Ards and North Down Borough Council

Review of Community Development and Community Centre & Halls Provision

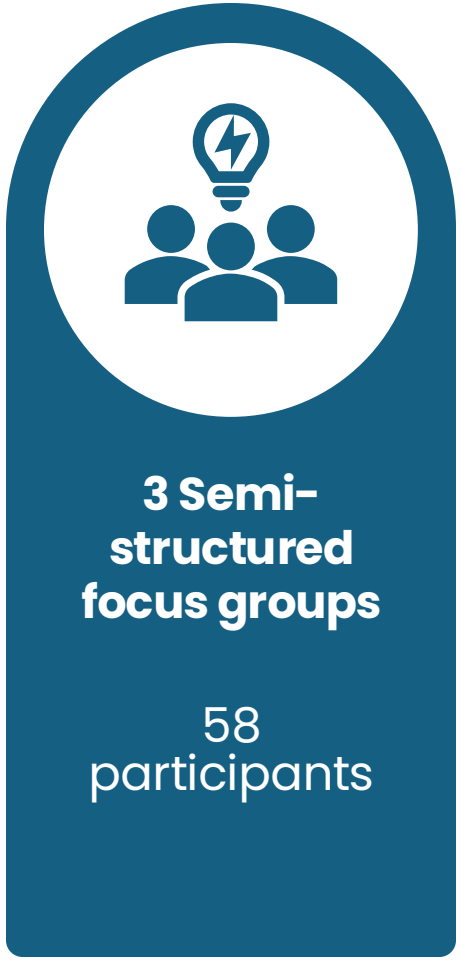
Phase 2 Consultation

S3 SOLUTIONS

What we have been asked to do:

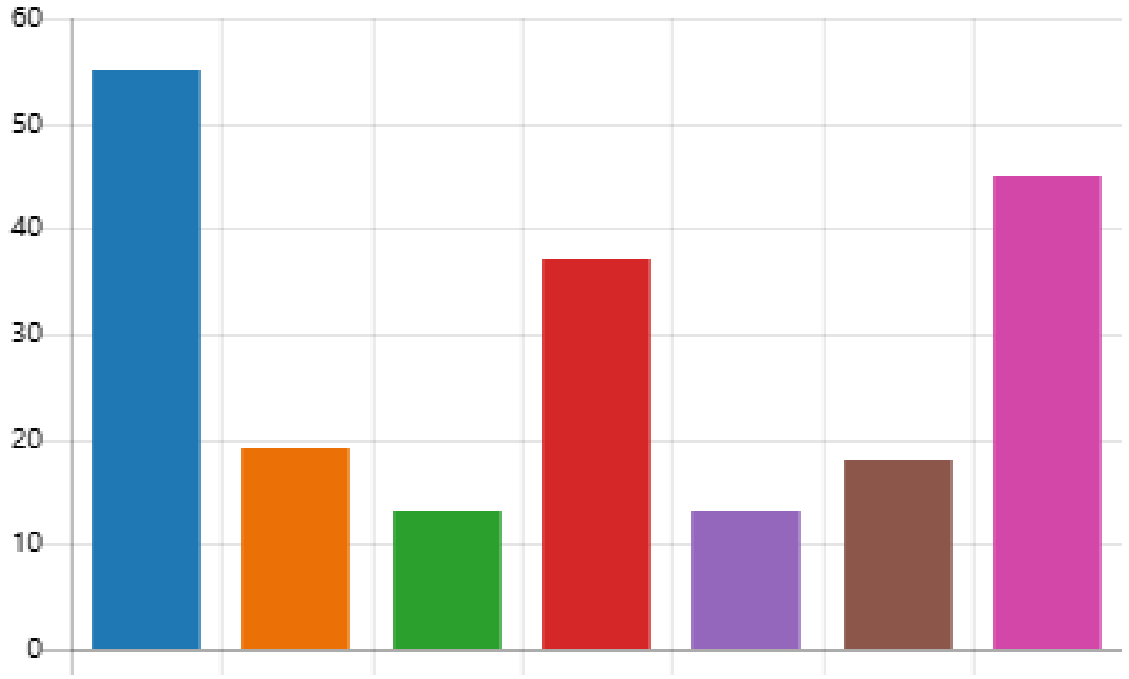
1. Develop a 10 year Community Development Strategy and 3 year Action Plan
2. Carry out a review of Community Development direct provision and make recommendations for future provision
3. Carry out a review of Community Centres and Halls provision and make recommendations for future provision

Below is a breakdown of who we engaged with under Phase 1 of the consultation held in Autumn 2025:



Over 233 residents completed our online survey – Below is a breakdown of numbers per District Electoral Area:

District Electoral Area of Respondents



Ards Peninsula	55
Bangor Central	19
Bangor West	13
Bangor East and Donaghadee	37
Comber	13
Holywood and Clandeboye	18
Newtownards	45
*Did not say	33

What you said!

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECT PROVISION

The following slides outline the key findings from our consultation regarding Community Development Direct Provision:

Key Findings from Online Survey

Support Required for Community Organisations:

Based on first choice answers, those representing Community Organisations said that support was required in the following areas, in order of priority:

57% 1. Applying for funding

20% 2. Advice on governance, safeguarding and insurance issues

18% 3. Advice on volunteer recruitment and retention

5% 4. Advice on marketing, strategic planning & measuring impact

Key Findings from Online Survey

Community Organisation Operational Cost:

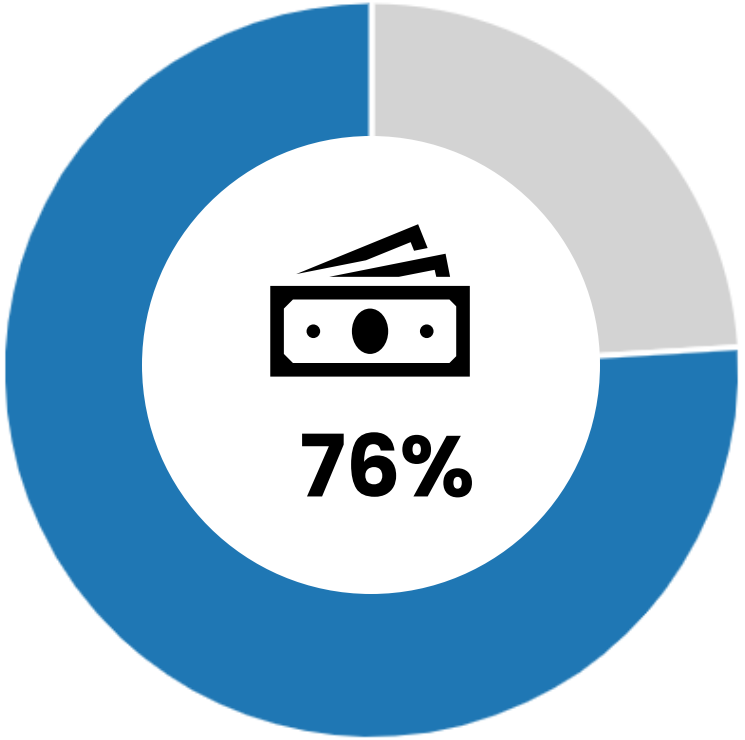
Based on first choice answers, those representing Community Organisations said that costs were mainly incurred in the following budget areas, in order of priority

52%	1. Overhead Costs
16%	2. Project & Programme Costs
13%	3. Governance Costs (Accountants, Access NI etc.)
13%	4. Volunteer Expenses
6%	5. Training/Staff Costs/Other

Key Findings from Online Survey

Financial Support from Council:

76% of those representing Community Organisations said that they applied for operational costs from the Council within the past 5 years



Key Concerns – Online Survey & Stakeholder Engagements

The key concerns raised from the online survey and stakeholder engagements were:

- Grant awards for running costs are reducing year on year as more groups are applying
- Community groups are facing increased competition to draw down external funding
- Competition for funding leads to lack of collaboration
- Experienced staff in the Community & Voluntary Sector are not being retained due to fixed term contracts expiring
- A decline in volunteerism especially post COVID

Key Concerns – Online Survey & Stakeholder Engagements

Continued - key concerns raised from the online survey and stakeholder engagements were:

- Desire to see a more visible connection between residents and Council services
- Equity in the provision of community development direct support across the Borough
- Requests to review support models to rural areas
- Desire for more initiatives based on social connection and health and wellbeing
- Low awareness of the Council Community Centre & Halls offer and it's potential

Key Concerns – Online Survey & Stakeholder Engagements

Priority Groups Identified for future Community Development Provision intervention included:

- Teenagers (particularly older Teenagers)
- Older People
- Disabled People
- Women facing domestic abuse
- Deprived Communities

What you said!

COMMUNITY CENTRES & HALLS PROVISION

The following slides outline the key findings from our consultation regarding Community Centres & Halls Provision:

Key Findings from Online Survey

Positive Feedback:

Positive Feedback	Standard Met	Good – Excellent
Quality and standard of community centre/hall	30%	45%
Size of community centre/hall for multipurpose use	27%	46%
Accessibility of community centre/hall	27%	53%
Maintenance of community centre/hall	29%	55%
Safety of community centre/hall	27%	63%
Affordability of community centre/hall	38%	44%

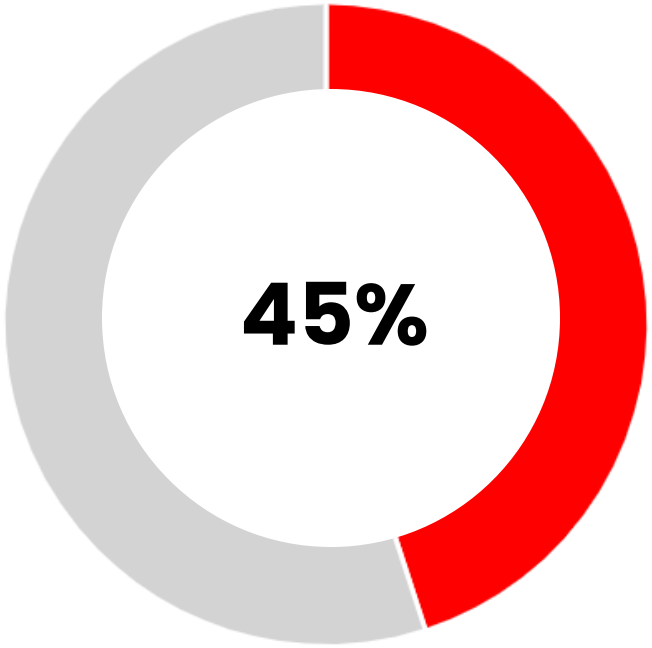
Key Findings from Online Survey

Negative Feedback:

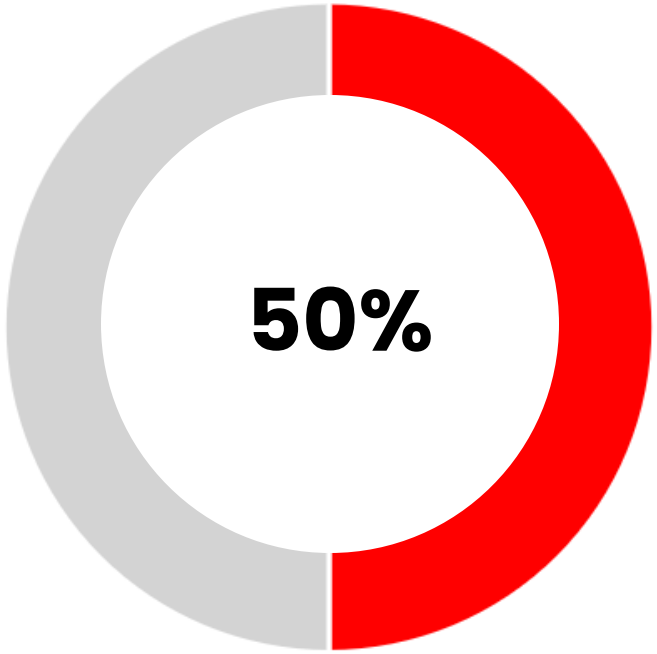
Negative Feedback	Standard Met	Below Average – Poor
Marketing and awareness of community centre/hall offer	31%	55%
Variety of community centre/hall offer for multipurpose use	30%	39%
Flexibility in opening hours of community centre/hall	32%	35%

Key Findings from Online Survey

Negative Feedback:



45% or those responded have NEVER used a Council owned community centre/hall



50% of those responded did not know how to book a community centre/hall

Key Findings from Online Survey

The key concerns raised from the online survey and stakeholder engagements were:

Lack of knowledge as to what community centres/halls are used for

Lack of awareness of the activities that are run out of community centres/halls

Some community centres/halls are viewed as 'venue hires' rather than 'active community hubs'

The process for booking community centres & halls takes too long and there is no online booking options

Community centres/halls are underutilised but on the positive side there is so much potential to rejuvenate use

Community Centres & Halls Operating Model Review

In tandem with this consultation exercise, the Council has engaged S3 Solutions Consultants to undertake a review of Community Centre & Halls operating models and make recommendations for future delivery.

This will include a review of:

a) Current Operating Model Efficiency

Review of current budgeting and operating practices:

- Opening Hours
- Locations
- Annual Marketing Plans
- Pricing

b) Potential Alternative Operating Models

Review of current budgeting and operating practices:

- Current and potential future use (footfall and bookings)
- Income models
- Expenditure Models
- Analysis of non-Council Community Centres/Halls
- Analysis of other alternative locations and venues for Council programme delivery

These are the next steps to be undertaken after the Phase 2 Consultation Period:

MARCH

Second Programme of Engagement with residents, community stakeholders and elected representatives

APRIL

Final draft submission -Review and Analysis of Council Direct Provision /Review and Analysis of Council Community Centres and Halls Provision and Recommendations

First draft submission – 10 year Community Development Strategy & 3 Year Action Plan

MAY

Final draft submission – 10 year Community Development Strategy & 3 Year Action Plan

We listened to what you said – Our commitments to you!

Based on the consultation to date, the following draft commitments in the ensuing slides have been devised for your feedback:

Strengthen our Connections to Communities

1. To increase awareness and understanding of Community Development & Community Centres and Halls provision using clearer more consistent communication tools (Council co-ordinating resource, digital/offline channels review and identification of areas of improvement)
2. To improve awareness and access to community participation across the borough by improving signposting and information sharing mechanisms with local community organisations so residents can identify and access participation opportunities
3. To strengthen connections between communities, community development officers and existing peer networks to evaluate how current engagement is working and where improvements can be made

Improve Wellbeing through Active & Healthy Social Participation

1. To further enhance inclusive participation opportunities ensuring activities are planned to reflect a broad range of ages, abilities and needs (children & young people, older people, people experiencing poverty, individuals with additional needs)
2. To review and modify where appropriate existing community programme models to improve sustainability and responsiveness to need (Summer Schemes, Play Clubs, and Over 50's Clubs etc.)
3. To improve participation opportunities in communities where access to programmes is limited (geography, rural location, transport constraints, lack of local provision) – Piloting outreach programmes and using the existing centres/halls infrastructure to host (Leisure strategy model)

Reduce Inequalities & Support Priority Communities

1. To better use data, local insight and community planning intelligence to identify communities of greatest need – development of a prioritisation framework for future service planning
2. To strengthen the understanding of rural community needs to inform targeted community development delivery in these areas
3. To develop a better understanding of the role of community development within Council in terms of remit and better inform of the role of other Council services and their function to residents
4. To strengthen collaboration with statutory, funded and community planning partners to support more joined-up responses in areas with emerging need

Develop a Sustainable, Skilled and Empowered Community Sector

1. Continued support to community groups to build their capacity and operate sustainably (governance, committee skills, safeguarding and mandatory requirements)
2. To provide targeted support and, where required, direct provision to strengthen local delivery in priority areas
3. To review and deliver community development grant funding in line with the grants policy, with clear processes and consistent application
4. To strengthen support for community groups to access external funding supports
5. To strengthen volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition to support a sustainable volunteering environment

Improve Partnership, Collaboration and Whole-System Working

1. To strengthen internal staff team co-ordination to maximise joined up cross council responses to community need
2. To strengthen community development's role in influencing multi-agency and external partner work plans
3. To strengthen joint planning between Community Development & Community Centres and Halls staff teams to support better aligned delivery of services (in particular on the ground staff)

Develop a ‘fit for purpose’ Community Centres and Halls Estate

1. To develop a strategic vision and management framework for the Community Centres & Halls Estate
2. To better market and promote the use of Community Centres and Halls in the Borough so benefit to the community can be maximised
3. To improve the process for booking Community Centres & Halls to include the introduction of new online booking solutions
4. To explore how the functions and uses of Community Centres & Halls can be diversified to provide a better offer to local communities (e.g introduction of pilot activity programmes)
5. To review and prioritise areas for modernisation and improvements across the Community Centres & Halls Estate

What do you think of our draft commitments?

We'd like to here from you!

What do you think of our draft commitments?

We would appreciate if you would click on the survey link below and provide feedback on the draft commitments outlined in this slide deck.

Link to survey:

NEW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – HAVE YOUR SAY – Fill in form