the overall economic impact and how that was measured, wondering if Council used the Tourism NI economic calculator and if officers had the information available to make that calculation.

The Head of Tourism advised that economic impact was assessed and included in an end of year summary and the Tourism NI calculator was used.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Items 6, 7 and 8 be noted.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION 669 - BUSINESS ACCOMMODATION IN THE BOROUGH (FILE RDP14)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Council agreed the following Notice of Motion (669):

"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."

Planning Context
The Council had recently published its draft Plan Strategy (dPS) for public consultation, with a closing date of 17 December 2025.

The LDP had a key role to play in achieving a vibrant economy and facilitating employment through the zoning of land and the development of appropriate planning policy to support business development and job growth within the Borough. Both the Ards and North Down Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy (ITRDS) 2018-2030 set ambitious targets to grow the number of jobs and business activity within the Borough and the LDP can assist in the achievement of these aims.

The dPS contained a Spatial Growth Strategy which seeks to focus growth in Bangor and Newtownards as the principal settlements in the Borough, strengthening their roles as the primary locations for future housing and economic growth and investment. It also aimed to consolidate the growth of the other towns as local service centres for employment to support the local population and their hinterlands.

The draft Plan Strategy also set out an Economic Development Strategy as follows:

Economic Development Strategy

To ensure there is a generous supply of suitable land to meet the economic development needs of the Borough over the Plan period, to allocate appropriate economic development land in the key settlements of Bangor and Newtownards and to provide a spatial framework for the application of economic development policies intended to deliver sustainable and environmentally sensitive economic growth across the Borough, including rural areas.

The creation of jobs and thriving businesses is supported by the economic policy which zoned new employment land and protects existing employment land from loss to other uses or encroachment by incompatible uses.

Redevelopment of NIE Site, Balloo Road, Bangor
The former NIE site was owned by Council on a freehold basis. It was approximately 7.7 acres. The land was suitable for industry/employment, with a particular focus in this location for innovation/light industrial units and/or business units to support economic regeneration growth.

The Borough Business Accommodation Review 2021 highlighted the site as a potential key driver in helping support business growth and recommended that the site should be developed to achieve maximum economic benefit, including job retention and creation, within the Borough.

At the time of writing this report internal discussions are ongoing and if Council approval was received it was Strategic Development's intention to prepare a Development Brief for the former NIE site.in order to enable the Council to evaluate a range of potential options for the redevelopment of the site.

In parallel, the Strategic Development team had met with Invest NI to inform them of the proposal and potential next steps. Invest NI had expressed support for the preparation of a Development Brief as a means to test wider market interest and to encourage innovative development proposals.

Purchase of Land Zoned for Employment, Comber Road, Newtownards
Members approved purchase of land at Comber Road, Newtownards, at the March 2025 Council meeting. This land, zoned in the Ards and Down Area Plan for employment use, provides the Council with a unique opportunity to support the Council's Corporate Vision to increase economic growth, attract more businesses and jobs to the Borough and increase the non-domestic rate base.

The sale of that land had now successfully completed and it was intended to model development of the site on the template for the NIE site, in terms of provision of a range of units dependent upon local need. Such development would assist in transitioning smaller businesses out of the existing Business Parks into larger units, enabling growth, whilst freeing up that incubator/start-up space for new business start-ups.

Local Economic Partnership (LEP)
The Department for the Economy has proposed the creation of economic interventions such as the Local Economic Partnerships to empower communities to build a more sustainable and thriving economy where people want to live and work and where employers want to invest.

Ards and North down is currently developing an action plan which should draw down in excess of £4.15 million until 31st March 2028 to address some of these challenges.

The first workstream of this draft action plan to be presented to the Committee in December 2025, highlighted the intention to use some of the capital funding to

develop business space and accommodation. An update would be provided to the Council when details of the plan were firmed up.

Invest NI (INI) land in the Borough.
Invest NI had land available in the Borough, notably in the Balloo Industrial area of Bangor.

It must be noted that Invest NI land was available to companies which met the Invest NI client criteria which was:

Manufacturing and/or tradeable services business with the potential to achieve at least 25% of sales to customers based outside Northern Ireland (or at least £250,000 external sales, whichever is lower) and either employ or have the potential to employ (within 5 years) at least 10 staff.

The key was that business needed to produce a product or deliver a service that could be sold into markets outside NI. The business needed to be focused on markets outside NI and either employ 10 staff or demonstrate that the business model could be scaled so that it could employ 10 staff within 5 years.

Individual applications for land were assessed against Invest NI's Intervention Principles to ensure value for money for taxpayers. This included ensuring proposals were strategically aligned to INI's business strategy (i.e. focused on growth in markets outside NI), that risks were sufficiently mitigated and that the risk of failure was not unacceptably high, that the proposal and company were both considered viable, and that the proposal would not have a material impact on another NI company (i.e. that increased sales and job creation for the project would be off-set by reduced sales and jobs in another NI company).

Taking this into account, the land available from INI was subject to the above initial conditions and to an in depth analysis of the business case presented by a potential applicant.

The Invest NI Business Strategy 2026/27 focused on ensuring the provision of a sufficient supply of strategic land and property for economic development to allow Invest NI to deliver against its strategic priority of 'Promoting Places and Partnerships' and achieving regional balance.

The implementation of Invest NI's new Regional Property Programme (RPP) was underway and was expected to be a significant driver of regional balance by increasing industrial land at a regional level. Through a phased and targeted approach to land / property development, it aimed to ensure Invest NI had enough land and buildings to maximise new economic opportunities aligned to its business strategy.

Several wider challenges existed, including the availability of suitable water, electricity infrastructure, and transport infrastructure. Furthermore, current public sector budgetary pressures were slowing progress and reducing the resources available for delivering locally focused property solutions.

Reports produced on the subject of business accommodation:
Two main reports produced in 2021 and 2025 respectively had provided recommendations in terms of business accommodation needs:

- **Supplementary Review of Business Accommodation Needs in Ards and North Down (2021)** - council appointed economic consultancy Jettora and property consultancy Riddell KcKibben to conduct a detailed review of business accommodation in the borough.
- **Economic Scoping Study (2024/25)** - conducted to establish progress against job growth and productivity targets set by Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2018 for achievement by 2030 (as set out in the ITRDS – Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy). The scoping study also aimed to identify the key business sectors that will form the sources of employment within the Borough in the future and to establish how the Council can support these businesses in their growth. The report from this study was presented to Committee in September 2025.

The reports provided recommendations, which were listed below with an update on relevant council activities to address these since these reports were completed:

1. **Consider entering into a Partnership for development of Surplus Council Owned sites**

Council Office Estate Rationalisation: The Council was currently considering the consolidation of its own widespread estate into a single 5,400sqm headquarters in Bangor City Centre. The proposed HQ would accommodate c400 of the Councils 900 staff on a rota basis on any given working day within the City Centre to provide footfall for hospitality and retail outlets. In addition, this would free up **8,728sqm** of the Council's existing estate footprint for potential business accommodation throughout the Borough.

Queens Parade Development: The Council was working with DfC and Bangor Marine Limited in the redevelopment of this iconic site in Bangor. The plans included a mixed-use development with offices, residential and hospitality accommodation. This development, when completed, would create significant capacity for high-quality business accommodation in the City Centre of Bangor.

2. **Progress Innovation Hub funding application for an Innovation Hub in Bangor**

The development of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Innovation Hub had progressed from business case development to approval at departmental. The hub had been developed through the Belfast Region City Deal "Regional Innovators Network" opportunity and had taken on the sectoral focus of the screen industries. In order to satisfy stakeholders the hub would be based in Holywood as a necessary requirement to meet the needs of the sectoral cluster in the town. The £10 million funded project was currently awaiting confirmation of a site to be able to proceed.

3. **Address the demand in the Flex Market**

Key features of the accommodation for which there was the greatest demand in the "flex" market were:

1. **Location:** Accessibility to local amenities such as cafes, restaurants and hotels is a priority, making central locations highly sought after.
2. **Short Lease Terms**: Given the changing needs of occupiers, leases for flexible accommodation could often be as little as twelve months for private offices and monthly for hot-desking tenants.
3. **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG**): The modern flexible office offerings enabled occupiers of all sizes to choose office accommodation that satisfied various Sustainability Certifications such as Wired Scored, EPC B+.
4. **Facilities & Products**: Operators were increasing the level of amenity space in their centres to support tenants attract and retain staff in competitive labour markets. Whilst meeting spaces were essential, flexible offices were increasingly providing gyms, saunas, roof terraces and private dining and club spaces new schemes.

The review of business accommodation in 2021 concluded there was a need for greater supply of flexible office accommodation in the Borough. However, as this analysis was undertaken during the height of the COVID pandemic, there was some uncertainty as to how demand for such facilities have changed since restrictions on working practices have been lifted.

This upsurge in private provision of managed spaces has not yet been reflected into Ards and North Down. Except for the Formation Works in Jubilee Road, Newtownards, the offering across the Borough was provided largely by social enterprises for example:

1. **The Old Market House (Gifted Enterprise)**: Former Danske Bank at 77 Main Street, Bangor - Currently offering event space, hot desking and meeting space (owned by the Kilcooley Women's Centre ("KWC")).
2. **Boom Studios**: Main Street, Bangor – Focused on providing maker spaces for artists and creative businesses.
3. **Ards Business Hub**: Sketrick House, Jubilee Road, Newtownards. Ards Business Hub have purchased a site adjacent to Sketrick House which was zoned for commercial development but currently undeveloped.
4. **North Down Development Agency**: Accommodation available at Balloo Avenue and Innotec Drive.

4. **Consult on possible amendment to Key Site Requirements within new LDP**

The council was at the draft Plan Strategy stage of the LDP. It would be a number of years before the AND Local Policies Plan was published which would put lines on maps and zone land for employment. However, if an application for employment/industry on land zoned for housing was received at present, the Key Design Considerations/Requirements could be reviewed with the statutory consultees given the passage of time since the relevant development plans were adopted and see if any flexibility could be applied.

5. **Incorporate private workspace within any Council HQ development plans and align with Connect2**

In August 2025 the Council, with the support of its partners, announced its decision to progress with the Queen's Parade site in Bangor as the preferred location for its new headquarters.

6. **Seek to increase capacity for private investment in Holywood**

The Innovation Hub would be based in Holywood as a necessary requirement to meet the needs of the sectoral cluster in the town.

To date Council had been unable to secure a suitable site in Holywood to build the hub for which £10 M had been secured through BRCD.

7. **Greater Engagement between Council and Business**

Council continued to engage with businesses through the provision of a range of services, including: 1-to-1 business advice sessions; business research service; NI Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed); Labour Market Partnership. The business research service had conducted approximately 11 commercial property searches over the previous year on behalf of local businesses, for a range of different types of accommodation including office space, industrial units and retail space.

The newly formed council-led Local Economic Partnership (LEP) would present further opportunities for collaboration between council, local businesses and government departments. The LEP would discuss matters relevant to economic development in the borough, such as the potential purchase/development of business accommodation and land.

The Council's Economic Development team would be conducting a survey for local businesses in autumn 2025, which would include an opportunity for local businesses to provide feedback and raise issues relating to business support and doing business in the Borough, including the availability of suitable commercial premises.

Other council-led initiatives related to providing and/or improving business accommodation

Mini Digi Hub

There were plans for Comber Community Centre, located five minutes from the town centre, to become an Internet of Things (IoT) exemplar site. This €553K (Euros) PEACEPLUS project aimed to enhance the centre's management and usability, while demonstrating IoT's potential to local businesses and residents.

The Mini Digi Hub project would convert a small 5m x 8m room into a high-tech business space for meetings, hybrid events, and mentoring, responding to local business needs for professional meeting spaces. The larger hall would also be enhanced with IoT capabilities. Additionally, outreach efforts would include open days, mentoring, and workshops. The Dundalk Institute of Technology, one of the partners on the PEACEPLUS, was in the process of developing a Mobile Lab. This would have the potential to visit the various partner regions to provide hands-on technology demonstrations and facilitate the de-risking of the adoption of digital transformation hardware.

Supporting Thriving High Streets

The Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme aimed to revitalise and support our city and town centre high streets, with £1M+ of support available via two grant schemes:

- **Glow Up Grant** - grant funding for active businesses in the urban centres of Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood seeking to make shopfront enhancements. Grants would provide 90% funding up to a maximum amount of £2,500 per property. Funded by the Department for Communities and Ards and North Down Borough Council.
- **Empty to Energised Grant** - to support proprietors of vacant and/or derelict properties to undertake renovations and introduce new commercial uses. This was a pilot scheme for Bangor and Newtownards and was the first time a scheme of this nature had been available in Ards and North Down (launched in November 2025). To note, this scheme was funded by Ards and North Down Borough Council's Tax Base Development Fund.

For information, the most recently published Non-domestic Property Vacancy Rates for the town centres in Ards and North Down were shown in the table below (data from April 2025).

Town Centre	No. of Properties	No. of Vacant Properties	% of Vacant Properties
Bangor	666	145	*21.8%*
Comber	129	21	*16.3%*
Donaghadee	118	17	*14.4%*
Holywood	305	26	*8.5%*
Newtownards	535	112	*20.9%*

Source: The Northern Ireland Town Centre Database, Department for Communities

It must be noted that a dereliction study would be conducted in the Borough and was expected to be concluded by March 2016. This would highlight properties that had a potential for redevelopment.

Conclusions

One of the key deficiencies that had been identified through the scoping exercise was the lack of suitable accommodation for productive growth in the Borough – in particular flexible office accommodation.

The Council's surplus assets, such as the former NIE Site, the land purchased by the Council on the Comber Road (Newtownards) and the accommodation that would be freed-up following the development of the new HQ could be utilised for economic growth.

The LEP through the proposed draft action plan to be considered by Council in December 2025, could play an important role in purchasing/developing land and business accommodation in the Borough (details of locations to be confirmed).

Invest NI land throughout the Borough was only accessible to clients which met the eligibility criteria as laid out in this report. However, the implementation of Invest NI's new Regional Property Programme (RPP) may have, in time, addressed the

shortage of industrial land in the Borough. Any investment would be subject to prioritisation of needs across the 11 council areas.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Alderman McDowell emphasised the importance of ensuring smaller towns and villages were not overlooked in the Economic Development Strategy and LDP which he noticed focused heavily on Bangor and Newtownards as ‘key settlements’.

He sought reassurances that zoning would be broadened to include smaller towns and villages and that the Planning Department’s approach and specifics of the LDP would not limit economic initiatives to those larger areas.

In terms of the Economic Development Strategy, the Economic Development Manager referred to a broad and inclusive approach and smaller settlements were not excluded in that regard. Decisions on investment would depend on the proposals brought forward but the zoning lay with the Planning Department.

Alderman McDowell asked if the Committee could respond to the LDP consultation with his concerns around zoning and the Director clarified that there was not enough time for a formal Council approved response due to the approaching closing date. He could however feed back the concerns informally to the LDP Manager and Alderman McDowell and the rest of the Committee indicated agreement to that approach.

Alderman McDowell stressed the risk of land being set aside for industrial use and then left undeveloped for various reasons. He noted concern about an apparent over supply of land for industry/enterprise in local plans, but little was actually available or viable for development.

In a further query, he asked for an update on the progress of an innovative hub that had been planned for Holywood. The Director reported ongoing significant difficulties in securing a site in Holywood. Multiple alternative sites had now been assessed with one being actively considered. A detailed report with a recommendation on the preferred site would follow in January 2026.

The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, explained that she had recently hosted representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, during which the topic of business accommodation was discussed.

She underlined the importance of the Council engaging constructively with key stakeholders throughout the LDP consultation, ensuring the process was meaningful rather than perceived as a formality. She stressed the need for sincerity and integrity in this work, with a commitment to actively seeking and listening to a wide range of opinions.

The Mayor also referred to the Council's plans to relocate its headquarters to Bangor's city centre, highlighting the potential opportunities this may create through the release of other Council-owned sites for business use. She asked the officer to provide further detail on how that process would progress.

The Economic Development Manager outlined the findings from a recent business accommodation study and advised that a consultant had been appointed to analyse the potential land and footprint that could be available as a result of the Council's decision to centralise its services in the proposed new headquarters. She explained this meant that substantial assets could be freed up for business accommodation pending future decisions.

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

10. NOTICE OF MOTION 646 - COMBER INDUSTRIAL UNITS (FILE RDP14)

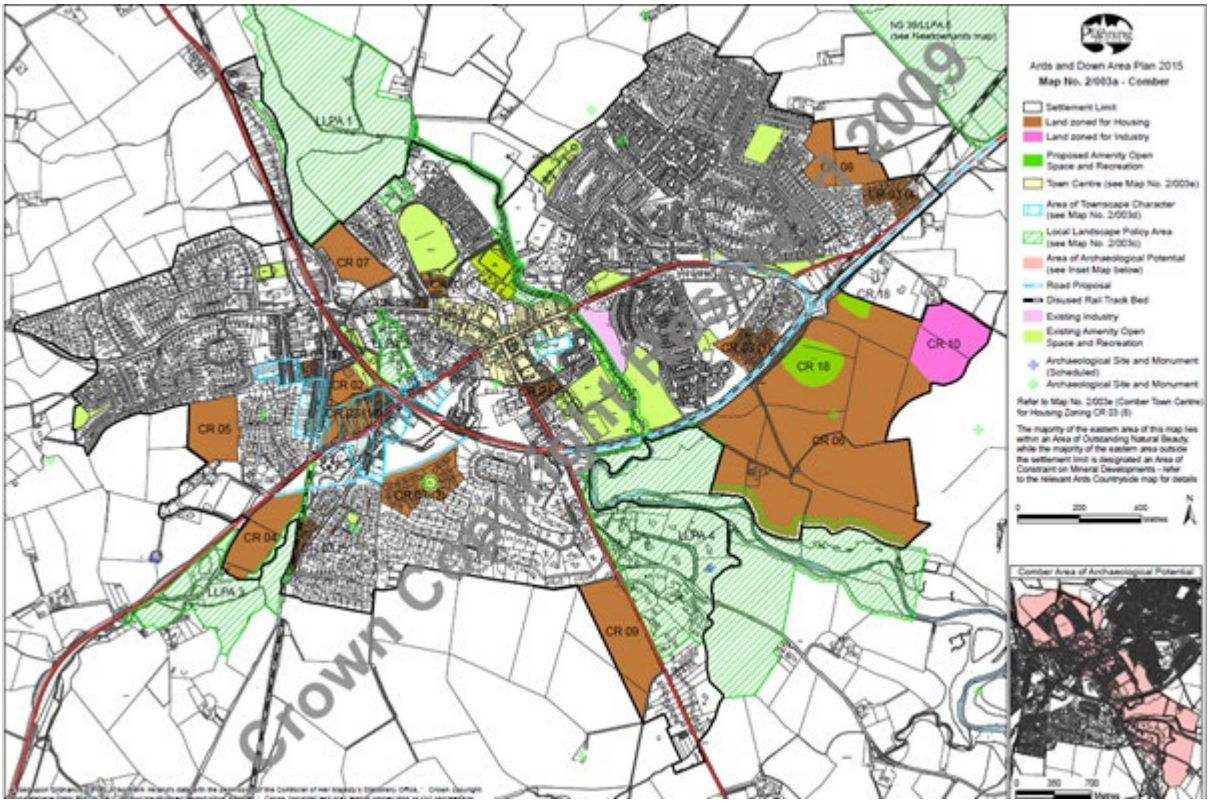
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Council previously agreed the following Notice of Motion (646):

"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."

Whilst the Notice of Motion was heard at Planning Committee initially, as it was considered to relate to Local Development Plan zonings/designations and approvals for employment uses, it was agreed that any future report be brought back to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

Planning Background
The relevant extant of the Local Development Plan relating to Comber is the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015, as adopted by the then Department of the Environment in March 2009.

One area of land was designated as 'existing industry/employment' and one area zoned for 'proposed future industry/employment'

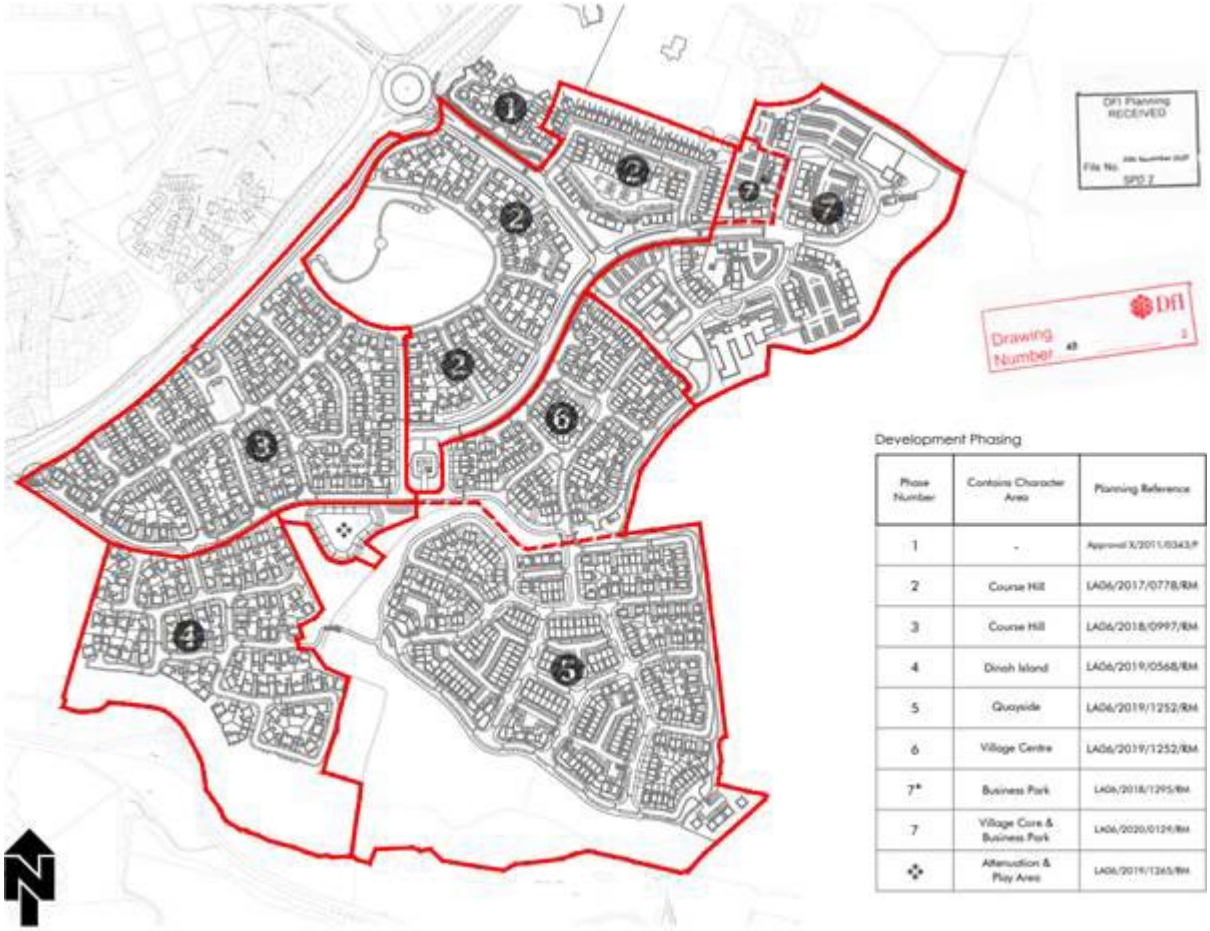


The 1.32ha site designated as existing industry at Newtownards Road had subsequently been developed for 43no. social housing units (approved by Council December 2018) and was known as Newtown Green.

Zoning CR10, which was part of the overall 'Enler Village' development, consisted of 4.66ha of land to the NNE of the overall housing zoning reference CR06.

Planning permission was granted by the Department for Infrastructure for a business park as follows

CR06 and CR10 Planning History		
Reference	**Proposal**	**Decision and date**
LA06/2020/0129/RM	Village Centre consisting of 4 retail units, creche and nursing home, residential units and 10 business park units (B1, B2 and B4), open space and pumping station	Approval 24.02.2023
LA06/2018/1295/RM (Western portion of CR06)	Erection of 2 no. Class B1(b) or B1(c) business units with associated car parking, access roads, pumping station, landscaping and other site works	Approval 20.12.2022



Phase Number	Contains Character Area	Planning Reference
1	-	Approval X/2011/0343/F
2	Course Hill	LA06/2017/0778/RM
3	Course Hill	LA06/2018/0997/RM
4	Dinah Island	LA06/2019/0568/RM
5	Quayside	LA06/2019/1252/RM
6	Village Centre	LA06/2019/1252/RM
7*	Business Park	LA06/2018/1295/RM
7	Village Core & Business Park	LA06/2020/0129/RM
✣	Attenuation & Play Area	LA06/2019/1265/RM

Phase 7* includes The Mill Offices at Enler Village, Comber

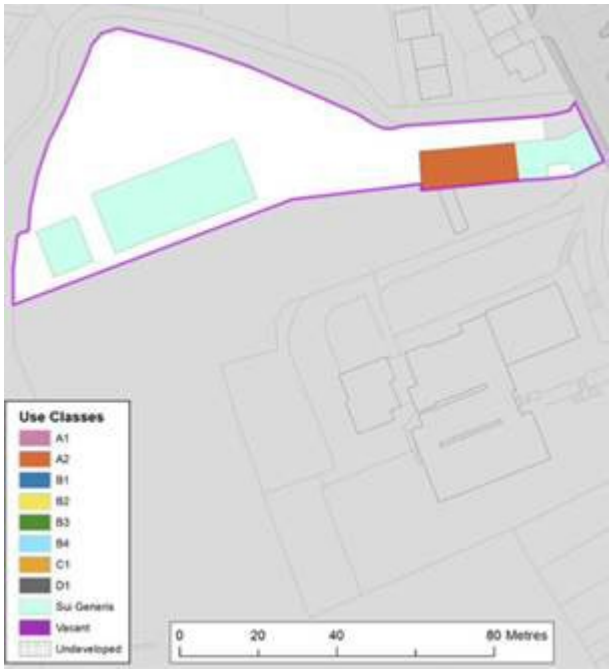
Marketed through McKibben Estate Agents, the commercial opportunity was for the Class B1 (b) (Call Centre) or B1(c (Research and Development) use with associated car parking and landscaping. The building had recently been completed to shell and core specification. Units were available from 246m2 (2,646ft2) to 738m2 (7,938ft2).

For further details see www.mckibben.co.uk/the-mill-offices-at-enler-village-comber.

Business Park Proposals -
A business park had also been approved to cater for B1, B2 and B4 uses beside the Village Centre.

Unzoned sites greater than 0.5ha
The Planning Service's Employment and Economic Development Land Monitor also identified unzoned sites within the Borough's key settlements that appeared to be in economic development/employment use and were greater than 0.5 hectares in size.

In Comber there was only one of these areas at Killinchy Street. The site currently had four buildings along the southern boundary, three of which were in B4 storage and distribution use and one of which was A2 use as an accountancy business. There was a parking and circulation area to the north of this.



Map of site on Killinchy Street, Comber

Sites with extant planning permission in/around Comber
The following table summarises approved applications for relevant employment-related uses in the Comber area within the last five years:

LA06/2022/0740/F	Ground floor unit, 19 High Street, Comber	COU from coffee shop to office	Approval 07.09/2022
LA06/2021/1448/F	Comber Tyre Services, 81a Killinchy road, comber	4 light industrial units class B2	Approval 08.07.2022
LA06/2021/1106/F	1 Killinchy Street, Comber	COU from bank to sui generis category	Approval 12.11.2021
LA06/2020/0672/F	Thompson Timber Building Supplies, 31b Ballygowan Road, Comber	Extension to shed to form reception and building supplies shop	Approval 12.01.2021

Vacant sites that could potentially facilitate economic development in Comber
The Employment Land Review Report (ELRR, 2019), carried out by Gravis Planning included an assessment of the amount of zoned employment land available and what would be required in the future based upon the Council's own growth aspirations (contained within the Integrated Tourism, Development, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy). Based upon the success scenario of 7500 jobs by 2030, the ELRR used a well-established methodology to convert the jobs into floorspace calculations and then convert the floorspace figures into hectares of land required. The exercise found that 25ha of land would be required. This was a large oversupply as there was already 62.28ha of undeveloped zoned land within the

Borough. It should be noted that only 4.66ha of this was in Comber (the Riverside site already referred to).

The ELRR did not make any specific recommendations about employment land provision in Comber. In line with the RDS, it recognised the strategic importance of Bangor and Newtownards as employment locations within the Borough and also the high level of existing zoned sites that were already located in these larger settlements.

The future zoning of land would be informed by the Council's growth aspirations, updates to the ELRR and in-house survey work carried out by the LDP team.

The Employment Land Review Report completed for the Local Development Plan included an assessment of suitable 'brownfield' sites within the development limits of the Boroughs main settlements. Brownfield sites aligned with the definition within the Regional Development Strategy:

'Land that is or was occupied by a permanent structure within a defined settlement limit. The term may encompass vacant or derelict lands, infill sites, land occupied by redundant or underused buildings or a piece of commercial property that is abandoned or underused and often environmentally contaminated.'

For the purposes of the Brownfield assessment, areas of public open space, gardens of dwellings, sites already zoned for alternative uses in the extant area plans and lands currently in active use were excluded from the definition of 'brownfield.'

The following was a map and associated table detailing the findings for Comber.

Map Ref.	Address	Area (ha)	Current Use	Planning history and comment
1	Land south east of no.2 Ardara Wood and 5-7 Ardara Pines	0.37	Triangular shaped agricultural field in crop, with primary school to east and residential land uses to NW and SE and new housing development (zoning CR 04) now built to south (Pirrie)	The southern fringe of the site is shown on the ADAP Comber Map as a future link road. It is unclear whether or not this will be carried forward in the emerging LDP, but if it does it will impact upon the size of the site available for development.
2	Lands to the rear of nos. 1-57 Brownlow Street to the rear of nos. 22-24 Glen Road	0.61	Recently constructed housing	Site no longer vacant – new Glenwood development built and occupied. Not available for redevelopment for economic use.

3	Lands to the east of 9-13 Londonderry Avenue	0.35	Square shaped agricultural field used for crops, bound to the south by a bowling club	No planning history.
4	Former civic amenity site at Glen Link	0.08	Community garden	Now used as community garden so not available for redevelopment.
5	Land to the rear of no. 78-86 Mill Street and west of Comber Baptist Church	0.14	Unmanaged and overgrown area	No planning history TPO on site for development potential may be restricted as may access and parking due to confined and backland nature of site.
6	Land to the rear of 10-24 High Street Court, adjacent to Windmill Hill	0.18	Rectangular shaped site, accessing via Windmill Hill. Views of the site are well contained	No planning history Relatively tightly confined site with narrow access.
7	Lands to the rear of 8-11 Weir Close	0.22	Steep parcel of land which is overgrown with vegetation and landlocked	No planning history but access likely to be difficult
8	Land west of Carnesure Heights , south of comber By-Pass	2.26	Irregularly shaped site which is dissected by the Enler River. The land uses to the south and west are residential	No planning history. Adjacent to river so this may act as a constraint to development. Route of the proposed future link road runs along the southern boundary of site. It is unclear whether or not this will be carried forward in the emerging LDP, but if it does it will impact upon the size of the site available for development.
9	Lands between 48 and 52 Castle Lane	0.09	Narrow elongated site, overgrown with vegetation, adjacent to day nursery, with a dwelling on other side	Previous history of approvals for small housing development. Not constructed and the permissions have expired.

				Very restricted in size.
10	Lands to the rear of 33-37 Castle Street	0.14	Narrow finger-shaped site which is mostly wasteland that has become overgrown	Site has approval for 13 dwellings (LA06/2021/1220/F). This permission remains extant but has not yet been built, unlikely to become available for other uses.
11	Lands NE of no. 7-16 Castlelodge Park	1.83	Irregularly shaped field adjacent to Enler River	No planning history Adjacent to river to – among other material considerations, PPS15 considerations will be relevant
12	Lands NW of 13 Dunsy Way	0.27	Irregularly shaped site, consisting of overgrown grass and accessed off Dunsy Way. There is residential land use to the north east and south and school playing fields to the south west	No planning history Electricity pole and transformer is centrally located within the site so discussions would need to take place with NIE regarding the relocation of this piece of infrastructure.
13	Land to west and south of 53 Newtownards Road	0.14	Recently constructed housing development	Planning permission granted in 2018 for 5 dwellings under reference LA06/2015/0463. This permission is now full implemented and the housing occupied. Site is no longer available for alternative uses.
14	Land south of Enler River, north of Ballydrain Road	7.22	Previously vacant land but now a housing development	Site has approval for various phases of the Ardnavalley housing development No longer available for alternative uses
15	Land between 3 and 5 Ballydrain Road	0.36		Site in the process of being developed for housing so no longer available
TOTAL		**5.76**		

Shaded boxes - Lands with approval/already developed for alternative uses

The assessment of Brownfield sites showed the following:

- Out of 15 sites, six of these were no longer available for economic development purposes due to extant planning permissions (primarily for housing), some of which had been fully implemented;
- Other sites were very limited in area such as nos. 5 and 9, so would have limited potential for economic development uses;
- All of the sites had their own unique planning constraints such as restricted access, TPO trees and electricity infrastructure.

The Employment Land Review did not recommend formal zoning of any of the above sites for economic development purposes. The restricted access, limited space for parking and circulation of large vehicles and location adjacent to residential properties rendered them unsuitable for many of the types of uses that fell within Class B of the Planning (Use Classes) (NI) Order 2015 such as storage and distribution and General Industrial. Notwithstanding, these smaller sites may have been suitable for small scale business units and would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

In terms of compatibility with the Department of Economy Sub Regional Economic Plan, and Sectoral Action Plans together with Invest NI, the Economic vison of the Department was to see employment providing better rewards and to be fulfilling and accessible. It wanted to see people benefit from better jobs wherever they lived and wanted to see these jobs and the lifestyle they supported to be greener.

The Plan had recognised the lack of supply of industrial land and property, the needed for investment in water and sewage systems. It had also pointed out low paying sectors such as tourism, hospitality and agriculture along with an aging population as issues affecting economic progress, all of which was relevant to the Comber area.

The Department for the Economy had proposed the creation of economic interventions such as the Local Economic Partnerships to empower communities to build a more sustainable and thriving economy where people wanted to live and work and where employers wanted to invest. Ards and North Down was currently developing an action plan which should draw down in excess of £4.15 million until 31st March 2028 to address some of these challenges.

In terms of Invest NI, its priority was delivering its business strategy which maintained a focus on manufacturing and tradable services businesses which could sell their goods or services into markets outside NI.

Ensuring the provision of a sufficient supply of strategic land and property for economic development was a key element of the business strategy and it was particularly important in allowing Invest NI to deliver against its strategic priority of ‘Promoting Places and Partnerships’ and achieving regional balance.

The implementation of Invest NI’s new Regional Property Programme (RPP) was underway and was expected to be a significant driver of regional balance by increasing industrial land at a regional level. Through a phased and targeted approach to land / property development, it aimed to ensure Invest NI had enough

land and buildings to maximise new economic opportunities aligned to its business strategy.

Several wider challenges existed, including the availability of suitable water, electricity infrastructure, and transport infrastructure. Furthermore, current public sector budgetary pressures were slowing progress and reducing the resources available for delivering locally focused property solutions.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Gilmour raised questions on behalf of her colleague, Alderman Cummings, who had hoped to request speaking rights but was unavailable to attend the meeting.

Councillor Gilmour queried how Invest NI could be kept aware of Comber's aspirations to retain its locality within the Borough's Economic Strategy, in line with Invest NI's PPP goal of regional balance and asked whether officers would pursue this with Invest NI.

In a second query, Councillor Gilmour highlighted long-standing concern regarding infrastructure support in Comber, particularly water supply and sewerage services. She requested an update on the current status with Northern Ireland Water and whether further follow-up was required to ensure alignment with the strategy's aspirations.

In a final query on behalf of Alderman Cummings, she referred to the Department of Economy's proposal to create economic interventions. Councillor Gilmour asked if the Council could maximise use of this plan to secure support for Comber and whether any specific interventions had been identified in the action plan. She recognised that this question might be answered in a later item on the agenda.

In response to the first query, the Economic Development Manager explained that Invest NI support was not linked specifically to Comber or any individual town within the Borough. She added that eligibility depended on the calibre of proposals and whether they met Invest NI's selection criteria to be considered viable.

Responding to the second query, the Director added that water supply was a Borough-wide issue affecting development and not limited to Comber. He explained that the Council regularly challenged NI Water which provided deputations and updates. The concerns would be addressed as part of a corporate response, rather than focusing solely on Comber, and it was important to continue pressing NI Water on multiple areas across the Borough.

Councillor Gilmour appreciated that the issues raised regarding NI Water were Borough wide and reiterated that she had brought the above questions on behalf of Alderman Cummings.

The seconder, Councillor Morgan, recognised the work that had gone into the report and felt this was good for Comber, believing that the town was often overlooked compared to Bangor and Newtownards. She welcomed the news of new business accommodation at Enler and asked if the facility was currently in use. The officer would make enquires and report back.

In a further comment, Councillor Morgan felt that while it was a positive step to gain this new business accommodation, she noted that there was limited provision in Comber beyond that. She was also aware of other significant issues in addition to the sewerage infrastructure in relation to flooding which made some sites unsuitable for development.

In a final comment, Councillor Morgan emphasised the need to remain mindful of towns such as Comber and Donaghadee and suggested that smaller scale accommodation for businesses may be appropriate.

Alderman McDowell asked if photograph of the Enler building featured in the report was authentic or if it had been AI-generated and questioned how Council could work more closely with the people involved to try and create jobs and economic growth in the area. The officer suspected that the photo had been slightly enhanced and advised that the Economic Development team would make contact to clarify existing use and any potential for collaboration.

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

11. PLACE AND PROSPERITY DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2025 (FILE FIN45)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Place and Prosperity Budgetary Control Report covered the 6-month period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 and reflected the recent Organisational changes. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £326k (8%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance
The Place and Prosperity Directorate's budget performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£347k favourable	**3**
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£40k favourable	**3**
Report 4	Income	£61k adverse	**3**

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

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(347)	Mainly due to vacant posts during the first 6 months. • Planning & Building Control (£275.9k) • Economic Growth (£73.4k)
Goods & Services		
Capital Development	(40)	Revenue spend on major capital projects less than budget.
Income		
Planning	63	Planning application fees £71.4k Planning Property Certificates (£9.7k)

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT

Period 6 - September 2025

	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget		Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£		£	£	%
Place & Prosperity						
5100 Place and Prosperity HQ	242,313	242,000		313	424,800	0.1
5200 Economic Growth	888,449	978,500		(90,051)	2,899,000	(9.2)
5300 Planning & Building Control Services	806,270	1,019,700		(213,430)	2,236,300	(20.9)
5400 Tourism, Arts & Heritage	1,625,662	1,582,100		43,562	3,137,500	2.8
5500 Capital Development	171,950	237,600		(65,650)	641,100	(27.6)
Total	**3,734,644**	**4,059,900**	A	**(325,256)**	**9,338,700**	**(8.0)**

REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT

	£	£		£	£	%
Place & Prosperity - Payroll						
5100 Place and Prosperity HQ	161,903	162,000		(97)	324,400	(0.1)
5200 Economic Growth	785,541	858,900		(73,359)	1,718,700	(8.5)
5300 Planning & Building Control Services	1,640,376	1,916,300		(275,924)	3,832,400	(14.4)
5400 Tourism, Arts & Heritage	902,596	873,700		28,896	1,711,300	3.3
5500 Capital Development	167,852	194,100		(26,248)	386,900	(13.5)
Total	**3,658,269**	**4,005,000**	B	**(346,731)**	**7,973,700**	**(8.7)**

REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT

	£	£		£	£	%
Place & Prosperity - Goods & Services						
5100 Place and Prosperity HQ	80,409	80,000		409	100,400	0.5
5200 Economic Growth	345,887	350,600		(4,713)	1,687,800	(1.3)
5300 Planning & Building Control Services	178,969	179,200		(231)	523,800	(0.1)
5400 Tourism, Arts & Heritage	831,653	827,700		3,953	1,639,000	0.5
5500 Capital Development	4,097	43,500		(39,403)	254,200	(90.6)
Total	**1,441,016**	**1,481,000**	C	**(39,984)**	**4,205,200**	**(2.7)**

REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT

	£	£		£	£	%
Place & Prosperity - Income						
5100 Place and Prosperity HQ	-	-		-	-	-
5200 Economic Growth	(242,980)	(231,000)		(11,980)	(507,500)	(5.2)
5300 Planning & Building Control Services	(1,013,075)	(1,075,800)		62,725	(2,119,900)	5.8
5400 Tourism, Arts & Heritage	(108,586)	(119,300)		10,714	(212,800)	9.0
5500 Capital Development	-	-		-	-	
Totals	**(1,364,641)**	**(1,426,100)**	D	**61,459**	**(2,840,200)**	**4.3**

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

The Chair noted a large budget variance in relation to Payroll (Planning and Building Control) and asked the Director to clarify if this was a Planning Committee related matter. The Director explained changes to finance reporting structures and advised that the figure would be reported separately to the Planning Committee.

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

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were not items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

13. GO SUCCEED – AMENDMENT TO THE QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT OF 6 MARCH 2025 (FILE ED135)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The report addresses council contractual arrangements with the Programme Management Office in Belfast. This is linked to a collaboration agreement that should not be shared with the public.

14. LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP) ACTION PLAN (FILE ED136)

(Appendix VII - VIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The LEP is currently discussing potential projects which are confidential and for which negotiations are on-going. The resulting action plan has not been agreed and cannot be shared with the public until the DfE approves it.

15. ARDS CITIZENS' HUB UPDATE (FILE RDP251)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Exemption Reason: 1. relating to an individual

The report contains commercially sensitive and politically significant details that could affect negotiations and contracts or cause public concern and negative media cover. It states the project cannot proceed for now which might be misinterpreted as cancellation rather than a temporary pause pending resolution. This pause is intended to protect Council's interests and allow negotiations to continue without external influence.

16. KIRCUBBIN HARBOUR UPDATE (FILE 160121)

(Appendix IX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

EXEMPTION - 3: RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

This report details the current condition and anticipated repair costs of a privately owned asset in addition to the details of previous negotiations with the landowner and therefore the report must be In Confidence.

17. GP14 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – BID FOR EVENT 2026 (FILE TO/EG70)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

This report contains information relating to the financial details of an application to the Bid For Events Fund 2026-2027.

The report recommended that Council approved the award subject to the Rates Setting process and adherence to terms and conditions of the award.

18. PICKIE FUNPARK PERIOD 1 REPORT (FILE DEVP1)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

This report contains information relating to the financial and commercial affairs of the Operator.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

19. EXPLORIS PERIOD 1 REPORT (FILE DEVP3)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

This report contains information relating to the financial and commercial affairs of the Operator.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

20. LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE (FILE RDP47)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

This relates to funding which has just been allocated to the LMP. The allocation of that funding is currently being worked out and needs the approval of DfC to proceed. Information on these contracts and the potential delivery agents cannot be shared with the public at this stage.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.02pm.

ITEM 7.4

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 December 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cochrane

Aldermen: Brooks
Graham (7.05 pm)
McIlveen
Smith (7.05 pm)
McRandal (Zoom)

Councillors: Chambers (Zoom)
Gilmour (7.25 pm Zoom)
Irvine, S
Irvine, W
Thompson
McBurney (Zoom)
McCracken
Moore (Zoom)

Officers in Attendance: Acting Director of Corporate Services (C Jackson), Head of Corporate Governance (A Curtis), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance (S Denny), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Irwin and apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Smith.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION – BANGOR LADIES CHOIR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that a formal request had been received from Councillors Cochrane, McClean and Thompson requesting that a civic reception be held in honour of Bangor Ladies Choir. The proposed event would commemorate the choir's 50th anniversary.

Bangor Ladies Choir was established in April 1976 by Isobel Reid, who conducted the first rehearsal in her home with nine members. Over the years, the choir grew steadily, with some original members still active today. In 1990, leadership passed to Joan Houston, whose direction elevated the choir's reputation as one of Northern

Ireland's finest. A new era began in 2011 under Paul Briggs, supported by Christine Crutchley and Joanne Cruise, until Mr Briggs' departure in 2017 and his passing in 2020.

Christine Crutchley then assumed the role of Musical Director, introducing contemporary arrangements and innovative performance elements, supported by Joanne Cruise and a strong technical team. The choir embraced digital platforms, including social media and YouTube, to share its work.

Bangor Ladies Choir had performed widely across Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom, forging musical links with choirs in Bobbio, Italy, and participating in cultural exchange projects. It had shared stages with renowned artists such as Aled Jones, Hayley Westenra, and Phil Coulter, while using its talent to raise substantial funds for charities, including mental health initiatives. Annual engagements included a Christmas concert for the Mayor's Charities, and the choir regularly collaborated with disability choirs and performed in care homes, reinforcing its commitment to community support.

In 2022, the choir was appointed as the first City Ambassadors for Bangor following its conferment of city status, performing for Princess Anne at the official ceremony. Membership now stood at 82, with recruitment continuing through the "Find Your Voice" initiative. Dedication and camaraderie remained central to the choir's ethos, ensuring high standards and strong bonds among members. The choir would celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026, marking five decades of musical excellence and friendship while striving to sustain and grow its legacy for future generations.

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, and prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception
The criterion against which each request would be assessed was as followed: -

1. **Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community <u>and</u> 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.

<u>OR</u>

2. **A Very Significant or Unique Achievement**
   An achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient has a strong association with the Borough.

The request had been submitted in line with agreed procedures and met the criteria for a civic reception as stated in point 1 above - Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary. The cost could be met from the 2025/26 civic budget.

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

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

Proposing the recommendation Councillor W Irvine stated that Bangor Ladies Choir was a very worthy recipient of this honour. He noted that the Choir had grown in numbers over recent years and that the International Choral Festival had contributed to tourism within the Borough.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Thompson remarked that the Choir had been established for nearly fifty years, with a reputation extending beyond Northern Ireland. He acknowledged that the International Choral Festival had been set up by the members and stated that the honour would be welcomed by the Choir, particularly in light of its anniversary.

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

4. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION TO MARK RECENT AWARDS SUCCESS IN DONAGHADEE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that a formal request had been submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillors Chambers, Cochrane, Hennessy, Irwin and Thompson proposing that a civic reception be held to celebrate the recent achievements in Donaghadee.

In 2025, Donaghadee received significant recognition, including the Ulster in Bloom Best Small Town Award, a Gold Medal in Britain in Bloom, and most recently, the All-Ireland IPD Pride of Place Award.

The proposed event would provide an opportunity to formally acknowledge and congratulate the Dee Bloomers, Donaghadee Community Development Council, and the Council's Parks Team for their outstanding contributions to those remarkable accomplishments.

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, and prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception
The criterion against which each request would be assessed was as followed: -

3. 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

4. A Very Significant or Unique Achievement
An achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient has a strong association with the Borough.

The request had been submitted in line with agreed procedures and met the criteria for a civic reception as stated in point 2 above – A very significant or unique achievement. The cost could be met from the 2025/26 civic budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to offer the Dee Bloomers and Donaghadee Community Development Council a Civic Reception to acknowledge their recent successes and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Brooks welcomed the opportunity to mark the town's achievements. He noted that Donaghadee had come to great prominence in winning Ulster in Bloom four times in succession and that was a source of considerable pride. He further recorded that this year's success in Britain in Bloom had been a tremendous accomplishment. The Alderman highlighted that Donaghadee was the only town in the whole of Ireland to be awarded the Pride of Place Award, recognising how communities worked together and how the town was perceived by others.

He welcomed the civic reception and acknowledged the contribution of residents and the wider community in the achievements won, giving particular credit to the Donaghadee Community Association (DCA) for its significant work.

Councillor Thompson concurred with Alderman Brooks' comments and stated that the achievement had been made possible by residents and volunteers coming together to accomplish something not previously attained. He expressed his thanks to the Dee Bloomers, who had celebrated their 25th anniversary, and observed that the whole town had united alongside the Council team to secure that success.

The Chair, as a proud Donaghadee Councillor, agreed with the sentiments that had been expressed. He stated that it had been a phenomenal year for the town and that everyone was very proud of the collective achievement.

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

5. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - LAND REGISTRATION LEGISLATION PROJECT

(Appendices I - III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Land Registry was part of Land & Property Services (LPS), which

was part of the Department of Finance. It had responsibility for maintaining records of land and property ownership in Northern Ireland. Its primary function was to ensure that legal interests in land were accurately recorded, providing transparency, security and legal certainty for property owners and potential buyers.

There were four main registers:

- Land Registry, which was map based with a folio boundary and associated Land Certificate;
- Registry of Deeds, which dealt with parcels of unregistered land;
- Statutory Charges Register, which enabled public authorities to register charges and restrictions on registered and unregistered land;
- and Ground Rents Register, which recorded the grounds rents that had been redeemed relating to both registered and unregistered land.

New Legislation and Consultation
Land Registry had decided to take a digital first approach and intended to phase out the existing LandWeb system over the next two years and replace it with a new platform that would offer digital services and electronic payment methods. The aim was to deliver faster and better-quality services and improve the online user experience.

In order to do that the current legislation must be amended, using the powers conferred by the Electronic Communications Act (NI) 2001.

Members could access the details of the plans in the Land Registration Legislation Project document (Appendix 1), together with the Draft Order 2026 No.1 (Appendix 2).

As part of the consultation process, a questionnaire was produced by LPS and a copy of the draft response prepared by officers was also attached (Appendix 3).

Whilst welcoming any improvement in the speed that applications could be made, approved and registered, there was concern at the security of the system in terms of submissions and the electronic seal, as well as the discretion given to the Land Registrar. Assurances had been sought in respect of the retention of hard copies of documents of title that were being sent off-site and, potentially, out of the country for scanning onto the digital platform.

The consultation would run for 13 weeks and close on 12th January 2026.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the draft consultation response in Appendix 3.

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

6. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

6a Community Planning and Climate

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services 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 Half Year 1 (April – September) was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to 7 outcomes as follows:

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:
Participation was a priority of the Big Plan.

In May 2025, the Council hosted the Big Community Planning 10-Year Summit, a half-day celebration marking a decade of community planning in Northern Ireland. The event featured:

- The launch of an updated Big Plan
- A series of animations showcasing achievements by the Community Planning Partnership
- Opportunities for participants and beneficiaries of community planning workstreams to share their experiences

This milestone event was designed to re-energise stakeholders and partners, reaffirming collective commitment to collaborative planning. Its success was reflected in the increased level of activity across workstreams. During the reporting period, 22 workstream meetings were held, more than double the target of 10, indicating that community planning had returned to pre-pandemic levels of engagement.

As part of the Over 50s Council meeting, feedback was sought on new content for the Big Guide to Age Friendly. The proposed additions aimed to help the public proactively prepare for emergency events, such as severe weather, by providing practical guidance and resources.

The Council had initiated the development of an online public survey to gather insights into community experiences and perceptions of climate change. That would inform future planning and ensure that the strategies reflected lived experiences and local concerns. The survey would be rolled out in the second half of the year.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements
Priority 6 of the Big Plan focused on Environmentally Sustainable Communities. In addition to that, in July 2025 Climate Change and Sustainability officially transferred to sit within the Community Planning and Climate service area.

Work to produce the Council's first Climate Mitigation Action Plan took place. That plan would set out clear priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience across services and communities.

In preparation for Council's new reporting obligations under the Climate Change (Reporting Boundaries) Regulations (NI) 2024, extensive validation of the Carbon Dashboard, recording Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, was undertaken. That would ensure that the data submitted via the DAERA reporting portal was robust, transparent and fit for purpose.

The information required for the DAERA climate mitigation reporting portal was collated to the reporting deadline of 31 October 2025.

To support the governance and strategic oversight of climate (mitigation) action, an internal Net Zero Board had been established; a first meeting took place in September. The group would monitor the impact, and cost effectiveness of climate action to review progress towards the targets adopted within Council's Corporate Plan and its own Climate Action Plan.

Internal audits of the ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems had taken place, and the external accreditation remained valid.

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements
Priority 5 of the Big Plan was to focus on Employment, Employability and Economic Inequality. This was delivered via the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan and an Anti-poverty workstream.

The Community Planning and Climate Manager was a member of the Labour Market Partnership and also participated in the work of the Local Economic Partnership.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements
Under Priority 6 of the Big Plan, the Council continued to advance work that supported the development of environmentally sustainable communities across Ards and North Down. A key focus had been on progressing the Sustainable Tourism Workstream, which aimed to define what it meant for the Borough to be recognised as a sustainable tourism destination.

The workstream had adopted a co-design and co-production approach, bringing together internal teams, external stakeholders, including tourism destinations to shape a shared understanding of sustainability in tourism. Workshops in May and August had been instrumental in identifying the actions, both internal and external, required to move the Borough forward on its sustainability journey.

A third workshop had now been completed, and a draft action plan was currently being developed. This plan would outline practical steps and measurable outcomes to support Ards and North Down in becoming a recognised sustainable tourism destination. In parallel, the workstream had also been developing a sustainability metric to help assess progress and benchmark the position over time.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements
Priority 4 of the Big Plan continued to focus on creating a welcoming Borough for all, with delivery led through the Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly workstreams.

The Age Friendly programme, managed by Environmental Health and funded by the Public Health Agency, remained a key driver of inclusive community planning. Within that, the Dementia Friendly sub-workstream had made significant progress in the first half of 2025, particularly through the development and launch of the Dementia Safeguarding Scheme. That was a collaborative initiative between the Council, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP), and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The scheme promoted the use of programmable wristbands and hangtags, which contained emergency contact details accessible via NFC-enabled smartphones. Those devices empowered individuals living with Dementia to retain their independence while offering reassurance to caregivers and families.

To support the launch, the Council produced instructional videos for both Android and iPhone users, demonstrating how to scan the devices and access emergency contact information. Those videos were shared via Council platforms and had helped raise awareness and understanding of the technology among the public.

Watch the Android video

Watch the iPhone video

Between April and September 2025, the Community Planning Service coordinated a multi-agency distribution plan, working with community planning partners and voluntary sector organisations to ensure the devices reached those who would benefit most. During that period, over 300 hangtags and wristbands were distributed across the Borough. Additional hangtags had been ordered.

The scheme had been well received by families, carers, and local organisations, and reflected the Council's commitment to building a Dementia-Friendly community where individuals were understood, respected, and supported.

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements
Priority 3 of the Big Plan focused on improving health outcomes by addressing the wider determinants of health through collaborative and preventative approaches.

Two key initiatives had progressed significantly between April and September 2025: the launch of the BIG Digital Guide to Wellbeing and the continuation of the Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight.

The BIG Digital Guide to Wellbeing was officially launched in September 2025, following a period of co-design with Community Planning partners. That interactive digital tool helped residents understand and access activities aligned with the Five Steps to Wellbeing, including opportunities for connection, learning, physical activity, mindfulness, and giving. The Health and Wellbeing Workstream Group played a central role in shaping the content and structure of the guide, ensuring it reflected local services and community assets. The guide was previewed at the Big Community Planning 10-Year Summit and had since been promoted across Council platforms and partner networks.

In parallel, the Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight, delivered in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA), had continued to evolve. That initiative was being academically evaluated through the PHIRST programme, which assessed how effectively the Council was implementing Public Health England's whole systems guidance.

A major milestone during the period was the commencement of a complex systems mapping exercise, which had been paused for over a year. In early 2025, PHA appointed Queens University, Belfast to lead the work. Following finalisation of

contract arrangements, workshops were held with stakeholders to re-engage partners and begin mapping the interconnected factors influencing healthier weight across the Borough. Those sessions had helped identify key leverage points for intervention and would inform the development of a localised action plan.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements
The facilitation of the Community Planning Partnership contributed to that outcome. Gathering of information during the period for the annual progress update report and 4th Statement of Progress.

The ongoing provision of data and evidence to other internal Council Services had enabled them to make evidence-based decisions for their service area.

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:

- Additional work waws needed as part of the phase 1 restructure to integrate the Climate Change and Sustainability Team into the Community Planning and Climate Service area.

Action to be taken
- New service plan, to include climate change and sustainability commitments
- New risk management plan, to incorporate climate change and sustainability

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Spend against Budget	Projects being delivered across 12 months, more expenditure expected in the second half of the year	None	Community Planning and Climate Manager	March 2026

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

6b Communications and Marketing

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services 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 April to September was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service has contributed to 7 outcomes as follows:

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:
During the period, the Communications and Marketing Service delivered a wide range of engagement initiatives to ensure transparency and participation.

The team issued over 230 media releases.

16 integrated marketing campaigns were delivered, generating 11 million digital impressions and promoting major Council events and tourism activities, providing residents and businesses with clear opportunities to engage.

Regeneration projects such as Bangor Waterfront and Village Plans were supported through over 30 public information sessions, the Go Vocal engagement platform, and

targeted publicity, enabling stakeholders to review proposals and contribute feedback.

Those actions collectively enhanced openness, built trust, and ensured citizens and businesses could influence service delivery and investment decisions.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

Key achievements:
The Service supported environmental sustainability through targeted communications on waste and recycling initiatives. Social media and web platforms were used to promote responsible waste management and recycling behaviours, ensuring residents were informed and engaged as Council transitioned to net zero.

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:
Borough Marketing delivered 16 integrated campaigns generating over 11 million digital impressions and promoted Council-led events and tourism development activities to attract visitors and investment.

Corporate Marketing support for economic development initiatives, including Labour Market Partnership and inward investment propositions, strengthened the Borough's profile as a business-friendly destination.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:
The Service showcased Ards and North Down as an appealing destination through high-profile campaigns, event promotion, and placemaking activities. Regeneration communications for Bangor Waterfront and Village Plans ensured transparency and community involvement in shaping public spaces. Visitor guides, maps, and digital content further enhanced the Borough's attractiveness to residents and tourists.

The visitardsandnorthdown.com website attracted approximately 730,000 visits annually, with web traffic trend increasing by around 50% year on year with an increasing visitor audience discovering the Borough's appeal. 97,454 emails were sent to Council's visitor database of 5,000 email subscribers during the period with high engagement average open rates of 39%.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing.

Key achievements:

Public engagement was prioritised through over 30 Village Plan sessions and targeted campaigns promoting community events such as Armed Forces Day and Taste Festivals.

Communications supported initiatives that fostered inclusivity and local pride, while internal engagement activities strengthened staff connection to Council values and objectives.

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy.

Key achievements:
The Service promoted leisure and recreation opportunities through marketing support for Council's leisure strategy and event programmes.

Campaigns encouraged participation in outdoor festivals, sporting events, and active travel initiatives, contributing to healthier lifestyles and improved wellbeing across the Borough.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation.

Key achievements:
Internal communications were strengthened through 28 editions of *NEWS AND INFO*, 12 Chief Executive updates, and video messaging to improve staff engagement.

The Service delivered continuous improvement of the Council website, managed 2,500+ social media posts, and processed 200+ media enquiries, ensuring transparency and responsiveness. The team also facilitated Social Media Coordination Group meetings.

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 on any actions required detailed below:

Sponsorship
An Advertising and Sponsorship Policy was approved by the Council in April, followed by a pilot scheme inviting Expressions of Interest. That was promoted through Council databases, local print publications, the website, and social media. However, the initiative attracted limited business interest due to restrictive criteria and unattractive contract terms, resulting in low participation and below target income generation.

Building on the lessons from the initial pilot, a refocused approach was now underway, including a targeted promotion of advertising opportunities on Council leisure centre screens commencing in December. Initial discussions were also taking place regarding the potential installation of large digital screens at key

Council-owned sites, subject to planning approval, to further enhance the Council's advertising portfolio.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Increase sponsorship revenue	Pilot restrictive criteria and unattractive contract terms Detailed above	Refocused phase 2 pilot Detailed above	Bangor Regeneration Manager	March 2026
Launch Engagement Framework	Requirement for further engagements with key services to shape the document	Amends being processed in preparation for the Framework to go through the Policy Development Process.	Bangor Regeneration Manager	March 2026

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Councillor Thompson referred to the regeneration projects on the Waterfront and Village Plans. He welcomed those initiatives but asked when the Village Plans would be released, noting that the consultation had taken place some time ago. The Acting Director of Corporate Services undertook to provide him with further information from the Regeneration Service which was working on the plans.

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

6c Finance

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services 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.

The service was currently implementing a new financial management system – a large scale culture change initiative which would involve all services across the Council. That was a major investment in new business critical digital infrastructure which would replace 25 year old software. It would provide a modern, user friendly interface, accessible anywhere with an internet connection and streamlining a range of manual processes. In order to staff the dedicated project team it had been necessary to backfill a number of key posts.

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 the half year up to the end of September was attached.

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

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- Transaction processing within Employee Payments remained very high.
- Attendance was within the corporate target
- Progress at implementing the new financial management system was progressing well.

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

- The diversion of resources towards the implementation of the new financial management system (FMS) was having an adverse impact on a number of indicators, such as supplier payments and debtor payments.

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

% spend against budget	Vacancies	Budget to be carried to next year	Head of Finance	December 2025
% of completed Employee Appraisals	Resources diverted to FMS project	All now completed	-	-
% Debtors payments	Payment channels not keeping pace with technology	Introduce better payment channels	Financial Ops Accountant	December 2025
To issue monthly budgetary control reports	Delays during the previous year accounts preparation	Target now being achieved	Performance Accountant	December 2025
To complete monthly account reconciliations	Delays during the previous year accounts preparation	Further focus on month end processes	Corporate Accountant	December 2025
Creditors paid within 10 working days	Main focus on 30-day target	New FMS will provide speedier system	Financial Ops Accountant	December 2025
Creditors paid outside 30 calendar days	Resources diverted to FMS project	New FMS will provide speedier system	Financial Ops Accountant	December 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

6d <u>Strategic Change</u>

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services 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 approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015 (version 4.0 updated October 2024). The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

The Council's 16 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 were reported to relevant Committees on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year H1	April – September	December
Half Year H2	October – March	June

The report for Strategic Change for Half Year H1 2025-26 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to: *Outcome 7 - Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation.*

Key points to note:
- Spend against budget was slightly lower than expected (96.68%) due to the vacant Procurement Officer post.
- Staff attendance had been consistently high at over 99.55% (against a target of 94.5%).
-

Procurement Service	
Key Achievements	• Procurement savings for the Council are over target for the year to date (£158,168 versus £125,000). Figure achieved through Procurement engaging with Service areas to define project budgets, and tenders received being under this stipulated budget. • There have been no procurement challenges. • A number of procurements have been complex capital projects and under additional scrutiny. • Continued support to the Finance Project Team in the implementation of the new financial management system. • Implementation of the new Procurement Act 2023. • Procurement Policy, Handbook and associated procurement documents reviewed, updated and implemented. • Review and implementation of revised Procurement Control Limits. • Supported Council to take forward and complete the decision process required for the future leisure provision. Work is now ongoing to implement Council's decision. • Supported the PeacePlus team in the appointment of providers to deliver the PeacePlus programme. • Satisfactory Procurement audit.
Emerging Issues	The Procurement Assistant has been a positive addition to the team providing significant additional capacity. Despite this, there continues to be capacity issues associated with the volume of work.

Action to be taken	Recruitment for a Procurement Officer will be undertaken in Quarter 4 of year 2025/26.

Digital Services	
Key Achievements	• Systems and network uptime is 99% (against a target of 99%). • 97% of service calls satisfactorily addressed with timescales (against a target of 97%). • Increased use of mobile devices. Consolidation of devices from Desktop PC, Tablet, Mobile phone to Laptop and Mobile Phones. • 260 laptops deployed (new and refreshed). • Standardisation of service desk portal across Digital Services, GIS and Finance. • Mitel Micollab now stable with over 600 softphone deployments. • Server upgrades/ replacements and retirement of old units. • SOC/SIEM fully operational. • Windows 10>11 upgrades almost at a close. • Bin widget transformation project. Residents can now find missed collections etc. This led to a 36% reduction in calls. • Increase in staff training due to broader availability of courses. • No. of GIS Web Editors – 23. • No. of public facing applications (on Council site) – 3. • Total GIS Portal Views (Geoportals and GIS Help Hub): 43,230 (increase of 29,730 from last year).
Emerging Issues	The Digital Services Manager is retiring at the end of January 2026.
Action to be taken	Further to an unsuccessful recruitment campaign (via a recruitment agency) in early summer 2026, the Digital Services Manager post has been advertised again with a closing date of the end of November. This is being managed by the Council's HR team who are adopting a multi-channel approach (online, print, radio) not utilised the last time.

Transformation Service	
Key Achievements	• Completed the statutory 2025/26 Performance Improvement Plan and 2024/25 Self-Assessment Report. • Overall, the team has supported: - Digital Services on the implementation of the Council's new Corporate File Plan (EDRMS) and the introduction of a bin widget

	- Council to complete the decision process required for future leisure provision. Work is now ongoing to implement Council's decision. - CLT in taking forward Phase 2 of the organisational redesign. - Tourism to complete a mid-point review of the Tourism Events Strategy and progressed 'Bid for' sporting events package. - Community Development to take forward the development of a Community Strategy (due to be complete by May 2026). - The PeacePlus team in preparation of project business cases. - The Corporate Grants Working Group to implement the approved Grants policy and prepare for an online grants system. - Finance to progress the new Financial Management System. - Environmental Services in taking forward the depot rationalisation project (currently at SOC stage). - Leisure Services to: Develop a ten-year Leisure Strategy (approved in July 2025) and implement year 1 recommendations. Undertake APSE benchmarking with the third NI benchmarking process and second UK benchmarking process complete. Progress staff restructuring (Phase 4 – Admin, Fitness manager). In addition the team: • Led on the Living Wage accreditation process for Council • Completed the Council's first NI APSE Core submission.
Emerging Issues	To date the ream has relied on anecdotal feedback in terms of the Transformation team's performance, which, while it has been excellent, is difficult to quantify.
Action to be taken	Going forward, the team plan to formalise feedback and evaluation of projects completed to ensure continuous improvement of the Transformation Service.

Organisational Development	
Key Achievements	• The OD function moved across from HR to Strategic Change to facilitate greater collaboration with the digital, transformation and performance improvement functions. • Implemented the Apprenticeship, Traineeship, Placement and Work Experience Scheme - 1 Apprentice commenced in October 2026. • The Workforce Plan has been drafted and will be consulted on during the second half of the year. • Learning and Development Strategy implemented. • Launched 7 eLearning Courses.

	• Organised over 100 training courses (including Member Development). • Raising awareness of Domestic Abuse and related events in partnership with Externally Funded Programmes. • Commenced third Investors in People Assessment. • Implemented year 6 of the People Plan • Positive partnership and collaboration with Communications on IIP, long service and roll out eLearning courses e.g. social media.
Emerging Issues	The Training Co-ordinator is retiring in June 2026 and succession planning could be an issue.
Action to be taken	A review of the entire OD service will be undertaken during Phase 2 of the organisational redesign in order to understand the capacity and skills of current and potential future OD workforce.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Alderman McRandal noted that the services target for disaster recovery exercises had been set at five, with actual performance recorded as zero. The Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance reported that the organisation had been working through its business continuity approach over the past year, during which the Business Continuity Plan had been revised. She confirmed that the Business Impact Analysis for each service area was in the process of being completed, and it had been agreed that, until that work was finalised, it would not be valuable to undertake disaster recovery exercises. She further advised that the exercises were scheduled to take place before March.

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

6e Corporate Governance

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

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
Q2	April – September	December
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 3 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:

Customer Service
33 complaints received April – September 2025

- 57.58% dealt within 5 working days in line with complaints procedure (19)
- 27.27% had authorised extensions (9)
- 15.15% not requested/authorised (5)

12 went to stage 2

- 85% of Stage 2 complaints have been dealt with in line with the Complaints Handling Procedure (6)
- 15% had an authorised extension (1)

1 went to NIPSO - Outcome not known at this time.

Key points to note:
The method of managing and collating complaint information was proving to be very effective as the lessons learned from each complaint were now being considered on a regular basis. Actions to address recurring issues were also being put in place, which demonstrated that citizens had opportunities to influence services.

Screening
100% of policies were screened for Equality, Good Relations, Sustainability, Rural Needs and Data Protection.
Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan reviewed, and consultation took place.

An EQIA was screened in for one new event in the Borough. The EQIA provided the evidence to enable the Council to permit the event.

The revised Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan, following consultation, would be reported to the Council in due course. There had been no officer in post since August, and the work would be completed once the incoming officer had had a chance to review the documents.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:
- Paper postage had been reduced in most services due to capitalising on digital communication methods.
- Paper filing had now been stopped as a default. Files were now set up digitally, by default, with paper versions only by exception.

Key points to note:
HR paperwork was being reviewed to determine if paper could be designed out of its processes.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- The Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) project commenced at the start of September.
- The implementation of the EDRMS was critical to ensure that files and records were kept and maintained appropriately to ensure data organisation and security of data.
- That was a significant culture change and digital transformation project, that would involve all services across the Council.

Key points to note:
During the reporting period the contract plan was established. It was currently being rolled out throughout the organisation following a successful pilot. The full transition to SharePoint would take approximately 12 months and was currently running on target.

The implementation of the Information Management System had not been successful. Officers were reviewing that at the minute.

The implementation of a lands inspection policy and explored use of ArcGIS Field Map app was currently being investigated.

Emerging issues:
Cost increases continued to put pressure on the service. Officers endeavoured to live within tight budgets with expectations increasing.

Information requests and complaints were remaining complex and suspicion of AI generated requests was rising.

Action to be taken:
Budget issues were taken into consideration when setting next year's budget.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
100% of complaints dealt in line with CHP	Stage 1 extensions granted are being treated as missing 5 day deadline	Now recording them internally as 2 separate items, but they will still be treated as missing the 5 day deadline by NIPSO. More consideration to be given to going straight to Stage 2 rather than extend stage 1.	Customer Services Manager	Ongoing
Complete Title Reconciliation exercise	Not enough resource to carry out	Continue to work on this when time allows	Lands Manager	Ongoing
Draft and implement a lands inspection policy and explore use of ArcGIS Field Map app	Not enough resource to carry out	Continue to work on this when time allows	Lands Manager	Ongoing
Implement Information Management System	Project Delivery issue, investigating termination of contract	Continue to review	Compliance Officer (Information)	Ongoing
Implement EDRMS for Council	Project didn't start until September	Project now in place	Head of Corporate Governance	Ongoing
Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan reviewed and agreed by Sept 2025	Post consultation feedback version to be presented when new officer in place	Updated draft to be presented at February committee	Compliance Officer (Equality)	Ongoing
% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	Timing of employee appointments	Complete in next 4 weeks	Head of Corporate Governance	Ongoing

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

It was noted that the rollout of the information management system had not been successful to date and the Head of Corporate Governance explained that further

details on that could not be shared until the 'in confidence' section later in the meeting.

Alderman McRandal had noticed that there were not enough resources to carry out reconciliation work and asked when that might be completed. The Head of Corporate Governance reported that the reconciliation exercise had been started but had been carried out in a piecemeal fashion. She confirmed that a significant amount of work would be completed before the end of March 2026, although the Lands Team was undertaking that on top of their normal workload. It was explained that the land inspection policy was being designed with a proactive regime to follow after that.

Alderman McIlveen raised concerns regarding the complaints section, noting that performance was at 51% compared to the 100% target. He referred to the five-day deadline in the report and asked whether that accounted for all complaints or only some. Responding, the Head of Corporate Governance explained that it did not account for all of them and there had been issues noted in obtaining Stage 1 responses. While the team tried to avoid extensions in order to provide quick answers, complaints were becoming increasingly complex, making the five-day turnaround difficult. The volume of data and discussion often led to agreement on an extension.

Alderman McIlveen requested that the Council provide a breakdown of the 51% figure, since it appeared poor. It was acknowledged that it was disappointing, and officers would provide more detail.

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

6f Human Resources

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the Director of Corporate Services 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 April to September 2025 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028
In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to:

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Days lost due to absence (for those who were on sick leave) had reduced from 14 at the end of last year to 6 for the first half of this year, which had met the target set of 11.05 days. Considerable work had taken place in line with the Council's Management of Absence Action Plan to reduce absenteeism
- Staff attendance within the HR section was 97.26% which met the target of 94.5%
- Spend against budget was 99.81% which met the target set of 100%
- Recruitment exercises had been completed in a timely manner with all candidates for employment being responded to within 2 weeks of the shortlisting meeting and those attending for interview being notified of the outcome within 2 weeks of the interview.
- The HR service had commenced the process of having a paperless service.

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:

- The target set for having 100% appraisals completed within the HR service had not been met.
- Work towards having a formal Corporate Induction policy in place had not progressed in the first half of the year.

Action to be taken:

- Ensure that any appraisals not completed were carried out as soon as possible.
- Ensure that work was progressed towards a Corporate Induction Programme to compliment the very comprehensive departmental inductions already in place.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review

Develop a Corporate Induction Policy	HR is a very reactive service and due to having to prioritise workload, this KPI has not been developed	Ensure that work commences on this as soon as possible	Head of HR	March 2026
Ensure that any outstanding appraisals are completed	The HR admin officer was on sick leave and was unable to carry these out for the HR admin staff, these are not being completed	Ensure that the outstanding appraisals are completed	Head of HR	December 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Alderman McRandal referred to appraisal targets not having been met, though it was unclear whether that shortfall applied only to HR or across the organisation as a whole. It was explained that the appraisal system as a whole had not been working as well as it should and that was thought to be as a result of limitations with the current form/digital system for reporting. The team was reviewing that aspect of the system and a new format/approach was expected to be introduced by April 2026.

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

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING ANNUAL UPDATE

(Appendices IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the purpose of the report was to provide the Council with an update on the implementation and progress of community planning across the Borough, as facilitated by the Council and its community planning partners. The report summarised the key points from the statutory (biennial) Fourth Statement of Progress and the Annual Performance Update Report 2025, both adopted by Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership (SCPP) in October 2025.

Under the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Councils were required to lead a community planning process and publish a Statement of Progress every two years. In addition, the SCPP produced an Annual Performance Update Report to provide a more detailed account of progress against the outcomes and priorities of the Big Plan.

Summary of Key Achievements (2024-2025)

Over the past year, community planning in Ards and North Down had continued to evolve, marking a decade of collaborative action and innovation. The Big 10-Year Summit event was a highlight, bringing together partners, community organisations, and residents to celebrate the progress made and to launch a refreshed Big Plan. The updated plan reflected the changing needs of our communities, with a renewed focus on wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability.

Young people and older adults had played a central role in shaping our priorities. The Youth Voice initiative saw over 800 young people participating in sessions that built leadership, confidence, and civic engagement, while the Over 50s Council continued to champion the voices of older residents, fostering intergenerational connections through projects like the GEN2GEN podcast series. Those efforts had helped bridge generational divides and ensured that community planning was truly inclusive.

Meanwhile, the commitment to health and wellbeing had been strengthened through the launch of the Big Digital Guide to Wellbeing and the Here2Help app, which had already supported residents in accessing advice and crisis support. Supporting vulnerable residents remained a priority.

The Dementia Safeguarding Scheme had provided practical support and reassurance to families, with hundreds of wristbands and hangtags distributed and a strong focus on raising awareness across local businesses and services.

The Labour Market Partnership had continued to deliver real impact, helping over 500 residents access training and employment opportunities, and supporting local employers to upskill their workforce.

Tackling poverty and inequality was at the heart of community planning. The Social Supermarket Programme had provided vital wraparound support to families facing hardship, not only addressing food poverty but also connecting people to wider services and opportunities for personal development.

Environmental sustainability had also been a key theme. Initiatives like the Moved by Nature campaign had encouraged residents to connect with the natural environment for their wellbeing, while planning for climate adaptation had become more closely integrated with community planning.

Throughout all those achievements, the strength of partnership working had been evident. By listening to communities, where appropriate co-designing initiatives, and sharing leadership across partners, Ards and North Down continued to build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Borough for everyone.

Challenges
The implementation of community planning in Ards and North Down continued to face several notable challenges. Accessing up-to-date and comprehensive data for some population indicators remained difficult, which could limit the ability to fully measure progress against certain outcomes.

The voluntary and community sector, which was integral to the delivery of many initiatives, was experiencing increased demand for services while operating with limited resources and capacity. That had at times affected the ability of partners to engage fully and sustain collaborative projects.

Competing demands also remained a challenge for the strategic community planning partners, but an initiative within the SCPP to map those pressures would help with better integration and impact.

Next Steps
Looking ahead, the Strategic Community Planning Partnership was committed to strengthening collaboration and shared leadership across all sectors involved in community planning. There would be a continued focus on building capacity both within the Council and among external partners, ensuring that all stakeholders had the resources, skills, and confidence needed to contribute effectively.

The Partnership would further embed systems thinking approaches, recognising the interconnected nature of challenges in health, the economy, and the environment, and would seek to develop integrated solutions that addressed those issues holistically.

Expanding opportunities for community engagement remained a priority, with particular emphasis on reaching underrepresented groups and ensuring that a diverse range of voices informed future priorities.

Regular monitoring and transparent reporting would be maintained to ensure accountability and responsiveness, and the Partnership would continue to advocate for longer-term funding arrangements, across its priority workstreams, to support sustainable progress.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Councillor W. Irvine thanked officers for the report and raised the issue of agencies working together under community planning. He noted that resources had sometimes come directly from the Council rather than external bodies and requested an update on that.

The Head of Community Planning advised that the Council naturally acted as a facilitator and therefore had taken a larger role in coordination. She acknowledged that the Council had carried a heavier load but explained that was the nature of how councils operated. She confirmed that partner agencies had provided a satisfactory level of contribution and that overall buy-in had remained strong.

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

8 UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF 2025/26 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2025)

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Members would be aware that the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 placed a duty upon Councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to account for it. At the beginning of each financial year, the Council was required to determine its priorities for improvement, which were aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Plan and to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) by 30 June that set out improvement objectives for the year ahead, and by 30 September to publish a Self-Assessment Report to review performance against the improvement objectives set in the preceding year.

Performance Planning and Management
To fulfil that requirement the Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and a Performance Management Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years
- PIP – published annually in June
- Service Plans – developed annually

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

Section 90 of the Act required a Council, during each financial year, to collect information that would allow it to assess its performance in achieving its improvement objectives and to measure its performance against performance indicators or standards set by the Department or any other indicators or standards which the Council choose to use.

The Council had governance arrangements in place to assure accountability for improvement and to ensure the delivery of its plans took place in an open, effective, honest and accountable manner.

Those arrangements included:
- Alignment of the service planning and budget process to ensure all costs were included in the estimate process
- An electronic performance management system (Ideagen), which could:
  - analyse data on a range of frequencies for trends and comparison
  - track the progress of indicators and actions
  - provide and communicate regular and robust performance information to managers, Elected Members and the public
- Half yearly reporting on progress against the Performance Improvement Plan to Corporate Services Committee
- Monthly reporting on Capital Projects to Corporate Projects Portfolio Board
- Reporting to Strategic Policy and Finance Group on at least 3 occasions per year

- Appropriate risk management in relation to main programmes of work.

Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26
This year Council's PIP identified four improvement objectives with a corresponding 64 measures, together with six Statutory Indicators and three self-imposed indicators.

An update on performance against the 2025/26 PIP to date (April – September 2025) was attached. It should be noted that the report reflected performance of the PIP only and was not necessarily representative of the overall performance of the organisation.

Where PIP measures were not being met, Action Plans would be presented to parent Committees as part of half yearly Service Plan performance reporting.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the attached Performance Update Report for the 2025/26 Performance Improvement Plan (April – September 2025).

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

Councillor McCracken asked for some clarification since it appeared that some of the targets seemed out of date. The Acting Director of Corporate Services explained that the report covered the period April to September 2025 so it would not reflect more recent developments.

Councillor W Irvine referred to social supermarkets where a problem had been noted in getting returns. He asked if that had been rectified and if there was any further update. The Acting Director agreed to come back to the Member with further information in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

9. <u>CORPORATE PLAN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT YEAR 1 2024 - 2025</u>
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council's third Corporate Plan (2024-2028) was approved by the Council in June 2024 and published in July.

The Plan was driven by three corporate priorities that aligned with the three pillars of sustainable development:
1. Economic - Increasing economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses.
2. Environmental - Reducing carbon emissions as we transitioned to net zero.
3. Social – Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequalities.

The Plan identified seven outcomes that needed to be achieved to meet priorities. They were (not in order of priority):

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

Across the seven outcomes 48 separate measures were agreed that would demonstrate whether the Council had been successful or not in achieving each outcome.

The Council was now halfway through year two of the Corporate Plan and an analysis of the first year's activities had been undertaken to assess the extent to which we were achieving the measures and outcomes, and, more importantly, to understand the work needed over the next two and a half years to ensure successful delivery of all activities.

The attached report provided a comprehensive summary of year one activities, each of which had been assigned a 'RAG' rating, and the table below highlighted the overall RAG status of all 48 measures.

Key

Completed/ Ongoing	**10**	***21%***
Started/ Ongoing	**37**	***77%***
Not Started	**1**	***2%***
TOTAL	**48**	***100%***

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the attached report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillor Gilmour entered the meeting at 7.25 pm)

10. <u>NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR W IRVINE AND COUNCILLOR S IRVINE</u>

That this Council pledges to oppose the introduction of any Digital ID system that would be mandatory or linked to essential services. We resolve to write to the Prime Minister urging the Government to abandon any Digital ID initiative and calling for a full public consultation to take place on the subject prior to any future proposals being brought forward.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine reported that the proposed Digital ID system in the United Kingdom had raised widespread concern locally and nationally. He highlighted risks around privacy, surveillance, and data security, noting past government breaches and the danger of centralising personal information. He warned that mandatory use could exclude elderly and disabled people from essential services, while placing burdens on law-abiding businesses and citizens. He also cautioned against racial profiling and loss of personal freedoms. He hoped that the Council would agree that it was important to send a united message rejecting the plan and insisted that any legislation must undergo full parliamentary scrutiny with public consultation.

As seconder to the Motion Councillor S Irvine emphasised the principle of protecting residents' fundamental rights and freedoms. He explained that the proposal for a mandatory digital system linked to essential services had posed serious risks that could not be ignored. While acknowledging that technology had a role to play, he stressed that it must never come at the expense of personal freedoms, privacy, or equal access.

He added that such a system would, by design, act as a gateway to everyday life, including accessing healthcare, opening bank accounts, receiving benefits, or verifying age, and warned that if the gateway failed, people could have been unfairly excluded from the basic services they relied upon. He further highlighted that those without digital literacy, financial means, or those who were vulnerable would have been disproportionately impacted.

Councillor Irvine cautioned that once mandatory, the system would have centralised large amounts of data, creating opportunities for misuse and that a system designed for one purpose could be extended to others. He clarified that he was not opposed to progress or innovation, but to the imposition of a system that people had not called for and which fundamentally altered the relationship between citizen and state.

In conclusion, he called for the proposal to be abandoned and for full open consultation before any changes were made, affirming that the Council stood for civil liberties and democratic accountability.

Alderman Smith stated that he was happy to support the Motion commending the opposition to the proposed introduction of ID cards. He had hoped that the Council would join the millions across the country who had already opposed. He had argued that ID cards were "un-British" and contrary to civil liberties rooted in wartime culture.

He had questioned the government's claim that ID cards would stop illegal immigration, noting its poor track record and the lack of public appetite for such measures. He had warned that ID cards represented a step toward a surveillance state and had doubted the government's ability to protect citizens' data. He concluded that although the proposal might not succeed, it was important to show opposition to what he described as a "stupid suggestion."

Alderman Graham had observed that most of his viewpoints had already been made. He had added that introducing legislation without a clear mandate was inherently undemocratic and he stressed that the government should adhere to the manifesto it had presented to the electorate before taking office.

Councillor W Irvine had thanked Members for their contributions and thought it was important for the Council to lay down its opposition to the government's proposal.

NOTED.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

ITEMS 12 – 18 ***IN CONFIDENCE***

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

In respect of Item 6e – Corporate Governance

Further discussion on the item took place.

12. RENEWAL OF TENANCY AGREEMENT – ABBEY STREET GATE LODGE

(Appendix VIII)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider the renewal of the tenancy agreement for the Abbey Street Gate Lodge. It was recommended that Council renewed the Agreement.

The recommendation was adopted.

13. LEASE TO NIE – SUBSTATION AT MCKEE CLOCK TOILETS

(Appendix IX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL OR PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to grant approval in principle of a site for a new NIE substation beside the public toilets at the McKee Clock. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

14. RENEWAL OF LEASE – LANDS AT BANGOR ABBEY
(APPENDIX X)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider the renewal of the leased lands at Bangor Abbey. It was recommended that Council renewed the Lease.

15. LEASE TO BRYANSBURN RANGERS FC BALLYWOOLEY PLAYING PITCH
(Appendix XI – XIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL OR PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to grant consent in accordance with the terms of the Lease for works to the premises. It was recommended that Council acceded to the request.

16. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF TOURISM DESTINATION AWARENESS MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

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

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

The Council was requested to consider the award of the tender for the Provision of Tourism Destination Awareness Marketing Campaigns to the highest-ranking company in accordance with the outcomes of the tender evaluation process.

17. DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION ORDER – PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY AT NORTH ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendices XIV & XV)

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

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

The Council was asked by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to consent to a Public Path Diversion Order.

The recommendation was that the Council provided consent.

18. ESTIMATES PROGRESS REPORT 3

(Appendices XVI & XVII)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider the progress made so far in setting a budget and district rates for 2026/27 financial year.

The recommendation was that Council note the report.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.15 pm.

ITEM 7.5

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Ashe

Alderman: Brooks
McRandal

Councillors:

Boyle	Kerr (7.20pm Zoom)
Chambers	McBurney
Cochrane	McClean
Douglas	McKee
W Irvine	Moore

Officers in Attendance: Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Falkner), Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services (G Kinnear), Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager (D Mackey), Operations Manager (S Fegan), Leisure Services Officer (A Irvine) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

Also in Attendance: Councillor Kendall and Councillor Wray (Zoom)

1. APOLOGIES AND CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman thanked Alderman McRandal for stepping in for her while she had been absent and continuing she informed members that Committee member Councillor Hollywood and his wife had welcomed the arrival of new baby twins and she wished them all well.

Apologies were sought at this stage and were noted from Alderman Cummings, Councillors Holywood and S Irvine. Apologies for lateness had also been received from Councillor Kerr.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Councillor Chambers –

- Item 3 - Northern Community Leisure Trust and Leisure Ards and North Down Joint Membership for Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Item 14 - Single Tender Action for part replacement of timing system at Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex

Councillor W Irvine – Item 3 - Northern Community Leisure Trust and Leisure Ards and North Down Joint Membership for Ards and North Down Borough Council

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

(Councillors Chambers and W Irvine left the Chamber at this stage having declared an interest in the next item)

3. NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEISURE TRUST AND LEISURE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUINCIL (FILE LEI25)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that Leisure operations across Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) were delivered through two operating/delivery models; Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) operated the North Down leisure facilities with Serco as their delivery partner. Leisure Ards and North Down (Council) operated the Ards and lower peninsula leisure facilities.

NCLT centres were Aurora Aquatics Centre (AAC), Sportsplex, Bangor and Queens Complex in Holywood. Council centres were Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC), Comber Leisure Centre (CLC) and Portaferry Sports Centre (PSC).

Currently there was no joint membership across both operations to give members access to all five centres (AAC, ABMWLC, CLC, PSC and Queens). Both operators already work collaboratively with regards to harmonisation for pricing, terms and conditions and other operations.

Opportunity to deliver a joint membership for ANDBC
An opportunity had a risen with cooperation between NCLT and Council to offer a joint membership across all five sites.

Table 1 showed current pricing across Council leisure facilities.

Table 1

Centre / Management	Membership Types & Price Highlights	Notes / What's Included

ABMWLC, CLC, PSC (Council)	Gym + Classes + Swim: £35 per month (rolling) £350 annual	Access to gyms, classes, swimming at ABMWLC and health suite at CLC.
AAC (NCLT)	Gym + Swim + Classes: £39.90 per month (12-month contract) £46.85 per month (rolling) £399 annual	Full gym, classes, and 50m pool access. Swim-only option available.
Queens Leisure Complex (NCLT)	Gym & Classes: £27 per month (12-month contract) £36 per month (rolling) £270 annual	Gym and class access only; limited aquatic facilities.

Proposal

The joint membership proposal would be for two categories Fitness and Aqua and would be available for adults and concession/students.

1. Fitness would include Gym/Classes/Swim/Health Suite (Health Suite at AAC and CLC) and
2. Aqua would include Swim Water Aerobics.

Table 2 showed the proposed pricing structure and features offered within each membership category which had been agreed with colleagues in NCLT.

Table 2

AND / NCLT membership	**AND Current Pricing**	**NCLT Current Pricing**	**5 Centre (proposed) Rolling Contract**
Fitness / Gym, swim, classes (Adult) Gym, Classes, Swim, *Health Suite	£35	£46.85 rolling £39.90 contracted	£49.95
Concession Fitness / Gym	£26.25	N/A	£34.95
Student Fitness / Gym	£24.50	N/A	£34.95
Aqua / Swim and Water Aerobics (Adult)	£25.50	£22.50 contracted	£34.95

*The membership would not include access to The Spa at ABMWLC, Leisure Waters at AAC, Splash Pool at ABMWLC or any of the Soft Play facilities across the centres.

Finance
In terms of costs for offering the programme to include updates from Legend (leisure management software) for creating the new membership category (Joint Membership - five Centres), producing membership cards and promoting the programme/branding £1,500 for both operators. This would come from existing revenue budgets. Projected income with 40 new members in Year 1 for both operators would generate income £19,000 per annum based on an average membership fee of £39 for each operator.

The income for each membership would be credited to the centre at which the membership was taken out. Financial reports from Legend would detail the income breakdown.

Table 3 covered the financial details for Council.

Table 3

Income Year 1	Expenditure Year 1	Net Expenditure Year 1
(£19,000)	£1,500	(£17,500)

Software operations

NCLT and Council were working with Legend - the leisure management software used across both NCLT/Serco and Lards centres. Legend was considering how best to produce one membership card which could be presented at any of the five centres.

Outcomes and Benefits

- Working collaboratively between Council and NCLT with benefits for all within the Borough.
- No detrimental cost to either NCLT or Council operated centres.
- Harmonised pricing structure.
- Improved customer service across leisure operations with increased access to leisure facilities and increased customer satisfaction.
- Increased participation.
- Streamlined marketing and operational efficiency across joint operations.
- Equity and Inclusion with reduced disparity across the Borough with enhanced reputation for Council.
- Generation of additional income.

If approved, Leisure would be working towards commencing the membership offer from 1 January 2026.

The Northern Community Trust and the Serco Senior Team discussed and approved this proposal at its quarterly meeting with officers on 24 November 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the joint membership for Leisure across Council and NCLT.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Cochrane welcomed the report adding that it demonstrated how well the hybrid model worked. Continuing he asked if any consideration had been given to membership for Gym access only.

The Operations Manager advised that type of membership was currently not offered by the Centres. He indicated however that was something which could be taken into consideration in the future.

In terms of the updates from Legend (leisure management software) for the creation of the new joint membership cards, Alderman McRandal sought clarity around any additional costs associated with that.

In response the Operations Manager indicated that he had no concerns around the cost associated with that adding that, they would be appropriately covered.

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

(Councillors Chambers and W Irvine re-entered the Chamber at this stage – 7.05pm)

4. INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND DEBT SERVICES CONSULTATION RESPONSE (FILE CDV60)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Department for Communities (DfC) sought views on draft proposals on a proposed support framework for independent advice and debt services in Northern Ireland. For the purposes of this consultation, independent advice and debt services referred to the Department funded community-based advice and regulated debt advice services. It did not include specialist Housing Advice delivered by Housing Rights.

The document put forward draft proposals for how the Department would work with local government and independent advice providers to ensure that people could access consistent quality advice regardless of where they lived in Northern Ireland, with a focus on ensuring that the Department's investment:

- supported independent advice and debt service-providers to meet needs on the ground;
- struck the right balance between supporting frontline community delivery and regional services; and
- supported collaboration and joining up of services to minimise duplication, maximise resources and improve outcomes for clients.

Proposals were geared towards achievement of a cohesive partnership between DfC, the District Councils and the independent advice and debt sector, underpinned by 'Guiding Principles' that were a reference framework for how services should be delivered.

Members were asked to note that due to the closing date of 3 November 2025, Community Development submitted a response to The Department for Communities in order to meet that deadline. This response was formulated in relation the quarterly feedback received for the existing Advice Services in Ards and North Down.

A main issue highlighted by the local service and included therefore in the response was the regional phone line, which created a barrier to maximise the full potential of reach, and led to one off advice, where local services could deal with these queries.

RECOMMENDED that Council retrospectively approves the response.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman McRandal noted that within the response at Question 7 the Council had neither agreed or disagreed and he asked why.

The Director responded stating that her understanding was that within the response you could choose agree, disagree or neither. She was unsure what the rationale was behind that choice of answer and endeavoured to investigate further and report back in due course to the member.

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

5. LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR IRISH FA NATIONAL FOOTBALL CENTRE (FILE CW181) (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that members may already be aware of the Irish FA's proposal to erect a National Football Stadium on a 50-acre site opposite the Galgorm Resort on the Fenaghy Road, Ballymena.

The proposed facilities would include four outdoor pitches, one indoor pitch, stands, training buildings and parking. The stadium would be a state-of-the-art training and development centre for elite and grassroots football.

The Chief Executive's Office received a letter from the Irish FA on 19 November 2025 (see Appendix) outlining the plans for the project and confirming the consultation period ended on 28 November 2025. As Council would be unable to meet the consultation deadline due to the lateness of the receipt of the letter, it was suggested that Council send a letter of support.

RECOMMENDED that Council send a letter of Support from the Chief Executive to the Irish FA outlining the Council's support for the project.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Boyle welcomed the report gave the popularity of football throughout the Borough, adding that anything which could enhance that was to be welcomed.

Commenting as seconder Councillor W Irvine indicated his support but also acknowledged the question mark around funding. He added that he looked forward to the matter progressing particularly given the Borough's football sporting history with two international players included on the Wall of Fame.

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

6. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM REPORT – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS (FILE SD155)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that members would be aware that on the 26 August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £70,000 had been allocated within the 2025/2026 revenue budget for this purpose. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to members.

In September 2025, officers advised members that, due to the success of the Sports Forum Grants scheme in this financial year, an additional sum of circa £12,000 would be required above the £70,000 budget agreed for 2025/26 to meet the expected level of applications based on analysis of 2024/25 trends and year to date performance. At that stage, members approved the allocation of funding to facilitate eligible requests for the remainder of the year with the surplus being sourced from the success at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing Leisure Centre (ABMWLC) in surpassing income targets.

Continued high demand for Sports forum grants throughout September and October has led to that additional budget of £12,000 already being allocated and spent, bringing the total spend 2025/26 year to date to circa £82,000.

The table below demonstrated the spend across each of the grant categories at the time of Novembers Ards and North Down Working group meeting on Tuesday 4 November 2025.

2025/26 Budget £82,000	**Annual Budget**	**Awarded to Date**	**Remaining Budget**
Anniversary	£2,000.00	£1,500	**£500.00**
Coach Education	£3,000.00	£500.00	**£2,500.00**

Equipment	£26,750.00	£26,656.05	**£93.95**
Events	£12,500.00	£11,922.76	**£577.24**
Seeding	£2,000.00	£799.91	**£1,200.09**
Travel and Accommodation	£32,750.00	£39,076.89	**-£6,326.89**
Discretionary	£1,000.00	£340.00	**£660.00**
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000.00	£0	**£2,000**
	£82,000.00	**£81,045.61**	**£764.04**

Officers continued to receive grant applications but because the budget was spent the application process had closed there no further applications had been accepted. It was estimated that a further £15,000 was allocated to the fund for this year which would bring the annual total up to £97,000. The additional £15,000 could be sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

Following the success of the 2025/26 period, an additional £30,000 had been requested in next year's budget.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves an additional £15,000 for the 2025/26 Sports Forum Grants.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the report commenting that as a member of the Sports Forum he could confirm that it could account for all funding received and the issue was that there was just not enough funding available. Continuing he expressed his thanks to the Operations Manager and his team for all the good work which had been taking place. He urged members to support the proposal which would enable the good work of the Sports Forum to keep going.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor W Irvine welcomed the engagement of some many Clubs with the Sports Forum.

At this stage Alderman McRandal noted the additional sum of £12,000 which had already been approved and with this additional £15,000 being requested that would equate to 40% above budget. As such he asked if those additional funds had been anticipated.

In response the Leisure Services Officer confirmed that they had done extremely well this year, noting that this time last year the Sports Forum had 275 Grants and currently they were sitting with 345 Grants. Continuing she advised that there was a lot of appetite for this particularly with those affiliated Clubs using it for accommodation purposes. As the Borough had so many great sporting people she believed that it was important for them to be supported.

At this stage Alderman McRandal stated that he wished to propose an amendment which was that Council approves an additional £15,000 for the 2025/26 Sports Forum Grants and furthermore that officers bring back a report providing a

comparison of successful grant applications over the past three year period, including commentary on trends.

Alderman McRandal commented that the Council could not have an open cheque book and as such suitable scrutinization should be applied to this. He noted that within the reports which came to Committee the same names kept appearing and he suggested that perhaps consideration needed to be given to capping individual Clubs per annum to provide visibility on where that money was going.

Councillor Moore indicated her intention to second the amendment.

The Leisure Services Officer confirmed that could be carried out adding that from starting her role in October 2025 she had noted a massive increase in the applications coming through.

Councillor McKee welcomed the financial report proposed within the report adding that he too would share Alderman McRandal's concerns around whether this would keep on increasing over time. Continuing he stated that he remained very conscious that community organisations were not afforded the same open cheque book approach and while he acknowledged that Sports Clubs were right to ask for further funding, he encouraged those in real need in the Borough not to be forgotten.

At this stage Councillor McClean expressed his support for the amendment adding that he thought it was excellent. He agreed that it was very unusual to twice go back to seek additional funding and as such he would like to know why that was the case. He added that he also agreed with Councillor McKee's comments around funding for Community Groups and while he welcomed the success of the Sports Forum he asked that a level of consistency was applied.

At this point the Director advised that in this case it was a supply and demand situation, with the Council being inundated with applications for Sports Grants leading to the money running out. She advised that the money was available through the success of ABMWLC which was currently over budget and as such it was an unrestricted fund within the Leisure Services budget. Having said that members were advised that there were strict criteria in place for the allocation of those funds. She did agree that it would be worthwhile reviewing applications over the past 3 years

Councillor Boyle commented that he had found some of the comments somewhat insulting adding that he would put that down to naivety and perhaps a level of ignorance as to what went on within the sporting community of the Borough. He reminded members that information on the Sports Forum Grants was provided every month at each Committee meeting and added that strict criteria was applied to receive that funding. Councillor Boyle stated that he was happy for those figures to be reported back to the Committee again but encouraged members to read the reports which came to Committee as they contained all the necessary information.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council approves an additional £15,000 for the 2025/26 Sports Forum Grants and furthermore that officers bring back a report

providing a comparison of successful grant applications over the past three year period, including commentary on trends.

(Councillor Kerr joined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 7.20pm)

Reports for Noting

7. ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT (FILE FIN45)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Active and Healthy Community's Budgetary Control Report covered the six month period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £ 348.0k – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance
The Active and Healthy Communities' budget performance was further analysed on page 3 into three key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£272.8k favourable	**3**
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£43.2k adverse	**3**
Report 4	Income	£118.4k favourable	**3**

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

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(272.8)	Mainly due to vacant posts during the first 6 months. • Environmental Health & Regulatory Services (£134.6k) • Community Development (£71.6k) • Leisure (£77.3k)
Goods & Services		
Environmental Health & Regulatory Sers	30.1	• Mainly due to the Council's share of the Animal Welfare Service (£23k). This wasn't budgeted as NI Councils are in dispute with DAERA over the funding for this service
Income		
Community Development	(26.0)	• Community Centre income (£27.1k)

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Leisure	(78.1)	• Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex – (£62.5k) • Comber Leisure Centre – (£6.0k) • Portaferry Sports Centre – (£4.6k)

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor W Irvine referred to the deficit of £23,000 relating to the Animal Welfare Service and sought an update on that.

The Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services confirmed that negotiations remained ongoing between all parties involved in the dispute. It was noted that while the Council's legal representatives had enjoyed some success it had not been as positive as they would have hoped. He added that this had arisen as the result of a judicial review put forward by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and the outcome of that. The officer commented that at the moment it had been agreed that that service was operated at risk and while the matter still had to be resolved weekly updates were being provided.

Referring to the significant underspend around vacant posts, Councillor McBurney asked if there were any plans for that.

In response the Director advised that in relation to the underspend throughout the three services detailed in the report, she confirmed that was regularly reported to the Council's Finance team in respect of forward planning for that underspend. On occasions members were advised that Finance reallocated those funds elsewhere within the Council, adding that her officers would not have plans in place for all that money. It was further noted that some of those vacant posts had subsequently been filled and interviews were currently ongoing for those higher salaried Head of Service posts. In summing up she stated that it would be unrealistic to say that all the underspend would be spent by the end of March 2026.

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

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1-Q2 2025-2026 (FILE CW22)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that as members would be aware 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 this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The

Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

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

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

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for Quarters 1 and 2 was attached.

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

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Participated in 22 interagency meetings with community groups.
- New structured working partnership between Neighbourhood Environment Team and PSNI.
- Monthly survey to service users to assess levels of satisfaction and areas of Improvement.
- Processed a significant number of service requests made by members, MLAs and MP's particularly relating to public health, housing and pest control matters.
- Survey distributed to local sports & community groups to determine a baseline model re capacity for CPR training and AED provision.
- Facilitating quarterly meetings of the Over 50s Council (two afternoon & two evening meetings, average 22 attending) with representations from SEHSCT, Capital Projects, Neighbourhood Environment Team and Community Planning.

- Recruitment exercise for Over 50's Council with 22 new members.

- Facilitating the inclusion of Over 50's Council and SWAN members as consultee for PHA Age Friendly evaluation through Social Market Research.

- Reviewing and updating of the ANDBC 'Big Guide'.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Completed the first stage of replacing Neighbourhood Environment Team diesel vehicles with EVs
- The assessment, through the planning process, of the associated risk assessments for several Brownfield sites. This assists in the promotion and reuse of land affected by contamination, resulting in the return to use of vacant and underused land which can help address local housing need in areas well served by existing infrastructure.
- This Service also responded to planning consultations for sustainable projects including, Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Biofuel Electricity generation and Storage Units, Wind Turbines and Air Source Heat Pumps which contributed to the Councils commitment to the path to net zero.
- Inspection of 14 premises licensed for the storage and use of petroleum and assessed compliance with requirements of the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (NI) 2013 in the five premises subject to permitting for vapour recovery under this legislation.
- Response to pest control issue at Millisle Beach Park. This included engagement with organisers of Kite Festival, to produce a revised site management plan that enabled the event to proceed (also Outcomes 3, 4 and 6).

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- Supported businesses providing advice and guidance on compliance with food safety, health and safety and consumer protection;

    - 170 total visits for Health and Safety, including inspections of workplaces, revisits, advisory visits and visits to investigate accident reports received.

    - 469 Food Hygiene and Food Standards inspections were completed during the reporting period.

    - 53 Visits were carried out to premises in relation to Consumer Protection compliance including product alerts and requests for advice.

- Supported businesses through the issue of Licences and issuing associated advice:

- 67 Entertainments Licences Issued.
- 3 Amusement Permits Issued.
- 6 Places of Marriage and Civil Partnership Licences Issued.

- 141 of the 161 planning consultations received were responded to within the target time of 15 working days. Timely and thorough responses impact the overall ability of the Council to provide a planning service that was fit for purpose and attracts developers to the Borough.
- Supported Breeding Establishments through inspections for compliance and issuing of licences.
- Awarded 'Mind, Body Business' health & wellbeing grants to 16 businesses
- Engaged with 25 businesses in Newtownards – Dementia awareness raising for staff and information sharing for public.
- Promotion of job fairs and volunteering opportunities through older people's network and Over 50's Newsletter.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:
- Inspected 94% of caravan parks during Q1 and Q2
- Accommodated eight Pop Ups for seasonal Control Orders on Beaches and Parks

All nine designated beaches remained safe for swimming during the Bathing Season, with Ballyholme, Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn achieving excellent water quality results for the entire period. The annual Classification for Ballyholme had been set as 'Good', a significant improvement on its 'Poor' status in 2023.

- Inspected Entertainment Premises for compliance:
  - 46 Annual Inspections completed
  - 47 During Performance Inspections completed
- Response to public consultation on Dilapidation Bill.
- 259 Fly-tipping service requests successfully investigated.
- 938 service requests received and investigated in relation to public health/statutory nuisance.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:
- Attendance at Pet Nose Day, Mount Stewart, providing information and advice to dog owners.
- Facilitated and participated in interagency Ops for underage consumption of Alcohol.
- 55 Project ELLA initiatives.

- 173 Home Safety Checks provided (104 OP/Vulnerable adults and 69 U5/vulnerable children) resulting in over 1143 individual pieces of home safety equipment being provided and over 69 onward referrals to organisations including NIFRS, OT, falls team etc.
- 35 Certificates of Fitness issued for private rental properties in the Borough.
- Visited more than 90 tobacco/vape retailers to promote compliance with age of sale legislation and test purchased 27 for vapes (8 sales).
- Intergenerational Project involving Over 50's Council, U3A and Youth Voice to launch Gen2Gen podcasts during Intergenerational Week.
- Dementia Action week engagement sessions.
- Dementia Awareness sessions to 17 staff.
- Audit of community hall used as Dementia friendly church.
- Tea Dance in Queens Hall with 76 people in attendance.
- Ongoing engagement with key internal and external stakeholders regarding the review of the city and town centre CCTV system.
- Provided advice and support to community groups and societies and issuing licences:
    - Issued Temporary Street Trading Licences for 2 community events
    - Issued Road Closure Orders for 6 community events.
    - Issued 4 Society Lottery Licences
    - Initiated a review of our city and town centre CCTV system

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:
- Phase 3 of Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight and recruitment exercise for WSAHW Co-Ordinator complete.
- Cycle to Work scheme open again for applications and 18 bike checks carried out.
- Procurement of defibrillators and outdoor cabinets for installation at council-owned sites offering 24/7 public access
- Health & Wellbeing Officer appointed, and progress made with resuming employee health & wellbeing with a full programme of activities and health checks scheduled.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- Neighbourhood Environment Team successfully investigated 1677 service requests, had 16 successful prosecutions and 14 sets of control conditions issued. 187 abandoned vehicles were investigated and 16 subsequently removed by council contractor.
- First Duty of Care Fixed Penalties issued for Fly-tipping.
- Officers had completed all e-learning .
- Officers had completed the following training, Equality and Good Relations, Personal Safety, Purchase Order, Mindful Manager, Emotional Intelligence 1 & 2 and nature workshop.

- Three officers completed the handling of Prescribed Breeds training alongside the Met Police.
- Home Safety staff had completed autism spectrum disorder training.
- One Licensing Officer attended Fire Risk Assessment Refresher Training.
- 97% of customers satisfied upon completion of service request.

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:

- PPE not suitable or robust enough for dealing with Prescribed Breeds.
- No direct access to the ARU PSNI.

Action to be taken:
- PPE researched and appropriate PPE ordered for all NE vehicles.
- Direct access through PSNI arranged.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% of Caravan and Petroleum Sites inspected annually and licences issued where appropriate	A significant number of PL visits are programmed for Q4. The target should be met by end of year	Complete remaining inspections as programmed.	Hazel McKee	March 2026
% of High Risk (H&S) Premises Inspected	This is an end of year target	Ensure all high risk inspections programmed are completed by end of year	Hazel McKee	March 2026
% spend against budget	Primarily due to vacancies existing across various service units. Some projects not able to be delivered.	A number of vacancies have been filled. Money available for projects diverted to meet other Service needs.	Gareth Kinnear	March 2026
% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period Q1-Q2	Appraisals completed but not signed off. Also staff returning from absence and unable to carry out during period.	Sign off issues will be addressed, and full compliance will be achieved in Q3-Q4.	All SUMs	March 2026

% of premises which are permitted under the Pollution Prevention and Control legislation inspected	The remaining premises are not due to be inspected until Q4	Complete remaining inspections as programmed	Hazel McKee	March 2026
% Planning Comments made within 15 days	One officer deals with planning responses and there has been a recent handover with the officer taking up a secondment opportunity. 141 of 161 consultations were responded to within target.	Should staffing levels be maintained on a permanent basis a second officer will be trained to respond to consultations as part of succession planning and knowledge management.	Hazel McKee	March 2026
Project ELLA Delivery	School Summer Holidays	Uptake has increased and the annual target has now been surpassed.	Dawn Phillips	March 2026
FPNs Issued	High long term absence level	A full complement of officers	Dawn Phillips	March 2026
% targets achieved for PHA SLA	An objective cannot be achieved for Tobacco Control as the relevant legislation is not yet in place	Await new legislation Tobacco and Vapes Bill	Vivienne Boyd	March 2026

Environmental Health, Protection and Development - Performance Indicator Summary

Generated on: 24 November 2025

Last Update H1 2025/26

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Complete CP Market Surveillance exercises	2	1
	% of Caravan and Petroleum Sites inspected annually and licences issued where appropriate	56%	90%
	Implement a new Food standards delivery model.	74%	50%
	% of High-Risk Food Premises Inspected	96%	90%
	Complete H&S targeted inspection initiatives	1	1
	% of High Risk (H&S) Premises Inspected	67%	75%
	% spend against budget	88.59%	100%
	% staff attendance	94.13%	94.5%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	93%	100%
	% of premises which are permitted under the Pollution Prevention and Control legislation inspected	19%	90%
	% Planning comments made within 15 working days	88%	90%
	Project ELLA delivery targets	16	18
	% Customers satisfied with service upon completion of service request	97%	90%
	NET Improve(increase) total number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). Recorded as total number of FPNs issued	125	213
	% of PTO applications completed within 180 days	91.4%	90%
	% targets achieved for PHA SLAs	93%	97%
	% of service requests responded to within 2 working days	95.2%	94%

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor McKee welcomed the report and referring to the issue of CPR and defibrillators he noted that a number of Groups had been surveyed about this and he asked if sea swimming groups had taken part in those surveys.

The Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services commented that he was not sure but would find out and report back to the member.

Continuing Councillor McKee recalled previous discussions around the provision of AEDs on the Council's estate and the suggestion that Pickie Fun Park could avail of one of those particularly after an incident which had occurred there a number of years ago resulting in someone having a cardiac arrest.

Again the Acting Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services apologised stating that he was not sure but would find out and report back to the member.

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

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1-Q2 2025-2026 LEISURE (FILE LEI26)

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

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

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

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 2 was attached.

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

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:
- Monthly meetings with the Sports Forum with a range of stakeholders from across the Borough.
- NCLT monthly meetings with a range of stakeholders.

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:
- Leisure sites continued to encourage recycling.
- The level of recycling rather than landfill continued to increase across the portfolio.

Outcome 3
A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:
- Local business continued to operate from Council facilities such as Parklands Café and The Beauty Spot.
- Leisure continued to develop partnerships with private business for example Origin Gymnastics.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:
- Leisure contributed to providing a sustainable Borough for all residents and visitors with its management of accessible and affordable services and facilities
- Leisure had now recruited over 98% of previous staff vacancies.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:
- Leisure provided facilities which permit community groups to use safely and to develop their communities regarding their health and wellbeing.
- Leisure reflected the need for communities to flourish and develop through offering access to all and supporting groups with access to a wide range of facilities.

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- Over 2.3 million visits during 2024/25 to leisure sites highlighted the opportunities for residents to be active and healthy during 2025/26.
- Year to Date over 1.2 million visitors across leisure sites.
- Over 100 sport clubs being supported by the sports development team to provide opportunities for residents to be active.
- Leisure Strategy had been finalised with delivery of the outcomes commencing during 2025/26.
- Council had agreed the Hybrid Delivery Model across leisure operations with a review for the lower peninsula to be completed.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- The inhouse team had delivered and continued to deliver a quality service significantly under budget. YTD for 2025/26 at period 6 (end of Q2) showed over £1million additional income had been generated above budget.
- Leisure had now recruited over 98% of previous staff vacancies.

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:

- Continued issues with the fabric of the building for Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC) around leaks may start to impact on service delivery and negatively affect the membership base.
- Splash Pool continued to be closed affecting service delivery in terms of access for seven year olds and under to facilities. ABMWLC was losing between £12,000 and £13,000 per month. Reputational damage to Council.
- Portaferry Sports Centre (PSC) had no operational boiler with no heat or hot water.
- % spend against budget – due to staffing resourcing issues in the first two quarters has resulted in an underspend position.
- Implementation of the Leisure Strategy was pushed back due to the strategy not being finalised until the start of Q2.
- Number of clubs affiliated with the Sports Forum had remained static from 2024/25 to the first two quarters of 2025/26 with 91 affiliated clubs. The reasons for this was lack of awareness of the forum due to staffing resources in Sports Development who were unbale to get out and meet with clubs.
- Percentage of completed Employee Appraisals April 2025 to March 2026 with 70% completed. The other 30% were not completed due to staff not being in post and issues with the appraisal Jot Form.
- Number of individuals attending Sports Education Courses, 199 attended to course of which seven courses were offered to clubs. Clubs were running their

own courses through Sport NI which was impacting the delivery of Sports Education courses by Sports Development.

Action to be taken:

- Council estates team were conducting building surveys regarding leaks at ABMWLC with a view to developing a scheme of works for issues to be resolved.
- Council estates team had employed a Technical Officer specifically for leisure and was based at ABMWLC.
- Council estates team were working with approved contractor regarding signing off on the tile specification for the Splash Pool. When this had been completed estates would produce a scheme of works including a timeline for completion.
- Council was working with the school, Education Authority and Department of Education for a resolution regarding the issues with the boiler at PSC. Leisure was now considering reducing membership fees and giving PSC members free access to ABMWLC.
- Percentage spend which had been affected by staffing resourcing issues, the leisure transformation with new posts at new pay grades, leisure believed would attract key personnel over the Q3 and Q4 which would reduce the underspend.
- Implementation of the Leisure Strategy was being progressed during Q3 and Q4.
- Number of clubs affiliated with the Sports Forum - Sports Development were continuing to contact clubs in the Borough of which there over 200 clubs, encouraging them to join and actively participate in the sports forum, however, resourcing with the required staffing structure would need to be considered to permit more outreach.
- Percentage of completed Employee Appraisals April 2025 to March 2026 – Leisure was working through the remaining appraisals over Q2 and Q3 to achieve the target of 100%.
- Number of individuals attending Sports Education Courses – Sports Development would continue to offer clubs access to courses and were considering working alongside Sport NI in delivering these courses.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (FILE CW22) (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that as members would be aware Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance

Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four 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 Half year (H1) April – September 2025 was attached.

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

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:
- Community Development continue to fund and engage with Youth Voice
- Community Development delivered Grant workshops
- Staff continue to attend community meetings across the Borough
- Community Development continue to enhance direct provision

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:
- Introduction of Solar Panels at four Community Hall facilities.

Outcome 5
Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:
- Community development continued to work on the grants policy and the online system with partners across Council

- Community Development manages the provision of the two social supermarkets
- Continuing the implementation of the PCSP action plan
- Continuing the implementation of the Good Relations Action Plan
- Continued implementation of PEACEPLUS plan
- Weekly patrols carried out by the PCSP Community Safety Officers
- Monthly meetings held with ASB forum
- Monthly meetings held of the support hub
- Shared Voices Programme underway in Schools around the Borough
- Delivery of PCSP grants programme
- Delivery and monitoring of EVAWG momentum and change fund
- Delivery of Racial and Social cohesion funding

Outcome 6
Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:
- Commencement of Consultation of the Community Services Strategy and review of Community Development direct provision and a Hall operating model
- Delivery of eight Council run summer schemes, two community led schemes, and one facilitator led scheme – 11 schemes in total, which was one more than 2024-25
- Continued increase of footfall at the community centres
- Increase hours booked at community centres
- PEACEPLUS projects to encourage activity across the borough

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:
- Community Halls ahead of expected income budget by 19%.

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:

Recruitment to fill vacant posts had been difficult and this had led to an underspend in staffing budgets

NB. Given the merger of two units which were formally in different departments, some KPIs may appear to be duplicated in the following table, e.g. staff attendance. One is for Community Centres, formally part of leisure services until 1 September 2025, and the other was for the service units that had been part of the former community and culture department.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cochrane referred to the KPI around the offer of a space to every P7 child on the Bee Safe Programme and noted within the report the Performance Data balance was zero and he sought an update on that.

The Director informed the member that the Bee Safe Programme had not yet taken place and was scheduled to commence in February 2026, hence it being recorded as a zero within the report.

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

11. CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS 2025-2026 (FILE GREL415)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Council's Cultural Expression programme supported inclusive local events and festivals that enable communities and groups to celebrate their culture and identity through grant aid. 75% of this financial support was provided through the Executive Office and 25% was provided by Council. When bonfires were associated with those local events and festivals, Council support was available where communities agreed to core conditions which aimed to lessen the negative social and environmental impact of community bonfires.

Update for 2025-2026
Funding from The Executive Office (TEO) in 2025/2026 was at a reduced amount following on from the reductions in 2023-2024 and again in 2024-2025.
The grant budget ringfenced and agreed by Council for the Cultural Expression (CE) programme of £100,000 enabled a return to previous years grant amount of £2,300 festival support for sites engaged in the CE programme.

Discussions with individual bonfire representatives resulted in 27 sites (20 bonfires and 7 beacons) engaged in the Cultural Expressions programme in 2025-2026, 25 in July 2025 and 2 in October 2025. (Appendix 1 and 2). This was four more than last year due to the reconstitution of East End Residents Association; now known Ards Community Wellbeing Association. Sites re-entering programme were Millisle, Castle Gardens, Ballywalter Gardens in Kilcooloey and Slidy Rock, Conlig.

Tensions on wider societal issues remained, such as immigration, however community representatives normally engaged in the CE Programme, continued to work with the Good Relations team.

After discussions between the Good Relations Team and local community representatives, a new CE agreement was reached and agreed by Council in April 2025.

Council continued to offer alternatives within the CE programme following restrictions put in place during Covid.

- A local cultural festival or
- Educational programmes, either through facilitation/ talks online or
- A combination of both

A total of seven sites requested the use of willow burners, (Appendix 2) in 2025-26, Ballywalter Beach, Ballyhalbert, Clandeboye, Killinchy and Rathgill in July and Portaferry and Kircubbin in October. Due to the weather at Halloween, Portaferry rescheduled their event but Kircubbin had to cancel due to the lack of volunteers. The cancelled beacon was charged at a reduced cost.

Monitoring
In the lead, up to 11th July the Good Relations team worked in partnership with a range of Council services and statutory agencies to address issues as they arose i.e. the Councils Enforcement Officers, Councils Parks Officers, NIHE, SEELB, DAERA, PSNI and NIFRS. Weekly meetings enabled agencies to collectively assess any concerns or perceived risks to minimise any damage to people and property during and in the lead up to the 11 July.

The Good Relations team regularly monitored associated bonfires signed up to the CE agreement (IP) (27) and those not signed (NIP) (23).

Most bonfires in and out of the programme did not cause any real concerns however, Good Relations worked closely with the builders to try and alleviate concerns with those that did to ensure the bonfires would pass off peacefully and without incident. Bonfires causing most concern were:

- Castle Gardens (IP) – Concerns due to its size and proximity to surrounding houses and businesses. SEELB(EA) who owned the land had stated they hoped to sell/repurpose the land before 2026 season. Site was part of Ards Community Wellbeing Association.

- Strand Avenue, Holywood (NIP) – Large amount of fly tipping occurred this year. Good Relations Team and the NET officers took steps to identify and contact landowner who agreed to remove but with conditions that Council did not agree to. As a result, the site was set alight on 11 July. The owner had since cleared the remaining debris.

- Slidy Rock, Conlig (IP). Site back into programme for 2025/26. Vastly less material on site in 2025, management of site by new builder worked well, very tidy.

Costs
The total cost to Council for, set up, clearance, reinstatement, beacons and barriers for the 2025-26 programme was circa £97,957. One hundred percent of this cost was met by Council. Costs were increasing annually due to the cost of living crisis and the surge in prices etc. The table below identified the breakdown since 2023-

2024. Savings were made in 2025-2026 by reducing the number of sites receiving sand and the wooden fences.

Year	Total Cost	Beacons on council land	Set up/ clearance, barriers net cost
2025-2026	£97,957	£47,300 (7)	£46,857
2024-2025	£98,274	£51,100 (7)	£47,174
2023-2024	£94,214	£49,000 (7)	£45,214

This cost to Council did not include the cost of clean-up for those built on NIHE land which was met by the Housing Executive.

Complaints
In 2025-2026 the Good Relations team received 10 complaints relating to flags and 11 to bonfires. Some of the sites reported were Cloughey (IP), Ballywhiskin (NIP), Churchill (IP), Ballyrea/Ballyvester (NIP) and Innishargie (NIP). This figure did not include recurring complaints about the same issue to the Good Relations team or complaints that do not come directly to Good Relations.

Feedback from Statutory Agencies
Following 11 July 2025, statutory representatives met to review lessons learnt from the Cultural Expressions programme and to consider improvements for 2026-2027.

PSNI – Flags observed on more bonfires and migrant boat raising issues on hate crime. Bonfires bigger than usual. Balligan Gardens bonfire embers across to Springhill. Late night with festival not finishing until 2.15am. Castle Gardens needed re-sited.

NIFRS – This year a lot more activity and call outs with more fires being burnt that were not related to the programme e.g. farmers. Between 10.00pm -1.00am all appliances in use including support from outside the area. Main sites that caused concerns were Bowtown, Castle Gardens and Glen.

NIHE – There had been more requests for boarding as bonfires are getting bigger. Programme worthwhile, very few complaints overall. Looking at the possibility of doing something at Glenburn Road (third Site) and Churchill.

DAERA
Engaged sporadically in meetings. Updates were provided to them each week.

SEELB - reported that they would be considering their plans for the site at Castle Gardens, which could include better securing the site, disposing of the site or changing the use of the site. EA representative believed the programme worked well for groups who wished to engage and with good community links.

ANDBC – Costs reduced slightly due to reduction of wooden fences and sand on some sites. As new sites engaged in the programme those costs may increase depending on the landowner.

What worked well
Collaborative working between the agencies worked well in terms of collectively and effectively dealing with issues of concern, reducing fly tipping and costs, and should continue to be built upon for 2026-2027. All statutory agencies agreed that whilst there were still some concerns especially around the size of some bonfires the programme continued to provide positive results.

All statutory agencies agreed community engagement in association with the CE Agreement had significantly reduced negative incidents that previously occurred during bonfire season.

Many sites who were in the programme (IP) and not in the programme (NIP) continued to engage with the GR team for example to enable the removal of unwanted fly-tipping.

West Winds, Newtownards – a UVF mural at the end of a gable wall was covered up for the festival because of a request to make the festival more family friendly. The wall had since been reimaged.

EA representative believed the programme worked well for groups who wanted to engage and with good community links. GR had excellent relationships with the builders which was why it worked so well.

All statutory agencies agreed there was less fly tipping accepted by bonfires and sites were generally tidier.

Review
Over the next few months officers would be meeting with key influencers and community representatives to consult upon the lessons learned and discuss what could be done to address on-going challenges.

The challenges for 2026-2027 included:

- Encouraging bonfires not in the programme back into programme
- Managing budgets
- Managing collection of materials before the agreed date.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor W Irvine welcomed the report and acknowledged that there could still be further work to be undertaken. He thanked officers for their work on this noting the large amount of sites to be covered throughout the Borough. Going forwards in terms of those not yet engaged with the Programme he asked if work was underway in relation to that.

The Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager stated that the Cultural Expression Agreement for 2025/26 approved by the Council in May 2025, highlighted how those groups not in the Programme could join the Programme. Those Groups had been given a three year waiting list and if they abided by the rules, they could join the Programme on the fourth year.

Alderman McRandal noted the Programme for the current year had been agreed in May 2025 which had been followed by a Workshop held in November 2025. He asked when the details of that would be brought back to the Committee.

The Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager advised that the information which had come from that meeting around the issue of flags had already been discussed with the various Groups and they had all declined. As such it was now up to the Council to decide what the next steps should be.

The Director added that further community consultation would be undertaken and a report brought back to the Committee in due course. She added that it was anticipated the current Programme would run for a further year and consultation during this off peak season remained ongoing with Community Groups.

Welcoming the report Councillor McKee noted within the report those sites which were of concern including Strand Avenue, Holywood. He had however been concerned that the site at Valentines had not been included given the significant difficulties which had arisen there from January 2025. As such he sought comment from officers around lessons learnt in respect of those two sites.

In response the Director confirmed that work remained ongoing between Elected Members and Council officers and a plan was being worked up in relation to those sites. The Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager added that Valentines was not in the Programme but discussions were continuing with them. It was noted officers had been made aware that wood would be collected there from January 2025 and officers had made contact asking them to keep the site tidy.

At this stage Councillor Boyle stated that he concurred with Alderman McRandal's comments around feedback from the Workshop. Continuing Councillor Boyle noted the funding figures referred to in the report and sought clarity on those. The Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager referred to the reduction in funding from TEO over the past number of years, Council had agreed to retain that budget of £60,000 to ensure those Groups were able to get the maximum amount available. She added that the £100,000 included the beacons, clearance costs and that amount was ringfenced. It was further noted that a donation was also made by the NIHE of £26,000 which went towards the Programme. £100,000 was Council funds which were topped up by the £26,000 from the NIHE. £50,000 was set aside for clean up as detailed in Page 3 of the report.

Continuing Councillor Boyle expressed the view that the Council was paying for a clean up to insult people as some of the bonfires carried certain emblems and yet the Council paid for a section of the community to be insulted. He added that people needed to realise that you could not give two fingers up to a section of the community year on year just because they wished to celebrate a culture which was

part of insulting another culture. At this stage he offered his congratulations to the people of the West Winds Estate, Newtownards for covering up a paramilitary mural to make the event more family friendly. He noted that the wall had subsequently also been reimaged. Continuing Councillor Boyle referred to Ards Community Wellbeing Group and its bonfire site at the EAs site at Castle Gardens, he noted the EA were potentially looking at reclaiming that piece of ground and he asked if the Council were aware of that. He added that he did not wish any Group to be denied of somewhere to hold its bonfire.

The Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager confirmed that any conversations would take place would be between EA and the Council rather than directly with the Group themselves. She acknowledged that EA was in deficit currently and as such she could not foresee much happening at this stage with that site.

At this stage the Chairman asked how a site was quantified as a site of concern. In response the Acting Externally Funded Programmes Manager advised that those sites raised constantly at weekly meetings with the Council's statutory parties would be classed a sites of concern.

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

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

12.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray

Councillor McCollum proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that this Council recognises the valuable work undertaken by the Community Safety team in tackling anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough. That this Council also acknowledges the significant and increasing pressures on those officers to meet the growing and complex demands of their workload. Furthermore, that Council notes the recent review of the criminal legislative framework to help tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the greater powers which may devolve to Council, and tasks officers to prepare a report which outlines the needs of the Borough in relation to community safety and the resources currently available, details a range of measures appropriate to address those needs, including recruitment of additional officers, and identifies requisite funding requirements and opportunities.

The proposer Councillor McCollum stated that safety was a cornerstone of the Council's work and was not just a priority but instead it was a responsibility. It was the basis of trust between communities and local government and when residents felt safe, they thrived. She added that residents deserved to feel secure, but was aware that currently safety was increasingly under strain.

Community Safety in the Borough was delivered by a dedicated but very small Community Safety Team (CST) with support from PCSP, PSNI and the Council's Good Relations Team. Among their core responsibilities was tackling anti-social

behaviour which included disorderly street behaviour, property damage, and disruptive nuisance. Officers primarily delivered community safety through hotspot patrols, community engagement, education and awareness programmes, all in partnership with local schools, neighbourhood police teams and community groups. She noted that those officers worked late and flexible hours to enable them to respond to need as and when it arose, as well as delivering education and awareness programs, and providing support for youth diversion projects. Councillor McCollum stated that in her own DEA, last year an incredibly worthwhile project was delivered by the CST in partnership with PSNI and the community groups of Redburn Loughview Community Forum and Holywood Community Network. Hooked on Holywood was aimed at teenagers and took place in a local boxing studio over several weeks and was focussed on messages about the life changing dangers of Just One Punch. Feedback from Community groups about the lasting power of that engagement was fantastic and the messaging had got through. Continuing she noted that CSTs also tackled substance misuse through initiatives like RAPID bins and joint monitoring with PSNI. All those efforts were vital and made a lasting difference however the resources to deliver them were increasingly being stretched to breaking point.

Continuing Councillor McCollum stated that the need was great. In the past year alone, anti-social behaviour incidents rose by 2.6%, with 3,159 cases reported. Hate crime offences increased by 79%, and hate-motivated incidents rose by 34%. While drug offences decreased, thanks to significant seizures, this success relied heavily upon community intelligence and collaboration and was proof that collaboration worked. Yet she noted despite those obvious challenges, the bulk of that work was undertaken by just two officers. Two officers for 26 towns and villages, which meant the current staffing levels were limiting the Council's ability to keep its communities safe and visible. During periods of increased anti-social behaviour (ASB), such as school holidays or summer months, those resources were stretched to breaking point. For seasonal hotspots like summertime in Ballyholme and in her own DEA, Helens Bay and Seapark, as well as Bangor City Centre, Blair Mayne, Portavogie, and Portaferry in winter, those areas demanded concentrated attention, which of course left many other areas completely unpatrolled during those times. Even during those quieter periods, the numbers told the story:

- Two patrol evenings per week over 52 weeks.
- Without factoring in annual leave, that meant each area got only four full evenings per year
- When the CST delivered essential programs during evenings, this dropped even further.

Meanwhile, internal Council ASB complaints such as those at Blair Mayne, the Glen Community Centre and the Market House in Portaferry could not receive adequate attention because staff were balancing project delivery with Borough-wide patrols. Councillor McCollum noted that funding from PCSP was split between education and diversionary activities in hotspot areas. However with only two staff, the officers were forced to choose between patrolling and delivering programs or investigating new complaints. As an example, the Bee Safe program ran for two weeks in February and required both CST staff which meant no patrols could occur during that time.

This she added also carried a human cost for staff with work-life balance suffering, recruitment became harder, and annual leave further reduced patrol capacity because staff could not patrol alone. Furthermore during periods of crowd swell, CST must retreat for health and safety reasons if additional resources were not available.

Continuing Councillor McCollum stated that all this mattered because every gap in patrol coverage was an opportunity for anti-social behaviour to take root and every missed complaint eroded public confidence. Every time the officers pulled back for their own safety, the chance was lost to engage positively with communities. In terms of what was needed Councillor McCollum commented that primarily the Council needed to deliver the level of service its residents expected and deserved. Additional staffing and resources were needed and that investment was not just about patrols, but was about prevention, visibility, and community trust.

In comparison to other Council areas Councillor McCollum informed members of staffing levels as detailed below:

- Mid & East Antrim
  3 x Community Safety Wardens. Funded via PCSP, NIHE & Ballymena BID
- Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon
  1 x p/t Community Safety Manager and 4 x p/t Community Safety Wardens
- Derry & Strabane
  11 Community Safety Wardens. Funded from PCSP, NIHE, Apex, Uni of Ulster, DfC & Council
- Antrim & Newtownabbey
  4 x p/t Community Safety Wardens which they say was not enough for meet need. Funded through PCSP, NIHE & Council

At this stage Councillor McCollum reminded members that Ards and North Down had just two officers one of which was shortly due to take up a position elsewhere, leaving the other officer unable to undertake solo patrols. This disparity left residents vulnerable, and staff overworked and was not sustainable.

As such Councillor McCollum stated that if the Council seriously wanted to reduce anti-social behaviour, build confidence in policing, foster engaged communities and nurture relationships with communities, it needed to invest more in its CST. More resources would mean more patrols, better coverage, and stronger partnerships. It would also enable the Council to deliver education programs without sacrificing patrols and provide the ability to respond to complaints promptly while maintaining a visible presence that deterred crime. She referred to the proposed legislative changes which would give Councils powers to regulate public drinking and apply for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. This she stated would only increase its responsibilities and without additional resources, those powers would be meaningless. Councillor McCollum expressed the view that the cost of inaction would be painfully high and see ASB continue to rise, hate crime escalate, and community trust erode. Residents would feel abandoned, the burden on police would grow and the Council would risk losing the progress it had made through collaboration and innovation. As such

Councillor McCollum urged members to commit to increasing its precious community safety resources in order to give the CST the capacity it needed to protect every corner of the Borough and to make communities safer, stronger, and more resilient. Safety she stated was not an option and instead was a fundamental human need.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Wray thanked Councillor McCollum for working on this matter with him, especially as it had been something he had focused on since becoming an Elected Member. He acknowledged the great work currently undertaken by the Council's two Community Safety Officers adding that community safety was a requirement of the Council in partnership with the PSNI. The Council was severely under resourced when it came to community safety, a matter which would only become worse as he as aware one of the officers would shortly be leaving post. Those officers he stated were vital in building relationships with the local community which was imperative particularly given ongoing antisocial behaviour in a number of towns and villages and at Council facilities. Continuing Councillor Wray stated that evidence suggested more resources were needed on the ground in order to tackle those ongoing issues. As such he urged members to support the motion.

Rising in support of the motion Councillor Moore added that she was a member of the PCSP and was therefore aware of the great work undertaken by those officers. She noted how chronically under resourced the Council was in this area but also how effective the two offices were and as such to further invest in this area would undoubtedly pay dividends.

Councillor McKee also rose in support of the motion and thanked the two Elected Members for bringing it forward. He acknowledged the facts which both members had referred to in their remarks commenting that they were eye opening. Continuing he recalled that when he had joined the Council there had previously been more resources available for this service and at the time had asked questions around why the resource was being removed but had never really received answers to that.

Also expressing his thanks Councillor W Irvine commented that it was very timely given the recent issues in the Grays Hill area of Bangor. As such he welcomed the report to come back to the Committee commenting that there may be some external sources of funding available which could be investigated. Councillor Irvine added that he fully supported the proposal.

Also thanking Councillors McCollum and Wray, Councillor Cochrane welcomed the proposal adding that it was always better to be proactive rather than reactive. He commented that anti social behaviour was a serious issue particularly in his own DEA at Linear Park, Bangor. Councillor Cochrane also acknowledged the pastoral side of the Community Safety Team and their engagement with young people.

By way of summing Councillor McCollum thanked members for their supportive comments noting that there were many issues in a number of DEAs including her own at Helens Bay during the summer months. She stated that her Notice of Motion had primarily been drafted around Human Resources and she also noted comments around external funding advising that she was aware in other Council areas that was being provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). She reiterated

that it was imperative that the Council took this on board as it was its responsibility to do so and expressed her thanks to the Council's Community Safety Team as well as her PCSP colleagues.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Wray, that this Council recognises the valuable work undertaken by the Community Safety team in tackling anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough. That this Council also acknowledges the significant and increasing pressures on those officers to meet the growing and complex demands of their workload. Furthermore, that Council notes the recent review of the criminal legislative framework to help tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the greater powers which may devolve to Council, and tasks officers to prepare a report which outlines the needs of the Borough in relation to community safety and the resources currently available, details a range of measures appropriate to address those needs, including recruitment of additional officers, and identifies requisite funding requirements and opportunities.

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

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that this Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support.

This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include:

1.The potential introduction of stricter controls on the sale and importation of fireworks, limiting use to licensed, organised displays only.
2.Enhancing PSNI and Council enforcement powers to tackle illegal and antisocial firework use, and increasing the regulatory powers of the Department of Justice as the primary authority responsible for oversight and enforcement of fireworks legislation in Northern Ireland.
3.Establishing Northern Ireland–wide time restrictions to reduce unexpected noise and protect animals.

The proposer Councillor McKee stated that he wished to take the time that this issue deserved to explain why he had brought it forward and why it was so important that the Council took a stand. The immediate catalyst for this Motion was the heartbreaking news that two much-loved family dogs in the Borough recently died because of panic caused by fireworks. For those families, those were not just animals, they were companions, confidants, and cherished members of the household. Their sudden loss was devastating, and on behalf of the Council he extended his deepest sympathies to them. Everyone recognised that those tragedies were part of a much wider pattern. Every year, there were reports from right across the Borough of animals bolting from gardens in fear; horses and livestock injuring

themselves in moments of panic; wildlife disrupted and disoriented; and vulnerable residents—children, older people, veterans, and those with sensory sensitivities—left distressed or frightened by sudden, unregulated explosions. Therefore he stated that tonight's debate was not about denying people celebration or joy but instead was about ensuring that fireworks were used responsibly, predictably, and in a way that was safe for the community and animals.

Councillor McKee stated that it was true that Northern Ireland already had some of the strictest fireworks legislation in the UK. The permit system, sales restrictions and designated usage periods did place it ahead of other regions. However despite having stronger rules on paper, problems persisted and in many cases those problems were unique to Northern Ireland. Fireworks were still used in ways that caused significant harm for example as tools of antisocial behaviour and were used unpredictably, in ways that caught residents completely off guard. He added that illegal fireworks also continued to enter communities while enforcement remained patchy and difficult. Councillor McKee stated that the reality was that the lived experience of constituents did not match what the legislation was supposed to provide. At this stage he indicated that he wished to take a moment to welcome the fact that this Council's Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) had discussed the issue of fireworks at its most recent meeting, particularly as it had a significant and very constructive role to play in addressing this problem. Beyond enforcement, Councillor McKee believed one of the most effective tools there was education to help communities understand the impacts of antisocial firework use, the trauma it caused for animals, and the distress it created for vulnerable people. As such he believed the PCSP was ideally placed to lead on this work, bringing together the police, elected members, and community representatives to raise awareness, promote responsible behaviour, and foster a culture where thoughtless or harmful firework use was increasingly challenged and discouraged. At this stage he took the opportunity to thank the PCSP for taking this conversation seriously and strongly encourage it to continue to expand that work. He believed legislative reform was essential adding that real change also depended on informed and engaged communities. Continuing Councillor McKee also wished to recognise the dedication of local animal welfare groups, rescue centres, and volunteers. Every year, they carried a heavy burden comforting frightened pets, searching for missing animals, and supporting distressed owners. Their compassion was remarkable, but he believed they should not have to shoulder the consequences of a system that was failing to protect animals adequately. That was why he along with Councillor Kendall were calling for an urgent review of fireworks legislation by the Department of Justice. Not in a vague or symbolic way but a meaningful, thorough review that reflected Northern Ireland's real-world circumstances.

Councillor McKee stated that their Motion outlined three key areas that needed review.:

1. Firstly - the potential for Stronger controls on sale and importation fireworks and moving toward licensed, organised displays
While Northern Ireland already required permits, illegal fireworks still circulated widely. High-powered explosives were purchased on the black market and antisocial behaviour spiked every year around Halloween.

Organised displays were predictable, managed, and safe and allowed residents, especially animal owners, to prepare. They also cut out a lot of the random or antisocial misuse that generated most of complaints.

2. Secondly Enhanced enforcement powers for Councils, PSNI, and the Department of Justice
At present, enforcement responsibilities were fragmented and Councils had limited roles. The PSNI was under enormous pressure to respond to all sorts of crime and the Department's oversight powers were not sufficient to ensure consistent enforcement across Northern Ireland. For legislation to work, those enforcing it must have clear, practical, and properly resourced powers.

3. Lastly - Northern Ireland–wide time restrictions
Predictability was key. When residents knew when fireworks would be used, the distress caused to animals and vulnerable people was dramatically reduced. Those restrictions worked in other regions and countries. They were simple and were fair and allowed celebration without chaos.

Councillor McKee stated that none of what was being proposed was extreme. Instead they were balanced, reasonable measures which protected the wellbeing of the community while still allowing fireworks to be enjoyed in an organised and responsible manner. He added that it was also important to acknowledge Northern Ireland's distinct context. In some areas, fireworks were not merely recreational and instead they became tools of nuisance and intimidation. Fireworks had a different social impact here than in other parts of the UK, and this reinforced the need for legislation that was not just stricter but better tailored to our realities. As such Councillor McKee believed that if action was taken now the prevention of further tragedies could become a reality. The burden on animal welfare organisations could be eased and antisocial behaviour could be reduced. Those most vulnerable would also be protected and it would also help to ensure that celebration did not come at the expense of safety, wellbeing, or compassion. By supporting this joint motion, a clear message would be sent to the Department of Justice that Northern Ireland needed a system that worked and not just one that looked strong on paper. An equally important message would also be sent to residents that they were heard and understood and the Council was committed to taking real, meaningful action. Councillor McKee urged members across the Chamber support the motion.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Kendall noted how recently two beloved family dogs in the Borough had died not from illness or accident, but from terror caused by fireworks. She added that dogs were not the only ones to suffer. People with autism, veterans, other pets, wildlife all endured unnecessary suffering because of fireworks. As such she asked members to put themselves in their shoes (or paws) in order to hear their experiences.

For those with autism, who struggled with sensory overload, fireworks could be hugely distressing. The National Autistic Society warned that sudden loud bangs, flashes, and crowds could lead to sensory meltdowns, physical pain, and isolation. One adult with autism said: "I can't control the noise… fireworks outside are way too loud." For affected families, this meant retreating indoors, cancelling events and

being unable to enjoy common celebrations due to anxiety and stress. This she stated did not just affect the individual, it often affected the whole family.

For many veterans, fireworks were not cause for celebration and instead were debilitating triggers of combat flashbacks causing high levels of trauma, anxiety and increased stress. PTSD UK reported 93.9% of people with PTSD or C-PTSD suffered panic attacks, flashbacks, insomnia; many needing medical or therapeutic help. The unexpected nature of fireworks could also cause significant issues for people suffering from PTSD, and seriously increase symptoms. One RAF veteran recounted curling into a ball in his car, “the bangs took me straight back to combat.... an absolute uncontrollable sense of terror and panic”. UK Charity, Combat Stress noted fireworks could undo years of trauma therapy. Research also carried out by Help for Heroes and Combat Stress revealed 74 per cent of veterans wanted tighter restrictions, including on the days/times when fireworks could be set off; 67% wanted a reduction in the overall number of days fireworks could be sold to the public; and many said fireworks had triggered a negative experience for them.

Continuing Councillor Kendall stated that dogs affected by fireworks experienced high levels of anxiety, they barked, spinned, chewed their tails and could inflict physical harm on themselves. RSPCA’s surveys (2021–2024) indicated 60% of dog owners said their pets experienced fear during fireworks, with many dogs shaking, panting, and even vomiting. During times of firework, reports of missing dogs increased by sometimes up to as much as 81%. The Kennel Club also found 40–41% of dogs and approximately 34% of cats displayed fear of fireworks. On 25 October someone’s beloved dog was killed on the road due to being frightened by fireworks in Kilcooley, Bangor. In sympathy Councillor Kendall referred to some of the comments that were made on that same day in response to this loss of an innocent animal:

“I was walking our dog and literally had to turn around within 5 mins as the bangs were so loud. She never reacts to them in the house or when we’ve walked before but these were something else....Can’t even time walking the dog as you don’t know when they’ll go off.”

“I had to sedate my [pet] tonight as she was so frightened. Silent only fireworks would be amazing. It's awful what animals have to endure and like someone else said you can't even time walks... they are so spontaneous, 24/7.”

“Our beautiful dog of 11 years was killed last year....spooked by fireworks...let off in September. Poor animals are petrified. It is so wrong”

Continuing Councillor Kendall advised that the RSPCA had documented the impact of fireworks on farm animals such as increased the heart rate in pigs and increased respiration rate in lambs. Horses could also take flight when scared, colliding with fences and other harmful objects as they fled. Wildlife also suffered the effects of sudden loud noises, although more difficult to assess when compared with pets, one study in the Netherlands showed that birds were disturbed by New Year's Eve fireworks across three consecutive years, and firework distress had also been associated with the abandonment of nests or even whole colonies.

Reflecting public views members were advised that a YouGov poll commissioned by Dogs Trust revealed powerful support for change in Northern Ireland: 95% supported licensed public displays only, 93% wanted date/time restrictions, 83% cited pet distress as a significant factor, 70% favoured low-noise fireworks. 31% supported a full ban. Therefore, despite a significant licencing regime in Northern Ireland, laws were inadequate in protecting communities, animals, and environment. Something more needed to be done and more could be done she suggested. It was noted that in some areas of Italy, noiseless/silent fireworks were mandatory. The Netherlands banned consumer fireworks in cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, using professional, low-noise displays. Low-noise fireworks existed and offered dazzling visuals without the levels of trauma often seen. Many European areas employed alternative measures successfully, safeguarding vulnerable residents, animals, and ecosystems while keeping celebrations fun and engaging. Those policies and practices proved celebrations could be humane and joyful without the noise, without the stress and with minimal impact to others.

By way of summing up Councillor Kendall asked members to listen to the views of constituents who were calling for change particularly to consider vulnerable individuals and animals. This motion she stated was not about being a killjoy, instead it was more about ensuring that joy could be experienced by all. The evidence and public support had both been secured and she believed they had a moral responsibility to ensure Northern Ireland could celebrate responsibly, enjoy festivals and events while still protecting people and wildlife.

At this stage Councillor Moore proposed an amendment seconded by Alderman McRandal that this Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support.

This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include:

1.The potential introduction of stricter controls on the sale and importation of fireworks, limiting use to licensed, organised displays only.
2.Enhancing PSNI and Council enforcement powers to tackle illegal and antisocial firework use, and increasing the regulatory powers of the Department of Justice as the primary authority responsible for oversight and enforcement of fireworks legislation in Northern Ireland.
3.Establishing Northern Ireland–wide time restrictions to reduce unexpected noise and protect animals.
4. Council works with AND PCSP to explore how we can effectively tackle the antisocial behaviour associated with fireworks. Working with partners including PSNI, the EA Youth Service and our own Neighbourhood Officers to explore effective ways of communicating the impact of illegal and inconsiderate fireworks use, and enforcement where necessary.

The proposer Councillor Moore thanked Councillors McKee and Kendall for bringing forward their Motion commenting that it was important to strike a balance between those who enjoyed fireworks and those who did not. She noted the impact fireworks had on animals and agreed that the penalties for misuse of them needed to be stronger. Referring to the PCSP she outlined how it was working alongside statutory partners to tackle many issues including this. As such that was why her amendment was suggesting this localised action to help tackle the illegal use of fireworks and believed the Council could be more impactful by reviewing the current penalties to ensure they were an appropriate deterrent.

Commenting as seconder Alderman McRandal also expressed his thanks to Councillors McKee and Kendall for their Motion, adding that it was very worthwhile. He noted that Councillor Moore had amply set out the benefits of her amendment which he added was an enhancement rather than an attempt to highjack the original Motion.

Also expressing his thanks to Councillors McKee and Kendall, Councillor Boyle agreed that fireworks were incredibly upsetting for so many in the community. In his own community this was not so much of an issue as young people were encouraged to be brought along with those seeking the best of their community. He added that it was also equally important for Elected Members to play their part.

(Councillor Wray left the meeting at this stage – 8.16pm)

Rising to also support the Motion Councillor Douglas reported that many constituents had been touch with her about this issue, including one man and his dog which was now on anti-anxiety tablets as the result of fireworks. Fireworks caused distress to so many and therefore she was happy to support the Motion.

Also expressing his support Councillor W Irvine noted the strict guidelines already in place in Northern Ireland but acknowledged there did appear to be an issue with fireworks continuing to be so widely available. He thanked Councillors McKee and Kendall for bringing forward the Motion adding that he looked forward to the report coming back in due course.

Councillor Chambers also rose in support and expressed his thanks to Councillors McKee and Kendall for their Motion. He added that he was happy to support it as it was prior to Councillor Moore’s amendment which had enhanced it somewhat. Continuing he agreed that a review was required given the ongoing misuse of fireworks which he added were not exclusive to the Halloween period. Councillor Chamber also acknowledged the impact fireworks had on people as well as animals. He believed current fireworks legislation was no longer fit for purpose with fireworks now more readily available.

Expressing his thanks to Councillors McKee and Kendall, Councillor McClean acknowledged their emphasis on the unpredictability of fireworks. At this stage he asked Councillor McKee if he was content to proceed with his own Motion or accept Councillor Moore’s amendment, particularly as this could have been discussed via a phone call in advance of the meeting.

At this stage the Chairman thanked Councillor McClean for his comments adding that an amendment had been proposed and seconded and was on the floor for consideration. She also added that she was aware that Councillor Moore had spoken with Councillor Kendall in advance of the meeting.

Councillor McKee thanked members for their positive comments and support. He added that he was minded to politely decline supporting the amendment and was happy to learn that discussions on this matter would remain ongoing by the PCSP.

Councillor Kendall also expressed her thanks to members for their supportive comments, adding that Councillor Moore had reached out to her in advance of the meeting. Either way she believed the amendment could be added on as it would not make a difference to the substance of the original Motion which she believed was broad enough.

Rising to her amendment Councillor Moore expressed the belief that her amendment did bring significant benefits, adding that the PCSP had an important role to play in respect of this issue. Continuing she reported that the Chairman of the PCSP, Councillor Wray, had agreed to keep this issue on the PCSPs Agenda and reiterated the importance of the Council continuing to work alongside it. Councillor Moore also advised that any changes to fireworks legislation was a Reserved Matters at Westminster. She hoped there would be sufficient support for the amendment which was in essence an enhancement of the original Motion.

At this stage Councillor Chambers raised a point of order for future reference around that summing up that should have been undertaken by Councillor McKee. He referenced Standing Order 20.21. and read it out for the benefit of members.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Alderman McRandal, with 11 voting For and 1 voting Against, that this Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support.

This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include:

1.The potential introduction of stricter controls on the sale and importation of fireworks, limiting use to licensed, organised displays only.
2.Enhancing PSNI and Council enforcement powers to tackle illegal and antisocial firework use, and increasing the regulatory powers of the Department of Justice as the primary authority responsible for oversight and enforcement of fireworks legislation in Northern Ireland.
3.Establishing Northern Ireland–wide time restrictions to reduce unexpected noise and protect animals.
4. Council works with AND PCSP to explore how we can effectively tackle the antisocial behaviour associated with fireworks. Working with partners

including PSNI, the EA Youth Service and our own Neighbourhood Officers to explore effective ways of communicating the impact of illegal and inconsiderate fireworks use, and enforcement where necessary.

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

(Councillor Kendall left the meeting at this stage – 8.48pm)

13.1 Portaferry Sports Centre Update

Councillor Boyle sought an update on the latest outcome of recent meetings, concerning repairs to the Portaferry Sports Centre Main Hall along with the non-functioning Heating System within that building. Further he sought details of who attended any of those meetings and the response from particularly both the Education Authority (EA) along with the Department for Education (DOE)

In respect of the issue with the boiler at the facility, the Director reported that work had remained ongoing in the background between Council officers and liaison with partners in the EA and DoE. It was noted that letters had also been sent to the EA and some progress had been made with a meeting set up. In her absence another Director had attended that meeting along with the Operations Manager and some of his team, a member of the Council's Estate Department, two representatives from the DoE and one representative from the EA. The result of that meeting was a joint agreement that the boiler would be replaced and there would be a division in the funding based upon the current maintenance contract between the EA and the Council. That equated to Council 65% and EA 35% and was deemed to be a reasonable approach to try to resolve the issue. Following that meeting there had been further progress with the Council agreeing to carry out the work through its own Estates Department. It was noted that it was anticipated the boiler would be in the Council's possession before Christmas and installed early in January 2026.

In respect of the repairs to the Portaferry Sports Centre Main Hall, the Director reported that there were no further updates on that as the primary focus had been on the boiler. She advised that a similar joint meeting had been held with EA representatives, Council officers, school representatives and representatives from the diocese back in February 2025. Since then Council officers had been pushing the EA to progress the necessary works with no response from them to date.

At this stage Councillor Boyle thanked the Director and Operations Manager for their ongoing efforts and expressed disappointment that both the EA and DOE essentially had to be dragged along in an attempt to resolve the ongoing issues. Continuing he welcomed the news about the replacement boiler and thanked everyone involved for their efforts. In respect of the ongoing issues with the floor, Councillor Boyle expressed his disappointment that this remained ongoing now for almost three and a half years resulting in a loss of revenue to the Council. He noted the timeframe set out by the Director and recalled a meeting in November 2024 which he had attended with the same stakeholders at which it had been made clear who was responsible for fixing the floor. As such he asked if there had been any acknowledgement that it was up to them to fix the floor.

In response the Director advised that the outcome of the meeting held in February 2025 was that the DOE representative was to speak with the EA representative in an attempt to move things forward. She added that there had not been an acceptance of responsibility and no further updates had been received. In response to a further query from Councillor Boyle the Director confirmed that the issue with the floor had not been discussed at the meeting referred to earlier to consider the replacement of the boiler. She added that the Council could write to the EA again requesting an update on the matter.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Council writes to the Education Authority and Department of Education seeking a further update on the Sports Hall floor at Portaferry Sports Centre.

The proposer Councillor Boyle commented on the length of time which had past and the matter was still not resolved. He stated that he needed to clarity to his constituents why the school was able to continue using the Hall and Council customers could not. Councillor Boyle also acknowledged that there were two different Health and Safety policies in place.

The Operations Manager advised that following the closure of the Hall the Council had brought in a specialist flooring contractor who had provided a detailed report. Within that report they advised that two areas of the floor were usable while the middle area should not be used. Following this the Council carried out a risk assessment and provided that information to the school and advised them to do the same.

Councillor Boyle reiterated the loss of revenue for the Council as a result of this ongoing issue but thanked Council officers for their endeavours to try to resolve it.

The seconder Councillor Chambers indicated that he was content to support the proposal and asked given the loss of income was there potential to raise a claim as the result of that.

The Operations Manager commented that in terms of liability that would be something which would need to be discussed by Council.

The Director added that the debate was around who was responsible for what and as soon as that became clear there was the potential for a claim to be taken forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Council writes to the Education Authority and Department of Education seeking a further update on the Sports Hall floor at Portaferry Sports Centre.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at this stage – 8.59pm and resumed at 9.12pm)

NOTED.

(Councillor Chambers left the meeting at this stage – 9.12pm)

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

Reports for Approval Delegated to Committee

14. SINGLE TENDER ACTION FOR PART REPLACEMENT OF TIMING SYSTEM AT AURORA AQUATIC AND LEISURE COMPLEX

(Appendix VI)

****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE****
****IN CONFIDENCE****

Exemption: Relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities providing background information, raising key issues and information on the proposed Single Tender Action approach around the proposed works to the Current Swiss timing system at Aurora Aquatics and Leisure Complex.

Under the Councils' scheme of delegation, the Active and Healthy Communities Committee can approve this tender on behalf of the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council, further to the rationale outlined in the update report, approves a Single Tender Action for a direct award contract to Swatch UK Swiss Timing.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, with 8 voting For, 2 voting Against and 1 Abstention that that Council, further to the rationale outlined in this update report, approves a Single Tender Action for a direct award contract to Swatch UK Swiss Timing.

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 9.50pm.

ITEM 8.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	17 December 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development (Interim)
Date of Report	02 December 2025
File Reference	ED138
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☒ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	DfE Public Consultation - A definition of Social Enterprise in Northern Ireland
Attachments	Link below

Link: Consultation - Definition of Social Enterprise in Northern Ireland | Department for the Economy

Background
Growing the Social Economy Sector is a priority for the Department for the Economy and making the sector sustainable is a key feature of DfE's economic vision.

Social enterprises vary in structure and mission and unlike businesses or charities, social enterprise do not currently have a clear definition or a regulator. The identification of organisations eligible to receive funding is therefore proving challenging for funding bodies.

This consultation from DfE seeks feedback from organisations with an interest in social enterprises in Northern Ireland on a proposed definition framework that could be used by government departments in the delivery of funding support to the sector. A new arrangement through which government funding will be facilitated is proposed

to be in place from April 2027 and local authorities have been invited to respond to the consultation which closes on 23rd December 2025.

Definition of the Social Enterprise Sector
The Council welcomes the ambition to help the sector to become more sustainable and ensure that funding from government is targeting social enterprises correctly. The development of a Framework to bring a more structured and objective approach to defining a social enterprise is both timely and welcomed. The Council agrees that the lack of an agreed definition to date has created difficulties for funding and support of these organisations. As stated in the paper, the proposals 'do not seek to regulate the use of the term 'social enterprises', but rather, focus on financial decisions the NI Departments may make around support for social enterprises'.

As suggested, due to the challenges of having no clear standard definition, there is a lack of verifiable data on the size or scale of the sector in any area. This is no different in this area. However, through engagement with the local sector, it is apparent that while the Ards and North Down area have a small number of larger social enterprises who are mostly self-sustaining, the local sector is predominantly made up of smaller enterprises with much lower capacity.

These enterprises have been established to address an identified local need and tend to be focussed on a 'community of interest' or a geographical area. They provide employment and much needed support across the Borough and are meeting local needs. The Council is keen that these organisations continue to be able to access support to deliver their services effectively and that they have the resources and capacity to deliver their social objectives and mission.

Scope of the Three Tier Definition Framework
The three levels proposed provide a broad range of options for social enterprises to self-assess. However, due to the diverse number of enterprises across the sector, it will be difficult to confirm whether it will enable all to be included until it is fully operational and tested. The Council suggests the first year should be treated as a 'test' or 'pilot' phase when this is rolled out in practice, making provision to take on board feedback from enterprises or other funding bodies to highlight any emerging issues or potential barriers to accessing funding or support.

The Framework has a strong focus on finances and economic return. The Council agrees that where possible, social enterprises should be encouraged and supported to adopt a more commercial approach to enable them to resource their social objectives and ensure sustainability. Many social enterprises aim to be financially sustainable, however, some do rely on government funding as they do not have the ability to trade. One of the core purposes of social enterprise is social value - enhancing the lives of individuals, communities and/or their local environment regardless of the revenue model.

Social value is a fundamental aspect of social enterprises, and the Council therefore welcomes the inclusion of Section 2 of the Framework 'Mission and Impact' and hopes it will encourage the inclusion of those enterprises which may not be at the same level of maturity/capacity or economic strength as larger enterprises.

New Accreditation System
The Council notes that the following the consultation it is intended to develop an accreditation system, removing the need for multiple checks by different funders and requiring an independent assessment body. The development of an independent system to facilitate a consistency of approach from funders is welcomed, however, smaller enterprises lack of capacity could mean they choose not to engage with an accreditation scheme, particularly if costs are not kept to a minimum.

It is critical that the changes proposed do not become barriers to engagement for smaller social enterprises and result in their lack of participation in the Framework and Accreditation process. While the Council notes the scheme does not feature in this consultation, it is necessary to address these issues now and ensure these are taken into account in planning the new arrangements and, critically, that measures are put in place in the early stages of roll out to monitor the level of engagement and support the sector's participation.

Next Steps
Going forward the Council would suggest the following:

1) The initial roll out of the Framework should be treated as a 'test and learn' phase, with engagement levels monitored and a review undertaken to assess the impact of the Framework (and to also inform the 'new funding arrangement' in March 2027) including liaising with:
   - relevant bodies, funders and key stakeholders to test if the Framework has ensured the funding of the sector is being effectively targeted: and also,
   - a representative cross section of social enterprises to assess the impact of these proposals and identify if further refinement or adjustment is required to ensure there has been no adverse impact, particularly on smaller enterprises

2) Provision of some further detail on how the Framework is intended to 'guide' the funding process i.e. is the intention of the Framework to assist with categorising enterprises into the 3 Levels with funding being scaled and allocated accordingly.

3) The Department (and /or partner bodies) should provide briefing/information workshops on the Accreditation Process (potentially in partnership with Social Enterprise NI) and accompany this with a proactive outreach programme to the sector to inform and guide the sector on the Framework and the steps they should now take to identify which level they should align with and ensure compliance with requirements.

   To align with this process, the Department should explore putting specific supports in place, potentially in partnership with the 11-Council Enterprise Support Service – Go Succeed – to build the capacity of the sector to optimise their engagement with and enable their buy-in to the new Framework.

4) The Consultation Notes that (3.1) '*a new arrangement through which government funding will be facilitated is proposed to be in place from 2027'*. The Council looks forward to learning more from the Department about how this is planned to operate and how the three tier Framework Definition will be used in this process.

Not Applicable

Summary
The newly released 2025 Social Enterprise Sector Report delivers evidence of an active social enterprise sector with £933 million pouring into Northern Ireland's economy and with over 17,000 jobs created. This is a median turnover that's double the UK average**.**

The Council views the local social enterprise sector as being a key social and economic contributor to the Borough, and therefore it is keen to ensure it receives the support required to build its capacity and become more sustainable and have access to the funding and support it needs to achieve this. The Council would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department and other agencies going forward to ensure the sector is supported to continue to deliver its social objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the steps highlighted in this report and submits this to DfE by the closing date of 23 December 2025.

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

1 December 2025

Our ref: C237/25

By Email:

To Each Council Chief Executive

Dear Chief Executive

At its November meeting Council carried the undernoted motion:

> That this Council notes with concern the recent introduction of the PSNI's new online firearms licensing system, which requires applicants to renew and manage their firearm certificates exclusively through a digital portal. Council further recognises that while the move to online processing may improve efficiency for some users, it presents significant difficulties for older certificate holders and others within our rural communities who may not have access to, or the ability to use, email or smart phones. Council further notes that many of these individuals are long-standing, law-abiding members of the community who have safely held firearms for decades and should not be disadvantaged by digital exclusion.
>
> Accordingly, this Council resolves to:
>
> 1. Write to the Chief Constable of the PSNI and the Minister of Justice expressing concern about the lack of an accessible alternative for applicants without digital access;
> 2. Urge the PSNI to introduce an alternative application process — whether through paper forms, in-person assistance from Firearms Enquiry Officers, or via registered dealers or clubs — to ensure all applicants can continue to renew their certificates without discrimination.
> 3. Write to the Equality Commissioner to seek their opinion on the current online portal only arrangements.

Cookstown Office
Burn Road
Cookstown
BT80 8DT

Dungannon Office
Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

Magherafelt Office
Ballyronan Road
Magherafelt
BT45 6EN

Telephone 03000 132 132

info@midulstercouncil.org
www.midulstercouncil.org

I would ask that you bring this to the attention of your elected members and ask that to give strength to the campaign for change in the firearms licensing system that your council also writes to the Chief Constable, the Minister for Justice and the Equality Commissioner as outlined in the motion.

Yours sincerely

Joseph McGuckin
Head of Strategic Services and Engagement

ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	17 December 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community Development
Date of Report	09 December 2025
File Reference	CW142
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Social Supermarket Undespend 2024/25
Attachments	None

There was an identified underspend of £14,362.91 in 2024-25 Social Supermarket funding, officers sought permission from the Department for Communities (DfC), to carry this over into 2025-26. Following the 6 monthly return to the department it was identified that the underspend had been agreed by the department, but confirmation had been sent by email to a Council officer that is currently off sick. Officers now seek permission to issue a letter of variance to the two appointed social supermarkets as following:

Kilcooley Women's Centre (KWC), £7,899.60 – 55% of underspend
Bangor Food and Community Support (BFCS) £6,463.31 – 45% underspend.

The percentage of the split is as previously agreed based on percentage of population that each service covers.

KWC covers Bangor, Holywood and Donaghadee.
BFCS covers Ards, East Ards (Comber, Ballygowan and Killinchy) and Peninsula.

Not Applicable

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the issue of Letter of Variance to the two Social Supermarkets, KWC £7,899.60 and BFCS £6,463.31.

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	17 December 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	10 December 2025
File Reference	N/A
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Nomination to Outside Bodies
Attachments	

Places on working groups are filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and are thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position becomes vacant, it reverts back to Council to nominate a Member to fill the place rather than the Party Nominating Officers.

Following the resignation of Linzi McLaren (Holywood and Clandeboye DEA) from the Council, which has subsequently been filled by Councillor Hollywood, a number of outstanding positions on Working Groups are now required to be filled. Nominations are sought to fill each of the below positions for the remainder of the term as necessary:

1. Body: Elected Member Development Steering Group – 7 Places (4 Year Appointment)
2. Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Not Applicable

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

The below tables reflect the current membership of the above working groups:

Body: Elected Member Development Steering Group – 7 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	**2023/27**
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor McLaren
2	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Smart
3	Alderman Keery	Councillor Moore
4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor McAlpine
5	Councillor Thompson	Alderman McIlveen
6	Alderman W Irvine	Alderman Graham
7	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor Cochrane

Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)

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

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

	2024/25	**2025/26**
1	Councillor Thompson *(Replaced Councillor MacArthur April 2024)*	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
4	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings

Not Applicable

Nominations are sought from Council to fill the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council nominate a Member(s) to the bodies as outlined in this report.

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	17 December 2025
Responsible Director	Acting Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Corporate Governance
Date of Report	01 December 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Freedom of the Borough - Rhys McClenaghan
Attachments	

Background

At the Council meeting in September 2024 it was agreed:-

"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."

Meetings have since taken place between Officers and Mr McClenaghan, who has accepted the honour, to plan the associated events.

The Freedom of the Borough conferral ceremony will be held on Friday 23 January 2026 and a public event will be held on Sunday 25 January 2026.

Friday 23 January 2026

Conferral Event
It is recommended that the conferral event is held in the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel. It will incorporates the various civic ceremonial protocols that are characteristic of the bestowal of the Freedom of the Borough and a celebratory.

It is envisaged that the event will cater for 100 attendees, with approximately 60 Council guests and the remainder Mr McClenaghan's guests.

The event will include:

- Drinks reception
- Formal proceedings conducted in the Blackwood Suite, with members robed
- Speech of Conferral – The Mayor of Ards and North Down
- Recitation of the resolution – Chief Executive
- Signing of the Honorary Book of Burgesses by the Mayor, Chief Executive and Mr McClenaghan
- Presentation of Illuminated Certificate
- Response from Mr McClenaghan
- Exchange of gifts
- Interview conducted by special guest
- Toasts including the Loyal Toast, The New Freemen of the Borough, the Borough of Ards and North Down and "Our Guests"
- Dinner

It is also recommended that a commemorative brochure be produced to mark the occasion.

Wording for Certificate
It is recommended that the certificate be worded as follows:

To: Rhys McClenaghan BEM

Greetings

Whereas the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Ards and North Down in the County of Down being sensible of your contribution to the Borough; and in acknowledgment of your inspirational talent and outstanding achievements in sport - European, Commonwealth, World and Olympic Gold Medallist.

Do by these presents confer upon you the Freedom of the Borough of Ards and North Down.

In witness thereof the Common Seal of Ards and North Down Borough Council is affixed hereto this 23rd day of January 2026.

Not Applicable

Sunday 25 January 2026

To enable the public to better engage with this Freedom of the Borough, it is proposed to host two hour long performances in Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. Curated by Peter Corry Productions and in association with Origin Gymnastics, the performance will tell the story of Rhys' life to date – from young aspiring gymnast to Olympic medallist. It will celebrate the contribution Rhys has made, and continues to make, to sport, wellbeing and his local community. The event is aimed at engaging and inspiring the audience.

As capacity for this event is limited, it will be ticketed. Tickets will be available in January for a small fee. The performance will be aimed at a family audience.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

ITEM 15

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	17 December 2025
Responsible Director	Acting Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	09 October 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	Active & Healthy Communities	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 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.	Adele Faulkner (Director of Active & Healthy Communities)	
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 Estates)	
370	Active & Healthy Communities	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	Gareth Kinnear (Interim Head of Environmental Health)	
514	Environment	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	Update report to be brought to EC February 2026 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation 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.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

519	Active & Healthy Communities	20.06.22	Councillor Kendall, 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 Comittee if that clarity is obtained in advance. Meeting to be held on 27 November 2025 with the Mayor, Members and Officers.	Nikki Dorrian & Alan Johnson	
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 November 2025 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
564	Environment	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	NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Officers awaiting response from EA in order for report to be brought back to future Environment 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.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

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. November 2025 - Advice now recieved on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
585	Environment	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.	Council October 2023 Item 15.2	Update report to be brought to EC December 2025 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation 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	November 2025: The sellers' solicitors have confirmed that they were not willing to undertake first registration. Officers sought further legal advice and CLT agreed to refer the matter to Arthur Moir – the former Registrar of the Land Registry would be asked to provide advice on the various issues in the title and provide an indication of the likelihood of achieving Good Leasehold title. This will allow the Council to make a better informed decision on the purchase. This project is continuing to incur costs to the Council.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
595	Environment	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	Update report to be brought to a future EC NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee Second report to June 2025 C&W Committee.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
599	Active & Healthy Communities	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 January 2026 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 Enviroment 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 Estates)	
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	November 2025: This matter is progressing in line with the actions agreed by both The Council and Conlig Community Regeneration Group.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance) & Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	

629	Environment	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	Update report to be brought to EC December NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage. Report to June C&W Committee with porgress 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 recongition of his outstanding achievements in sport.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.1)	Meeting with Rhys McClenaghan took place in January 2025. November 2025: Progressing report to follow when more information available.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.2) Environment Committee 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1) Environment Committee 7 May 2025 (Item 3)	Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1. Further report to follow. Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

636	Active & Healthy Communities	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 January 2026 A&HCC with the aim of tying this in with the Leisure Strategy launch. Update report to January A&HC Committee.	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)	Strategic Development, Lands, and the GIS officer met 16.10.25 to discuss how to get the information from GIS. Update to be provided to Elected Members by 17.10.25 Update report to P&P in the first quarter of 2026 Agreed at 7 Nov 2024 P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council 2024 - 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	Environment	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 Welleing 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/feasability 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 brought to P&P Committee 4.12.25 and agreed, subject to ratification at Dec Council 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)	

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	Update report to be brought to EC April 2026 Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Environment Committee 05.03.2025. Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council 26.02.25	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	
657	Environment	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	Update report to be brought to EC April 2026 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation 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	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
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	Update report to be brought to EC February 2026 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 Estates)	
665	Environment	15.04.2025	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	Update report to be brought to EC January 2026 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Assigned to June 2025 C&W Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

667	Corporate Services	23.04.2025	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 diffuclt 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	November update :Consultation with key stakholders to take place end November and report will be presented to Committee when proposal available		
668	Active & Healthy Communities	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	Report to January 2026 A&HC Committee. Alan to liase with Sharon Mahaffy.	Alan Johnson (Acting Head of Leisure)	
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 brought to P&P Committee 4.12.25 and agreed, subject to ratification at Dec Council 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. Indicaton of costs should be included.	Council 28.05.25 and Environment Committee 11.06.25	Report to be brought to EC February 2025 Agreed to adopt NOM at June 2025 Committee Assigned to June 2025 EC Agenda	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	
671	Active & Healthy Communities	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. Moved to A&HC due to restructure. Update to January 2026 A&HC Committee.	Gareth Kinnear (Interim Head of Environmental Health)	

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	1. BM to be invited to next CAG (soon to be relaunched as LAG, likely Jan/Feb 2026 whilst the C/TAG to LAG process is formalised 2. Re: commercial marketing plan, update report to P&P in first quarter of 2026. Agreed to adopt NOM at Sept 2025 P&P - ratified at Sept 2025 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 Environment Committee 03.12.2025 Item 3	Update report to be brought to February 2026 EC Report brought to December 2025 EC Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	
676	Active & Healthy Communities	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. Report to January 2026 A&HC Committee.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

677	Environment	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	Update report to be brought to EC April 2026 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Assigned to September 2025 C&W Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
678	Corporate Services	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	November update: The Lands team are looking at options and a report will be brought back to committee.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
680	Active & Healthy Communities	05.09.25	Councillor Cochrane and 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.	Council 24.09.25 - October Active and Healthy Communities Committee	Leisure Officers to progress.	Alan Johnson (Acting Head of Leisure)	

681	Corporate Services	09.09.25	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 is 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.	Council 24.09.25 - October Corporate Services Committee	Added to the agenda for CS 14/10, 14/11 letter sent to NAC NI by CEX. NAC NI have confirmed that this will be dicussed at the meeting of their Executive Committee in December and that they will respond after this.		
682	Corporate Services	17.09.25	Alderman Graham and Councillor Gilmour	Council recognising the importance of Holywood as a Garrison town, seeks in conjuction with the Craigavad and Helen's Bay Branch of the Royal British Legion, to bring a miltary event to Holywood.	Council 24.09.25. Corporate Services Committee	November update : Meeting to take place to work up proposal. Once there is a proposal a report will be presented to Committee.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
684	Environment	10.10.25	Councillor Hennessy and Alderman Brooks	That this Council brings back a report, with associated costs, detailing the possible road safety and lighting improvements that could be made between Donaghadee harbour and Donaghadee Community Centre.	Council 29.10.25 Environment Committee	Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC 2025 - to be ratified at November 2025 Council Assigned to November 2025 EC Agenda	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	

685	Active & Healthy Communities	14.10.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor S Irvine	This Council recognises the link between domestic abuse and non-accidental harm to companion animals and the emotional trauma this causes victims and survivors, acknowledging that companion animals are often used as tools of coercion and control in abusive relationships and that their welfare is intrinsically linked to the safety and wellbeing of victims. The introduction and implementation of Ruby's Law, as proposed in other parts of the UK, seeks to provide legal protection for pets in households where domestic abuse occurs, ensuring that they are considered in protective orders and safeguarding measures. Therefore, this councils resolves to: 1. Write to the Ministers for Justice, Communities, Finance, DAERA, and Health, calling for: 1. The introduction of Ruby's Law in Northern Ireland; and 2. Them to work in partnership to deliver a cross-departmental collaboration with Causeway Coast Dog Rescue charity, and other animal welfare and domestic abuse organisations as required, to ensure the development of robust and enforceable provisions, taking a multidisciplinary approach to identify key stakeholders and government agencies to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and coercive	Council 29.10.25 AHC		Gareth Kinnear (Interim Head of Environmental Health)	
686	Corporate Services	15.10.25	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Gilmour	That this Council is deeply alarmed that the definition of victim in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 does not distinguish between those who perpetrated wrongdoing during the Troubles and the innocent victims they harmed, injured, killed or bereaved; believes that innocent victims should not have to interact with terrorists and their supporters when accessing victim support services; asserts that there is no moral equivalence between victim-makers and innocent victims; welcomes the fact that the victims pension legislation makes a clear distinction between perpetrator and victim; condemns the Alliance Party's decision to intentionally blur this line by removing the word "innocent" from the description of a victim in a recent Assembly motion addressing the legacy of the past; and resolves to write to the Justice Minister requesting that she personally apologise for suggesting that victim makers could also be considered victims.	Council 29.10.25 Corporate Services Committee	On the draft agenda for CS 11/11. Letter to go to Minister of Justice-draft with with Director of CS - 8/12.		

687	Active & Healthy Communities	16.10.25	Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray	That this Council recognises the valuable work undertaken by the Community Safety team in tackling anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough. That this Council also acknowledges the significant and increasing pressures on those officers to meet the growing and complex demands of their workload. Furthermore, that Council notes the recent review of the criminal legislative framework to help tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the greater powers which may devolve to Council, and tasks officers to prepare a report which outlines the needs of the Borough in relation to community safety and the resources currently available, details a range of measures appropriate to address those needs, including recruitment of additional officers, and identifies requisite funding requirements and opportunities.	Council 29.10.25. AHC	Deferred to December A&HC Committee	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
688	Corporate Services	16.10.25	Alderman Graham and Alderman McIlveen	That Council in liaison with Belfast City Airport arranges a visit to the Airport for members and officers.	Council 29.10.25 Corporate Services Committee	On the draft agenda for CS 11/11. 20/11/25 Democratic Services to invite the members of CS committee and Acting CEX to BC Airport for Xmas Cheer on 16/12 and to issue a deputation request to BCA via their representative at Brown O'Connor.		
689	Environment	21.10.25	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	That Council task officers to bring forward a report on the possibly of permitting wooden memorials at our cemeteries as part of regulations going forward.	Council 29.10.25 Environment Committee	Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC - to be ratified at November 2025 Council Assigned to November 2025 EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
689	Corporate Services	31.10.25	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	That this Council pledges to oppose the introduction of any Digital ID system that would be mandatory or linked to essential services. We resolve to write to the Prime Minister urging the Government to abandon any Digital ID initiative and calling for a full public consultation to take place on the subject prior to any future proposals being brought forward.	Council November 26.11.25 Corporate Services Committee	Added to the agenda for CS 9/12		

690	Environment	11.11.25	Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers	This Council notes the Ulster Farmers' Union's unprecedented motion of no confidence in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), which reflects deep and widespread frustration within the farming community. This Council recognises the unrelenting pressures faced by family farmers across Northern Ireland, including: • The unresolved and escalating crisis surrounding Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB); • Uncertainty regarding future Inheritance Tax arrangements for farm succession; • Continued planning paralysis affecting essential agricultural development; and • Increasing policy and regulatory pressures, with little meaningful assurance, progress, or action from DAERA to address these challenges. This Council further acknowledges that family farmers are the backbone of Northern Ireland's agri-food sector, sustaining rural communities, underpinning the regional economy, and serving as essential custodians of our environment and biodiversity. This Council therefore calls on the Minister for	Council November 26.11.25 Environment Committee			

691	Active & Healthy Communities	12.11.25	Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall		This Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support. This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include: 1. The potential introduction of stricter controls on the sale and importation of fireworks, limiting use to licensed, organised displays only. 2. Enhancing PSNI and Council enforcement powers to tackle illegal and antisocial firework use and increasing the regulatory	Council November 26.11.25 Active and Healthy Communities Committee			