

Agenda

Agenda

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1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
- 4 Mayor's Business
- 5 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of March 2026 (copy to follow)
6. Deputation from National Association of Councillors (NAC)
7. Minutes of Council meeting dated 25 February 2026 (Copy attached)

[C 2026.02.25 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[C 2026.02.25 Minutes PM FINAL.pdf](#)

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8. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)

8.1. Planning Committee dated 3 March 2026

[8.1 2026.03.03 Minutes PC.pdf](#)

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8.1.1. Matters arising from Planning Committee meeting of 03 March (Report attached)

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8.2. Environment Committee dated 4 March 2026

[EC 2026.03.04 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[EC 2026.03.04 MinutesPM.pdf](#)

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8.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 5 March 2026

[2026.03.05 PP Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

8.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 10 March 2026

CS.2026.03.10 Minutes.pdf

Not included

CS.2026.03.10 MinutesPM.pdf

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8.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 11 March 2026

AHC 2026.03.11 Minutes.pdf

Not included

AHC 2026.03.11 Minutes PM.pdf

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9. Deputation request from Rights Respecting Schools Ambassadors of Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College (Report attached)

9.1 Deputation request from Rights Respecting Schools Ambassadors.pdf

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9. Appendix 1 - Deputation Request Form.pdf

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10. Sealing Documents

11. Transfer of Rights of Burial

12. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

12. Notice of Motion Status Report.pdf

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12. NoM Tracker.pdf

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13. Notices of Motion

13.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers

That this Council aims to reduce its level of rates increases in future years by introducing a zero based budgeting process, completing the ongoing review of planned capital expenditure and undertaking an in-depth engagement process with ratepayers/residents to explain our current strategy and to obtain feedback and input to the next rates process

13.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McClean and Councillor Gilmour

That this Council, mindful of our close connections to the United States and our role in their history, commits to mark and celebrate the United States Semi quincennial. Officers should consider options for events of different scales, including the theming of an existing event in the calendar, as well as exploring options to collaborate on an event of an appropriate level that complements the proposals of other councils (Causeway Coast and Glens, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Lisburn and Castlereagh) and would run in the latter half of this year.

13.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine

That this Council commends the continued work and dedication of the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF). For many years, the organisation has provided invaluable support, advocacy, and practical assistance to victims and survivors across Northern Ireland ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are not forgotten.

We agree to display the SEFF memorial quilt at a suitable location in the borough to honour innocent victims, educate the public about the impact of the Troubles, and ensure the legacy and memory of those lost continues to be recognised.

13.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas

That this council recognises the Invictus Games, Birmingham 2027, a multi sports event, for wounded, injured and sick military service personnel, both serving and veterans, is being hosted in the UK for the first time since the inaugural games. Further, that we task officers to engage with Invictus Games to explore how we might facilitate additional training for Northern Ireland competitors in advance of the games, offering the best opportunity for local veterans and participants to attain the peak level of fitness, and to identify potential funding sources to assist in minimising the cost attributed to commuting to and from the mandatory national training camps, as required by all registered participants.

13.5. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Edmund and Alderman Adair

That this Council is deeply concerned at the impact of the change to Isle of Man's visa requirements on the Northern Ireland fishing fleet. The changes which mean that overseas crew require an Isle of Mans work visa rather than the transit visa or UK skilled worker visa and therefore cannot fish within the Isle of Man 12 nautical mile limit. Effectively exclude the Northern Ireland fishing fleet from its fishing traditional waters. Council requests that officers write to the Manx Government, to highlight the damage to the Northern Fishing and Fish Processing Industry and request that the relevant measures are taken by the Manx Government to reverse

the impact of these changes.

13.6. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray

That this Council notes the profound impact on the Clandeboye Community of the tragic death of 16 year old DICE leader and Army Cadet Jaidyn Rice on the 8th July 2025 and further notes the terrible loss of seven other lives on roads in our Borough during 2025, the highest of any Council area.

Further that this Council tasks officers to work with the Rice family to create a bench honouring Jaidyn's contribution to her community, such bench to be a place of reflection, connection and outreach, in an agreed location and incorporating Council's Here to Help app for signposting to vital support services around the Borough.

Circulated for Information

(a) Letter re Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (NI) 2026 (correspondence attached)

📎 *CFI (a) - Letter to Chief Executives.pdf*

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(b) CCNI Energy Briefing (correspondence attached)

📎 *CCNI - Energy Briefing.pdf*

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

14. Licences and Wayleaves for NI Electric Vehicle Consortium (Report attached)

📎 *14. Licences and Wayleaves for NI Electric Vehicle Consortium.pdf*

Not included

📎 *14. - Appendix 1 - Council minute.pdf*

Not included

15. Bangor Marina and Harbour update (Verbal Update)

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

19 March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 25 March 2026 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Michael Steele
Acting Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

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****IN CONFIDENCE****

- 14. Licences and Wayleaves for NI Electric Vehicle Consortium (Report attached)
- 15. Bangor Marina and Harbour update (verbal update)

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

ITEM 7

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 25th February 2026 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor McCollum)	
Aldermen:	Adair	McAlpine
	Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
	Brooks	McIlveen
	Cummings	McRandal
	Graham	Smith
Councillors:	Ashe	Kendall (Zoom)
	Blaney	Kennedy
	Boyle	Kerr
	Brady	McBurney
	Cathcart	McClellan
	Chambers	McCracken
	Cochrane	McKee
	Douglas	Moore
	Edmund	Morgan
	Gilmour	Newman
	Hennessy	Smart
	Hollywood	Thompson
	Irvine, S	Wray
	Irvine, W	

Officers: Acting Chief Executive (M Steele), Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Faulkner), Acting Director of Corporate Services (C Jackson), Director of Environmental Services (G Bannister), Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), and Democratic Services Officers (H Loebnau and R King)

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from Councillor Harbinson and Councillor Irwin.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest and the following declarations were made.

Councillor Chambers and Councillor Newman – Item 18 - Artificial pitch replacement at Aurora and Ward Park.

Alderman McAlpine and Councillor Newman – Item 17 - Request for a licence at Carrowdore Playing Fields to facilitate works at Strangford Integrated College.

Councillor Boyle – Item 10 - Deputation Request from National Association of Councillors (NAC).

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor highlighted her attendance at the launch of the Council's Leisure Strategy at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, she thanked those councillors who had attended along with officers and leisure centre staff for their extensive work and welcomed the strategy's aim to increase opportunities for active leisure for all residents.

RESOLVED, that the Mayor's business be noted.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2026

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of February 2026.

(Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy withdrew from the meeting – 7.04 pm)

The Mayor outlined her key engagements and events in February and reflected on a visit of over 50 beavers and cubs from 6th Ards to the Council Chamber in Newtownards at Alderman McIlveen's request - Alderman McIlveen had presented on the work of the Council and Elected Members; and the Mayor had been impressed by the enthusiasm and curiosity of the children. She also noted an upcoming return visit of the scouts, to be hosted by the Deputy Mayor.

The Mayor highlighted further receptions which were part of the 'Belonging' series of morning coffee and tea events with groups such as Comber's Knit and Natter, Holywood U3A, Millisle Health and Wellbeing, and Rathmore Together attending; she praised their efforts to combat loneliness, recognising a high demographic of older people living in the Borough. She was particularly moved by comments from members of the Knit and Natter group who had recalled 'keeping each other alive and sane' during the Covid Pandemic, the group had included widows without children living close by, and others living alone.

(Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy returned to the meeting – 7.05 pm)

The Mayor's Cup event had taken place during February half-term: 140 children from 15 football clubs, with skills and coaching, workshops on healthy relationships, self-esteem, good mental health (delivered by Sport Changes Life and Women's Aid), and mentorship from several local sports figures who had given up their time. The Mayor thanked the Council's teams from the Mayor's Office, Sports Development, PCSP, Ards Blair Mayne staff and all external partners involved, and noted extremely positive feedback from participants and parents.

Receptions had been held for Bangor Royal British Legion and Olive Leaf Royal Black Preceptory; recognising those organisations' service to the community and the Mayor also referred to a meeting with the new High Sheriff and potential collaboration on domestic abuse awareness projects focusing on rural and older communities. This was identified as a key priority area by the High Sheriff for his term in office. The Mayor noted that he brought insight to the issue through his work as a GP and he was keen to raise awareness within the Borough.

The Mayor referred to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls initiatives through PCSP, noting a storytelling event on coercive control, delivered in partnership with Women's Aid. She reported on a further event that aimed to showcase the progress of 11 funded domestic abuse awareness projects and noted the launch of the 2026–2027 Change Fund scheme with the application process closing on Friday 20 March.

In a final matter, the Mayor advised Members of the upcoming Mayor's Concert for Belonging (Saturday, 28th March at 7:30 PM, Bangor Elim Church) and encouraged their attendance. Tickets were priced at £12 with proceeds directed to the Mayor's three chosen charities - Orchardville, St. Vincent de Paul, and Women's Aid.

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

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 28 JANUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7. MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING DATED 28 JANUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

8. MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING DATED 10 FEBRUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

9. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

9.1 Planning Committee dated 3 February 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 13

Alderman McDowell wished to propose an amendment for accuracy in relation to Item 8 – Minutes of Special Council Meeting dated 10 February 2026, explaining that the Notice of Motion (Item 4.1) should list Alderman McRandal instead of himself.

Raising a point of order (Standing Order 13), Councillor Gilmour noted that the minutes had already been agreed and the Council would need to agree to suspend standing orders to allow Alderman McDowell's amendment to proceed.

It was agreed on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, with a qualified majority of 38 voting FOR, 0 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, that Council suspends Standing Order 13 - Order of Business - in order to permit Council to return to the minutes of the Special Council meeting on 10th February 2026 to make an amendment in relation to accuracy.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the minutes of the Special Council Meeting dated 10 February 2026, in relation to Item 4.1 Notice of Motion, be amended for accuracy, to read Alderman McRandal where it stated Alderman McDowell.

REINSTATEMENT OF STANDING ORDERS

It was agreed on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the Council reinstates Standing Orders.

9.2 Environment Committee dated 4 February 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Brady, seconded by Councillor Newman, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 6 – North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes

Alderman McRandal raised the issue of litter picking along the coastal path. He reported having attended a North Down beach clean on 15 February at Carnalea and Swinley Bay and highlighted the significant accumulation of rubbish, totalling 56kg, following recent vegetation-cutting works. He questioned the Council's litter-picking regime for the more remote sections of the path, recalling that he had previously queried the matter in 2022/23 and had been advised that these sections were only litter picked annually when grass verges were cut back. He further questioned why litter picking had not taken place following those latest vegetation cuts.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that he was not aware of any change to the regime and undertook to follow up on the specific incident and report back. Alderman McRandal stated that previous queries had gone unanswered and the Director agreed to also follow up on why the queries had gone unanswered.

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

9.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 5 February 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

9.3.1 Matters Arising - Event Proposal 2026 - Belfast Fleadh (Appendix II – IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in January 2026, a report was approved by the Place and Prosperity Committee concerning a proposed Fringe Fleadh event to take place on 1 August 2026. Further to this, at the Council meeting on 28 January 2026, the following amendment was agreed:

'That item 4 was referred back to the Place and Prosperity Committee for further consideration and that officers provide a supplementary report to look at: what other days the Fleadh fringe event could be held on; what the financial and operational implications would be of each option; and, how we ensure proper member oversight and value for money for events going forward'.

The Place and Prosperity Committee received a verbal update on 5 February 2026 stating that the report would follow and be presented at the February Council meeting.

Other Days for the Fringe Fleadh Event - Factors

The report to the Place and Prosperity Committee advised that to deliver the event a procurement exercise to appoint an event management company would be

undertaken. There would be a requirement in the brief to include a performance by Ards CCÉ, other local artists, and that programming would be done in discussion/agreement with the Council and Ards CCÉ representatives to ensure a quality performance.

At the Council meeting a query was raised as to whether the event could be held on an alternative date and not the same day as the Pipe Band contest. Officers contacted Ards CCÉ to gain insight into their views on what other days the Fringe Fleadh could be held. The Ards CCÉ Committee discussed this at a meeting on 30 January and responded confirming their position on the matter. Within the correspondence, the Committee outlined points as to why the Saturday 1 August was suggested as appropriate for the event.

The Council, in considering the event date and whether it would be possible to hold it on a different day was advised that to gain the best advantage it would need to be before the main event dates which are 2-9 August 2026. Therefore, Friday 31 July 2026 was reconsidered by Officers as an alternative date. The information below outlined key factors regarding delivery of the event on Friday 31 July:

- This date was unlikely to maximise the opportunity to gain visitors travelling to the Belfast Fleadh. The competition started on Sunday 2 August and currently the advice was that participants and attendees would arrive earlier, but as Friday was a working day it was anticipated that attendees would arrive Friday evening or Saturday morning in NI.
- The proposed event concept for Saturday 1 August was to hold the event between 1-9pm. As Friday was a working day the potential available audience would be reduced. Therefore, an event time of 6-9pm was likely more appropriate meaning the estimated attendance could potentially be reduced by up to c.50% (c5,000 to c.2,500). It should be noted that attendee numbers were indicative as this proposed event was a new Fringe concept and in a new event location.
- The proposed event concept with the support of Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI) was to showcase Bangor for 'the day' as a place of musical excellence and to gain best potential advantage from that aspect and encourage more attendees. This would not be the case with two separate dates and hosting the event on a Friday evening would most likely have a lower number of spectators.
- The use of the car park would be closed for up to two days i.e closed late Thursday through to all day Friday. A Saturday event would mean the car park would close late Friday afternoon/evening.
- Ards CCÉ had indicated they were not available to participate in July dates.

The day after the Belfast Fleadh event finished was a Tuesday, and the weekend after the Belfast Fleadh event was four days after the final Belfast event, whereby it was anticipated visitors would have enjoyed the finale and returned home. Both of these date options were deemed not appropriate to maximise best potential economic return.

The Belfast Fleadh event was running between 2-9 August. During these dates there were events in Belfast including competitions, street performances and

concerts running each day in a series of venues with a variety of performances. There would also be a daily Gig Rig at Belfast City Hall acting as the Main Stage (performers for this aspect are currently being requested). Businesses in Belfast were being encouraged to run additional fringe activity. It was unlikely that any Fringe Fleadh event held in the borough during this time would be able to 'compete' with the offering in Belfast.

Information on Proposed Event Location

The Holborn Square site had been reviewed by Officers. This area had recently been refurbished with a view to this being a potential event site with kerbs removed. It also had the advantage of being central within Bangor and has two well established bars having beer gardens backing onto the site, alongside additional hospitality businesses on High Street and nearby Main and Abbey Streets. This concept would be very similar to the popular and well attended element of the Wexford event in 2025. The venue was proposed was in easy walking distance from the Translink station, and it was close to the hospitality hub; businesses which were most likely to benefit from visitors to this event. There had been pressure for many years from retailers on High Street for support. It was also using a space that had been specifically redesigned by the Council to host events. Officers had since had meetings with Translink which had advised they would be able to have a bus stop for a 'drop off' from a Park and Ride (this would be further developed if the event concept is approved). The Council would engage ambassadors to point people to the two events within the City, and a signage plan would be implemented as required at orientation points. This site was deemed as the one which was appropriate for the scale and nature of the event taking on board learnings from the familiarisation visit.

Financial and Operational Implications of both Options

Option 1 – Saturday 1 August 2026

As per the report to Place and Prosperity on 8 January 2026, a budget of up to £40,000 was estimated to deliver the event with the appointment of an event management company. This was included within the Events budgets.

The event concept indicative budget was scoped by Officers, using knowledge and market costs based on similar event requirements for other events, for the delivery of the proposed event at the site of Holborn Square. At this juncture, there had been no further work completed on a budget as this would be determined by the successfully appointed event management company, subject to a successful procurement exercise.

It was anticipated that marketing and promotion of the event would be closely aligned to Belfast City Council's Fleadh Fringe promotion and would maximise the Council's Regional Tourism Partnership with Visit Belfast. This would help gain the best exposure of the event campaign.

As per previous Pipe Band events, the Council would work closely with RSPBANI on collaborative promotion and seek to maximise the opportunities afforded with all activity linked to musical excellence on Saturday 1 August 2026 in the Borough. All marketing costs were included within this budget.

As per the report to Place and Prosperity on 8 January 2026, the Events delivery team would be assisting with the RSPBANI 73rd Ulster Championships on Saturday 1 August 2026. This included the core Events delivery team, Assets and Property team, Parks, Risk and Waste team members as relevant. The costs associated with delivering the event and staffing were included in the budget of £36,700.

A team member would be responsible for project managing the Fringe Fleadh event and the remainder of the Events team would be responsible for events support attributed to the Pipe Band event.

Shared operational elements would be discussed and coordinated by the Events team for both events. Shared Joint Advisory Group meetings (including PSNI and Neighbourhood Enforcement Team members) would be undertaken and coordinated by the Council, and if determined, Safety Advisory Group meetings would be undertaken by the Event Management Company and the RSPBANI respectively.

The two events on one day option would allow synergies and potential economies of scale with regard to traffic management and marketing to include both events.

Option 2 – an alternative date, Friday 31 July 2026

As indicated earlier in the report, an alternative date was not likely to position the Council optimally to gain best advantage from the Belfast Fleadh event, however, financial and operational implications for an event held on 31 July, which was the most reasonable alternative date, were considered below.

As the Council had approved a notional budget of £40,000 within the Rates Setting process, this was the budget which would be available for the event. On this basis, Officers had reviewed the delivery of the event without procuring an event management company. The Council budget would include similar costs for hire of event infrastructure, traffic management, security, event dressing, waste/recycling and marketing. The fees associated with event management would be redirected to Council labour costs and contingency. The one area which Officers would wish to procure independently was programming expertise to ensure quality musical performances. Timings for the event would be reviewed once further scoping work was completed, however as indicated Friday is a working day and therefore likely to gain less attendees overall as the time of the event would be shortened. The reduction in event times would have some impact on the overall budget. Many items cost the same for lesser hours.

At this juncture, the Council was advised that Ards CCÉ was not available to perform at an alternative date.. This reduced the local authenticity of the event both for local attendees and visitors.

A key consideration of this approach was the Council labour resource management of two events in close proximity over two days, which required project collaboration with external partners e.g. PSNI, traffic management and internal partners. Timings for both events being managed would be challenging for set up, take down, and allocation of Council event infrastructure and internal project management and would add further complexity to operations management, rather than reducing it.

Member oversight and value for money

It was the intent that going forward the Events Service would attend the new Local Action Groups (LAGs) and present on upcoming events giving Elected Members and broader LAG membership the opportunity to engage. This would be the case for events aligned to each city/town. Where an event was not in a town with a LAG, it was intended the Events Service would utilise the existing Village Group co-ordinated by the Regeneration Service or the existing localised Event stakeholder group.

An end of year report was presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee on an annual basis for Tourism Events. This included budget, actual spend, out of Borough attendance, estimated attendee spend and cost per attendee. A return on investment calculation could be added to this report for Elected Members' consideration and future planning. It was acknowledged that this report was brought later in the season, when all events were complete. Consideration would be given to the practicalities as to when an earlier report can be brought to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

Summary

The timeline to deliver any proposed Fringe Fleadh event was a concern. Opportunities to successfully secure either an events management company or support for programming and the individual artists might reduce as the event got closer.

Having reviewed an alternative date, it was felt the timing of the event on Saturday 1 August 2026 had the potential for most benefits:

- On advice, most participants and visitors to the Belfast Fleadh would be arriving in NI closer to the Belfast Fleadh event. Holding an event on Saturday was likely to have the ability to attract most attendees and most spend into the Borough.
- Saturday 1 August was likely to maximise the opportunity available for the Council to promote the City and the wider Borough via the profile of the Belfast Fleadh event.
- The proposed event concept with the support of RSPBANI on the Saturday was to showcase Bangor for 'the day' as a place of musical excellence and to gain best potential advantage from that aspect.
- The proposed event concept was to incorporate local talent and recognise the local connection of the successful Belfast Fleadh event bid partner.
- The cost of running the proposed event on an alternative date, with factors as set out in the report, was not one which would likely achieve Council outcomes as intended for the Council investment.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves:

C.2026.02.25

14

- the proposed Fringe Fleadh event to be held on Saturday 1 August 2026, as outlined above, at a budget of £40,000 subject to a successful procurement exercise;
- the hosting of the Ulster Championship Pipe Band event at Ward Park, Bangor with the existing projected 2026 event budgets on Saturday 1 August 2026 and;
- other related activity where partners and performers can be secured (Appendix 3).

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

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor McCracken recalled that, when the report on the Fleadh Fringe had been considered by the Place and Prosperity Committee in early January, Members had held an extensive debate on the operational and management issues. An overwhelming majority of Members from all political parties had supported the proposal, and the Alliance Party had been satisfied that it was a robust and carefully considered process.

He believed that the Fleadh Fringe would add significant value to Bangor and the wider Borough by linking the area to the largest music festival on the island, which was expected to attract up to one million people to the region. The Bangor Fringe could attract around 5,000 attendees, many of whom would be first-time visitors, bringing economic benefits to local hospitality and retail businesses and encouraging overnight stays. He recalled agreement with Holborn Square as the venue given its recent refurbishment to function as an event space and its proximity to hospitality businesses. Given its design to double up specifically as an event space, he was therefore surprised that concerns about the location had subsequently been raised.

Councillor McCracken agreed that Saturday 1 August was the most appropriate date, as it immediately preceded the main Fleadh (2–9 August) and would therefore serve as a natural introductory event. A Saturday was also the most convenient day for the public to attend and Bangor, as a city, should think and act as a city - multiple events running simultaneously was common in cities and typically enhanced diversity, vibrancy, choice, overall audience numbers and reputation of the city. He argued that this principle applied equally to the Fleadh Fringe and the RSPBA (NI) event, and that the two groups viewed the day as an opportunity to collaborate and showcase diverse musical traditions rather than compete against each other.

Rather than present this as a confrontational and competitive narrative, as he believed some Unionist groups and media outlets had chosen to do, the reverse was true. He added that this was an opportunity to present Bangor as an open, inclusive, and vibrant city that celebrated a diversity of musical traditions.

The proposer referred to concerns raised by the DUP regarding cost and value for money, stating that these concerns did not stack up. The indicative £40,000 allocation for procurement was comparable to the £36,700 allocated to the RSPBA (NI) event, particularly when officer time was considered. Previous evaluations of

cultural events, such as Culture Night in Belfast, had demonstrated significant returns on investment with an average spend of £33 per person, and suggested that similar outcomes could be expected for the Fringe along with non-tangible benefits such as creating a general feel-good factor and supporting a growing reputation as a cultural hub. Referring to DUP concerns around process, he argued that a costed report had been brought to Committee, where a detailed debate had taken place and the proposal had been approved by an overwhelming majority. He therefore felt there was no reason for the DUP to send it back for further consideration, as due consideration had already been given.

It was therefore no surprise, he concluded, that the report before Council reaffirmed that the proposed date, location and budget were appropriate, that the social and economic benefits remained clear, and that the collaboration between the two groups offered an opportunity to deliver a musical event greater than the sum of its parts. He gave his full support for the recommendation.

The seconder, Councillor Hennessy, agreed that, as set out in the report, holding the event on Friday 31 July would not maximise visitor numbers, as it would likely only operate between 6pm and 9pm.

He added that separating the events across different dates would undermine the intended 'Day of Music' concept, as the ability for visitors to move easily between two major musical events was a key attraction. In relation to location, he referred to the report's explanation that Holborn Square remained the most suitable venue, being a space specifically designed for events, centrally located within Bangor and close to restaurants, pubs and cafes. With the use of Google Maps, clear signage and high-visibility ambassadors, visitors would have no difficulty finding the Fringe Fleadh event.

He appreciated the clear consideration given by officers to the financial and operational implications and noted that collaboration between the Council and RSPBA (NI) on promotion and marketing, and between any procured events company and RSPBA (NI), would allow for economies of scale, whereas managing two events over two days would increase complexity rather than reduce it. He acknowledged that some Members had raised concerns at previous meetings and hoped that they would be reassured by the report and be supportive of delivering a 'Day of Music' across Bangor on 1 August.

Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to bring the following amendment:
That the Council approves the officers recommendation and furthermore establishes a task and finish group to look again at our events calendar and how it is populated, to review our events strategy, to determine whether it is delivering on its stated aims, to assess how the Council are adequately supporting volunteer-led events, how communication with members is improved around the delivery of events and to bring back recommendations for consideration.

This was seconded by Councillor Gilmour.

Speaking to the proposed amendment, Councillor Cathcart explained that the previous concerns raised by the DUP related to process rather than to the event

itself, despite attempts across the Council Chamber to mislead. He had raised a point of order at that previous meeting and, although he did not have a right of reply at the time, he said Councillor Boyle had since apologised, which he had privately accepted.

The report highlighted the issues the DUP had raised and while he felt it addressed some matters relating to the potential clash of events, it was clear that this information should have been presented at the original meeting. The concerns regarding the clash of dates, the uncertainty around the budget and the use of the car park had been predictable and would inevitably have arisen, yet the relevant detail had not been provided at that time. He felt that the information presented previously had been incomplete and even now, the budget remained uncertain with only rough estimates of the likely cost.

Councillor Cathcart insisted that the DUP would not apologise for asking questions about how ratepayers' money was being spent, reiterating that their concerns were about process rather than the event itself. He was disappointed at the manner in which the proposal had been brought forward, noting that the Council had known for some time that Bangor would be hosting a Fringe event. He had welcomed the prospect when serving as Mayor and it was therefore regrettable that the process had been, in his view, unclear and that operational details remained vague.

He referred to wider issues behind his amendment which focused on the approach to events funding. Members were frequently told that budgets for established events were fixed and could not be amended, yet additional funding had been identified for the Fleadh Fringe, despite the delivery partner not yet being appointed. He compared this with long-standing events run by volunteers, such as the Ulster-Scots Festival, May Day and events organised by the Orange Order, which attracted thousands of visitors but received no Council funding. Many volunteer-led events were seeking additional support for their programmes but were consistently advised that no further budget was available. He was concerned that some of these events could be placed at risk if funding continued to be allocated to new initiatives while established community events remained unsupported.

He was aware of concerns from the Bangor Chamber of Commerce and other organisations regarding how Council events were managed and referred to previous issues raised in relation to Christmas events, which he believed had been brought to Council too late for changes to be made. He welcomed the officers' proposal within the report to establish advisory groups and to engage earlier with stakeholders, describing this as a sensible step. He felt that a wider review of the events calendar was now required to ensure that it delivered on the aims previously set for the Borough.

He reiterated that the DUP's concerns had been about process rather than the event itself and that he looked forward to the Fleadh Fringe coming to Bangor. He noted that the last time the event had been held in Bangor was successful and had taken place shortly before the 12 July celebrations, which had attracted thousands to the city centre without receiving Council funding. He suggested that this highlighted the pressures faced by volunteer-led events and the need to ensure they were adequately supported. He concluded by stating that the purpose of his amendment

was not to prevent the event from proceeding but to ensure that appropriate questions were asked about the event setting process, and he looked forward to that review being undertaken.

POINT OF ORDER

Councillor McCracken referred to Standing Order 18.1.1 which stated that an amendment must relate solely to the proposal it sought to amend, must not introduce a new proposition on a different matter, and must not place a greater responsibility on the meeting than the original proposal. He said that the amendment before Members sought a complete review of the Council's events strategy and therefore did not relate directly to the Fleadh Fringe report under consideration. He argued that such a proposal should come forward as a Notice of Motion.

The Mayor acknowledged that Councillor Cathcart's amendment was substantial and that the points raised by Councillor McCracken were valid, particularly in relation to the amendment appearing to expand the scope of the original recommendation. She noted, however, that the original proposal brought forward by Alderman McIlveen had included consideration of the financial and operational implications of the event, as well as how proper Member oversight and value for money for events could be ensured going forward.

After consideration, the Mayor felt that, while it was usually more appropriate for this type of amendment to proceed as a Notice of Motion, she noted that the matters raised within it could be linked back to the original proposal. Therefore, she allowed the amendment to proceed.

As seconder, Councillor Gilmour agreed that the amendment reflected what had been discussed at the previous month's Council meeting regarding the need for proper Member oversight and value for money for events going forward. She welcomed that the report now included those additional details which had been missing at the outset.

She recalled previous occasions where Members had received reports on events at short notice or at a stage where it was too late to make changes. She referred to Christmas events, noting that Members from Newtownards had been particularly frustrated that the report on the Newtownards switch-on had arrived too late to make any changes. She therefore considered it appropriate to take the opportunity to review the process for events planning.

Councillor Gilmour recalled the previous review of the Borough Events Strategy and popular events such as Donaghadee Lights Up, the Groomsport Eagle Wing Festival and the Sea Park Halloween event - had been removed. She had opposed this but noted Members had been advised of resource pressures in terms of budget and officer capacity making the full events offering unsustainable.

That review had led to concern within the community, particularly among volunteer-led groups seeking to retain events previously run by the Council. She argued that the introduction of a new event in this case appeared inconsistent with that revised approach.

Councillor Gilmour stressed that she had no objection to the concept of the Fleadh Fringe event, but wanted further information around logistics and costs, and even now the full cost would not be known until delivery arrangements were confirmed. She went on to challenge the assumption that there would be economies of scale, pointing out that the two events would be delivered separately – one by Council and the other by an external provider.

An alternative date might have allowed for a broader weekend of music, she argued, potentially attracting visitors to the Borough on more than one occasion. She felt that the concerns raised by her party colleagues had been legitimate and noted that, at the previous meeting, criticism had been directed at them based on assumptions rather than on their actual contributions.

(Councillor Hollywood withdrew from the meeting – 7.54 pm)

She added that the Borough had a strong track record in delivering successful events, citing the UK Pipe Band Championships during her mayoral year as an example. However, she noted that there was no certainty regarding the attendance levels for the Fleadh Fringe event and that, given the costs, it was reasonable for Members to question that, given other events had been removed from the calendar. Concluding, she felt that a task and finish group and a review of the events strategy would allow the Council to assess whether it was moving in the right direction, whether it had the capacity to deliver additional events, and how to ensure fairness and consistency rather than selectively supporting individual proposals.

(Councillor Hollywood returned to the meeting – 7.57 pm)

Supportive of a review but not the original recommendation, Councillor S Irvine felt the event did not yet have a proven track record. He referred to the expenditure calculations reported by Councillor McCracken in the meeting, noting that if an estimated spend of £33 per person were applied to 5,000 visitors, the economic return would be significantly lower than that generated by other established events in the Borough which attracted much larger crowds. He found this imbalance difficult to justify.

Rising in support of the amendment, Councillor Boyle noted that events were not just confined to Bangor, so he had no issue with the review of the wider events programme. He felt there was little in the updated report that differed from what had been reported previously, although some finer points had now been clarified and he felt that was reason to support the recommendations.

He encouraged Members to consider the broader context, stating that while Council often wrote to finance Ministers about different issues, they also needed to support local businesses and the hospitality sector where possible. Therefore, he felt the Council should support the amendment and move on.

Councillor W Irvine, while supportive of the wider review, was unable to support the full amendment with the inclusion of the officer's recommendation. He recognised there were still a number of unknowns surrounding the proposed event, including the outcome of the procurement process. He noted that the report had originally been

brought to Committee in December, at a point very close to the completion of the rates-setting process, which had concluded at the end of the previous month. He felt that a task and finish group would provide an opportunity for Members to sit down, examine the event in detail and determine whether it was viable for the Council to run.

Councillor Brady thanked the officers for the detailed report, and he believed it addressed all of the issues that had been raised. He had no difficulty with the amendment and supported scrutiny of the events process, adding that there might even be merit in expanding that scrutiny beyond events alone.

He believed that the Fleadh Fringe would be highly positive for Bangor and that holding it on the same day as the Pipe Band Championships would be culturally beneficial. He recalled that, during a recent visit to Bangor, a member of the public had overheard him discussing the event and had expressed enthusiasm about attending with their family, which he felt illustrated the level of public interest.

He welcomed the event and highlighted the benefits of the location noting that two nearby bars could open their beer gardens directly onto the event space, creating a vibrant and interconnected atmosphere. He also hoped that local artists could be engaged to enhance the area in advance of the event. He urged officers to make progress in order to secure the best artists.

Alderman McRandal welcomed that after four meetings, the Unionists had now made a proposal that would allow the event to go ahead. While he felt this had taken far too long and smacked of face-saving, he was happy to support the amendment to enable the event to proceed.

Adding his support, Councillor Blaney felt that it was important to take the politics out of the discussion, as the matter had never been, in his view, a political debate. He had supported the decision to refer this back to officers because time had allowed for those further considerations to be addressed.

He spoke of the importance of supporting local businesses, the economy and Bangor's entrepreneurial community, who were keen to maximise the opportunities that the event could bring. He added that the Council should present a united voice that the event would be positive for Bangor, beneficial for traders and an enjoyable occasion for all to enjoy.

Alderman McAlpine was delighted the event could go ahead, describing it as a golden opportunity to demonstrate that the Borough could host and support musical excellence from two main cultural traditions in the country. She welcomed the intention to review the events strategy, especially given the growing scale of volunteer-driven events such as the Kite Festival and Portaferry Gala, which brought a large number of visitors into the Borough. She noted that those events had grown since the original strategy had been confirmed.

Councillor W Irvine requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Morgan felt that, while the amendment sounded positive to suggest further reviews and additional scrutiny, much of what was proposed appeared to be work already covered by the Place and Prosperity Committee. She added that, if the Committee was not already carrying out the functions described in the amendment, then it ought to be doing so as part of its normal remit. She was therefore concerned that the amendment risked creating additional activity, officer time and cost and achieve little more than the Committee would have done.

In terms of the proposed task and finish group, she referred to her experience on the working group for the kerbside waste collection review, which had run over a considerable period and which she felt had been extremely well managed by officers, including external expertise. However, she believed that attendance by councillors had been very poor, which was regrettable given the importance of the issue. She was therefore interested to see what the level of attendance at meetings for the proposed group would be.

The Director of Place and Prosperity sought clarification from the proposer of the amendment regarding its scope and intent in order to brief officers appropriately. He reminded Members that the Council had previously spent considerable time developing its Events Strategy, the purpose of which was to attract events capable of attracting visitors from outside of the Borough and increasing overnight stays. He asked whether a review of that strategy formed part of the proposed change.

He also referred to comments made during the meeting about budgets. He explained that the Council allocated a specific budget to the Events and Tourism teams to deliver the programme of events agreed by Council. When opportunities for additional or new events arose, officers brought these to Council for decision, and it was Council - not officers - that determined whether such events should proceed.

He further noted comments about third-party events and funding and reminded Members that the Council itself had agreed the criteria for third-party event funding and that the budget for such funding was also set by Council. Once that budget had been allocated, not all applicants could receive the level of support they sought, despite the quality of many of the events involved.

He therefore asked the Mayor, and the proposer of the amendment, to clarify the remit of the proposed task and finish group, including its membership and whether it was intended that the Events Strategy be reestablished. He added that he was not questioning the Member's intentions but wished to ensure he fully understood what officers were being asked to deliver.

The Mayor reminded Council that the Events Strategy was very familiar to members of the Place and Prosperity Committee and was considered regularly during debates. In a further matter, Councillor Kennedy explained that, in addition to welcoming the amendment, he wished to raise an issue in relation to comments made about him during the Committee debate, which he described as deeply defamatory. He noted that the Member concerned, Councillor McCracken, had declined an offer on the evening to apologise and withdraw the remarks. He asked whether, having had time to reflect, if the Member would now apologise and withdraw the comments.

The Mayor advised that Members should not direct questions across the chamber and that she was therefore not in a position to respond to the query raised. She indicated that the meeting would move on.

Alderman McIlveen began by responding to comments made earlier regarding attendance at the kerbside waste task and finish group. He had also been a member of that group, and, in his experience, it had been well attended, with around 75% of nominated Members present at each meeting. He recalled attending every session and therefore took issue with the suggestion that attendance had been poor. Turning to the amendment, he considered task and finish groups to be a useful mechanism for exploring issues in detail. He noted that, since before Christmas, a number of queries, concerns and communication issues had arisen in relation to the event under discussion, as well as the broader process. He noted that Members had for years been told that the events calendar was fixed and could not be altered, yet an additional event had now been added. He believed it was therefore appropriate to examine this process.

Continuing, Alderman McIlveen clarified that he was not proposing a complete rewrite of the Events Strategy, but rather a review to assess what aspects were working well, what was not, and whether any elements required updating. He noted that strategies and policies were reviewed routinely, and he did not see why this one should be treated differently. He added that Members had identified concerns about how events were brought forward, how budgets were allocated, and how some community events struggled to secure funding despite their value.

He added that it would be beneficial to permit the current event to proceed and then allow a task and finish group to consider these issues without the drama that had been raised around this particular event. He believed the request was reasonable in the circumstances.

POINT OF ORDER

Councillor McCracken raised a point of order under SO 20.12 – Personal Explanation. He stated that comments made by Councillor Kennedy had included an accusation of defamation, which he regarded as a very serious allegation. He said he totally refuted the claim, noting that no evidence had been provided. With the Mayor's agreement, he invited Councillor Kennedy to withdraw the remark and apologise.

The Mayor advised Councillor Kennedy that, under Standing Order 20.12, she would use her discretion to offer him the opportunity to speak further. She explained that this was not a right of reply but was solely to allow him to apologise, withdraw or qualify his remarks. She asked whether he wished to do any of those three and Councillor Kennedy responded that, in all conscience, he could not do any of those. Returning to the queries raised by the Director, the Mayor advised that she would exercise her discretion to allow the proposer, Councillor Cathcart, who had already spoken, to provide further clarification on the ask of his amendment.

Councillor Cathcart explained the value of task and finish groups and had found the waste-management group particularly useful, as it allowed Members to examine an

issue in significant depth in a way that was not always possible within the constraints of a standard committee meeting. He was not proposing that the group should operate indefinitely and the duration would be a decision for members of the group.

His intention was for a general review, and he noted that a number of concerns had arisen in recent times in relation to events, and that it would therefore be helpful to look at these matters in more detail.

He added that he was unsure whether membership should be drawn from the full Council, as had been the case with the waste group, or from the relevant committee, but he was content with either approach. He suggested that each party could nominate a similar number of Members to those who had participated in the waste task and finish group.

The Director of Place and Prosperity responded that, if Members were content, officers would take account of the comments made during the debate. He would speak with his team and bring a proposal to the Place and Prosperity Committee as soon as possible, setting out how officers understood the decision and how the matter could be progressed. He noted that the Committee and Council would then be able to determine whether the proposed approach was acceptable.

Speaking in support of the amendment, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter responded to comments made about her and her colleagues during earlier discussions, expressing frustration that views had been wrongly attributed to her party. She argued that the matter had been politicalised by others and the concerns the DUP had raised were not about the event - they related to the practical implications of holding two major events in Bangor on the same day.

She referred to a party colleague and friend, highlighting their family connections to Irish dancing and the Fleadh, and explained the difficulties that the accusations from other Members had caused, placing herself and colleagues in awkward positions with those friends and relatives. She questioned how anyone could accuse Members with those connections to Irish dancing and the Fleadh to be against the event.

The Committee had given its support to hold the event previously and Members then sought clarification and assurance on the process, which she added was the Committee's responsibility. That scrutiny should not be framed as bigotry or being 'orange and green', she argued, indicating that it was others across the Chamber that were making it about that and they needed to consider the damage that had caused.

In a final comment, she added that her party had supported OrangeFest and other cultural events because proper processes had been followed, and that they expected the same standards to apply consistently. The concerns raised related to process, procedure, budgeting and the feasibility of running two significant events simultaneously, including the additional cost of outsourcing delivery.

In summing up, Councillor McCracken stated that he regretted some of the personal comments made about him during the meeting, which he felt had lowered the tone of

the debate. He said he would have no option but to defend his reputation and indicated that further action would follow.

In relation to the discussion, he said that the report before Members had not provided any new information. He noted that the issues raised had already been debated at length during a 30-minute discussion at the Place and Prosperity Committee in early January, and he did not believe the Council had taken this any further forward. He noted that Members had asked questions about budget and attendance figures which could not yet be answered, as procurement had not been completed and the event had not yet taken place.

He added that everything done to date had been reasonable, and he expressed disappointment that the matter had resulted in two months of fractious debate and negative media coverage for the Borough. He compared this with Belfast, where multiple meetings were held each week to coordinate a large number of events, whereas this Council had taken two months to reach a decision on one.

Regarding the amendment, he said that his party group had no objection to scrutiny of events but believed the proposal should have been brought separately rather than attached to the Fleadh event. He noted that the amendment related to the wider events programme across the Borough, not solely to the event in Bangor. He added that expanding the events offering was consistent with the Council's economic strategy, which identified events as one of its five pillars.

Councillor McCracken concluded that it would be positive to secure approval for the Fleadh event that evening but expressed the view that the DUP had contributed to a fractious debate and that this had been unfortunate.

On being put to the meeting, with 36 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the amendment was CARRIED.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (36)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (0)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Aldermen	Aldermen	Aldermen
Adair			
Armstrong-Cotter			
Brooks			
Cummings			
Graham			
McAlpine			
McDowell			
McIlveen			
McRandal			
Smith			
Councillors	Councillor	Councillors	Councillor
Ashe	Irvine, S		Irwin
Blaney	Irvine, W		Harbinson

Boyle
Brady
Cathcart
Chambers
Cochrane
Douglas
Edmund
Gilmour
Hennessy
Hollywood
Kendall
Kennedy
Kerr
McBurney
McClellan
McCollum
McCracken
McKee
Morgan
Newman
Smart
Thompson
Wray

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that Council approves the officers recommendation and furthermore establishes a task and finish group to look again at our events calendar and how it is populated, to review our events strategy, to determine whether it is delivering on its stated aims, to assess how the Council are adequately supporting volunteer-led events, how communication with members is improved around the delivery of events and to bring back recommendations for consideration.

9.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 10 February 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the minutes of the Corporate Services Committee be approved and adopted.

(Councillor Brady withdrew from the meeting – 8.31 pm)

9.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 11 February 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, be approved and adopted.

9.5.1 Matters Arising – Item 10 – Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - Invite to Shared Island Event – 2 nominations

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities advised Members that, at the February meeting of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, the officer recommendation had been proposed and agreed. The recommendation was to nominate two Members with experience in tackling and ending violence against women and girls to attend an event taking place from 24-25 March at the Slieve Russell Hotel.

She explained that attendance would be funded through resources secured by NILGA and the Irish Local Government Association via a bid to the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, as part of a cross-border initiative focusing on leadership and the influence of councillors in ending violence against women and girls. She advised that, while the Committee had agreed the recommendation, nominations for the two Members had not been made at that meeting, and it had therefore been agreed that the matter would be considered and decided at the Council meeting.

(Councillor Brady returned to the meeting – 8.33 pm)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that Councillor McCollum attends the Shared Island event.

(Councillor Boyle withdrew from the meeting due to a declaration of interest in Item 10 – 8.33 pm)

10. DEPUTATION REQUEST FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS (NAC)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that a deputation request, dated 5 February 2026, had been received from Ms Hazel Legge of National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region.

The attached form stated that the request was to ‘enable a delegation of the NAC-NI Executive Committee, to address and update all elected members of Ards and North Down Borough Council and to outline the work of the NAC – both locally and nationally - along with the progress made and delivery for our 462 Councillors elected to the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland.’

The request was for the deputation to be heard at a full Council meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the Council accepts the deputation request for hearing at a full Council meeting.

11. REQUEST FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - APPROVAL OF WARD PARK FULL BUSINESS CASE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services stating that at the Environment Committee on 7 January 2026 under the scheme of delegation, Council agreed to award the contract for the Ward Park Environmental Improvement Project to the most economically advantageous tenderer. However, due to a process anomaly the Full Business Case (FBC) which was an internal governance matter was yet to be approved by Council to allow contract documents to be signed.

In order to expedite this process as efficiently as possible and allow the contractor to commence work, officers were requesting that Council delegate authority to the Environment Committee on 4 March 2026, to consider and potentially approve the FBC. This would allow contract discussions to be finalised, and the contract sealed at the Council meeting on 25 March 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council Grants delegated authority to the Environment Committee on 4 March 2026 for consideration of the Full Business Case pertaining to Ward Park Environmental Improvement Project.

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

The seconder, Councillor McCracken, explained that he had received a number of enquiries from residents seeking an update on the matter. He welcomed the progress reported and hoped that the remaining stages of the process would advance smoothly. He looked forward to the completion of the works and to the appointment of an appropriate contractor.

(Councillor Boyle returned to the meeting – 8.36 pm)

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

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials – D41230-D41273
- (b) Local Economic Partnership Letter of Offer
- (c) Offer to Purchase and Transfer Deed in respect of the sale of an area of Council land to Donaldson (The Ark Farm) at Bangor Road

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

Reallocated

Redburn cemetery grave 3257
Ian Barnard

Transfer

Movilla section 34 grave 214
Rachel Tompsett – William Tompsett

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the transfers be agreed.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix VI)

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

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council recognises the huge benefits to the Ards Peninsula and wider Borough of greater connectivity in terms of tackling isolation, boosting local business and enhancing tourism.

Furthermore, that Council is concerned about the increased traffic travelling along Ards Peninsula roads which could be better served by a fixed crossing between Portaferry and Strangford village and which may help in addressing congestion in other parts of the Borough and assist in improving road safety in roads within the Peninsula.

Council, therefore, agrees to write to The Minister Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

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

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings

To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen tree over the Enler River, Comber, which has been there since Storm Eowyn.

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

15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks

That this Council notes with deep concern the recent destruction caused to bushes, trees and wild grass in The Commons, Donaghadee.

Further to this, Council agrees to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, calling upon him to designate The Commons, Donaghadee as either an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), or another appropriate form of protected status, in order to help safeguard this important green space.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

16. LEISURE PROVISION PROCUREMENT OF LEGAL AND LEISURE SPECIALIST TEAMS

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6

EXEMPTION - 3: RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that at a special Council meeting on 18 September 2025 the decision was taken that leisure services in Ards and North Down would be run via a hybrid model of operation when current contractual arrangements came to an end in March 2028. |

The first stage of the project was the procurement of a multi-disciplinary legal team and a leisure consultancy team to lead on and support the procurement of an operator for the outsourced service from 2028 onwards.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the awarding of the contracts for the appointment of the multi-disciplinary legal team and the leisure consultancy team to the relevant companies as outlined in the report.

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

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

17. REQUEST FOR A LICENCE AT CARROWDORE PLAYING FIELDS TO FACILITATE WORKS AT STRANGFORD INTEGRATED COLLEGE
(Appendix VII – VIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6

EXEMPTION - 3: RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

Council was asked to consider a request from Felix O'Hare Limited to use Council Land at Carrowdore Playing Fields during work at Strangford Integrated College.

The recommendation was that Council accede to the request, subject to the terms and conditions outlined. This was agreed.

18. ARTIFICIAL PITCH REPLACEMENT AT AURORA AND WARD PARK (FILE LEI28)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6

EXEMPTION - 3: RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities stating that as part of the 2024/25 rate setting process, Leisure Officers submitted an Artificial Sports Pitch (and artificial tennis courts) Renovation and Replacement Strategy, proposing the implementation of a rolling replacement programme covering a ten-year period. In September 2024, Council approved the implementation of this Strategy. This strategy involves the utilisation of an annual condition review of artificial pitches across the borough along with an accompanying

needs assessment in order to prioritise the need for renovation and replacement within the artificial sports pitch portfolio on a rolling basis to ensure that the local community can avail of and benefit from safe, fit for purpose facilities. |

A tender exercise was undertaken for these in September 2024. From October 2024 to present, works on this project had been ongoing, however, due to a number of issues relating to the contractor including the supply and delivery of the required artificial turf surfaces, these works had yet to be completed at both the Ward Park Tennis Courts and Bangor Aurora Hockey Pitch.

Three options were put forward for consideration to complete the current works. |

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves option 1 as being the option which will likely cost least and cause less disruption to users. |

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

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.04 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Tuesday 3 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham McAlpine
McDowell (Zoom, 19:38) McIlveen Smith

Councillors: Cathcart Harbinson
Hennessy (20:08) McKee (Zoom) Morgan
Kendall (Zoom, 19:02) Smart Wray

Officers: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning and Building Control (A McCullough), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) Senior Planner (A Todd) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for lateness had been received from Councillor Hennessy. An apology for inability to attend had been received from Councillor McCollum.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made. Members were reminded of their ability to make a declaration at any time during the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 03 FEBRUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

[Councillor Kendall joined the meeting via Zoom at 19:02]

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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4.1. LA06/2021/1476/F – ITEM WITHDRAWN**4.2. LA06/2024/0104/F – NEW FOOTBALL STADIUM FOR ARDS FOOTBALL CLUB, 100M EAST OF NEWTOWNARDS AIRPORT, 61 PORTAFERRY ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: Major Application

Proposal: New football stadium for Ards Football Club with capacity of 2000 spectators. Works include two new spectator stands accommodating supporters, matchday facilities, admin office, function and ancillary spaces. New car parking, vehicular entrances to Portaferry Road, hardstanding, new artificial pitch with floodlighting and boundary treatments.

Site Location: 100m East of Newtownards Airport, 61 Portaferry Road, Newtownards

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer advised that the application sought full planning permission for a new stadium for Ards Football Club at 61 Portaferry Road in Newtownards. The application was before committee as it was a Major application. The recommendation was to grant planning permission.

As shown on the extract from the Development Plan, the site was within the settlement limit of Newtownards, and was zoned as existing amenity open space and recreation. The site location plan identified the site outlined in red. The route of the community Greenway extended through the site to connect to the Floodgates walking path.

Surrounding land uses included Ards Airport; leisure facilities, multiple sports pitches, retail development and a nursing home. Overall the site was located within an established recreational and urban setting.

The stadium had been designed to meet NI Football League Premiership standards, and would provide facilities for players, officials, and spectators.

The development included:

- Two new spectator stands,
- Matchday facilities,
- Offices,
- Function space,
- 2X Vehicular entrances
- Car parking, and
- A 3G Pitch with 24m-high Floodlights.

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The stadium would have capacity for up to 2000 spectators. Under the terms of the Club's lease with the Council, the car park would be made available for general public use when not in use for senior matches.

The elevations of the main stand illustrated its overall scale, massing and architectural design. The stand had a contemporary profile with a maximum height of 10.6metres. Officers were satisfied that the scale and design were appropriate within this established recreational and urban context.

The internal layout included matchday facilities; hospitality and administration areas. Elevations of the away-stand showed its modest scale, with a height of approximately 4.2metres. A conceptual image had been provided for illustrative purposes, to help Members visualise the completed development.

In addition, a series of photomontages had been prepared to demonstrate how the stadium would appear within its surrounding context. The first photomontage showed the approach when travelling along Portaferry Road towards the town centre whilst the following image illustrated the view of the stadium when travelling south along Portaferry Road.

Existing roadside vegetation was to be retained, with additional new structural planting to soften views of the development and further integrate it into its surroundings.

Finally, the view from Floodgates public path illustrated how the development would appear from the shore of Strangford Lough. The visual impact of the proposal had been carefully assessed and was considered acceptable. Officers were satisfied that the development would not result in unacceptable visual harm.

Principle of Development

The site was designated as amenity open space and recreation. The proposed stadium aligned with this designation and enhances the existing recreational value of the site. The development complied with Policy OS 4 of PPS 8, which supported intensive sports facilities within settlements, subject to environmental and amenity considerations.

Residential Amenity

The nearest dwelling was approximately 120m from the site. Noise and lighting assessments had been carried out and Environmental Health had raised no objection subject to mitigation being secured by condition. Officers were satisfied that, subject to conditions, the development would not result in unacceptable harm to residential amenity.

Nature Conservation

The site was hydrologically linked to designated sites associated with Strangford Lough. NIEA Natural Environment Division and Shared Environmental Service had considered the application and raised no objections, subject to mitigation relating to pollution prevention, water quality monitoring, and habitat protection. The proposal

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was compliant with natural heritage policy subject to planning conditions to secure this mitigation.

Access, Traffic and Parking

The site was highly accessible, located close to public transport routes, pedestrian footpaths and the community Greenway. A detailed Transport Assessment had been submitted, including baseline traffic surveys, junction analysis and modelling based on a worst-case scenario. The assessment concluded that the surrounding road network had sufficient capacity to accommodate traffic generated by the development.

Right hand turning lanes at both access points would assist traffic flow. A total of 268 car parking spaces with additional coach parking were to be provided. The development would operate in accordance with a Travel Plan to promote sustainable travel. It included event management mitigation for high attendance fixtures, including additional off-site parking, matchday stewarding and signage. DfI Roads had reviewed the supporting information and had provided no objection to the proposal subject to mitigation being secured by condition.

The flood risk and drainage assessment had been reviewed by DFI Rivers and no objection had been raised. Drainage measures, including attenuation tanks and filtration systems, were proposed to mitigate flood risk and prevent environmental harm.

Representations

One letter of objection was received, raising concerns about visual impact, traffic and parking. These matters had been addressed in detail in the Case Officer Report, with mitigation measures secured through conditions.

Conclusion

The proposal represented the delivery of a new, purpose built stadium that would allow the Ards Football Club to return to its hometown. The stadium provided modern, fit for purpose facilities which would encourage wider participation in sport.

The proposal would deliver meaningful sporting benefits while addressing key planning considerations such as residential amenity, nature conservation, visual impact, access, parking and flood risk.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission is granted, subject to the conditions set out in the COR.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the travel plan and parking impacts had been a focus for him when reading the report. He recalled that the plan had been submitted to the Department for Infrastructure, which had raised no concerns. Although the Council had not received the Department's response before the meeting, confirmation had since been provided that they were content with the proposals. He highlighted that maximum-capacity parking demand would occur only on certain match days and that

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the travel plan referred to stewarding arrangements for those busier occasions. He asked for further detail on how traffic would be redirected and where any overflow parking would be located.

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer confirmed that the travel plan included a range of mitigation measures and identified several potential parking sites, including local schools whose principals had agreed in principle to participate. She emphasised that the plan did not rely on a single measure but a combination of approaches and also advised that an enforcement mechanism had been incorporated. If ongoing monitoring showed that the plan's objectives or targets were not being met, no further events exceeding 800 spectators could proceed until a revised travel plan with additional mitigation had been agreed with the Council. She stated that this provided an important safeguard. Alderman McIlveen added that the club would be motivated to minimise any inconvenience to local residents as they returned to playing within the town, and he indicated his willingness to make the proposal.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the Council grant planning permission.

Alderman McIlveen remarked that the application had been awaited for quite some time and that it was important to ensure it met the relevant policy requirements. He again referenced the key considerations related to its traffic and travel plans, both of which had addressed the concerns previously raised. He expressed his satisfaction that the proposal had reached this stage with a recommendation to grant approval and hoped it would progress to development.

Councillor Smart agreed with Alderman McIlveen's comments regarding the development and the robustness of the traffic plan. He noted that the area was busy and was likely to become even busier in future. He reflected on the long history of the application and the strong support it had received. He welcomed the opportunity to see the site brought back into use for the benefit of the town, recalling that it had historically been a landfill site and had remained unused for a considerable period. There had been indications that the area might once again be used for household recycling, which several members had felt was not the best use given its scenic setting and the development of the incoming greenway.

Councillor Smart recalled how both he and Councillor Kennedy had previously proposed a park for the site, and that this proposal had been amended when interest in the current scheme emerged and was glad to see this had been cited. He thanked officers for their work on the application, noting that the proposal blended well with the environment, was limited in scale, and represented a valuable opportunity with several elements coming together.

Councillor Cathcart sought clarification regarding the function room, noting that the addendum referred to concerns about floodlighting and asking what activities were proposed to take place in the room at night. The Senior Professional and Technical Officer explained that the function room was located internally within the main home stand and was of a small scale, with a corporate area included but ancillary to the primary sporting and recreational use. She stated that it was not envisaged that the room would be used outside those purposes and confirmed that the floodlighting

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related to the pitch, with columns of 24 metres, and that two conditions had been included to control their use: one requiring a verification report demonstrating compliance with the mitigation measures, and another controlling illumination levels throughout the operational period of the development.

Councillor Cathcart sought clarification regarding the proposed function room, noting that the addendum referred to concerns about floodlighting and asking what activities were expected to take place in the room at night. The Senior Professional and Technical Officer explained that the function room was located internally within the main home stand and was of a small scale, with a corporate area included but ancillary to the primary sporting and recreational use. She stated that it was not anticipated that the room would be used beyond those purposes. She confirmed that the floodlighting related solely to the pitch and comprised 24-metre-high columns. Two conditions had been attached to control their use: one requiring a verification report demonstrating compliance with the mitigation measures set out in the lighting assessment, and the other regulating illumination levels during operational hours throughout the lifetime of the development.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted, that Council grants planning permission.

4.3. LA06/2024/0945/F – SINGLE STOREY DETACHED DWELLING AND ASSOCIATED ENTRANCE, SITE IMMEDIATELY SE OF NO.1 CRAIGANTLET ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Holywood & Clondeboye

Committee Interest: Called in by a Member of the Planning Committee

Proposal: Single storey detached dwelling and associated entrance

Site Location: Site immediately south and east of No. 1 Craigantlet Road, Craigantlet, Newtownards

Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Senior Planner explained that Item 4.3 was an application that sought full planning permission for a dwelling immediately southeast of 1 Craigantlet Road, Newtownards. The application had been recommended for refusal on the grounds that it was contrary to policies CTY1, 2A, 8 and 14 of PPS21 and insufficient information had been provided to address Environmental Health concerns regarding the site's proximity to Craigantlet Quarry. The application had been called in by Alderman Graham to allow Committee to further consider the proposal in the context of Policy CTY2a and the issues surrounding the proximity to the quarry.

Site

The site was located in the countryside between 81 Holywood Road and 1 Craigantlet Road, Newtownards with Craigantlet Quarry located approximately 50m to the south-east.

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The site was visible from both the Hollywood and Craigtantlet Roads with its topography rising up in a southeasterly direction. The first image showed the site at the time of the officer's initial inspection and the second image showed the site as of yesterday (2nd March 2026). As could be seen, excavation and ground works had already commenced on site prior to any planning permission.

Slide 04 showed the site layout for the proposal with access taken from Hollywood Road. Due to the rising topography, ground works would be required to cut into the site and retaining banks were proposed along the southern and eastern boundaries.

Slide 05 showed the floor plan and elevations of the proposed dwelling with the extent of excavation required indicated by the red hatched line on the rear elevation.

The application had been assessed against policies CTY8 - Ribbon Development and CTY2A - New Dwellings in Existing Clusters. The proposal failed to meet Policy CTY8 as there was not a substantial built-up frontage of three or more buildings with only the ancillary building at No.1 Craigtantlet Road and the shed at 81 Hollywood Road having a frontage to the road.

Policy CTY2A allowed for a dwelling at an existing cluster of development provided all six of the listed criteria had been met. The Planning Department was of the opinion that the proposal failed to meet the second criterion which required the cluster to appear as a visual entity in the landscape, the fourth criterion which required the site to have a suitable degree of enclosure and be bound on two sides and the fifth criterion requiring that the development should not alter existing character or visually intrude into the open countryside.

Slide 08 showed an extract from the guidance document for development in the countryside 'Building on Tradition'. This showed examples of clusters of development. All of these were made up of tight cohesive collections of buildings with development on both sides of the road. The area around the application site did not exhibit these features, consisting of a ribbon of four dwellings on the south-eastern side of the road. While there was a shed to the south-east and a church to the north-east, these were each physically separated from the ribbon by over 50m and were therefore not considered to form part of a cluster. There was also no other development on the north-western side of the crossroads and for these reasons, the Planning Department did not consider that the existing development appeared as a cluster which was a visual entity in the landscape as required by criterion 2.

The consideration of whether or not there was a cluster of development that read as a visual entity in the landscape required a visual assessment. The next few slides showed the views towards the crossroads from different approaches. The first view was on approach from the north-east. From here, only the church could be seen with the dwellings at the crossroads partially visible in the distance. Due to the physical separation between the church and the dwellings, there was no sense of a cluster from this viewpoint. Approaching closer to the crossroads, while the dwellings become visible, these represented a single ribbon of development on one side of the road with no development at all on the opposite side of the road which could be said to make up a cluster.

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On approach from the south-west at 60 Dunlady Road, there was also no sense of a cluster, again due to the significant physical separation between this dwelling and the ribbon of dwellings at the crossroads.

Closer to the crossroads on Dunlady Road, the existing dwellings were intervisible with the church in the distance, however this appeared as a ribbon of development on one side of the road with the church physically separated over 50m away on the opposite side of the road. From here, the existing buildings did not represent a cohesive visual cluster of development. From the Holywood Road, the Industrial shed was also not directly intervisible with the dwellings at the crossroads due to the topography and intervening vegetation and there was also no impression of a cluster from this viewpoint.

The final views at the crossroads itself showed the ribbon of development on the southern side of the road rather than a cluster of development around the crossroads. As the Planning Department did not recognise there to be a cluster at this location, it was also considered that the proposal failed to meet criterion 4 of the policy in that the proposal could not be said to be bound on two sides by other development in a cluster.

The site's open field setting, framed by mature trees, also offered a valuable visual relief along the road frontage and within the landscape contributing to the rural character. The site also lay within a Local Landscape Policy Area as proposed in Draft BMAP with the one of the key features being the stand of trees which could be seen in the photographs. These trees were identified in the plan as being locally significant as a feature that contributed to the character of the area. The construction of the proposed dwelling on this site would remove the landscape setting of the trees and obstruct views towards them.

Slide 14 showed an extract from Draft BMAP with the LLPA shaded green. The site was also located immediately outside the settlement limit of Craigtlet as proposed in Draft BMAP and as also included in the adopted quashed BMAP. During the Public Inquiry into BMAP, the PAC considered an objection to the proposed Craigtlet Settlement Limit seeking the inclusion of the land between the Dunlady Road node and the Holywood Road node within the settlement limit, the area in which the proposed dwelling was located. The PAC considered that this would lead to ribbon development along the Holywood Road, that the site was exposed and prominent and therefore it was not included within the settlement limit. Draft BMAP clearly set out that the reason for the settlement limits being drawn around the separate nodes within Craigtlet was to prevent further encroachment into the countryside. The proposal would definitively be at odds with this, resulting in further encroachment into the countryside and would also fail to meet criterion 5 of CTY2A in this regard

As it was likely that the settlement limit would be included in any future adopted plan, significant weight was attributed to this. Given that the existing dwellings were located within the proposed settlement limit, they could not be considered as part of a cluster of development in the *countryside* for the purposes of policy CTY2A.

Regarding matters relating to residential amenity, in its response of 6th October 2024, Environmental Health raised significant concerns in relation to the proximity of the

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proposed dwelling to Craigantlet Quarry. A Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, Air Quality Impact Assessment and Contaminated Land Impact Assessment were requested, however none of these had been submitted by the applicant. Northstone Quarries had also submitted several representations raising similar concerns with regard to the lack of proper assessment of the potential impact of the established operations of the Quarry on the proposed dwelling. The aerial image on the slide showed the distance of the site from the edge of the Quarry at approximately 50 metres; significantly closer than the other existing dwellings which had separation distances ranging between 82-192 metres. The Health and Safety Executive was also consulted on the application and advised that the site was less than 100 metres from the boundary of an active quarry. The Vibration and Blasting Guidelines (NI) stated that no blasting should take place within 100 metres of any occupied dwelling which was outside the ownership or control of the quarry operator. While the part of the quarry closest to the application site was not currently subject to extraction, there was no evidence to suggest that extraction could not take place again in future within this area. The Planning Department therefore agreed with Environmental Health colleagues that the impact on future occupants must be properly considered prior to any decision being made.

Since the publication of the planning report, a further 28 letters of support had been submitted from acquaintances of the applicant bringing the total number to 41. One letter of objection had also been received from the occupants of No. 1 Craigantlet Road and the concerns raised had been considered in detail in the planning report.

Summary

In summary, the Planning Department did not consider this site to meet the requirements of either policy CTY8 as an infill site or policy CTY2A as a dwelling within a cluster. The existing development at the crossroads comprised a ribbon of development on one side of the road rather than a cluster of development that reads as a visual entity in the landscape. The existing dwellings were also located within the settlement limit of Craigantlet as defined in draft BMAP and therefore did not constitute a cluster of development in the countryside. The acceptance of a cluster would also be likely to open up further opportunities for development at this location resulting in further encroachment into the countryside. Furthermore, the proposal would result in development outside of the proposed settlement limit, creating urban sprawl and a ribbon of development along this stretch of the Hollywood Road. Finally, the applicant had also failed to provide the required assessments to allow proper consideration of the potential impact of the adjacent Quarry operations on the dwelling.

RECOMMENDED that planning permission is refused.

Alderman Graham referred to points made during the Senior Planner's presentation and noted that there appeared to have been an approval for planning permission on the opposite side of the road and asked whether any further information could be provided on that matter. The Senior Planner explained that the approval in question was a historical permission dating back to 2011, which had subsequently been renewed, and that the site lay within the proposed settlement limit of Craigantlet.

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Alderman Graham observed that although the existing quarry was some distance away, the presence of that approval suggested the quarry could potentially shift. The Senior Planner confirmed that the extent of the historical quarry came within 50 metres of the site, and that without further evidence, additional extraction could not currently be carried out there. However, she noted that the planning authority had to assume that such activity could occur and that future planning applications to the north were also possible.

Alderman Graham asked whether any extension of the quarry would require planning permission and requested that the slide showing the surrounding properties at the crossroads be displayed again. The Senior Planner located the relevant photograph from the report and presented it. Alderman Graham then queried whether, if a quarry extension did not require planning permission, a dwelling on Craigantlet Road would also be placed at risk. The Senior Planner responded that the Committee could only consider the proposal before it and assess its specific impacts.

At 19:33, the applicant, Mr Black, represented by Mr Donaldson, joined the meeting and were reminded by the Chair that they would have five minutes to present.

Mr Donaldson stated that the application had been recommended for refusal on two principal grounds: that the site did not fall within a recognised cluster, and that the proposed dwelling would be unsafe for future occupants. He explained that Mr and Mrs Black were local residents who operated a business, and he argued that the first issue had been incorrectly assessed. He referred to Policy CTY 2A, introduced in 2010, which he said made, good sense and which he believed the proposal fully met.

He maintained that the site formed part of a cluster of four buildings close to a crossroads and that it would not harm the character of the countryside. He noted that the proposal would be well screened and not visually prominent, and that it sat slightly apart from the core of the cluster, meaning only the tight grouping at the crossroads needed to be considered. He added that the policy did not require buildings to be located on all sides of a crossroads, arguing that the draft BMAP report had been prepared before the construction of the industrial shed, which he described as a key feature contributing to the cluster's integration. He referred to slide 13, noting that the existing trees would remain.

Turning to the second issue, Mr Donaldson addressed the environmental health concerns. He said the applicant had been asked to provide surveys, but Mr Black was reluctant to incur the associated costs when officers were already recommending refusal on policy grounds. He argued that such surveys were unnecessary in this case. He stated that Mr Black had long worked alongside the quarry, was familiar with its operations, and was content to build beside it. He also pointed out that there were already ten houses in the area, six of which were closer to the quarry than the proposed dwelling. He highlighted that 61 and 69 Hollywood Road lay within 180 metres of the plant and advised that it was the responsibility of the quarry operator to ensure its activities did not harm existing properties. He referred to noise and air-quality information provided by the operator in 2022, which he said confirmed that quarry operations could be carried out without affecting nearby homes. He stated that no exceedances of noise limits were predicted at

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adjacent properties and that air-quality concentrations at nearby houses were below the relevant thresholds and considered not significant. He noted that the plant was already subject to conditions, including a 40 dB daytime limit at No. 1 Craigantlet Road, beside the application site.

Mr Donaldson concluded that the proposed dwelling would be of high-quality materials and design, that Craigantlet was clearly a cluster, and that the adjacent quarry was already required to operate in a way that did not adversely affect existing houses. He argued that the proposal would allow a local business to live beside its place of work and should therefore be supported.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the PAC's decision on the draft BMAP and, noting the visual test for identifying a cluster, highlighted the contention around whether development needed to exist on both sides of the crossroads. He asked for a response to that point and acknowledged that while Mr Black might be content with the proposal, once a house was built it would remain long after the applicant, raising a longer-term concern for planners that stretched beyond the lifetimes of those present.

Mr Donaldson addressed the cluster issue first, stating that the relevant development comprised four houses and the shed on the southern side of the crossroads, with no development immediately opposite on the northern side. He said it was a matter of judgement whether the church was included, but the policy required only that a cluster contain four or more buildings and be associated with a focal point such as a social building and be located at a crossroads. He maintained that Craigantlet clearly met that definition. He added that the policy did not require development on all sides of the crossroads.

Mr Donaldson then turned to the draft BMAP, noting that the examination had taken place in 2008–09 and that at that time, the PAC had not recommended any expansion of the settlement limit. However, he pointed out that the shed had been erected four or five years ago and now formed a strong physical feature adjacent to the group. He suggested that had it existed during the BMAP process, the PAC and others might have considered it as helping to frame the cluster. He also observed that BMAP remained unadopted and was unlikely to progress, with the expectation that the matter would instead be revisited through the Council's own Local Development Plan.

On the issue of safeguards, Mr Donaldson said that Mr Black had long experience of working alongside the quarry and understood its operations. While acknowledging that Mr Black would not be there indefinitely, he stressed that the proposal did not involve building a house in isolation beside a quarry. He noted that there were already ten houses in the vicinity, six of which were closer to the asphalt plant than the proposed dwelling, and that the plant generated the greatest activity. He emphasised that the quarry operator was already required to comply with conditions protecting residential amenity, including those attached to a 2023 permission covering noise limits for nearby properties such as No. 1 Craigantlet Road. He also addressed the suggestion that the quarry might excavate closer to the site, arguing that significant investment had been made in the plant, which lay some 600 metres

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away, and that it was unlikely the operator would move extraction closer to existing houses. He concluded that the proposal needed to be considered in its full context.

[Alderman McDowell joined the meeting via Zoom at 19:38]

Alderman Graham referred to a point in the report noting that, should permission be granted, a condition would require the design and finishes to remain as submitted. He asked whether this would present any difficulty. Mr Donaldson confirmed that it would not, explaining that the application was a full submission with all details before the Council, and that the proposal was for a modest, well-designed bungalow positioned behind 1 Craigantlet Road. He added that they were content with the proposed landscaping and the retention of trees on the higher ground.

Alderman Graham then asked, for the benefit of those less familiar with the location, how the Holywood Road should be described when travelling from the crossroads towards the quarry, noting that policy sought to protect open countryside and querying how the terrain on the left-hand side should be characterised. Mr Donaldson responded that, for the purposes of the cluster policy, all that was required was the presence of four houses at the crossroads and the applicant's shed. He noted that Craigantlet not only contained this grouping but also included the church, the Orange Hall, six cottages further along, the quarry access, and development on the opposite side of the Holywood Road. He described the area as one with substantial dispersed development focused around a busy crossroads, and said the proposed dwelling would sit within that context, positioned lower than the shed and adjacent to 1 Craigantlet Road.

Alderman McAlpine asked about the septic tank, noting that it appeared to be on higher ground than the proposed dwelling. Mr Black confirmed that he had already paid for the necessary water services and that the property was fully connected.

Mr Black and Mr Donaldson returned to the public gallery at 19:48. The Chair, Councillor McClean invited questions from members to the officer.

Alderman Graham referenced the issue of ribbon development, noting that the report identified this as a concern. He assumed it related to development along the Holywood Road and asked whether the presence of the large industrial shed effectively acted as a bookend, making further ribbon development unlikely. On that assumption, he queried how the application site could be considered as contributing to ribboning. The Senior Planner explained that the application site provided a visual break between 1 Craigantlet Road and the shed. The PAC had previously expressed concern that if this land were developed, it would extend ribbon development, as the three buildings would then be visually read together. She added that the shed had been approved on the basis of an earlier Certificate of Lawful Use for a builder's yard, which placed no restriction on the amount or height of stored materials, and this had informed the decision on the shed.

Councillor Morgan asked for clarification on the distance between the proposed dwelling and the quarry, noting that a chart in the report appeared to show approximately 50 metres. The Senior Planner confirmed that the site lay 50 metres from the boundary of the established quarry.

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Alderman McIlveen raised the issue of visual break, noting that although the area plan identified one, the shed had since been constructed. He said that, looking at the maps, the break no longer appeared evident and asked to see the photographs of the area again, commenting that the definition of a cluster was a more important consideration. Following these images being shown to members, Alderman McIlveen asked whether anything in policy required development to be present on both sides of a crossroads, noting that the policy referred only to a cluster being located at a crossroads or associated with a focal point. The Senior Planner advised that while the policy did not explicitly require development on both sides, the test was a visual one; the cluster had to read as a single visual entity when approached from different directions. She stated that, in planning judgement, the pattern of development in this location, if the proposed build was granted, would clearly be ribbon in nature, and that this assessment guided the recommendation.

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the Council refuse planning permission.

Councillor Morgan observed that, while Members could debate whether the site constituted a cluster, she did not consider the example sufficiently met the criteria of a cluster. Her principal concern was the site's proximity to the quarry, noting it lay only 50 metres away. She highlighted that Environmental Health had requested further information, which had not been provided, and she considered this a reasonable requirement given the distance involved. Without that information, she felt the Committee could not make an informed decision.

Councillor Harbinson stated that he had nothing further to add other than to share Councillor Morgan's concerns, noting that the proposal failed Policy CTY 2A under criterion 4.

Alderman Graham regarded general opinions that the site was, "*not enough of a cluster but a bit of a cluster,*" as an erroneous position. He considered the proximity to the quarry to be largely irrelevant, explaining that the actual excavation area was significantly further away, closer to 300 metres, and that the asphalt plant sat between the quarry and the application site. He agreed with Mr Donaldson's earlier comments that the scale of investment in the plant made further excavation towards the site unlikely. He disagreed with the officer recommendation, arguing that the area could be treated as a cluster, with the required number of buildings, a crossroads, and a planning approval on the opposite side of the road. He described Craigtanlet as more than a simple crossroads, noting its community features such as the church and Orange Hall, and even referencing its local history. In his view, the area met the criteria for a cluster.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the PAC determination and noted that the shed, which had been built after that decision, materially changed the visual context of the site. He was confused how further information had been requested while the stance already had been for refusal. He felt that the visual test was important and that the shed significantly altered the appearance of the area, making it read more as a cluster. Councillor Cathcart added that drone images taken from height were not reflective of the actual visual experience on the ground. Based on the images from

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road level, he believed the proposal would be relatively well integrated and advised that he would be against the officer recommendation.

Alderman McIlveen agreed, stating that without the shed, the Committee would not even be discussing a cluster. He felt the shed fundamentally changed the dynamic and that the proposal would not contribute to ribbon development, as the site was effectively bookended by No. 1 Craigantlet Road and at the other end, the shed. He said the key question was the potential impact of the quarry. While initially persuaded by the officer’s explanation, he found Mr Donaldson’s presentation compelling, particularly the practical points and the existing reports on noise and air quality. He noted that the quarry’s impact on existing houses in the area was already understood and managed. On balance, he was more inclined to support the application than oppose it, though he acknowledged the finely balanced nature of the decision, concluding that he would vote against the officer recommendation.

Alderman Smith also agreed with Councillor Cathcart and Alderman McIlveen. He felt the shed created a clear boundary for the cluster and noted that planning permission had been granted for a dwelling opposite the site, which further contributed to the cluster effect. While acknowledging the distance between the shed and the proposed dwelling, he considered it a matter of judgement whether the development read as a cluster. Regarding the quarry, photographs and maps clearly showed the true proximity and that the area adjacent to the cluster functioned more as a transport and parking area than an active excavation zone. Given that some existing houses were as close or closer to the quarry than the proposed dwelling, he stated that, in context, he would be minded to support the planning application.

In summing up, Councillor Morgan explained that she was surprised colleagues were overlooking the fact that Environmental Health had requested additional information. She reiterated that the quarry boundary lay 50 metres from the site and that excavation could theoretically occur at that point. She stressed that the necessary information simply needed to be provided so that an informed decision could be made. As it had not been submitted, she believed the Committee had no option but to refuse the application.

The Chair, Councillor McClean asked Members to vote on the proposal to refuse planning permission.

On being put to the meeting, with 7 voting FOR, 4 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 3 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (7)	AGAINST (4)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (3)
Aldermen	Aldermen	Aldermen	Aldermen
McAlpine	Graham	McDowell	
	McIlveen		
	Smith		

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Councillors

Harbinson
Kendall
McKee
Morgan
Smart
Wray

Councillor

Cathcart

Councillors

McClellan

Councillor

Hennessy
Kerr
McCollum

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, with 7 voting FOR, 4 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINED and 3 ABSENT, that the Council refuses planning permission.

[Councillor Hennessy joined the meeting at 20:08]

5. NIW CLOSED CATCHMENTS

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising that;

1. Subordinate Planning legislation required the Council to consult with Northern Ireland Water (NIW) where a development proposal was likely to significantly impact upon the availability of suitable water and sewerage infrastructure to service development proposals.
2. Members would have been aware of current issues with sewerage infrastructure as described by NIW across Northern Ireland caused by decades of under investment.
3. NIW provided a 'Wastewater Impact Assessment' service to assist developers in identifying any possible constraints that may be associated with servicing a development site in terms of wastewater infrastructure. The Impact Assessment could assist developers in understanding the potential costs and timescales involved in servicing a site prior to land acquisition or in advance of the submission of a planning application.
4. Planning Committee would have been aware of the use of negative conditions on grants of planning permission as follows:
"No development shall take place on site until the method of sewage disposal has been agreed in writing with Northern Ireland Water or a Consent to discharge has been granted under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 by the relevant authority"
5. The Council's recent Empty to Energised Pilot Grant scheme was directed at providing financial assistance to property owners who want to renovate vacant properties and introduce new commercial uses within Bangor's city centre and Newtownards' town centre. By bringing vacant spaces back into use, the scheme sought to boost town centre vibrancy, attract new tenants, increase

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footfall, create local employment opportunities, and promote sustainability in redevelopment projects.

6. Via a recent NIW response to a consultation request on a planning application for a change of use of a vacant retail unit to a hot food carryout in Newtownards town centre, it had come to the attention of the Planning Service, and also via correspondence forwarded by Kellie Armstrong MLA, that there were a number of 'closed catchments' in the Borough for which no new connections could be permitted (see attached letter from NIW).
7. In relation to the particular property, NIW had advised that there was 'simply not enough capacity in the existing public wastewater system to facilitate new connection, without increased risk of adverse environmental effects such as out-of-sewer flooding'.
8. Members' attention was drawn to the other attached document which was a download from the NIW's webpage entitled "Waste-water System Capacity Information – Council Areas (October 2025)". It should be noted that any information relating to Waste-water Treatments Works (WwTWs) in other council areas had been omitted from the download.
9. Members were asked to note that neither Cloughey WwTW nor Killinchy WwTW had any available capacity.
10. Regards information on Closed Catchments, Members were asked to note the information on UIDs. A UID referred to an Unsatisfactory Discharge. This occurred when the discharge from a sewage treatment works did not meet the required standards set by regulations. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) were responsible for enforcing compliance with these standards, and any failure to meet them could lead to enforcement actions.
11. In addition to the WwTW capacity issues, NI Water had also identified areas of the sewage network in Comber, Donaghadee and Newtownards where developer-funded solutions were no longer possible to achieve a connection to the sewer network. This meant that the Wastewater Impact Assessment process in these areas was no longer able to provide a solution that a developer could implement.
12. NIW had confirmed that the 'closed areas' did not cover all of the towns referenced above, and that it would continue to support developments in these areas where it could be proven that:
 - The site had extant planning with no conditions relating to capacity constraints or

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- The site was a redevelopment and there as no intensification of foul sewage discharge post development compared to the sewage discharge from the site within the last 5 years.

Key Issues

13. Newtownards was one of the town centres identified in the Empty to Energised pilot grant scheme, with a significant number of vacant properties that the Council was seeking to encourage to be brought back into active use in the context of the Corporate Plan's priority regarding increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and more jobs, and in turn increasing our non-domestic rate base.
14. The Council had just published its draft Plan Strategy within which was set out the Council's Social, Economic and Environmental Objectives alongside the Spatial Growth Strategy for the Borough. Without the requisite infrastructure being in place, or a commitment within NIW's next Price Control period (i.e. beyond 2027) the Council would not likely meet its growth aspirations.
15. The following was an extract from NIW's 2021-2046 Strategy:

Tipping point

"We are therefore facing a tipping point a we approach the next business plan period PC21 (2021-27), which will require an investment of around £2.5bn, including the Living with Water Programme. The NI Water Board and Executives continue to work with stakeholders to identify a means to fund this vital investment. However, a solution has not been identified. Our shareholder, DfI, needs to commit to fund this vital investment but faces competing pressures from transport infrastructure. Unlike in the rest off the UK, the risk of shareholder sanction from the Utility Regulator is much diminished due to our Government ownership. A solution must be identified to avert a funding cris for this vital infrastructure.

16. Members would have recalled previous letters written from Council to DFI Permanent Secretary and Secretary of State, and then DFI Minister (once Executive restored) regarding the ongoing funding crisis. Additionally, NIW representatives had attended as a deputation to Corporate Services Committee in previous years setting out its position in respect of underfunding. A copy of its presentation of February 2025 to Corporate Services was attached for Members' information.

Summary

17. In light of the ongoing, if not worsening, situation with NIW and NIEA, and the inevitable impact on the Council's growth plans and attempts to grow the non-domestic rates base, Members may have wanted to consider initiating further correspondence with NIW/DFI or inviting NIW representatives to present to Planning Committee on the matter.

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RECOMMENDED that Council Considers its approach in light of the information within the report.

The Head of Planning and Building Control explained that she wished to draw members' attention to issues arising from the recently launched Empty to Energise initiative, which had been prompted by an application brought to the Council's attention through Kellie Armstrong MLA's office. She reminded members that the Council had previously written to the former Minister, and subsequently to the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary, regarding the position in which NI Water now found itself. Through further investigation, it had become clear that in closed catchments, NI Water would not renew previous connections unless there had been like-for-like use within the past five years or an extant planning permission within that period. She advised members to be mindful of this constraint. NI Water was scheduled to present to members on 5 May at 6pm. Although such presentations were normally made to the Corporate Committee, the matter had significant implications for planning. She noted that the issue related to historic price-control periods and the level of investment required. Members were asked if they would prefer to write again to NI Water or await the forthcoming presentation.

Councillor Smart stressed the importance of the matter, particularly as the Council sought to revitalise town and city centres only to encounter obstacles of this nature. He argued that a delegation should be made to meet the Minister, noting that the situation, combined with what seemed like a lack of awareness around the Local Development Plan and the restrictions on derelict properties, ran contrary to the aims of both central and local government. He suggested that a cross-party delegation would be appropriate.

Councillor Cathcart sought clarification on whether NI Water would refuse a like-for-like replacement where a shop had been vacant for some time, particularly in cases involving a change of use. The Head of Planning and Building Control explained that if a unit had been vacant and the proposed use differed from the previous one, for example, a retail unit changing to a hot-food takeaway, NI Water considered this a different use. If the previous connection had not been active within the past five years, they regarded it as lost. She noted that NI Water assessed whether the proposed use would discharge the same volume to the system, and if calculations showed an increase, the connection would not be permitted. Where no evidence of use within the past five years existed, NI Water were not issuing reconnections.

Councillor Cathcart asked whether a map was available. The Head of Planning and Building Control said a link was included in the report, though it did not allow for detailed zooming. She explained that the Council was discovering the extent of the issue on an ad hoc basis, dependent on the location of each application, and that it appeared to relate to discharges via South Street.

Councillor Cathcart referred to a case on North Street where permission had been granted for apartments on one side of the road, but when the applicant moved to the opposite side, no capacity remained. He noted that options were being explored for a neighbouring barber shop and emphasised the timing pressures involved, particularly for regeneration areas such as Bangor Main Street, where changes of

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use and subdivision of units would be essential. He asked whether the Head of Planning and Building Control was suggesting that the Council write again to NI Water and invite them to Committee.

The Head of Planning and Building Control clarified that NI Water's visit formed part of NIW's annual engagement, during which it normally presented an overview of the year to the Corporate Committee. It had requested to attend on 5 May. She also noted that Bangor was not within the affected catchment area.

The Chair confirmed that Councillor Smart had made a proposal. The Head of Planning and Building Control indicated she was content to agree the relevant subject matter for any correspondence or engagement.

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Council notes the report and requests the Minister of Department for Infrastructure to accept a deputation of cross-party Members to discuss ongoing concerns.

Councillor Morgan described the situation as appalling, noting that while the Director was working to address derelict buildings and improve the appearance of Newtownards and Comber, NI Water's position meant such regeneration efforts could not progress. She said the situation was hopeless and urged the need for a meeting with the Minister.

Alderman McIlveen referred to an announcement made earlier that day by Andrew Muir regarding SORPI (Statement of Regulatory Principles and Intent) and NI Water, asking whether this would worsen the issue. He noted that although Bangor was not currently in an affected catchment, part of the announcement related to Belfast Lough, which could place Bangor in a similar position. He suggested writing to NI Water for clarification, particularly given the number of permissions already granted subject to NI Water agreement and those still in the system, and asked whether further difficulties were anticipated.

The Head of Planning and Building Control advised that she had read the press release that afternoon and suggested members might wish to refer back to previous papers on the Living With Water Programme and the situation in Belfast Lough. She explained that the scale of discharge entering the lough from the opposite side was significant, and that the lack of funding for upgrades at Kinnegar was a major factor. She noted that NI Water would proceed with connections where extant permissions met the necessary requirements and where developers could provide their own solutions, but some town centre sites could not do this. She was unsure whether the announcement was intended to prompt Executive action, but acknowledged that the issue appeared to be coming to a head.

Alderman Smith supported the proposal to seek a meeting with the Minister. He referred to the report's comments on development funding restrictions and expressed concern that the current Minister did not appear to have a clear plan for addressing the issue. He suggested that developer-funded solutions might be the only option being considered and it was essential to meet the Minister. He noted that NI Water would likely reiterate the scale of investment required and that no funding was currently being offered. He warned that the situation was preventing new

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housing and undermining efforts to support businesses seeking to rejuvenate local areas.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Council notes the report and requests the Minister of Department of Infrastructure to accept a deputation of cross-party Members to discuss ongoing concerns.

6. WORKSHOP ON RENEWABLES

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising that Members should note the attached letter which set out that as part of the Planning Improvement Programme, the Department, in conjunction with local councils and Renewables NI, was proposing to host a workshop on Renewable Energy on 11 March 2026 as part of capacity building and knowledge development.

Nominations were sought in respect of circa three attendees per council, consisting of planning officers and Planning Committee members.

It was proposed that two planning officers attend and as such, the Committee was asked if it wished to propose a Member to attend. In the absence of any Member expressing a desire to attend, a further planning officer would be proposed.

RECOMMENDED that Council Considers the attached letter seeking nominations to the proposed Renewable Energy Workshop on 11 March 2026 and determines whether any Member wishes to be nominated.

Councillor Harbinson proposed, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that Council notes the letter and nominates Councillor Morgan to attend the Renewable Energy Workshop alongside Council Officers.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that Council notes the letter and nominates Councillor Morgan to attend the Renewable Energy Workshop alongside Council Officers.

[Councillor Wray left the meeting at 20:21]

7. PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE UNIT PLAN 2026-2027

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity explaining that Members will have been 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 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)

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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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Planning and Building Control in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

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

8. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising of appeals decisions as outlined below.

The following appeal was dismissed on 30 January 2026 following written representations with accompanied site visit on 04 September 2025.

PAC Ref	2025/A0023
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0438/O
Appellant	Ryan Doherty
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for: Erection of shed for the storage and maintenance of agricultural machinery, yard and relation of access
Location	100m south of 35 Ballymaleddy Road, Comber

The Council refused the application at the Planning Committee of 04 March 2025, further to call-in from the delegated list by Alderman McIlveen, for the following reasons:

- a) The proposal was contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 1 of Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that, there were no overriding reasons why the development is essential at this location.
- b) The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI (para 6.73), and Policy CTY 12 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that:
 - it had not been demonstrated that the shed was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding;
 - the shed would not be sited beside existing farm buildings;
 - it did not merit being considered as an exceptional case as it had not been demonstrated that there were no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding, health and safety reasons existed to justify an alternative site away from existing farm buildings or that the alternative site away from existing farm buildings was essential for the efficient functioning of the business.
- c) The proposal was contrary to criteria a, b, c, d and f of Policy CTY 13 of Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the proposal:
 - was a prominent feature in the landscape
 - the site lacked long established natural boundaries or was unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the building to integrate into the landscape;
 - it relied primarily on the use of new landscaping for integration
 - ancillary works did not integrate with their surroundings

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- it failed to blend with the landform, existing trees, buildings, slopes and other natural features which provide a backdrop
- d) The proposal was contrary to Policy CTY 14 of Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the proposal would be unduly prominent in the landscape and the impact of the ancillary works would damage rural character.

Commissioner considered:

- there was an active and established farm business but not adequately demonstrated that the shed was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding.
- Invoices for agricultural contracting work outside the applicant's holding / evidence of four invoices were inconclusive in terms of demonstrating that the proposed shed was necessary for the efficient use of the holding.
- Recommendations within the Health and Safety report for facilities for the maintenance of farm machinery appeared excessive for a relatively small holding.
- Limited evidence presented leaned towards the appellant's agricultural contracting business rather than demonstrating maintenance or upkeep of the agricultural holding.
- Not persuaded that a shed of the size, scale and with the technical requirements specified were necessary for the efficient use of this agricultural holding or could not be sited beside existing farm buildings at 37 Ballymaleddy Road within its generous curtilage and which the farm business was registered to.
- Considered that a shed would appear as a prominent feature in the landscape and was unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure to integrate into the landscape and the impact of ancillary works would damage rural character.

All of the Council's refusal reasons were upheld and the appeal was dismissed.

1. The following enforcement appeal was upheld on 30 January 2026

PAC Ref	2025/E0006
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0296/CA
Appellant	Andrew Lawther
Subject of Appeal	Alleged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Unauthorised laying of hardcore to form a level surfaced area; ii. Unauthorised erection of one wooden building and eco composting facility; iii. Unauthorised erection of one yurt with pier foundations; iv. Unauthorised laying of hardcore stone laneway
Location	Lands opposite 49 Holly Park Road, Killinchy, Down, within forested area (wet woodlands) on eastern side of Holly Park Road, approx. 140m back from Holly Park Road and approx. 520m north of Derryboy Road

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Appeal was brought under Grounds (a), (c), (d), (f) and (g) as set out in Section 143(3) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act).

There was a deemed planning application by virtue of Section 145 (5) of the Act which relates to the appeal development on the site. This decision only considered Grounds (c) and (d).

Ground (c)- that those matters (if they occurred) did not constitute a breach of planning control

Appeal site not being actively farmed; however, appellant argued that site was farmed previously and planning permission therefore not required due to permitted development rights and that laying of hardcore was associated with overall agricultural management of the lands.

Commissioner not persuaded by evidence submitted which included mapping and invoices or that the laneway and level surfaced area were in place since the appellant’s father possessed permitted development rights. Appeal under ground (c) failed.

Ground (d)- that, at the date when the notice was issued, no enforcement action could be taken in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters

Commissioner also considered evidence presented in relation to Section 132 of the Act which dealt with time limits and considered on balance of probabilities, it was not demonstrated that on 1st April 2025 no enforcement action could be taken in respect of breaches i and iv. The appeal on ground (d) failed.

New Appeals

- 2. The following appeal was lodged on 10 February:

PAC Ref	2025/A0124
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0952/F
Appellant	James Morley
Subject of Appeal	Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 2 No. 3 bed and 4 No. 2 bed apartments
Location	115 Station Road, Craigavad

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

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report and attachments.

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

9. CONFIRMATION OF LISTING

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising that a report had been presented to the Council at its meeting of 17 December 2025 advising of DfC's Historic Environment Division's consideration of listing of Alexandra House, 230 Scrabo Road, Newtownards. Members resolved to support the intention to list the property.

This report was to advise Members that the property had since been listed and the signed schedule and map were appended for information.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report and attachments

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

10. SECOND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLANNING ACT (NI) 2011

Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity as outlined below;
Primary Planning Legislation

1. In Northern Ireland, the planning system was fundamentally reformed in 2015 with the transfer of responsibility for most local planning decisions and plan-making going to councils as well as significant reforms to the development management and plan-making processes. The reforms represented the most fundamental change to the planning system in Northern Ireland in over 30 years.
2. This also involved commencement of significant new primary legislation in the form of the Planning (NI) Act 2011 (the Act), together with a raft of other supporting subordinate legislation, which all came into effect on 1st April 2015.
3. In May 2016 the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, reduced the number of government departments from 12 to 9. As part of this restructuring, the majority of departmental planning functions of the former Department of the Environment were transferred to the Department for Infrastructure.

First Review of the Implementation of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

4. Section 228 of the Act requires the Department to review and publish a report on the implementation of the Act no later than 3 years after the commencement of Part 3 of the Act (Planning Control), and at least once in every 5 years thereafter. The Department was required by section 228(2) to make regulations setting out the terms of the review. The regulations were made on 12 October 2020 and came into operation on 2 November 2020.
5. The delay in meeting the initial timeframe set out in the Act for making the regulations and publication of the associated report, stemmed from decisions (not to proceed) made under the NI (Executive Formation & Exercise of Function etc.) Act 2018. These decisions determined that in the absence of a Minister or

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functioning Assembly, it would not be appropriate to make the regulations, and to publish the subsequent report on the implementation of the Planning Act.

6. The Planning Act 2011 (Review) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 specified that the Review must:-
 - consider the objectives intended to be achieved by the Planning Act;
 - assess the extent to which those objectives had been achieved; and
 - assess whether it was appropriate to retain, amend or repeal any of the provisions of the Planning Act or subordinate legislation made under the 2011 Act, in order to achieve those objectives.
7. The Department carried out its first review in 2021, by way of a Call for Evidence, to which the Council submitted its considered response.
8. The Department published its report in January 2022 – copy attached for information.
9. As detailed on DFI's website, overall the Review found that the vast majority of provisions within the Planning Act had been implemented and that the reformed two tier planning system envisaged by the Assembly when the Act was made had been established. However, the Review had also identified parts of the planning system which could be improved, including the time it took for councils to bring forward their respective local development plans and the speed at which major planning applications were processed.
10. The 2021 Review brought forward a series of recommendations for changes to the Act, subordinate legislation and guidance, aimed at improving the planning system. These included:
 - reviewing the consultation requirements in plan-making;
 - improving the quality of planning applications submitted;
 - increasing the use of digital technology in the planning system;
 - reviewing the statutory consultations process, including timeframes for consultations responses, penalties for late responses and how councils could proceed if statutory consultees do not respond within the required timeframes;
 - reviewing categories of development and the Department's approach to call in notifications; and
 - reviewing aspects of the appeals system around new material, and the variation of proposals at appeal.
11. A number of outstanding recommendations continue to be taken forward via the Northern Ireland Planning Improvement Programme.

Second Review of the Implementation of The Planning Act

12. The Department had advised Heads of Planning that it had commenced preparatory work with regards to its second report on the Review of the

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Planning Act (see letter of 21 January 2026 attached), and was seeking input from the planning authorities accordingly.

13. Further to some concern being raised in respect of the timeframe for response, the Chief Planner had recently (in attached letter of 04 February) set out the wish to maintain momentum, and reiterating that any response need only concentrate on any new matters that may not have emerged since the first Review and the intervening period.
14. Whilst a response was requested by the end of March, it was proposed to work with the other Heads of Planning to review the situation to date, to coordinate a response to DFI to be presented to Planning Committee at its meeting of 31 March (which was agreed in place of 07 April date). As such, delegated authority would be sought from Council at its meeting of 25 March for Planning Committee to approve the response, subject to any amendments instructed.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report and the intention to seek delegated authority from March Council regarding proposed response to be presented to Planning Committee at its meeting of 31 March 2026.

[Councillor Wray rejoined the meeting at 20:23.]

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 20:23.

Unclassified

ITEM 8.1.1.**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	25 March 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Building Control
Report title	Matters Arising from Planning Committee Minutes of 03 March 2026
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Other The Planning Act (NI) 2011
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Multiple Multiple If multiple:

At the Planning Committee meeting held on 03 March 2026, Members were advised of a response due with DfI Planning in respect of the Second Review of the Planning Act. It was advised that in order to submit the proposed response to DFI by 31

March 2026, delegated authority would be sought from the Council at its meeting on 25 March, to enable submission of the response within the timeframe requested by DFI.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Approves delegated authority be granted to Planning Committee at its meeting on 31 March, to approve a response in relation to the Second Review of the Planning Act to DFI Planning.

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 4 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor Kendall	
Aldermen:	Adair Cummings	McAlpine
Councillors:	Ashe Boyle Blaney Brady Cathcart	Douglas Edmund Harbinson Newman Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies 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 noted.

NOTED.

3. ANNUAL SERVICE PLANS 2026-27

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental 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 had in place a Performance Management Policy and 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 (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.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plans.

Next Steps

Attached were the 2026/27 Service Plans for Estates Services, Parks and Cemeteries and Waste and Cleansing in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook for Members consideration and approval.

Summary

The attached Plans:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Services for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Were based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plans may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Service Plans for 2026-27.

3.1 Estates Service (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Estates Service Plan 2026-27.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026-27.

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

Councillor Wray was happy with the three priorities in the Plan, economic, environmental and social and thought it was important to strike the correct balance between those. He asked how the seven outcomes were being achieved and the Director informed him that was demonstrated in the six monthly reports that had been produced in the past and would be produced going forward.

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

3.2 Parks and Cemeteries (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan 2026-27.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026-27.

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

Alderman Adair commended the parks and cemeteries team and, in particular, the Head of Parks and Cemeteries for the work that had been done and the increased maintenance that had been evident over recent years and looked forward to even greater success in the years to come.

Councillor Wray raised a finding, which had been highlighted in a University of Leeds report, that skateparks and MUGAs were predominantly used by males. He asked what those spaces could look like if the Council wished to increase participation by women and girls.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries reported that officers had been considering the matter for some time. He outlined proposed initiatives such as Spark Here events which were scheduled to run from March this year to June, which were funded projects aimed specifically at encouraging women and girls to take part. He confirmed that those considerations would be incorporated into forthcoming projects and that the service was fully committed to making facilities more accessible and welcoming for women and girls.

The officer advised that a full report would be brought to the Committee in September, detailing the work already undertaken and planned future actions.

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

3.3 Waste and Cleansing Services
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Waste and Cleansing Service Plan 2026-27.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026-27.

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

Alderman Adair paid tribute to the Waste and Cleansing team, noting that it had continued to work in all weather conditions and had demonstrated consistent perseverance and dedication. He also highlighted the difficulties experienced during storm conditions, when high winds had blown over bins left out for collection resulting in littered streets. He asked if, during severe weather and particularly on blue bin weeks, the Council could issue advance warnings that bins would not be collected the following day.

The Director acknowledged the points raised and explained that weather warnings were issued at yellow, amber and red levels. The recent incident the Member was referring to had involved an amber warning, and under such circumstances the Council had been unable to take an earlier decision. However, he stated that the intention was always to make early determinations with the information available.

The Head of Estates received praise also for the maintenance team's responsiveness when required and appreciated that a bigger budget would have enabled them to do more.

A query was raised regarding the proposed trial for the recycling of soft plastics which remained on hold subject to funding. The Director advised that the Waste Working Group would meet at the end of the month and that a report would be brought later in the year in respect of that matter, noting that legislative changes relating to soft plastics were forthcoming and required first.

The Chair noted the update and looked forward to receiving the report in due course.

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

4. NOTICE OF MOTION 670 RECYCLING ON THE GO PILOT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that a Notice of Motion (NOM 670) was agreed at Environment Committee in June 2025. The NOM stated, 'This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste that have been achieved in the Borough, however there are currently limited

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facilities to recycle litter. This sends out a poor message to our residents and visitors. This Council asks that officers bring back a report that explores how, and when recycling litter bins could be introduced to the Borough. Indication of costs should be included.'

Facilitating sustainable practices was a priority for Ards and North Down Borough Council. That included providing opportunities for residents, employees at work, and visitors to recycle packaging and food waste at home, at work, and at many Council premises.

For household recycling, the Council provided a comprehensive waste and recycling service. That included kerbside collections, bring banks and HRCs. Household recycling performance was 56.1% in 2024/25 and exceeded 60% in the first half of 2025/26.

For businesses and other non-household organisations, the Council had a statutory duty to provide a commercial waste collection where this service was requested. It was Council policy to require its commercial waste service customers to also separate recyclable materials for collection.

There were fewer opportunities for residents and visitors to recycle items outside the home or workplace. The proposed pilot scheme would seek to improve recycling opportunities for people 'on the go' particularly those making use of our public parks.

Aim of the trial

To extend recycling opportunities to residents and visitors of Ards and North Down's public parks and to measure the effectiveness of the scheme infrastructure, communications, and user satisfaction.

Existing good practice

The design and execution of the Ards and North Down 'Recycle on the Go' (RoTG) pilot would benefit from similar initiatives across the UK and Ireland. WRAP guidance was published in 2012, and Belfast City Council recently completed a similar on-street recycling trial with environmental charity, Hubbub. The AND pilot would employ insights from those schemes, including:

- The use of highly visible recycling bins
- Clear and specific messages on target materials, i.e. plastic drinks bottles and metal drinks cans
- Use of bold images and iconography
- Clarity on non-target items, eg. coffee cups, liquids

The scope of the AND RoTG pilot had yet to be finalised but would draw from existing good practice.

The pilot scheme

The project would be led by a cross-service team in both Parks and Cemeteries Service and Waste and Cleansing Services. A project manager would be identified from the Council's recycling officers. The project team would include close engagement with the Council's Communications team. It was anticipated that joint

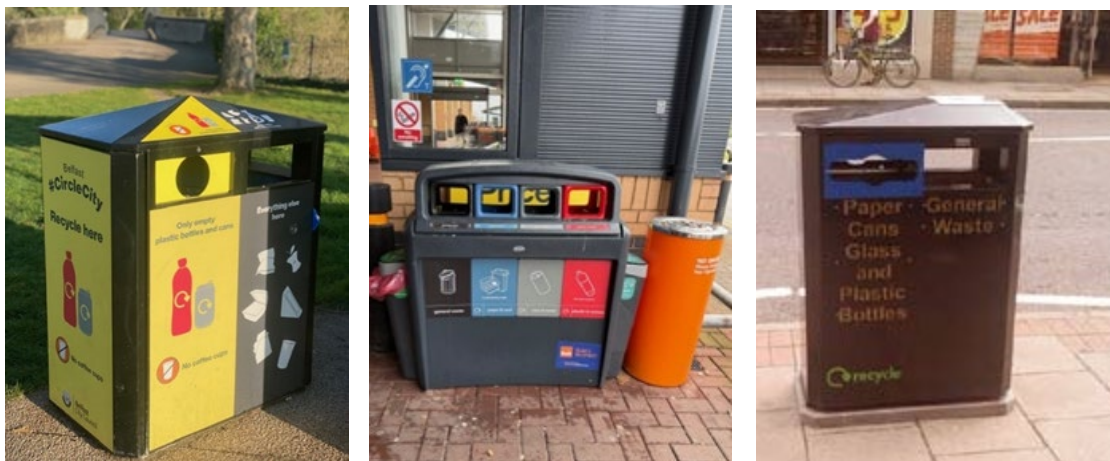
learning from this pilot would inform potential extension of this initiative beyond Council parks.

The Council proposed a phased introduction of new recycling bins, with a pilot exercise in Ward Park and Council-managed bowling greens. The containers would be co-located with litter bins in areas of high footfall so that visitors could dispose of rubbish and recycling conveniently at one location. The accessibility of the recycling bin would also eliminate a physical barrier to recycling. Co-located bins would also maximise capture of recyclables and minimise contamination.

The scheme would target two key material streams – plastic drinks bottles and metal drinks cans. Those two material streams were recyclable at the kerbside and commonly used by people when out and about. Provision of a recycling container would positively reinforce recycling behaviours and divert additional recyclables from disposal.

A recent successful pilot by Belfast City Council and environmental charity, Hubbub, found that the RoTG recycling comprised almost 50% by weight of target material. The trial found that contamination levels were low enough that the recycling could be sent for reprocessing.

The Ards and North Down pilot would follow the same approach as the Belfast pilot. It would ensure that the containers were clearly labelled with both materials iconography and wording to make targeted recyclable materials clear. That would reduce confusion and contamination. Examples of clearly labelled RoTG containers were shown below.



Images (left to right): Victoria Park, Belfast; B&Q Hollywood Exchange; and Elmbridge BC (from WRAP's 'Recycle on the Go' guidance (2012))

Cost of delivering the RoTG pilot

A budget of £45k had been identified to support the delivery of the pilot. That included £15k capital funding of the new recycling bins and £30k revenue for communications, operations, and project evaluation.

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The trial would target key packaging materials for recycling. For that reason, it was possible to cover the costs of delivering the RoTG trial with funding received from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme.

Monitoring and evaluation of the pilot

The evaluation of the pilot scheme would include:

- Public engagement with AND messages and communications, e.g. Council website and social media channels
- Waste composition analysis to measure the quantity and types of target and non-target material captured
- User satisfaction survey
- Net costs or savings of delivering the pilot scheme

A project report would be brought to the Environment Committee at the end of the trial period.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves to proceed with a trial as set out in this report.

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

Councillor Harbinson referred to the pilot scheme and enquired about the duration of the trial. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the pilot would run for a six-month period at bowling greens and Ward Park after which there would be an opportunity to review the outcomes and begin the process of wider rollout based on the lessons learned.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the increase in recycling, noting both the environmental benefits and the potential savings to the ratepayer. He referred to positive results from similar trials in Belfast and expressed hope that the initiative would encourage behavioural change, particularly around “on-the-go” recycling. He commented that residents already recycled well at the kerbside and emphasised the importance of communication to highlight that recycling both saved money and benefited the environment. He stated that while progress had been made, further improvement was still required, and he looked forward to the results of the pilot, which he found encouraging.

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

5. PLAY PARK REFUBISHMENTS AND OLDER CHILDREN PLAY PROVISION FOR 2026/27

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the Ards and North Down Borough Council’s Play Strategy (2021–2032) promoted the modernisation of local play areas. Under the Strategy, sites

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were prioritised within the Annual Independent Inspectors Report, supplemented by local knowledge and insight, and in accordance with the budget made available.

Furthermore, the agreed Strategy included a settlement hierarchy approach to fund provisions for older children, such as skate parks, pump tracks, and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs).

To ensure high standards, the Council employed expert contractors who adhered to specific design criteria, including age-appropriate equipment ratios and a minimum of 30% inclusive equipment. All projects complied with British and European safety standards. Rigorous oversight was provided by an independent inspector accredited by the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII), ensuring all assessments remained objective and professional.

2025/2026 Financial Year

To date in 2025/2026 the following play parks had been completed:

- Seafront Play Park, Groomsport

The following facilities were due for completion by the end of March 2026:

- Northfield Play Park, Donaghadee
- Island View Play Park, Greyabbey
- Moss Road Multi Use Games Area, Ballygowan

An agreed Multiuse Use Games Area (MUGA) for older children's play at Seapark, Hollywood had been delayed due to the requirement to submit a Certificate of Lawful Use/Development to the Planning Department and a determination was awaited for that. It was expected that the budget earmarked for the project could be accrued into the 2026/27 Financial Year if required.

As in all previous years from 2015, sourcing of external funding would continue to be explored by officers for future play park developments.

Key Issues

1. Older Children Facilities in 2026/27

- 1.1 If a Certificate of Lawful Use was approved then the MUGA at Seapark would be delivered.
- 1.2 The next location identified for an older children's facility, based on the settlement hierarchy approach outlined in the Play Strategy, was Portaferry. It was envisaged that the location would be adjacent to the play park at Cloughey Road. A public consultation would be carried out to ascertain what type of older children's facility the local teenagers and wider community would like to see delivered.
- 1.3 Members would also be aware that, through Peace Plus funding, a Pump Track was due to be delivered this year at The Commons, Donaghadee and a Pump Track element (along with other cycling facilities) would be delivered at Sportsplex, Bangor. It was proposed to install a youth shelter (£15,000) adjacent to the new pump track at The Commons, Donaghadee.

1.4 It was further proposed to install a basketball area (£15,000) to the rear of the tennis pavilion in Ward Park, Bangor, as that was a significant request raised through the public consultation, carried out as part of the wider Ward Park redevelopment project. The associated cost included the need for some groundworks and resurfacing of the area.

2. Play Parks in 2026/27

The budget available for play park refurbishments for the 2026/27 Financial Year was £1,125,000. The refurbishment approach outlined below, while taking cognisance of the Independent Inspector's scores, attempted to use the available budget in a targeted approach to ensure a fair spread of investment across the Borough, especially those areas that had not received investment in the recent past.

Members should be aware that the relative prioritisation between sites could change each year, for example the rate of deterioration of facilities could vary due to amount of use and/or location.

Based on the evidence from the Independent Inspector's Report and supplemented by local knowledge and insight it was recommended that the following Play Parks were proposed for refurbishment.

- Tullymally, Portaferry
- Sportsplex, Bangor
- Glenford, Newtownards
- Skipperstone, Bangor
- Main Street, Ballyhalbert (currently a Tier 2 will be upgraded to a Tier 1)
- Ballywalter Road, Millisle (Tier 1)

Next Steps

It was proposed that Council proceeded to deliver the following play parks and older children provision based on the Independent Inspector's report on need and officers' input to ensure a fair distribution across the Borough and within available budget.

Summary

Recommended Play Park Refurbishments proposed based on the independent report and officers' input:

- Tullymally, Portaferry (Tier 3) £85,000
- Sportsplex, Bangor (Tier 2) £170,000
- Glenford, Newtownards (Tier 2) £170,000
- Skipperstone, Bangor (Tier 2) £170,000
- Main Street, Ballyhalbert (currently a Tier 2 will be upgraded to a Tier 1) £250,000
- Ballywalter Road, Millisle (Tier 1) £250,000

Older Children Play Provision Proposed

- An older children facility would be delivered at Cloughey Road, Portaferry, £200,000.

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- A youth shelter adjacent to the new pump track at Donaghadee, £15,000
- A basketball area to the rear of the tennis pavilion building in Ward park (partial MUGA), £15,000.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the delivery of play refurbishments as detailed in this report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendations outlined in the report are accepted except that that officers bring back a report to next month's committee to consider replacing the Glenford Play Park with the Abbot Gardens Play Park for refurbishment for 2026/27.

Alderman Adair explained that he would make his own comments first and then read those remarks that Alderman McIlveen had submitted directly to him. He stated that he welcomed the report but believed that the Council was still not investing enough in the Borough's play parks, noting strong public demand for improved facilities. He welcomed planned upgrades for Ballyhalbert, Millisle and Tullymalley, and the consideration of provision for older children in Portaferry and urged officers to maintain or increase the budget for these.

Speaking on behalf of Alderman McIlveen, he referred to the December report linking Glenford Play Park to the Translink Park and Ride project. He noted that Bowtown had originally been a low score within the Borough's playparks being next in the list but had since been overtaken by other sites while being considered unfit for purpose. He understood that funding for the future development of Glenford Play Park was expected to come from the sale of the former Newtownards Leisure Centre site and asked Members to support an amendment to pause the decision for one month to explore whether Council funding could be made first to the Park at Bowtown noting that Translink had not yet submitted its application and progress was not imminent.

Councillor Cathcart supported the amendment, emphasising that it did not remove funding from Glenford but would direct current budgets to Bowtown instead. He reported that he had previously raised safety concerns about Skipperstone Play Park in terms of enclosing it for safety and the Director confirmed that fencing formed part of the upgrade proposed. The Member was pleased to hear that and praised the overall quality of the Council's play parks.

Councillor Wray asked about funding the playparks and the Director confirmed that the Council was due to receive a significant receipt from the sale of land to Translink. The Member expressed sympathy for the amendment that had been brought but explained that he was generally not supportive of frequent amendments in relation to play parks but that he did welcome the report.

Councillor Boyle opposed the amendment, and explained that the Council had commissioned an independent report to ensure fairness across the funding process and should not deviate from that and described the report as excellent.

Councillor Douglas supported the amendment and asked for an update on progress at the Moss Road MUGA in Ballygowan. She was informed that that park was expected to be completed before Easter 2026.

Other Members shared concern in relation to the amendment including Alderman McAlpine and Councillor Brady and could not support it. Councillor Brady stated how it was disconcerting that so many departments were involved in delivering playparks. The Chair welcomed the increased budget and the progress being made in developing excellent parks and Councillor Edmund welcomed the inclusion of Ballyhalbert, noting the significant population growth in that village.

In summing up, Alderman Adair reiterated that the Council was not strictly following the independent report alone as shown with that of Ballyholme which was a very low scoring site but would be funded separately under funds from City Deal. He stressed that the amendment would not delay any scheme but would allow the Council to gather full information. He went on to say that both Glenford and Bowtown were in Newtownards, and he urged Members to support a short pause while requesting a recorded vote.

Before the vote was taken the Director confirmed that only one Council directorate was concerned with delivering these playparks and the Council was due to receive a substantial sum equivalent to the value of the land sale as advised by its valuer which it could allocate how it wished within its funding policies.

On being put to the meeting with 5 voting FOR, 7 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the amendment FELL.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (5)	AGAINST (7)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Alderman	Councillors	Alderman
Adair	McAlpine	Brady	Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings	Councillors	Kendall	Councillor
Councillors	Ashe		Irwin
Cathcart	Blaney		
Douglas	Boyle		
Edmund	Harbinson		
	Newman		
	Wray		

Alderman Adair was disappointed but thought that Alderman McIlveen might raise the matter again at full Council and welcomed investment for all the Borough's playparks.

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

6. ON STREET RESIDENTIAL CHARGING SCHEME UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was participating in the “On Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme” (ORCS). The scheme was 75% funded by the “Office for Zero Emission Vehicles” (OZEV) with 25% match funded by the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi). The project had been progressed by the EV consortium, led by Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The Council agreed the tender for the Supply, Installation, Operation and Maintenance of Electric Vehicle charge points for the NI Electric Vehicle Consortium to Weev in February 2025, and the Concession Agreement was signed at its meeting in on 31 January 2026.

Charge Point Locations

The charge points would be positioned in a range of locations that were in ‘close proximity to a residential area’, as the aim of the scheme was to benefit homes without driveways/off-street parking.

The EV Chargers for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, as previously agreed, were in the following car parks:

Holborn Square, Bangor (2 charge points)
Bingham Lane, Bangor
Ann Street, Newtownards (2 charge points)
Kennel Lane, Newtownards (2 charge points)
West Street, Newtownards
Mill Street Gasworks, Newtownards (2 charge points)
Church Road, Holywood (2 charge points)
Meeting House Street, Portaferry

Due to NIE connection issues the following ChargePoint locations had been amended:

1. Central Avenue, Bangor moved to Abbey Street East, Bangor.
New location was 300 metres (4-minute walk) from original location and serviced the same homes as the original location.
2. Manor Street, Donaghadee moved to The Harbour Car Park, The Commons, Donaghadee.
New location was 180 metres (2-minute walk) from original location and serviced the same homes as the original location.

Next Steps

Officers were currently working with Weev to carry out the preparatory works and provide the necessary permissions to allow charge points to be installed in Spring 2026.

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When a “live” date for the charge points became available, officers would ensure there was appropriate communication with residents to raise awareness of the charge points.

Once operational, officers would monitor usage of those charge points to better inform any future strategy relating to EV charging across Ards and North Down.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the two alternative locations as identified in this report.

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

Councillor Cathcart was happy with the alternative sites and believed that the Council should absolutely target and accept any funding available but considered that the matter needed a wider and more focused strategy. The Head of Estates said he would report back to the Committee on any progress that could be made.

Councillor Douglas congratulated Comber Recreational Football Club which had, to her knowledge, been the first sports ground in Northern Ireland to have installed double electrical vehicle points on its property. Councillor Boyle agreed and praised the Club. He referred to some charging points which appeared to be defunct in the car park at Exploris, and some around the Meeting House in the town and asked if work on that could be done in 2026. The Head of Estates replied that Council did not own those but hoped that there would be a further roll out of charging points in the future. Councillor Boyle thanked the officer for the good work to date and the Chair of the Committee concluded by stressing the need for more charging points generally.

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

7. ESTATES CARBON REDUCTION TARGETS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that Members would be aware that the Climate Change Act 2022 imposed mandatory reductions in our carbon emissions with a target of 48% reduction over baseline data by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

Officers had since developed a number of Policies and Strategies in order to meet those targets, including:

- Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Roadmap to Sustainability
- Roadmap to Green Fleet
- Sustainable Waste Resource Management Strategy
- Climate Action Plan
- Climate Adaptation Plan
- Corporate Plan

Performance Targets

In order to help us meet those targets, officers would propose to implement a series of strategic annual targets, or milestones, that would help the Council monitor progress toward the longer term (2030) target.

Those milestones had been developed by calculating the carbon savings associated with the implementation of the energy saving initiatives highlighted within the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy's Action Plan. An updated Action plan was presented to the Council each quarter, as part of the Sustainable Energy Management Plan update. The projects therefore which would deliver on the carbon reduction target for 2026/2027 in the table below, were listed in report item 11 (Appendix 1).

Naturally, the carbon reductions would only be possible if ALL the proposed projects were completed and it assumed that the required ongoing budget would be available. Existing annual budgets included a considerable amount for those projects (£500k per year) and that would need to be retained or expanded in future years in order to deliver the projects.

Year	Target Reduction over baseline emissions	Budget Required
2025-2026	15%	£500k
2026-2027	16%	£650k
2027-2028	19%	£600k
2028-2029	37%	£750k
2029-2030	53%	£900k

Table 1

Reporting and Review

It was worth noting that the carbon savings on which the targets were based were theoretical, based on a number of complex variables, many of which, (such as weather) were outside of the Council's direct control. There was therefore likely to be times where the targets were not met, but nonetheless officers believed they were important milestones to serve as a general indicator of the performance of our journey toward carbon neutrality.

There was also scope for new technologies to be introduced that may create the need to adjust targets.

For those reasons, it was proposed for Members to agree the forthcoming annual target and associated budget as part of the Service Planning Process each year. That would enable us to keep the targets under review and adjust the targets for the following years. Those targets would form part of the Estates Services Annual Service Plan, for which Members would receive 6-monthly updates on our performance.

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Other Carbon Emitters

Members should note that these projects and the associated carbon reduction targets focused ONLY on the utilities (Electricity, Gas and Oil) and did not include targets for reducing the carbon output of our fleet.

Our fleet would be an extremely challenging task to decarbonise and that was explained further in our “Roadmap to Green Fleet” document, for which a separate update had been produced.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree the annual carbon reduction target for 2026/27, contained within Table 1 above.

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

Councillor Edmund commented that it had been good to see the targets set out and stated that achieving the carbon emissions reduction was worthwhile and he thanked officers for the work which had been undertaken to achieve that.

Councillor Cathcart sought clarification on the percentage reduction targets rather than the associated budgets, noting that the budget had already been agreed. The Director confirmed that the budget had already been agreed through the rates and it was now a matter of setting the policy against that. He advised that a further report later in the meeting contained detailed information on the proposed projects and how they would be delivered, with the full list of carbon reduction projects included within that report.

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

8. NI WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

(Appendices IV-VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) had launched a public consultation to seek views on its draft Rethinking Our Resources: Northern Ireland Resources and Waste Management Strategy.

The Waste Management Strategy Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 stated that the Department shall have a waste management strategy containing policies in relation to the recovery and disposal of waste in Northern Ireland. The Regulations stated that the Department must consult with district councils and other relevant stakeholders in its preparation of the strategy.

A public consultation opened on 15 January 2026 and would close on 8 April 2026. That was a public consultation on a draft Northern Ireland Resources and Waste Strategy. The Department was yet to publish its response to its recycling

consultation - Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in Northern Ireland Consultation.

Key issues

Ards and North Down Borough Council had one of the highest local authority recycling rates in Northern Ireland. That was, in large part, due to the provision of a comprehensive kerbside recycling collection service, an effective network of HRCs, and the support and active participation of the Borough's citizens.

The Council's ambition was to build on this performance through improved design and delivery of waste and recycling services and supporting householders and employees to minimise waste at source and recycle as much as they can. The publication of a new NI Resources and Waste Strategy was important in informing and enabling our future service delivery.

The draft strategy's aimed to:

- maximise the potential for better use of the resources consumed in Northern Ireland
- prevent them becoming waste, or where generated, to ensure they were captured and processed into products that minimised environmental pollution
- build on previous plans by broadening the range of sectors obligated, presenting new actions to achieve higher targets
- set out the greater ambition necessary to meet net zero
- integrate policy reforms, modern technology, and partnerships to ensure long term sustainability and adaptability.

The draft strategy set out 10 targets and 63 actions which would help government, and its stakeholders meet and exceed targets, whilst transforming the landscape of waste management.

A draft response had been prepared and was attached. The draft response text was italicised.

Key response points were:

- This Council supports the publication of the draft NI Resources and Waste Strategy and welcomes its alignment with the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- Notes the opportunities presented by the proposals, but stresses the need for robust evidence, clear policy recommendations, investment, communications and behaviour change programmes, and a fully resourced regulatory enforcement function.
- Supports the inclusion of the proposed sectors within the scope of the strategy and calls for support, guidance, and tools for obligated sectors to minimise any cost burden associated with regulatory compliance.
- Expresses concern on the lack of clarity on how the proposed implementation will be funded and resourced.

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- Records Council's concern on the delayed publication of a response to the Rethinking our Resources recycling consultation.

Next Steps

An agreed Ards and North Down Borough Council response to this consultation must be submitted through the Department's Citizen Space online consultation website by 8 April 2026.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the draft consultation response attached at Appendix 3.

The Director began by giving an update that the Department had confirmed that it would extend the Consultation response time from 8 April until 6 May to permit further comments. There were also a number of minor typing mistakes in the document and the Director pointed those out.

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

Councillor Cathcart thanked officers for preparing the extensive response which made fairly sensible points but that could only be achieved with the financial support of the Department.

The Chair thanked officers for the detailed response.

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

9. NOTICE OF MOTION 616 DONAGHADEE HARBOUR AND PARADE

(Appendices VII&VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that as a result of a significant report into the opportunities for development of Donaghadee Harbour in 2020 by RPS, a further Council decision was taken in April 2024 as follows, as a result of a Member's motion.

"That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams.

Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved."

An update report was presented to the Council in September 2024 providing information on works completed to date which included the following concerning the first part of the motion.

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

To address the second part of the NoM concerning the review of the RPS report, the September update report also proposed some questions that could be put to consultants in order to form the scope of a subsequent technical report concerning in particular the necessity of an offshore breakwater.

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

The findings of the report were presented to the Environment Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2025. The Council agreed as a result of the findings it should write to the DFI Minister, sharing the findings of the report and ask that the recommended enhanced coastal defences schemes be progressed for the inner and outer parades in Donaghadee, (given that those were public roads for which DFI were responsible in relation to flood protection) and that an update report be brought back to Council in six months. The matter was shared with the Minister at a cross-party meeting of Ards and North Down Members, including the Mayor shortly afterwards at Stormont, which was followed up with a copy of the said report on 8 July 2025.

Key Issues

The 2025 report had drawn a number of conclusions, most pertinent of which were as follows.

1. The risk of flooding is to the public infrastructure either side of Lemons Wharf rather than the harbour itself.
2. It is clear that a breakwater would not have any justifiable impact on managing overtopping and flooding along the parade, and no impact whatsoever on influencing overtopping or flooding on the harbour itself.
3. A breakwater would however improve tidal conditions in the harbour and therefore its use by recreational vessels. However, to provide this would entail a substantial cost
4. The report recommended recurved seawalls and rock armouring along the promenade as an extension to what was already provided there. That was DFI's responsibility and why the report was sent to them and a meeting with

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the Minister held about that. (Protection of public highways is the DFI's responsibility). The Minister replied to the Council's initial letter which asked for that to be considered, and a reply was received on 24 July 2025, attached at Appendix 1. However, given the more recent collapse of part of the sea wall in that location, a follow up letter was sent to the Minister's office in February 2026 suggesting a reconsideration of that position. A reply to that was included at appendix 2.

Next Steps

From the work done to date, continuing to pursue a breakwater project would be very difficult to justify financially and so officers recommend that no further activity should be embarked upon in relation to the matter.

Summary

1. The report clearly says that a breakwater would improve conditions in the harbour for vessels and therefore have a possible direct benefit on recreational use, but without it being shown that it would improve coastal protection from flooding, it would be extremely difficult to justify the cost for that alone (irrespective of the source of public funding required).
2. The DFI had indicated that it currently had no plans to further improve the coastal defences along the public infrastructure at The Parade and Shore Street at this time.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this update.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Edmund.

This Council notes the contents of the report; however, it agrees the following actions:

1. That the option of an outer breakwater should not be dismissed outright. The RPS Harbour Study (2020) indicated that an offshore breakwater could moderate wave conditions within Donaghadee Harbour to a more acceptable level and potentially reduce wave impacts along the adjacent shoreline. While Council recognises that it does not have the financial resources to deliver such infrastructure independently, officers should continue to explore potential external funding opportunities.
2. That Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on her Department to invest in improved coastal defences for Donaghadee, recognising the Department's responsibility for flood risk management and sea defence infrastructure in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to coastal erosion and flooding along the town's seafront.

Councillor Cathcart presented a detailed report outlining the increasing impact of storms on the Borough. He noted that severe weather events were becoming more frequent and that that posed a significant issue for a coastal area such as Ards and North Down. Businesses were also experiencing repeated flooding, and he expressed concern that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) did not appear to be

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taking sufficient action to address that. He stated that he was unsure about what the Department was doing about it currently and requested further information. As a prominent coastal Borough, he believed the Council should raise those matters more forcefully with the Department.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the breakwater and reminded Members that the Council had statutory obligations to maintain and improve the harbour. The breakwater was one such responsibility, although not the only one. While some believed the structure helped moderate wave action, he felt that the Council should explore external funding opportunities to support the works that would be necessary. He emphasised that the Minister should step up to the obligations of the role, as the situation could become very dangerous if left unaddressed.

Councillor Edmund spoke regarding the breakwater and the swell of the sea, noting that these forces would inevitably affect the harbour wall. He acknowledged that marine engineering was costly but stated that it was achievable with the right expertise. He expressed willingness to keep the matter active so that, should external opportunities arise, the Borough would be in a position to take advantage. He highlighted that coastal erosion was not the responsibility of any single Department in Stormont, yet pointed to what he reported to be 85 erosion hotspots along the Borough's coastline. He questioned where the Council should turn for support and warned that the short term responsibility might ultimately fall to the Roads Service. He confirmed his support for the amendment.

Councillor Wray also fully supported the amendment, describing coastal erosion as a major issue of the time and warned that something serious was likely to occur if action was not taken. Referring to Storm Eowyn, he noted that the tides had been favourable on that occasion, but that might not be the case in future storms. He thanked Members for bringing forward the amendment.

Alderman McAlpine also expressed support stating that the harbour walls required patching and that only some areas had been attended to. The mortar was weak, and without intervention, the walls would eventually fail suggesting that simple, practical steps could be taken immediately. She emphasised the need to raise questions with DfI regarding the breakwater and to ensure that roads and walls remained safe for the public.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that this Council notes the contents of the report; however, it agrees the following actions:

- 1. That the option of an outer breakwater should not be dismissed outright. The RPS Harbour Study (2020) indicated that an offshore breakwater could moderate wave conditions within Donaghadee Harbour to a more acceptable level and potentially reduce wave impacts along the adjacent shoreline. While Council recognises that it does not have the financial resources to deliver such infrastructure independently, officers should continue to explore potential external funding opportunities.**
- 2. That Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on her Department to invest in improved coastal defences for Donaghadee,**

recognising the Department's responsibility for flood risk management and sea defence infrastructure in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to coastal erosion and flooding along the town's seafront.

10. UPDATE ON GREEN FLEET

(Appendices IX&X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in January 2024 the Council agreed that, after reviewing the Alternate Fuel feasibility study, commissioned by East Border Region group of Councils, officers would use the information contained therein as a basis for the "Roadmap to a Green Fleet" document. The document was subsequently developed, outlining that the most viable fuel for the Council's smaller vehicles was battery electric (BEV) and the most viable fuel for the heavier fleet was Hydrogen. The Roadmap to Green Fleet (attached) was agreed in October 2024.

The report noted that the transition to a green fleet contributed to the Council's Roadmap to Sustainability, Action 16 the delivery of a Carbon Reduction Strategy, and contributed to the outworking following its declaration of a Climate Emergency. However, the report also noted some significant challenges to the Council's ability to transition toward a green fleet in an efficient and effective way.

Key Issues

The Roadmap to Green fleet document noted numerous challenges in achieving the required 48% reduction in Carbon by 2030, when considering the Fleet as a stand-alone component. The difficulties noted and explained within the report included: refuelling infrastructure, technological uncertainty, operational suitability, budget, depot suitability and skills and equipment.

Update

Due to those challenges, a phased approach was agreed, which included the following:

- Installing charging infrastructure at North Road Depot, to maximise use of the current NIE transformer, without needing to upgrade it at this time.
- Having the staff and resources in place to maintain the new renewable fleet.
- Replacing all suitable vehicles with battery equivalent.
- Exploring hydrogen power and the potential for hydrogen sharing agreements with suitable public sector organisations.
- Review the suitability of our depots, ensuring they can meet the organisation's needs to deliver phase 2 of this strategy.
- Utilise HVO to achieve additional carbon savings, if required, to meet the 2030 target of 48% reduction.

Following agreement of the Roadmap to Green Fleet, an action plan was developed to track progress and had been updated and attached.

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Replacement of suitable vehicles with BEV

At present 6 vehicles were due to be replaced with BEV. Traditionally, the Council would generally purchase vehicles outright, however for a number of reasons officers were currently investigating leasing the electric vans. As part of the procurement strategy, officers would carry out a cost benefit analysis on leasing versus purchase and the outcome of the subsequent procurement process would be reported in due course.

Next Steps

Officers would continue to progress the actions highlighted within the Action Plan and bring a further update to committee at an appropriate juncture but no later than March 2027.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the contents of the report.

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

Councillor Harbinson was pleased to propose the recommendation noting that these green vehicles should be the future. Councillor Brady asked about vehicles using hydrogen fuel and asked about the safety of those in a crash situation. The Head of Estates stated that all those technologies were in their infancy and vehicles were still at an exploratory phase.

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

11. QUARTERLY SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE 2025-2026 QUARTER 3

(Appendix XI)

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 has effective oversight and accountability within the Council.”

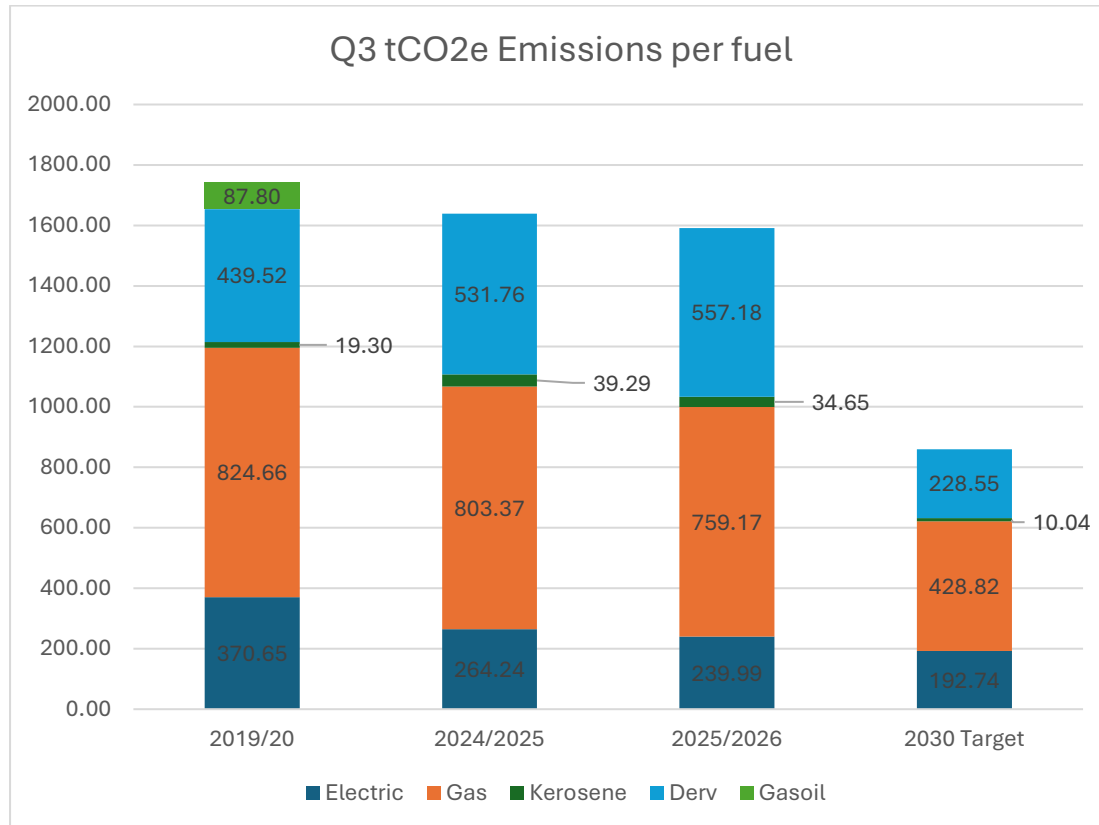
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management would ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan would be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance would improve energy performance by ensuring actions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

Key Issues

The report was part of our ongoing quarterly series, tracking energy consumption against our 2019/20 baseline and highlighting current and upcoming energy-saving initiatives.

Period:	Reported in:
Quarter 1: April to June	September
Quarter 2: July to September	December
Quarter 3: October to December	March
Quarter 4: January to March	June

Energy Consumption for this Period



Electricity

As shown in the graph above, electricity consumption increased in Q3, rising by 14% compared with the same period in the 2024/25 financial year. Despite the increase, the impact on emissions was mitigated by the use of green energy supply, resulting in a net reduction of 24.26 tCO₂.

When measured against our baseline year, Q3 also demonstrated a notable improvement, delivering a 6.5% reduction in carbon emissions, equivalent to 130.66 tCO₂. That reflected continued progress towards the Council’s emissions reduction objectives. We remain committed to building on that momentum through the implementation of additional energy-saving measures and by strengthening staff engagement across both new and existing initiatives, in support of the 2030 target.

A review of electricity consumption data had been undertaken to identify the underlying causes of the increase observed in Q3. The analysis indicated that several leisure centres, sports pavilions and community centres recorded higher electricity usage compared to the same reporting period last year. While this was currently assumed to be linked to increased occupancy and facility usage, further

investigation was required. Targeted energy efficiency initiatives would be developed and implemented at these sites as part of ongoing efforts to manage and reduce consumption.

Sites with the most significant decreases in electricity consumption:

- North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station
- Queens Leisure Centre
- Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre
- Green Road Community Centre
- Portavogie Community Centre
- Bangor City Hall
- Signal Centre

Sites with the most significant increases in electricity consumption:

- Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre
- Environmental Resource Centre
- Balloo Avenue Bangor Recycling Centre
- Queens Hall Newtownards Library
- Londonderry Park
- Comber Leisure Centre
- Hamilton Hub
- Donaghadee Community Centre
- Spafield Pavilion
- Church Street Offices

Gas

Natural gas consumption decreased by 5.5% in Q3, compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year, resulting in an estimated 44.2 tCO₂ reduction in emissions.

Relative to our baseline year, Q3 also showed continued progress, with an 7.9% decrease in gas consumption, equivalent to a 65.49 tCO₂ reduction.

Sites with the most significant decreases in gas consumption:

- North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station
- Environmental Resource Centre
- Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre
- Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre
- Queens Leisure Centre

Sites with the most significant increases in gas consumption:

- Comber Leisure Centre
- Signal Centre
- Hamilton Hub

- Donaghadee Community Centre
- Bangor City Hall
- Londonderry Park
- Alderman George Green Community Centre
- Redburn Community Centre
- Queens Hall Newtownards Library

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 our 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 12% in Q3 compared to the same period in 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a 4.6 tCO₂ emissions reduction.

A comparison of Q3 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.

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.

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As a result, kerosene stock data however showed an apparent increase in kerosene purchased in Q3 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 Q3 diesel emission, in line with the 2022 reform on red diesel usage.

Considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage had increased by 5.7% in Q3, leading to an increase of 29.9 tCO₂ emissions compared to the 2019/20 baseline year

Diesel consumption in Q3 was also higher than in the same reporting period in 2024/25. That increase was primarily attributable to reduced operating efficiency across several vehicle categories, including rear-end loaders (RELs), refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), MacPac units, and 4x4s. In addition, the fleet travelled an extra 10,805 miles during the period, consuming a further 20,426 litres of diesel.

Total fleet mileage for this reporting period was 424,142 miles, representing a 2.5% increase compared with the same reporting period in the previous financial year. Diesel consumption totalled 209,335 litres, reflecting a 4.78% increase compared with the same reporting period in the previous financial year.

A comparison with the previous financial year showed no increase in fleet vehicles.

As a result, carbon emissions rose by 25.4 tCO₂ compared with the previous year, representing a 3.6% increase.

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.

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Quarter 3 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	£218,370	£0.15	£383,205	£0.28	£409,839	£26,634	6.5% decrease
Gas	£175,759	£0.04	£163,097	£0.04	£176,250	£13,153	7.5% decrease
Kerosene	£3,337	£0.44	£7,259	£0.53	£4,044	-£3,215	79% increase
Derv	£165,454	£1.01	£236,846	£1.13	£184,885	-£51,961	28% increase
Gasoil	£17,811	£0.56	N/A	£0.70	£22,418	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	£580,731	-	£790,407	-	£797,436	£-15,389	1% decrease

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Delivered this Reporting Period

List below of recent energy saving initiatives in Q3:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO ₂ e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)
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	0.8	£1,920
Manor Court Community Centre Solar PV	2943 kWh	0.5	£629
Portavogie Community Centre Solar PV	7348 kWh	1.3	£2,138
TOTAL	29,529 kWh	5.3	£9045

Refer to the attached updated Sustainable Energy Action Plan for comprehensive updates on all noted actions.

Next Steps

From the next reporting period, the Energy Efficiency Officer would highlight any increases in building energy consumption to relevant Service Unit Managers. That

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would enable identification of root causes and facilitate discussion on targets and long-term actions to achieve measurable reductions in energy consumption.

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 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.
- Introduction of Half-Hourly 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

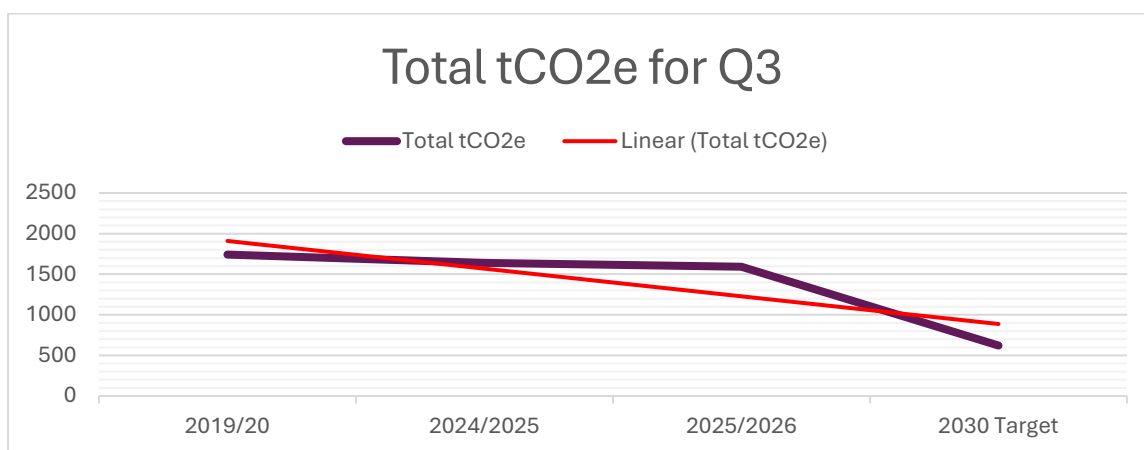
List below of future planned works

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO₂e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)
Queen's Leisure Centre – LED Lighting Upgrade	11,977 kWh	2.1	£2,515
Combers Leisure Centre – Dome Lighting	8,553 kWh	1.5	£2,566
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 Sportsplex LED Lighting (Car Park)	7854 kWh	1.4	£2,123
Environmental Resource Centre 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
Environmental Resource Centre LED lighting upgrade	7,523 kWh	1.3	£1,805
TOTAL	403,391 kWh	71.2	£110,694

Summary

The graph below illustrated the Council overall energy emissions for this 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 sufficient investment and continued efforts particularly regarding transition to a greener fleet, officers believed that we would achieve our long-term targets.



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

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

During discussion of the energy report, Councillor Brady queried the 14% increase in energy usage in Quarter 3 compared with the previous year which had been detailed in the report. The Head of Estates explained that several factors had contributed to the rise, particularly the combined heat and power system at Aurora being offline, which had resulted in greater reliance on electricity. Consequently, electricity consumption had increased while gas usage had fallen, leading to the spike.

Councillor Cathcart then referred to the cost-saving estimates table within the report and asked for further information on installation costs and the expected payback

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period, noting that such details would help assess the value of the initiatives. The Head of Estates advised that a payback analysis could be incorporated into future reports, although the lifespan of the initiative under discussion was significantly longer than five years, making a simple short-term payback calculation less representative of its long-term benefits.

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

12. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, APRIL TO JUNE 2025
(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the official waste management statistics for the second quarter of 2025/2026 (July to September 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 and other Northern Ireland councils.
2. Provide some detail around operational waste service management activities/actions that had been implemented during the quarter with the aim of improving performance.

In summary, all key indicators were very positive for the reporting period. They demonstrated continuous improvement in recycling achieved as a result of householder participation and combined communications, monitoring and enforcement interventions.

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

Key headlines

Sources: Quarterly data from DAERA's quarterly waste statistics reports. Annual performance data from DAERA's waste statistics 2024/25 annual report. [www.daera-ni.gov.uk]

Table 1: Overall performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

Household Waste Recycling Rate (KPI(a2)) (National recycling performance indicator)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	59.8%	58.1%	53.6%	51.5%	56.1%
2025 - 2026	63.1%	61.0%			
CHANGE	+3.3%	+2.9%			
Waste From Household Recycling Rates (Official UK recycling measure)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	59.7%	58.0%	53.5%	51.4%	55.9%
2025 - 2026	62.7%	60.9%			
CHANGE	+3.0%	+2.9%			
NI Household Recycling Rate Ranking (KPI(a2))					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	3rd
2025 - 2026	1st	2nd			
CHANGE	up 2	up 1			
Composting Rate					
	Q1	Q2	Q 3	Q 4	Annual
2024 - 2025	38.8%	38.1%	30%	25.7%	33.6%
2025 - 2026	37.3%	37.3%			
CHANGE	-1.5%	-0.8%			
Dry Recycling Rate					
	Q1	Q2	Q 3	Q 4	Annual
2024 - 2025	20.6%	19.5%	23.3%	25.4%	22.1%
2025 - 2026	25.4%	23.3%			
CHANGE	+4.8%	+3.8%			

The headlines for household waste recycling were:

- **Household waste recycling rate (KPI(a2))** rose by 2.9% compared to the same quarter last year, from 58.1% to 61%. That was 7.4 percentage points higher than the NI average of 53.6%. We were ranked second out of the eleven NI Councils for our household waste recycling rate, up one place from the same quarter last year.
- **Waste from households recycling rate** rose 2.9% to 60.9% compared to the same quarter last year.
- **Household waste composting rate** fell by 0.8% compared to the same quarter last year - from 38.1% to 37.3%. Our household waste composting rate was

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6.7% higher than the NI average of 30.6%. Ards and North Down was ranked joint 3rd in the Council performance table for this stream.

- **Household waste dry recycling rate** rose by 3.8% compared to the same quarter last year - from 19.5% to 23.3%. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) was 0.6% higher than the NI average of 22.7%.
- **Kerbside compostables capture rate** was 78.2% compared to a NI Council average of 71.3%.

Table 2: HRC performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

HRC waste received (total tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	5,769	5,971	4,555	4,663	20,959
2025 - 2026	5,824	6,275			
CHANGE	+1%	+5.1%			
HRC residual (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	1,474	1,445	1,245	769	4,933
2025 - 2026	1,364	1,283			
CHANGE	down 7.5%	down 11%			
HRC recycling (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	4,295	4,526	3,310	3,894	16,026
2025 - 2026	4,460	4,992			
CHANGE	up 3.8%	up 10.3%			
HRC recycling (%)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	74.0%	75.8%	72.7%	83%	76.4%
2025 - 2026	76.6%	79.6%			
CHANGE	up 2.6%	up 3.8%			

The headlines for HRC performance were:

- **Total HRC waste per capita** averaged 37.9kg, compared to an average 46.4kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC residual waste per capita** was 7.6kg, compared to an average of 16.6kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC recycling percentage** was 79.6% in this quarter, compared to an average rate of 64.2% for other Councils. During the same quarter the previous year, our

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HRC recycling rate was 75.8%, compared to an average of 65.6% for other Councils.

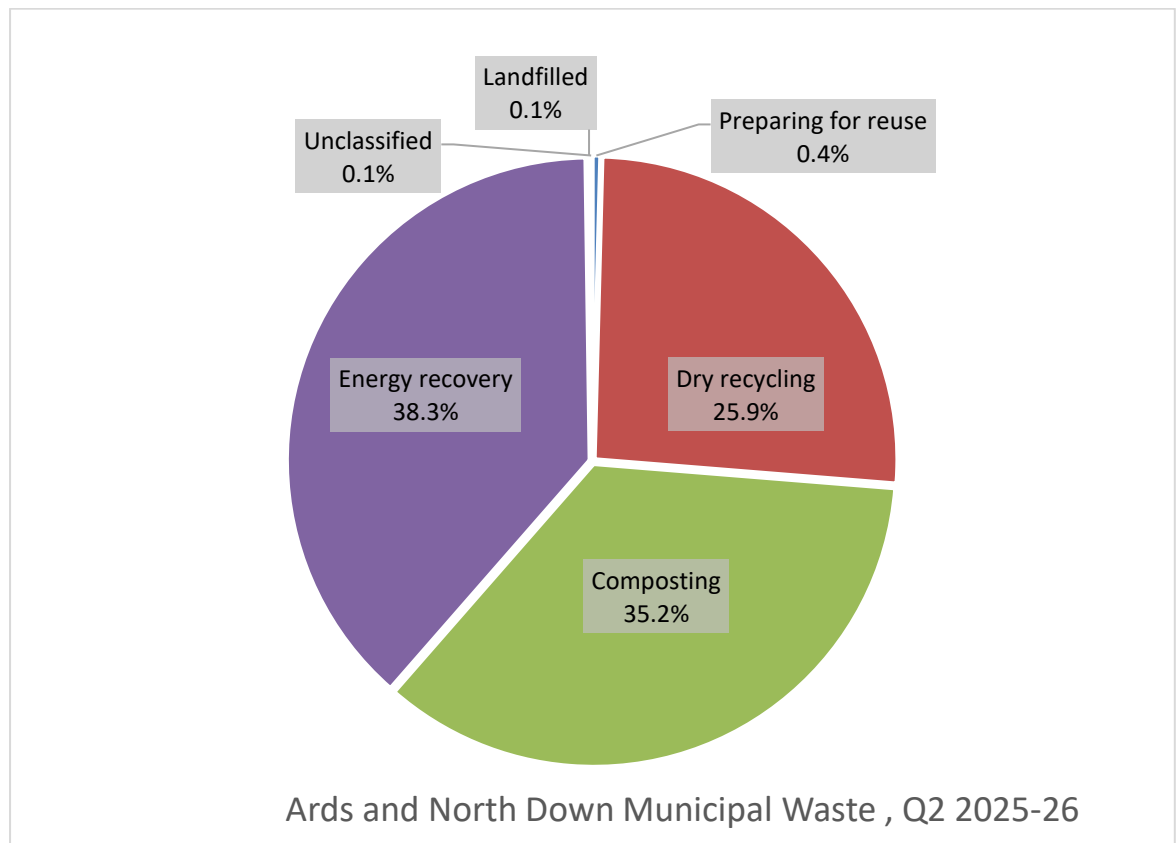
Table 3: Kerbside performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

Total kerbside waste collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 – 2025	16,109	16,038	13,919	14,446	60,512
2025 - 2026	15,610	15,874			
CHANGE	down 3.1%	down 3.0%			
Kerbside residual collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	6,029	6,543	6,143	7,205	25,920
2025 - 2026	5,992	6,744			
CHANGE	down 0.6%	up 3.0%			
Kerbside recycling collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	10,080	9,495	7,776	7,241	34,592
2025 - 2026	9,618	9,130			
CHANGE	down 4.6%	down 3.0%			
Kerbside collected for recycling (%)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	62.6%	59.5%	55.8%	50.1%	57.1%
2025 - 2026	61.6%	57.5%			
CHANGE	down 1%	down 2.0%			

The headlines for kerbside collection performance were:

- **Kerbside collected waste per capita** averaged 95.9kg during this quarter. The average for all other Northern Ireland councils was 90kg per capita.
- **Kerbside collected residual waste per capita** averaged 40.7kg per capita, compared to an average of 47.2k per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside collected recycling per capita** averaged 55.2kg per capita, compared to an average of 42.9kg per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside recycling percentage** (the proportion of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside bin collection) was 57.5%. Although that was lower than for the same quarter in the previous year, it remained higher than the 47.6% average for other Northern Ireland councils.

Municipal waste overview



In Quarter 2 of 2025/26, 61% (13,831 tonnes) of the Council’s municipal waste was sent for recycling or composting. That included all material received through kerbside collections, HRCs, bring sites, and non-household collections.

The Council reported that 0.4% (93 tonnes) was sent for re-use or repair.

For residual waste, 38.3% (8,691 tonnes) was sent for energy recovery during the quarter, and 0.1% (20 tonnes) was rejected as non-target material by our reprocessors and sent to landfill.

Operational Performance Improvement Measures


MC1 - Marketing and Communications Indicators

50 social media posts were issued across Facebook, Instagram and X. Those represented a mix of educational and operational messages including:

Paint Reuse Scheme at HRCs, School Uniform Project (Donations and Pop-Up shops promotion), Recycling videos (Blue Bin Burp, Recycling Journey, Glass Recycling), aluminium/foil recycling, Chewing Gum Grant/purchase of equipment, and Battery Recycling/HRCs Fires. Operational messages included HRCs summer opening hours and the pedestrian access trial, temporary changes to bin collections (Bank Holidays) and facilities access (HRC sites and public toilets.)

1 x press release issued. Copy available on website at [Council Secures Funding to tackle Chewing Gum on Borough’s Streets - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

Chewing Gum – Purchase of Equipment 3 July 2025



Boost [Close]

Tackling a sticky problem! A grant from the Chewing Gum ...
 July 3, 2025, 10:00 AM
 ID: 1143453951160725

Interactions
 57 reactions 48 comments 7 shares

Overview Performance Feed preview

Performance

Overview				
Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
24,061	13,843	87	15	1

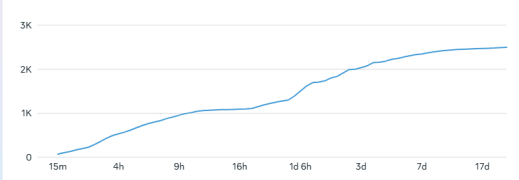


Recycling Journey video 7 July 2025

The Recycling Journey
 Reel · Published on: Jul 7, 2025

Overview

Views	Reach	3-second views	1-minute views	Watch time	Reactions, commen...
2,593	2,460	709	70	4h 17m	25



From followers: 81.4%
 From non-followers: 18.6%

Viewer activities

15-second views	Average watch time
160	7s



HRC fire/safe battery disposal
8 July 2025
[Posted in response to a fire at N’Ards HRC]



Performance

Overview				
Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
179,913	114,512	321	2	21

Extended summer Opening Hours at HRCs
16 July 2025

RECYCLING CENTRES
EXTENDED OPENING HOURS
FROM 1 JUNE - 30 SEPTEMBER
08:00 - 20:00

- Mondays** - Donaghadee and Holywood
- Tuesdays** - Comber and Kircubbin
- Wednesdays** - Portaferry and Newtownards
- Thursdays** - Balloo HRC, Bangor
- Fridays** - Millisle and Ballygowan

ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
 0300 013 3333

Performance

Overview				
Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
7,003	4,408	9	4	0

School Uniform Project: Multiple posts throughout the month
Example - Date for Diary post re: pop up shops / 18 July 2025



Performance

Overview				
Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
29,288	16,458	96	--	3

HRC Pedestrian Access trial 21 July 2025

Household Recycling Centre (HRC) Pedestrian Access ...
July 21, 2025, 10:00 AM
ID: 11527508311944

Interactions
35 reactions 73 comments 5 shares

Overview Performance Feed preview

Performance

Overview	Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
	17,873	8,984	46	5	3

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ONLY

Holywood HRC
8am-9am
Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

Donaghadee HRC
8am-9am
Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Ards and North Down recycles

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Glass Recycling video 22 July 2025

Check out this short video from Recycle Now about how household glass waste can be recycled.
Reel · Published on: Jul 22, 2025

Overview

Views	Reach	3-second views	1-minute views	Watch time	Reactions, comments...
1,298	1,262	260	15	1h 20m	3

From followers: 83%
From non-followers: 17%

Viewer activities
15-second views: 62
Average watch time: 4s

SOFT DRINK, Pasta SAUCE, wine, PALE ALE, JAM

United Kingdom

0:02 / 1:04

Blue Bin Burp video 28 July 2025

Blue Bin Burp
Reel · Published on: Jul 28, 2025

Overview

Views	Reach	3-second views	1-minute views	Watch time	Reactions, comments...
11,594	10,056	4,879	0	1d 4h	101

From non-followers: 51.23%
From followers: 48.8%

Viewer activities
15-second views: 2,138
Average watch time: 11s

0:09 / 0:58

Paint Reuse Scheme Expands Borough-Wide 30 July 2025

Collect your free paint here

- fill in the disclaimer form
- Speak to the site attendant
- choose your non-hazardous paint

DO NOT OPEN TINS ON SITE
PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY FROM WHAT IS ON TIN

Coming Soon: Paint Reuse Scheme Expands Borough-Wide...
July 30, 2025, 1:30 PM
ID: 1164494125723374

Interactions: 61 reactions, 11 comments, 25 shares

Overview Performance Feed preview

Performance

Overview	Views	Reach	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
	20,440	10,622	71	31	2

Collect your free paint here

- fill in the disclaimer form
- Speak to the site attendant
- choose your non-hazardous paint

DO NOT OPEN TINS ON SITE
PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY FROM WHAT IS ON TIN

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Aerosol (aluminium) Recycling 15 August 2025 (Alupro video assets)

Recycle your aerosols
Reel - Published on: Aug 15, 2025

Overview

Views	Reach	3-second views	1-minute views	Watch time	Reactions, comments
1,726	1,556	278	0	1h 6m	1

From followers: 78.6%
From non-followers: 21.4%

Viewers: 1,242

The heat is on! Stay cool and recycle.

Foil (aluminium) recycling – BBQs 19 August 2025 (Alupro video assets)

BBQ and recycle tool - Simply recycle your drink cans, foil trays, wrapping foil and screw caps
Reel - Published on: Aug 19, 2025

Overview

Views	Reach	3-second views	1-minute views	Watch time	Reactions, comments
1,943	1,711	301	0	1h 21m	7

From followers: 74.8%
From non-followers: 25.2%

Viewers: 1,386

Aluminium recycles forever!

alu METAL RECYCLES FOREVER

Recycle week / 22-30 September 2025

Multiple posts across FB and Insta using WRAP assets / characters with Ards and North Down Recycles tagline



MC2 Bin-Ovation

- 5 Bin-Ovation 'News and Info' articles were published including four service / Bank Holiday updates and a post promoting International E-Waste Day.
- 9 Bin-Ovation push notifications issued.
- 1,928 Bin-Ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered 16 community and engagement events, talking to 776 people.

- 12 x Summer Schemes
- 1 x Schools
- 1 x Adult groups
- 1 x Community Safety project (Urban Samurai)
- 1 x Brownies group

Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC1 Volume of blue bin recyclable materials separated from mixed waste by residents on-site: 757,220 litres.

That equated to approximately 32 tons of blue bin waste. That material included recyclables removed from residual waste following intervention and engagement with HRC staff. That 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 our more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access; many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips.

HRC2 Number of visitors turned away from site: 697

HRC2a – Number of HRC bookings: 85,160

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.18 (averaged across the 71,976 households in the Borough)

2.3 Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators



KS1 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 1913

KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 133

KS3 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 53

2.4 Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 9 (Jan to Mar 2025)	Monitoring Period 10 (Apr to Jun 2025)	Monitoring Period 11 (Jul to Sept 2025)
MC1 Social media posts	83	41	50
MC2 Print press and online articles	6	0	1
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	9	17	16
HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres)	677,500	719,940	757,220
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	653	645	697
HRC2a No. of bookings	73,224	80,136	85,160
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	1.02	1.11	1.18
KS1	1860	1938	1913

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Yellow warning stickers on grey bins			
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	145	161	133
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	71	88	53

2.5 Summary Analysis

Our overall recycling performance demonstrated an increase of 2.9 percentage points over the same quarter in 2024/25 with the Council ranked 2nd in the NI council recycling performance table. This quarter's performance was largely due to good diversion at the Council's network of HRCs.

The total tonnage of material collected at the kerbside and the tonnage collected for recycling both dropped by 3% in comparison to the same quarter in 2024/25. The tonnage of non-recyclable material collected at the kerbside increased by 3%.

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. One of the reasons for that could be the sensitivity of garden waste to seasonal growth conditions. In comparison to the same period in 2024/25, Q2 2025/26 had higher rainfall and below average sunshine which may have resulted in reduced growth and less material being placed out for kerbside collection.

During the quarter July to September 2025, we recorded:

- A 3.8% increase in the proportion of HRC materials diverted for reuse and recycling over the same period in 2024/25.
- A household waste recycling rate of 61%; the second highest household recycling rate of the 11 NI councils. That was an increase of 2.9 percentage points from the same quarter in 2024/25.

ANDBC's recycling performance was driven by strong resident engagement, making clear feedback on results and material destinations essential. The live NI Resources and Waste Management Strategy provided an indication of the Department's future policy framework, but clearer policy direction was anticipated when DAERA published its response to its 2024 Rethinking Our Resources consultation. The recycling consultation response was expected to outline consistent material collection requirements and new opportunities to support workplace recycling. That would inform and shape the Council's future waste and recycling service plans.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

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Councillor Harbinson noted that most of the performance figures appeared to be moving in the right direction, but he queried why the composting figure had fallen. Responding, the Head of Waste and Cleansing explained that the reduction was largely due to weather conditions, as the previous year had benefited from better growing conditions, which produced more garden waste for composting.

Councillor Cathcart recognised that kerbside recycling tonnages naturally fluctuated from year to year and that the recent change was relatively small. It was highlighted that the team was proactive in checking materials and was reviewing communications to further address the recycling issue but despite the variations, overall kerbside recycling had increased.

The Chair asked whether the overall position could be considered positive. The Head of Waste and Cleansing responded that performance was broadly similar to previous years and that, while there were areas of improvement, the overall trend remained steady.

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

13. NOTICE OF MOTION 665 COMBER DOG PARK

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in April 2025 the following decision was agreed by the Council as a result of a Notice of Motion:

“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.”

The proposal reflected growing interest in dedicated spaces for dog exercise and training, as well as wider discussions around balancing the needs of different park users. Designated dog parks can offer benefits in certain contexts, including more structured off-lead space and clearer separation of uses. However, they could also have implications for park management, maintenance, enforcement, biodiversity, amenity use, and community cohesion. As such, any proposal required consideration of evidence of need, suitability of the location, and local community views.

Key Issues

Comber Park Way currently operated as an informal open space used by a range of park users, including walkers, families, and dog owners. There was no existing designation for off-lead dog use beyond general controls, and no formal dog park infrastructure was in place. Operational feedback indicated that the site functioned largely without significant conflict between user groups. The space consisted of a large green with tree planting, pitch, skate park etc. The site was characteristically

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“wet” and ground conditions during wet spells would be marshy. The site was also used weekly for a Park Run event.

Parks officers met with colleagues in NET, to request a history of enforcement records relating to dog use which had been reviewed to identify any trends or recurring issues that might support the need for a designated dog park facility. Recorded Incidents – Muckers Field, Comber (2018–2024): A review of dog-related reports at Muckers Field, Comber, since 2018, showed there were four recorded dog-related incidents over this recorded period ie. 2018, 2020, 2023 & 2024.

The frequency and nature of those incidents was extremely low and largely relate to isolated matters. Enforcement data did not indicate persistent issues with dog behaviour, lack of control, or conflict at this location. Taken together, the available evidence suggested that current arrangements were generally effective and that there was no demonstrated enforcement-led requirement for the introduction of a dedicated dog park or introduction of a dog order at Comber, Muckers Field at this time.

Officers considered the following factors when carrying out an assessment of need:

- Compatibility with existing recreational uses and shared-space principles
- Potential impacts on grassed areas and wider biodiversity
- Health and safety considerations, including fencing, entrances and dog/user separation
- Visual and amenity impacts on neighbouring residents
- Ongoing maintenance, cleansing, and enforcement requirements
- Capital and revenue cost implications

While no clear operational or enforcement need had been identified, it was recognised that potential community interest and demand should be explored further. A local community survey and engagement exercise was undertaken to:

- Gauge public support or opposition to a dog park at Comber, Muckers Field
- Understand levels of satisfaction with current arrangements
- Identify specific concerns, including noise, safety, cleanliness, and impact on other users
- Capture views on alternative approaches or locations, if relevant

Analysis of the Comber Dog Park survey responses showed that the majority of participants did not support the creation of a designated dog park at Mucker’s Field. Out of the 35 responses received, 19 respondents indicated “No”, compared with 14 who said “Yes” and 2 who were unsure. Notably, 28 respondents identified as dog walkers, indicating that feedback came predominantly from regular users who walked dogs in the area. The “No” responses frequently referenced concerns about cost, antisocial behaviour, dog waste, and a preference for maintaining the space as it currently was or using it for alternative community purposes such as seating, gardens, or other recreational facilities. Many daily users of the field, including dog owners, expressed apprehension that a dedicated dog park may not address existing issues and could introduce new management or enforcement challenges.

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Overall, the survey results indicated that there was not sufficient community support at this time to advance the proposal for a designated dog park at Mucker's Field.

Next Steps

The site was a vital asset for Comber, and public consultations highlighted strong community interest in its improvement. To move forward, officers would progress a feasibility study to develop a formal business case for future budget review.

Summary

Current enforcement and operational data did not justify the immediate creation of a dedicated dog park in Comber. While public opinion remained divided over the dog park proposal, there was a clear case for a comprehensive feasibility study to inform a potential business case for the wider site.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Councillor Morgan had been given speaking rights on the item and she was invited to join the meeting.

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

Councillor Ashe thanked officers for their hard work in carrying out the feasibility study and had stated that she looked forward to its progression. Seconding the recommendation Alderman Cummings had commented that well-behaved dogs and responsible dog owners had become a victim of their own success in the area. He noted the strong community interest and was pleased with the officers' findings and the further responses that would be provided.

Councillor Morgan also thanked officers and had remarked that it was pleasing to note there had been only four dog-related behavioural issues raised. She had clarified that had not been the reason for bringing the matter before the Council and her initial concerns had stemmed from general user feedback rather than any belief that there was a significant problem. She had asked for an explanation of how the survey had been conducted.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries informed the Committee that two members of the parks team had carried out interviews in the area on a number of occasions. He had reported that, overall, respondents did not wish to see a dedicated dog park but did express interest in other improvements within the park. It was stated that further research would be required and it was acknowledged that the area was much loved by the Comber community. A further feasibility study could explore alternative concepts and that innovative solutions could create a very attractive space and the enthusiasm shown for any future project would be welcomed by both the Committee and the community at Comber.

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

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14. NOTICES OF MOTION

14.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings

To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen tree over the Enler River, Comber, which has been there since Storm Eowyn.

Councillor Douglas drew Members attention to the slightly amended Motion below:

To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen trees over the Enler River, Comber, which had been there since Storm Eowyn.

Councillor Douglas referred to photographs that had been circulated in advance of the meeting and outlined the impact of Storm Eowyn, which had struck Ards and North Down in January 2025. The storm had caused significant damage across the Borough, including to the roof of the Bangor Aurora Leisure Complex, extensive tree loss in parks, and widespread debris that had resulted in the closure of roads and some cemeteries.

She reported that along the Enler River in Comber, several trees had fallen across the riverbank and onto fencing belonging to social housing at Newtown Green. She advised that she had been contacted by numerous constituents who regularly walked the area with their dogs and children, and noted that the location was also used by young people accessing the nearby skate park. She stated that requests had been made to the Rivers Agency, the Department for Infrastructure, and Apex Housing Association, but none of the statutory bodies had accepted responsibility for removing the fallen trees.

The Member expressed concern that the trees, which lay from one bank of the river to the other, posed a clear danger by tempting children and young people to climb across them, creating a risk of falling into the river. She further highlighted that the damage to fencing created a security issue for residents of Newtown Green. With brighter evenings approaching and increased activity expected in the area, she asked that the Council support efforts to identify the relevant landowner and work with statutory agencies to ensure the trees would be removed as soon as possible.

Alderman Cummings seconded the Motion and thanked Councillor Douglas for bringing forward what he considered to be an important health and safety matter. He stated that the fallen trees presented an obvious temptation to children and that a coordinated, interagency response was required. He believed the Council was best placed to lead on securing a resolution. He also noted that the trees lay parallel to Park Way and Comber Greenway, both of which would see increased use during the summer months, and therefore the issue should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

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Councillor Boyle indicated his full support for the Motion and emphasised the need to clarify land ownership, noting that the responsible party should be required to remove the trees.

Councillor Blaney also expressed his support and although unfamiliar with the specific location, he agreed that the matter required action to prevent injury and reiterated the importance of establishing ownership. He commented that this was an example of local elected members acting as the “eyes and ears” of the community.

Councillor Ashe supported the Motion and stated that it was unreasonable that the trees had remained in place for so long since they were clearly a health and safety concern. She advised that her Assembly colleague, Nick Mathison, had also been working to progress the issue, and she reported that the Department for Infrastructure had made a statement that it was not responsible.

Councillor Edmund thanked Councillor Douglas for bringing the Motion forward and expressed disappointment that the relevant Department had not taken action and did not think that reflected well.

In summing up, Councillor Douglas thanked Members for their support and reiterated that the key issue was to establish land ownership as a priority in order to bring the matter to a sensible and timely conclusion.

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

14.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks

That this Council notes with deep concern the recent destruction caused to bushes trees and wild grass in The Commons, Donaghadee.

Further to this, Council agrees to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, calling upon him to designate The Commons, Donaghadee, as either an Area of Special Scientific interest (ASSI), or another appropriate form of protected status, in order to help safeguard this important green space.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Brooks, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Cochrane stated that he wished to bring forward his Motion in respect of The Commons, Donaghadee, a place that many in that town regarded not simply as a patch of grassland, but as part of the community’s heritage, landscape and identity.

He explained that residents had watched with disbelief and anger as bushes, trees and wild grasses on The Commons were cut down and destroyed. That was not routine maintenance, not planned environmental management, and not work authorised by the Council but rather the deliberate clearing of natural vegetation on public land - an act that had left local people shocked and deeply concerned.

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The area affected was part of what locals referred to as the town's "second Commons," a natural space above the shoreline near Stellenbosch Avenue that had, over time, developed into a rich patch of biodiversity with wild hedges, grasses and trees which were evolving naturally.

For years, that space had been used and valued by residents, by families walking along the coast, by dog walkers enjoying the open air, and by people simply seeking a quiet connection with nature. The reaction to the destruction of the area from the community had been strong.

Local residents had raised the alarm when heavy equipment appeared and began clearing the vegetation. Many initially believed it must have been work carried out by the Council, since nobody expected others to simply decide to take it upon themselves to remove vegetation from a public green space. Instead, what residents witnessed was the wholesale removal of natural shrubbery and habitat, something that many had described as shocking and unacceptable.

It had not been just grass cutting but an ecosystem of hedgerows, wild plants, and trees that had taken years, even decades, to establish themselves. As had been pointed out locally, those natural areas could not simply be replaced overnight and once they were removed, it could take a very long time for wildlife habitats to recover. He stressed that the issue mattered. It was about more than a single incident, it was about recognising the value of the natural spaces that existed within the Borough's towns and communities.

The Commons in Donaghadee was not a manicured park, and that was exactly its value. It was a piece of land where biodiversity had been allowed to flourish naturally over many years. The habitat provided shelter for insects, birds and small animals and formed part of a wider coastal ecosystem. Spaces like these were increasingly rare.

He went on to say that across Northern Ireland, natural habitats were disappearing at an alarming rate. When they were lost, they were often replaced with development, or with overly managed landscapes that lacked the richness of the natural environment they replaced.

The Commons had always been different and had existed in its natural state for generations. As had been noted locally, the land had effectively been left to grow and evolve for hundreds of years, allowing biodiversity to develop in ways that could not be artificially recreated. When the landscape was suddenly altered or destroyed, the loss was not only visual but ecological.

His Motion proposed that the Council write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and ask that The Commons be considered for designation as an Area of Special Scientific Interest or another appropriate form of protected status.

He said that such designations existed for exactly this purpose: to recognise and protect places that had environmental value, biodiversity significance, or scientific importance. A Designation would help ensure that the ecological value of the site

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was recognised and safeguarded and would send a clear message that natural heritage mattered, that those landscapes were not disposable, and that they deserved protection. It would also give the people of Donaghadee reassurance that the place they cherished would be protected for generations to come.

Councillor Cochrane concluded by stressing that the strength of feeling within the community should not be underestimated and residents had described The Commons as a treasured public space and was part of the character of Donaghadee.

Seconding the Motion Alderman Brooks stated that the incident that had occurred in the area had been disastrous and amounted to a crime. He noted that the community believed they knew who had been responsible and where the individuals lived. The matter had been reported to the Police Service for Northern Ireland, but he stressed that the crime needed to be punished. He described the attack as unbelievable and said the local community was rightfully outraged.

In the longer term, he believed the actions being requested were appropriate given the gravity of the situation, noting that someone had entered a property and caused extensive damage, and he supported the proposal for the Council to write to the Minister seeking assistance. He expressed satisfaction that the Motion had come before the Council and reiterated that this was Council property and the act had been outrageous.

Councillor Boyle thanked Members for bringing the Motion forward. He stated that it had been a long time since he had been so appalled to hear of such an incident. He noted that the local community appeared to know who had carried out the crime and he welcomed the fact that the police were investigating the matter. He asked what further action the Council could take to address the matter now and for the future and expressed hope that the site would qualify for protection. He looked forward to a positive outcome.

Councillor Edmund thanked the proposers and said that the reaction from the community had been one of despair at such vandalism. He hoped that the outcome deserved by the community would be achieved in due course.

Councillor Brady expressed his full support, noting that Northern Ireland was the twelfth worst country in the world for biodiversity loss. He supported criminal proceedings and thanked Members for bringing the Motion.

Councillor Harbinson also expressed support, agreeing that action should be taken to protect the area in the future and hoping that the culprit would be held to account.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries reported that officers were currently in communication with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and were awaiting the outcome of the investigation. He confirmed that the Council would become more involved as the investigation progressed.

The Chair noted that the area had high amenity value and that Tree Preservation Orders could be considered as a future option. She acknowledged that similar

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incidents occurred elsewhere and expressed full agreement with the sentiments raised by the Committee.

In summing up, Councillor Cochrane thanked Members for their unanimous support. He noted that the incident had taken place during daylight hours and encouraged anyone with information to contact the police. He reiterated the importance of protecting the area and expressed hope that justice would be achieved.

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

The Chair thanked Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks for presenting their Motion and they left the meeting.

15. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

16. TENDER REPORTS

16.1 Tender for the Provision of New and Replacement Play Areas, and Play Area Maintenance within the Borough of Ards and North Down

****IN CONFIDENCE****

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental detailing that there were currently over 80 play areas in the Borough including play parks, Multi Use Games Areas, skateparks and pump tracks.

RECOMMENDED that the Council gives approval to award the contracts for the provision of new and replacement play areas and play area maintenance to the companies recommended

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

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

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16.2 Extension of Ice Cream and Hot Drinks Vendors and Various Locations in the Borough 2026-27****IN CONFIDENCE********ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the purpose of this report was to update Elected Members on the appointment of Ice Cream and Hot Drinks Vendors at various locations in the Borough and seek approval to extend the contract period for financial year 2026-27, following the successful delivery of service.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the extensions as detailed.

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

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

16.3 Extension of Catering Services Provider at Bangor Walled Garden****IN CONFIDENCE********ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the purpose of this report was to update Elected Members on the appointment of a Catering Services Provider at Bangor Castle Walled Garden and seek approval to extend the contract period for financial year 2026-27, following the successful delivery of service.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the extension of the Catering Services Provider at Bangor Castle Walled Garden through 2026-27.

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

16.4 Extension of Key Holder Response and Opening and Locking Tender 2026-2027****IN CONFIDENCE********ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

The tender for a Keyholder Response Service and Opening and Locking of various Council areas was awarded in April 2024 for a period of 1-year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, with an option to extend for a further 3 x 12-month periods.

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RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the extension of the Tender for Key Holder Response and Opening and Locking of Council areas.

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

16.5 Building Repair Tender

****IN CONFIDENCE****

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the tender for the Building Repair works had been operational for the full extent of the contract and due to expire on 31 March 2026. Due to the on-going requirement a revised tender for Building Work was developed by officers and a procurement exercise undertaken.

RECOMMENDED that the Council gives approval to award the contract for the Provision of Building Repair work to the companies as detailed in the report.

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

RECESS 9.00 pm

RECOMMENCED 9.12 pm

(Councillor Blaney left the meeting at 9 pm)

17. WARD PARK FULL BUSINESS CASE

(Appendices XIII-XVI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the purpose of this report was to recommend approval of the attached full business case for the redevelopment of Ward Park.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached business case (FBC) and its recommendation to continue to proceed with Option 4.

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

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18. COMBER GREENWAY LANDS (COMBER SECTION)

(Appendices XVII-IXX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing an update on the section of the proposed Comber Greenway from the Belfast Road to the Comber Leisure Centre.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the update.

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

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

19. RESIDUAL WASTE TREATMENT REPORT****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that following a report to the Environment Committee in January 2026, Members requested a further report into the Council practice of sending its residual waste for pre-treatment and energy recovery. The report set out the factors leading to a change in the Council practice of landfilling waste as well as the costs and benefits of pre-treatment and energy recovery.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.25 pm.

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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 5 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McCracken

Aldermen: Adair
McDowell

Councillors: Blaney (Zoom) Hollywood
Brady Kennedy
Edmund Morgan
Gilmour Newman (7.02pm)
Hennessy Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Economic Development Manager (K McGuckin), Events Manager (W Smith) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster).

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Councillor McCracken) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from the Mayor (Councillor McCollum) who was on Mayoral business, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and Councillor Smart.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were declared.

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL**3. ECONOMIC GROWTH SERVICE PLAN 2026-2027 (FILE TO/MAR4/160167) (Appendix I)**

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 the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Economic Growth in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (for example due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

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

The proposer, Councillor Morgan, stated that she was happy to support the recommendation, however she had noted the difficulty with funding and delays with other Government departments, particularly Northern Ireland Water (NIW). As such she asked if officers had any thoughts on how to address those issues.

(Councillor Newman entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.02pm)

In response the Director confirmed that officers had met with representatives of those statutory agencies in order to establish what restrictions were in place.

Councillor Morgan welcomed the Director’s comments adding that it was important to make the process easier for Grant users.

At this stage Councillor Gilmour referred to Page 34 of the Appendix and the last point referred to in the Table as detailed below:

“To commence Phase One of the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena in keeping with the agreed Quality Specification as part of the Queens Parade redevelopment scheme – completion March 2026”

She stated that she sought to clear up the many misconceptions there were about this matter and the fact that no additional plans had been submitted other than that which had already been approved. She added that it had also been suggested that at a meeting held in August 2025 it had been unanimously agreed to car park a completely different area. Councillor Gilmour indicated that she had been in attendance at the meeting which had in fact been a Workshop and no unanimous decisions of that nature had been made.

At this stage the Chairman commented that he believed the member was straying into a different Agenda item. Councillor Gilmour clarified what her query was, and the Chairman allowed officers to provide the clarification which was being sought.

The Director confirmed that at the Workshop held in August 2025 Bangor Marine had presented proposals to Elected Members. Bangor Marine then advised of their intention to go away and work those proposals up into their final presentation. As of today, the Council still had not received the final proposals and as such it was not fully aware what their final proposals were. He added that it was hoped by April 2026 Bangor Marine would have submitted their final plans.

Councillor Gilmour thanked the Director for his comments of clarification.

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

4. DESIGN FOR BALLYWALTER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Place and Prosperity Committee held on 7 November 2024 supported the recommendation for officers to take forward a design for an Environmental Improvement Scheme for Ballywalter village, under the Council's regeneration 'working up' projects budget.

Design consultants, AECOM, were appointed to review the design undertaken in 2019 and update it accordingly to reflect the current needs and wishes of the community, whilst aligning the Council's corporate priorities.

The design development process included public engagement which took place on 30 September 2025 in Ballywalter Village Hall. The design team and Council officers were in attendance to present the draft design to members of the public and provide opportunity to share their feedback. A total of 24 people attended. In addition, the draft design was made available for public viewing and comment submission via the Council's website.

Further engagement included the Department for Infrastructure, Translink, internal Council departments, Ballywalter Community Action Group and the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee. The feedback received during the engagement had been considered and incorporated into the final design where appropriate.

Design Summary:

The proposed design (Appendix 1, 2 & 3) had taken a two-phase approach to ensure that funding opportunities were maximised. Phase 1 was focused on the main retail area between and including Harbour Road and The Square, and Phase 2 extended to both Ballywalter Lime Kilns and Dunover Road.

Phase 1 - Main Street

Natural stone paving bands in resurfaced asphalt, replacement of worn tactile paving with new concrete pavers and replacement lighting columns.

Additional green public realm in the Square including raised planters with resilient planting, additional trees suitable to the environment, linkage to the harbour and play areas from the Main Street.

Decreased visual clutter with the removal of the BT internet phone box and a new bus shelter.

Planting to include new trees and sustainable urban drainage sites, retaining and treating water, reducing surface run off and providing colour and pollinator friendly plants.

Additional green space on Harbour Street near the War Memorial, retaining vehicle access and welcoming additional seating. Proposed informal crossing connecting the seaside walk to the Ballywalter Lime Kilns to Main Street and reducing conflict with vehicle access.

Welcoming new and refurbished street furniture with new benches to match the existing benches in the Square, a refurbish and clean of existing benches as required, and replacement bins with matching bins as required.

Phase 2 – Extension from Phase 1 to Springvale Road and Dunover Road

Natural stone paving bands, increasing in width and frequency leading into the village to assist with wayfinding, asphalt resurfacing to create a neat finish. Resurfacing to extend to the Lime Kilns.

Tactile paving replaced with new units.

Additional controlled crossings to access green spaces and seaside. Thicker paving bands at main pedestrian crossings.

Sustainable drainage sites where feasible and continuation of trees.

The design aimed to create an accessible vibrant and welcoming Main Street in the heart of Ballywalter village which would identify how the full regeneration potential of the area could be realised as part of the long-term vision. The project included the incorporation of high-quality surface materials, improvements to the footpaths, junctions, new street furniture, and planting.

Summary

Members of the public expressed support for the proposed project, with a strong emphasis on identifying potential funding streams to progress the project to capital delivery stage. The design team were currently preparing estimated costs for the proposed scheme. Following receipt of statutory approvals officers would seek to source funding opportunities to progress the scheme to capital project delivery.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the proposed design and AECOM proceed to prepare and submit a planning application.

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

The proposer Alderman Adair welcomed the recommendation adding that at the Public Information session there had been a great deal of excitement and support. One minor point he wished to make was that within the report reference was made to Harbour Street and that instead should read Harbour Road. Continuing Alderman Adair welcomed the two phase approach which had been adopted and noted work which would also be undertaken under the Small Settlements Scheme. He believed

that a Rural Development Fund should be opened, something which he was aware Michelle McIlveen MLA was supportive of.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Edmund agreed that this was a great step in the right direction, adding that local residents in the village were delighted with the proposals. He too agreed that it was imperative to commence the Planning process in order to get the Scheme underway which would provide something residents would be proud of. He encouraged members to support the recommendation.

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

5. DESIGN FOR STATION SQUARE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in 2019 the Council appointed consultants, AECOM, to complete a technical design for Station Square, Helen's Bay. The design included new paving, lighting, planting and improved car parking.

Station Square, Helen's Bay, WAS a small courtyard area which comprised a mix of commercial and residential buildings adjacent to Helen's Bay Train Station and was a central hub for the local community. It was a busy area used by people to access local shops and services as well as passengers using the train station.

Given the time that had lapsed since the technical design was completed, it was agreed at the Place and Prosperity Committee held on 7 November 2025 to revisit and revise the design to ensure it aligned with current community aspirations and the Council's corporate priorities. The review included a revised design, updated costs reflective of the current economic climate and the preparation and submission of a planning application to secure the necessary statutory approvals.

Design consultants, AECOM, were appointed to take this project forward.

A public engagement drop-in session took place on 2 October 2025 where members of the public were invited to come along and view the proposed plans, sharing their feedback and ideas. The consultant team and Council officers were in attendance. The event was attended by 14 members of the public. In addition, to the public engagement session, the plans were available to view on the Council's website, with the opportunity to provide written feedback.

Further engagement took place with the Department for Infrastructure, Translink, internal Council departments, Bayburn Community Group and The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee. Feedback from the various stakeholders had been considered and incorporated into the final design where appropriate.

Design Summary:

The proposed design (Appendix 1) included the following proposals:

1. Improved pedestrian walkways

Widened footpath with natural stone, sandstone pavers to the public realm – both large and small setts.

Tactile paving for accessible parking spaces and informal road crossings.

2. New, informal crossing on Bridge Road to connect to the beach.
3. New street furniture to include cycle stands, upgrade of bins and new planters.
4. Reduce clutter by undergrounding overhead utilities.
5. Improved lighting with street lights changed to higher quality lighting columns with planting baskets retained.
6. New planting including; softworks to include hedge tidying at the car parking boundary by the train station wall, five new planters to match the style of existing and new street furniture and two new trees housed in planters. Planting to include evergreen species and lavender for pollinators.
7. Roadways and car parking improvements to include rationalising car parking within the train station square and including accessible parking space closest to the train entrance.

The design team were currently preparing estimated costs for the proposed scheme.

Summary

The design aimed to create an accessible, vibrant and welcoming space and included new paving, planters, formalising the existing parking arrangements, lighting, planting, cycle stands, informal crossings, and improved car parking. Members of the public were supportive of the proposed project and would like to see it progress to secure the necessary statutory approvals.

Following receipt of statutory approvals, officers would seek to source funding opportunities to progress the scheme to capital project delivery.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the proposed design and AECOM proceed to prepare and submit a planning application.

Councillor Hollywood proposed, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Hollywood welcomed the report stating that he hoped it would be the start of something positive for Helen's Bay given the frequent negativity endured by the village during the summer months. Continuing he sought clarity on a number of matters detailed below:

- What was the estimated cost attached to the proposals.
- Would contributions for this be requested from Translink.
- What was the projected start time once the Planning process had been completed.

The Director commented that officers could approach Translink in respect of contributions and he indicated that he would report back to the Member on the matter of estimated costs when the design was more finalised. Continuing he advised that as with the other Scheme the Council did not have the funding for this at

this time. However, it was hoped that such Schemes could be funded through the Shaping Sustainable Community Fund which would become available later in the year.

Councillor Gilmour agreed that it was a good idea to approach Translink and continuing sought reassurance from officers that consideration would be given to the provision of electrical sockets for the Christmas tree which was put in place in the vicinity during festive period.

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

6. TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE SERVICE PLAN 2026-2027(FILE TO/MAR4/160167) (Appendix IV)

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 the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Tourism, Arts and Heritage in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.

- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

Councillor Thompson proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the report noting that while there was lots of work to do he welcomed the work which had been undertaken to date. Referring to Page 12 of the report he indicated that he had a number of questions to ask as detailed below:

- Delivery of Food and Drink Destination Development Action Plan – when was that expected?
- Update on Installation of visitor servicing Tourist Information Points
- Heritage Visitor Development Feasibility Study – when was this expected

The Director advised that the Head of Tourism and Culture was currently off on Annual Leave and as such he would ask her to circulate that information to members on her return to work. In respect of the Food and Drink Destination Development Plan he confirmed that work would commence on this in the near future.

The Chairman asked that the information requested by Councillor Thompson was circulated to all members in due course.

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

7. COMBER EARLIES FOOD FESTIVAL – SITE REVIEW (FILE TO/EV140) (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in July 2025, an Elected Member contacted the Head of Service asking her to speak directly with two businesses regarding concerns they had about the impact of the Comber Earlies Food Festival upon their trading. It was agreed that to best gain insight into those areas of concern a meeting would be convened and opened to the Town Advisory Group members and other local businesses. Six businesses and three Elected Members (Alderman Cummings and Councillors Douglas and Morgan) were in attendance along with two representatives from the Comber Care Home. See Appendix 1. The meeting was held in Comber Leisure Centre on 18 September 2026.

Key Issues

At the September meeting, a discussion took place regarding the concerns raised specifically by two local businesses within close proximity of the Comber Leisure Centre Car Park event site. They stated that they had lost significant business because of the car park closure, necessitated by the event set up and on the event day itself. Other business representatives expressed views of positive impacts of the event such as business on the day and repeat business but acknowledged it was different for each business. Discussions around more extended use of the 'Passport' and other potential initiatives were explored and how businesses might gain best advantage of those.

Representatives from the Comber Care Home expressed concerns regarding proximity of the event to their premises and impact on residents. They raised some particular issues regarding access on the day.

On further discussion, officers agreed to consider other locations for the event; Lower Crescent, Comber Leisure Centre Car Park (existing) and Parkway and undertake further consultation with the Comber Care Home, prior to reporting back to the group in the New Year. It was agreed site visits would be undertaken in December.

The site visits occurred on 4 December 2025 and a meeting was scheduled for 29 January 2026. Invites were distributed by the Council via a letter drop to all previous business attendees of the September meeting, plus a wider town letter drop (c. 60 businesses). Emails were issued to relevant Elected Members and other stakeholders i.e. NI Growers and Food NI. In attendance were four local businesses and Councillors Ashe and Douglas. See Appendix 1.

Next Steps

At the meeting held on 29 January 2026, officers advised a report on the matter would be reported to the Council and proceeded to share the key points from the site visits for each site:

- Comber Leisure Centre Car Park
- Parkway
- Lower Crescent
- Dual site – Comber Leisure Centre and the Square

See Appendix 2 for full Site Assessment Matrix.

The findings of the site visit were presented to the group as per Site Assessment Matrix (Appendix 2).

- A general viewpoint, after discussing each of the sites, indicated that either Comber Leisure Centre or Parkway could be operationally practical to host the event.
- The option of Lower Crescent would not be appropriate due to size, layout and location of the site.
- The dual site option was discussed but officers indicated this would require a road closure of the Square and referenced the associated difficulties presented by late set up, loss of car parking in the Square and access to the residential properties. On that basis, officers indicated this was not a preferred option, however, would include activity at the Square, as previous years, and that this would not be dependent on the final site chosen.
- A business indicated their support for the existing site on the basis that they had gained repeat business.

Points raised during the meeting regarding the Parkway site included:

- Potential Killinchy Street road closure requirement
- Management of narrow access entering Parkway and access to site more generally
- Cancellation of Parkrun
- Impact on residents in this vicinity
- Location of bus drop at the site might deter attendees from visiting the town centre and that a further move has the potential to confuse visitors – additional orientation signage requirement.

A request for an update on the Comber Care Home consultation was sought, unfortunately this had not been addressed, but officers had since scheduled a meeting for 13 February 2026. The outworkings of this meeting were not available at the time of writing, but officers acknowledged that if the Comber Leisure Centre Car Park was to remain, they had committed to seek solutions with the Comber Care Home Managers and would endeavour to shorten the build time and subsequent car park closure.

Additional comments received at the meeting included notification that the event location had been discussed at the Comber Chamber AGM held on 23 January 2026. Further to this, the Chair of Comber Chamber of Commerce had since forwarded an email to Council to state:

'The view of the Comber Chamber and our members is that the current location is the best option for businesses in the town and that we will continue to work with the Events team and other council departments to maximise every opportunity to get the best for our members out of this extremely successful event'.

During the meeting officers were also asked to research possibility of Park and Ride from alternative venues (work in progress).

As part of the consultative process officers sought an opinion from other participating stakeholders. An email was received from Mr Orr from Comber Earlies Growers Association on 2 February 2026 indicating its preference for continuation at the Leisure Centre site.

Possible Locations for hosting the Comber Earlies Food Festival

Having reviewed businesses' and stakeholders' feedback, and the site assessment as presented in Appendix 1, two sites were presented as options for the location of the event

- Comber Leisure Centre Car Park and
- Parkway, Killinchy Street

It would be the intention that either site was also complemented with additional event animation/activity in the Square during the event times.

Summary

Two venue options for the delivery of the Comber Earlies Food Festival event had been presented. In officers' view, either option was deliverable within budget.

Most recent stakeholder communication indicated that the existing Comber Leisure Centre car park was the favoured option, however officers were cognisant of the original commentary regarding event impact on some businesses. Programming would remain as previous years and monitoring of capacity at either site would be part of the Event Management Plan for the event.

A decision on the preferred site was required to ensure officers could plan and deliver a successful Comber Earlies Food Festival event for 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees which of the two sites is the preferred venue for the Comber Earlies Food Festival, upon review of the information presented in the report and Appendix 2 attached:

1. Comber Leisure Centre Car Park
2. Parkway, Killinchy Street

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that Comber Leisure Centre Car Park is the preferred venue for the Comber Earlies Food Festival.

The proposer, Councillor Morgan noted that Comber Leisure Centre Car Park had been endorsed by both the Comber Chamber of Trade and the Comber Earlies Growers Association as their preferred site for the Comber Earlies Food Festival. She expressed the view that no venue in Comber would be perfect particularly as the

success of the event itself had meant that it was outgrowing its existing site space. Councillor Morgan thanked officers for reviewing the issues which had been raised by some local traders and businesses, adding that the two meetings held had been extremely useful.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Gilmour expressed her support also for Option 1 - Comber Leisure Centre Car Park which she agreed was the best option. She referred to the issues which had been raised around the car park being closed from the Thursday before the event was due to take place and asked if officers had any success in negating the need for closure at that stage.

In response the Events Manager confirmed that had been discussed and a proposal considered to close the car park from 6.00pm on Thursday. However, given the sheer amount of infrastructure required for event the team believed that would not be viable. The Events Manager however indicated that she would discuss the matter further to see what could be done.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that Comber Leisure Centre Car Park is the preferred venue for the Comber Earlies Food Festival.

8. STRATEGIC CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE PLAN 2026-2027 (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 the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Strategic Capital Development in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable the Council to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

Councillor Hennessy proposed, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Hennessy, welcomed the report which he stated was very thorough. Referring to Page 6 - Progress Overview of all Projects he commented that he had expected to see Donaghadee's 3G Pitch listed as the OBC had now been approved.

At this stage the Director reminded members that the Strategic Capital Development Team did not own the projects listed in the report. Instead, they were brought in once the project was ready to commence and would assist with running the contract. It was noted however that on occasions they could be brought in at an earlier stage for

those more complicated projects to assist with the OBC. By way of example he referred to the Depot Rationalisation Project which was significant in size and multi faceted. In respect of the Donaghadee project mentioned by Councillor Hennessy members were advised that while the OBC had been completed the Council had not yet initiated it as a live project. As such he suggested that the member took the matter up with the Director of Active and Healthy Communities.

Councillor Hennessy thanked the Director for his comments.

Councillor Thompson expressed his disappointment with what was happening with the sports pavilion at Donaghadee particularly given the length of time which had now passed. Continuing he made reference to the proposed new Greenway at Donaghadee mentioned in the report which was at feasibility study stage and sought reassurance from officers that a full public consultation exercise would be undertaken.

The Director reiterated that such matters should be taken up with the Director of Active and Healthy Communities in respect of the sports pavilion at Donaghadee and similarly with the Director of Environment in respect of the proposed new Greenway. He added that his team would not be in a position to provide members with the reassurance which was being sought.

At this stage Councillor Brady referred to the Vision Statement and noted that the third point related to Social Inequalities and he sought further details on how the Council was going about achieving this. He also asked if there were any KPI's or benchmarking to ascertain how well the Council was doing in respect of this matter.

In response the Director informed members that social clauses were built into all contracts and there were no KPI's as each funding pot had its own targets. It was further noted with that within tenders there was a requirement to demonstrate how those would be met and the Council would then score those accordingly. He added that it was not a case of one size fits all.

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

REPORTS FOR NOTING

9. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL

9.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council recognises the huge benefits to the Ards Peninsula and wider Borough of greater connectivity in terms of tackling isolation, boosting local business and enhancing tourism.

Furthermore, that Council is concerned about the increased traffic travelling along Ards Peninsula roads which could be better served by a fixed crossing between Portaferry and Strangford village and which may help in addressing congestion in

other parts of the Borough and assist in improving road safety in roads within the Peninsula.

Council, therefore, agrees to write to The Minister Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

Alderman Adair stated that it gave him great pleasure to bring forward his Notice of Motion on behalf of the residents of the Ards Peninsula. He took the opportunity to pay tribute to a number of people who had previously campaigned for this including Mr James Thompson, Councillor Joe Hagan and Councillor James McMullan. Continuing he advised that Michelle McIlveen MLA had previously met with the Minister to discuss the matter and given the overwhelming support there was for this he was now seeking the support of members to write to the Minister seeking a Feasibility Study to be undertaken. The Ards Peninsula was socially cut off and the provision of a bridge at this location would ease travel congestion and boost both local business and tourism in the area. More significantly ambulance waiting times would be reduced for those living on the Ards Peninsula. Alderman Adair referred to similar bridges which had been successfully built in Scotland and here in Northern Ireland at Narrow Water Castle. Given the lack of connectivity there was currently on the Ards Peninsula he believed that consideration should also be given to the establishment of a Special Fund from Westminster to enhance opportunities for those who lived and worked there. He urged members to support his Motion which he reiterated was to ask the Minister to undertake a feasibility study to see what could be done.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Edmund stated that Councillor Joe Hagan referred to by the proposer was in fact his Uncle who had campaigned tirelessly for greater connectivity for those living on the Ards Peninsula. So much so he had enjoyed some success with the provision of the first roll on roll off ferry between Portaferry and Strangford. Referring to the issue of Ambulance waiting times he acknowledged the arrangements which were in place between the Ferry Service and the Ambulance Service but was however mindful that the last ferry ran at 9.45pm. As such that remained an issue. Councillor Edmund reiterated that what was being asked for was a feasibility study and he asked members for their support for those living on the Ards Peninsula.

At this stage Councillor Blaney expressed the view that it was an ambitious plan and while he was content for the question to be asked around a Feasibility Study he asked if there would be any cost to the Council associated with that. The Director confirmed that any costs associated with a Feasibility Study would be met by the Minister. In that case Councillor Blaney indicated that he was happy to support the Motion.

Councillor Morgan agreed that it was right to recognise the social and traffic issues there were currently on the Ards Peninsula and while she supported the proposal she believed that it would not take long to get a response from the Minister or to guess what that response would be. She noted that the Minister had made an announcement on 11 February 2026 about this proposal which had already been considered and had costs of £300 million attached to it. However she acknowledged

the progress being made at Narrow Water Castle which demonstrated that not everything was pipe dream, adding that if there was a sufficient support along with a strong economic case, then why not consider it further. As such she was happy to keep the matter under review on the understanding that it would be budget dependent.

Councillor Thompson rose in support of the Motion agreeing that the Portaferry Road was not a good road to travel along at times, particularly if the Ferry was not in operation. He urged members to support the Feasibility Study which was being asked for which could lead to improvements in infrastructure and benefit both residents and tourists alike on the Ards Peninsula.

Rising to support the Motion Councillor Brady stated that he believed it was a great idea and was of the opinion that the Council needed to be ambitious. He added that he found it bizarre that a bridge was not already in place at this location given the long detour for motorists if the Ferry was not in operation. He believed that a bridge would open up many opportunities including economic benefits. Continuing Councillor Brady noted the Foyle Bridge in Londonderry had cost £16 million and as such he could not see how the bridge being asked for on the Ards Peninsula would cost £300 million.

By way of summing up Alderman Adair thanked members for their comments, adding that he believed this was something which should have been done a long time ago and he too did not imagine that it would cost anywhere near the £300 million which had been suggested. He made reference to similar bridges which had been installed in Scotland adding that he did not wish for the people of the Ards Peninsula to be denied this opportunity. While welcoming Councillor Morgan's support he was disappointed with her comments that the Minister would likely say no to what was being proposed. Continuing he acknowledged that the matter had been discussed recently in the Press and was aware that local Alliance MLA Kellie Armstrong was not supportive of this and as such he was delighted with the support he had received from the Alliance Party members in the Council Chamber. He reiterated his thanks to all members for their support for the people of the Ards Peninsula adding that he very much believed that if you did not ask you did not get.

At this stage Councillor Morgan called a point of order under Standing Order 20.12 Explanations. As such she wished to clarify that she had been quoting what the Minister had said in the Assembly on 11 February 2026.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council recognises the huge benefits to the Ards Peninsula and wider Borough of greater connectivity in terms of tackling isolation, boosting local business and enhancing tourism.

Furthermore, that Council is concerned about the increased traffic travelling along Ards Peninsula roads which could be better served by a fixed crossing between Portaferry and Strangford village and which may help in addressing congestion in other parts of the Borough and assist in improving road safety in roads within the Peninsula.

Council, therefore, agrees to write to The Minister Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL (IN CONFIDENCE)

11. GO SUCCEED FUNDING 2026-2027

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Exemption Reason:

4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

SUMMARY

This item is subject to funding negotiation with multiple Departments and information cannot be communicated until funding is confirmed.

(Councillor Blaney was put on hold via Zoom at this stage – 7.59pm)

(Councillor Blaney rejoined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 8.02pm)

REPORTS FOR NOTING (IN CONFIDENCE)

12. BANGOR HARBOUR AND MARINA UPDATE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2025 (FILE DEVP3C) (Appendix VII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Exemption Reason:

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

SUMMARY

This is a report about a contracted operator's activities and contains financial, legal and business information that is specific to this contract.

DIRECTOR SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

The Director gave an update on the appointment process for the Head of Economic Growth position.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.08pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held at Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cochrane

Aldermen: Brooks McRandal
Graham Smith
McIlveen

Councillors: Chambers (Zoom) McBurney
Gilmour McCracken
S Irvine (Zoom) Moore
W Irvine Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Acting Chief Executive (M Steele), Acting Director of Corporate Services (C Jackson), Head of Corporate Governance (A Curtis), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Lands Manager (G Brown), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Irwin.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and the following were noted:

Alderman Smith Item 16 – Request for a Lease at Comber Community Garden.

Later in the meeting Alderman Graham declared an interest in Item 21 – New Cemetery Lands.

NOTED.

Reports for Approval

3. CORPORATE SERVICE DRAFT SERVICE PLANS 2026-27

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting 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 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Services may face in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plans.

Next Steps

Attached were the 2026/27 Service Plans for Corporate Services in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus and direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable the Council to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plans:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017–2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Services for 2026-27 and identify the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Services would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- were based on agreed budgets. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plans may need to be revised.

- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the attached Service Plans for 2026-27.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plans be adopted.

Councillor McCracken thanked officers for the detail provided, which was good but wondered if the reports themselves were over engineered. He suggested that the nature of the Council as an organisation was quite complex and it evolved slowly so asked if the level of thinking in each Plan was appropriate and whether a directorate plan might be a better approach. In response the Acting Director of Corporate Services agreed that they were very detailed and took quite a bit of time and resource to compile, however they were beneficial for service-level direction setting and to ensure alignment of activity with the Corporate Plan. The Acting Director advised that Corporate Services was actively considering the option of a Directorate Plan, and that the Transformation Team would be using the Service Plans reviewed that evening to inform this. She outlined that the team would assess how this worked but also stressed that performance improvement regulations required much of the detail given so it would always be a mix.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plans 2026-27 be adopted.

3a. Finance
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Finance 2026-27.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

3b. Community Planning
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Community Planning 2026-27.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan 2026-27 be approved.

Councillor McBurney thanked officers for the comprehensive report and asked about the challenges of reaching a broad demographic rather than more obvious, and at times more vocal, groups. She asked how those could be worked upon and the Head of Community Planning agreed that it had been a challenge, but some good examples

of progress had been made recently through collaboration with other organisations and it was hoped that that would be built upon going forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

3c. Communications and Marketing
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Communications and Marketing 2026-27.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Communications and Marketing Service Plan 2026-27 be adopted.

Councillor McBurney explained that she had met recently with representatives from a local primary and secondary school and both of those schools had raised that their needs were not being represented by the Council and she asked what was being done to reach younger audiences.

The Acting Director of Corporate Services explained that much of the Council's communication with younger people was not done directly through the Communications and Marketing Service but through other Council teams speaking to them directly, such as waste and recycling, Parks and NET. However, younger people had recently been consulted in respect of the Bangor Waterfront and that engagement had been good with valuable feedback. She stressed that the young people wanted the Council to have direct conversations with them in an authentic way, and that while social media channels might seem appropriate to use, the young people had shared that they didn't think the Council was very suited to, for example, TikTok and wouldn't come across well. She highlighted that this was not an easy audience to reach but ideas would continue to be progressed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

3d. Corporate Governance
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Corporate Governance 2026-27.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

3e. Human Resources
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Human Resources 2026-27.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

3f. Strategic Change
(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Service Plan for Strategic Change 2026-27.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the Service Plan be adopted.

4. DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME 2026 REVIEW, EQUALITY ACTION PLAN AND DISABILITY ACTION PLANS 2026-2031
(Appendices VII - XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Equality Scheme served as a comprehensive framework for the Council. It included strategies for assessing compliance with equality duties, evaluating the potential impact of policies on different groups, and monitoring any negative effects those policies may generate. It also mandated transparency by requiring the Council to publish the findings from its assessments, provide staff training and ensure that the public had access to relevant information and services.

The scheme held the Council accountable to the standards set forth in equality legislation. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) played a crucial role in reviewing and approving those schemes, ensuring that public bodies adhered to their commitments. The Equality Scheme had been revised and would be submitted to the Equality Commission following approval from the Council.

Members would be aware that each public authority had a duty to produce and annually monitor their Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.

The Draft Equality and Draft Disability Action Plans 2026-2031 had been written to reflect potential inequalities and service improvements in current service delivery, identified from customer comments and complaints and service changes that may need to be considered.

Many of the actions in the draft Disability Action Plan were based on good management, in-house training and revised service delivery. That was important for three reasons:

- the responsibility to comply with the duties and responsibilities by all Officers and Elected Members in their respective roles;
- good practice across the Council in considering the diverse range of needs of users and potential users will mitigate against adverse impact on individuals and groups; and
- the duties and responsibilities to deliver on the Council's commitment should be mainstreamed into the actions of all Officers on behalf of the Council.

At the May 2025 Corporate Services Committee, Draft Equality and Draft Disability Action Plans were presented for consideration prior to the required consultation period

of 12 weeks. The attached appendix detailed the version that was agreed and that was consulted upon.

The consultation period ran from 12 June until 4 September 2025. That 12-week period was a commitment within the Council's Equality Scheme to meaningful consultation. All consultees were encouraged to comment on the actions outlined, or those that were of relevance to them or those they represented.

Feedback on the consultation was collated and the Draft Equality and Draft Disability Action Plans amended to reflect consultation feedback. The proposed changes made as a result of the consultation exercise were highlighted in the Draft Equality Action Plans and Disability Action Plan.

Key Issues

From August 2026 – December 2026 there was no Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) in post. Due to that passage of time it was proposed that the new Scheme and Action Plans were dated to cover 2026–2031. In the intervening period, the current Action Plans had continued to run until updated ones were approved.

The main area of change was that objectives were now SMART (where possible) and that offered measurable criteria to ascertain if the Council was being successful in its delivery on the commitments made in the Action Plans.

Next Steps

It was recommended that the Council approves:

- The Draft Equality Scheme 2026-2031 Review (Appendix 2)
- The Draft Equality Action Plan 2026-2031 (Appendix 4)
- The Draft Disability Action Plan 2026-2031 (Appendix 6)

The documents would be made available in alternative formats on request where a need was identified and distributed through local community and voluntary groups. An easy read version would be created for those with learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves:

- (A) The Draft Equality Scheme 2026-2031 Review (Appendix 2)
- (B) The Draft Equality Action Plan 2026-2031 (Appendix 4)
- (C) The Draft Disability Action Plan 2026-2031 (Appendix 6)

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

5. CLIMATE ADAPTATION – DAERA PUBLIC REPORTING (Appendices XIII - IXX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that the purpose of the report was to seek approval from Elected Members for the submission of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Climate Adaptation actions to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), as

required under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and associated reporting obligations.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets out statutory duties for public bodies, including local councils, to contribute to mitigation and adaptation objectives. <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/2401/Climate-Adaptation-Plan>

The regulations require each reporting body to provide:

- An assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to its functions; and
- Proposals and policies for adapting to climate change in the exercise of its functions, including timescales for implementing those proposals and policies.

DAERA had confirmed that the first adaptation reports must be submitted by 31 March 2026, covering a four-year period.

Council's Climate Adaptation Plan, approved in 2024, aligns with the mandatory elements within the reporting regulations. It:

- Identifies how climate change affects Council services by assessing both current and future climate risks.
- Sets out clear actions the Council will take to manage these risks.
- Provides timelines for delivering these adaptation actions.
- Enables Council to track progress so it can demonstrate improvement in future reporting cycles, as required under the regulations.
- Aligns with key national and regional climate assessments, including the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) and the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP).
- Promotes collaboration with other organisations, reflecting the need to coordinate adaptation actions across Northern Ireland.

Key Issues

Ards and North Down Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and established climate resilience as a central component of its corporate strategy.

The Council's Climate Adaptation Plan (2024) highlighted key vulnerabilities, outlined adaptation pathways, and sets out actions across Council services to reduce risks linked to extreme weather and long-term climate shifts.

The Borough was highly climate-exposed, particularly due to:

- 115 miles of coastline, increasing vulnerability to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and storm surges.
- Increasing frequency of erratic and extreme weather events, including high winds, intense rainfall, and storm damage.
- Record-breaking temperatures, affecting public health, infrastructure resilience, and service delivery.

Using the NI Adapts Planning Toolkit, the Council undertook workshops and created a Climate Adaptation Risk Register covering risks from:

- Flooding
- Storms and high winds
- Heat and drought
- Cold and snow

The assessment identified risks to community wellbeing, Council operations, infrastructure, nature, business operations, and heritage.

The impacts had required the Council to include adaptive actions within its Climate Adaptation Plan, including:

- Climate-proofing developments and consider retrofitting Council buildings for resilience.
- Revised grounds maintenance, including altering mowing practices and appropriate planting to strengthen ecosystem resilience.
- Enhanced business continuity planning to address service interruptions caused by extreme weather.
- Protecting outdoor staff and operational teams during extreme heat, storms, and flooding events.

The Council's actions directly mapped to Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme priorities, including:

- Community preparedness
- Resilient buildings and infrastructure
- Nature-based solutions
- Strengthening governance and climate-risk decision-making
- Protecting vulnerable people

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the submission to DAERA.

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

Alderman Graham referred to the discussion about Green Infrastructure and asked for a definition on sustainable drainage. The Community Planning Manager said that she would seek that from the officer who had prepared the report and would come back to the Member directly.

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

6. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 690 – DIGITAL ID (Appendices IXX & XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that a Notice of Motion was debated at the Corporate Services Committee on 9 December 2025 and subsequently agreed by the Council.

It was agreed that the Acting Chief Executive would write to the Prime Minister to register the Council's opposition to the introduction of any Digital ID system that would be mandatory or linked to essential services. The Council urged the Government to abandon any Digital ID initiative and called for full public consultation to take place on the subject prior to any future proposals being brought forward.

A letter was sent by the Acting Chief Executive on 28 January 2026, and a reply was received from Josh Simons MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office on 18 February. Copies of both letters were appended to this report.

Next Steps

The Council should note that the response and in line with the request in the Notice of Motion, the Cabinet Secretary had confirmed that a public consultation would be rolled out and when that was available, the Council was encouraged to submit a response.

The response also referred, as part of the public consultation, to representatives of the Cabinet Office travelling around the country to listen to the public feedback. In addition to responding to the Consultation, the Council may also wish to write a further letter to the Parliamentary Secretary to ask whether Northern Ireland would be included in such plans.

RECOMMENDED that the Council considers the next steps as outlined in this report.

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

Councillor W Irvine noted the public consultation and therefore expected that a report would be brought back to the Council on that. He made it clear that his objection had been to the mandatory nature of the proposal without having first sought widespread consultation and that remained a concern for him. The Acting Director of Corporate Services agreed to bring back a report but the timeline of that was yet uncertain. Seconding the recommendation Alderman Smith referred to the Cabinet Office's engagement process and it appeared unclear if Northern Ireland would be included. The Acting Director agreed to write to the Cabinet Office seeking clarification that Northern Ireland would be included.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted and that a letter be written to the Cabinet Office to seek clarification that Northern Ireland would be included in the Consultation.

7. SCHEME OF COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES (Appendices XXI & XXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that each year the Council must approve a Scheme of Allowances for Councillors before any payments could be made to Members.

Key Issues

The latest version had been prepared in order to comply with the increases in the national minimum wage which came into force from 1 April 2026. In line with previous practice the scheme had maintained the budgeted figure. However paragraphs 3 and 4.1 had been reformatted to show the maximum allowances permitted.

All changes from the current version had been highlighted in the proposed scheme attached.

Members should also note that a clause had been included within the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill currently before the Northern Ireland Assembly to allow the Department for Communities (DfC) to set Councillors' basic allowances. Special responsibility allowances would continue to be set by the Council within the maximum determined by the Department. That change would not come into effect until a future date.

Next Steps

In due course, the DfC would issue a circular to update the maximum rates. A further revision of the scheme would be brought back to the Council to amend the scheme in line with the departmental direction.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Scheme of Allowance v 14 for 2026-27.

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

8. REQUEST FOR A KNITTED POPPY DISPLAY AT ARDS ARTS CENTRE (FORMER ARDS TOWN HALL)

(Appendix XXIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Council had received a request from the Royal British Legion Newtownards Branch ("RBL") for a hand-knitted Poppy Remembrance Installation at the Ards Arts Centre/Town Hall in the lead-up to Remembrance Sunday. The approximate dates would be Thursday 5 to Monday 9 November 2026, which included Remembrance Sunday.

The proposed installation would consist of a single knitted, crocheted and felt poppy panel, approximately two metres wide, hung from an upper part of the building so that it fell vertically down towards ground level and affixed to the ground at the flower beds. The display would be attached to camouflage netting, be temporary and be installed for the period leading up to Remembrance Sunday only.

RBL had advised that the intention behind the installation was to provide a respectful and visible act of remembrance for those who served and sacrificed, and to allow members of the local community to engage with Remembrance in a meaningful and creative way. An AI visualisation provided by RBL had been attached to provide an idea of the scale and appearance and was attached.

Key Issues

Officers were consulted and had no objections to the request, in principle. However, queries were raised regarding how the installation would be attached to the building, which was listed, how the installation would be cordoned off to prevent public access and anti-social behaviour and how it would be affixed to the ground adjacent to the flower beds. RBL was also advised that the installation should not block any fire exits.

A location was agreed, in principle, between two windows on the front right-hand side of the building (looking at the building) behind the Blair Mayne statue, so as not to block the light into the centre. Officers advised there would be an art exhibition on the ground floor at this time.

Officers met with Councillor S Irvine and RBL representatives on site to discuss the request and those queries were raised with them. There would be agreement needed with Estates and Parks and Cemeteries Officers regarding installation and the impact on the flower beds at the front of the building. However, in order to start preparation of the 6 to 8,000 poppies needed for the installation, the request required the consideration of the Council as early as possible.

Next Steps

Any approval should be subject to the following terms and conditions:

The Applicant must:

- i. Provide a risk assessment.
- ii. Agree installation and method of installation in advance with Council officers.
- ii. Display appropriate notices to inform the public of the works and notices must be removed immediately on completion of the installation.
- iii. Provide evidence of relevant insurances, fully indemnifying the Council against all risks or claims associated with the use of land or property.
- iv. Make good any damage caused during the use to the satisfaction of Council officers. Should the Council have to undertake remedial works the costs would be recoverable.
- v. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage was present.
- vi. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all debris arising from the installation. Should the Council have to do any additional cleaning, the costs would be recoverable.
- vii. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the work.
- viii. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the installation – barriers/cordons would be required and to be agreed in advance with Council officers.
- ix. Obtain and provide evidence of permits/licences/registrations and approvals.
- x. Ensure that adequate staff were placed throughout the area to ensure that members of the public were not endangered by the work.
- xi. Ensure no petrol generators were used.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the request from Royal British Legion Newtownards for a hand-knitted Poppy Remembrance Installation at the Ards Arts Centre (Former Ards Town Hall) from approximately 5 to 9 November 2026.

Proposed by Councillor S Irvine, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor S Irvine thought the initiative was brilliant and he was happy to propose it since he believed that it would bring people within the community together. He had already had people phone him asking for patterns and for ways in which they could contribute. He considered that it would be a powerful and respectful visual tribute and hoped that the Council Chamber would give the initiative its support.

Councillor Moore echoed those comments stating that the proposal looked incredible and impactful but her only concern was if the tribute would be vulnerable to the elements. The Acting Director of Corporate Services replied that that risk had been considered but that this was a temporary display only and there was confidence that it would stand intact for the period it would be in place.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor S Irvine, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted.

9. REVIEW OF LAND AND PROPERTY POLICY (Appendices XXIV & XXV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that at its meeting in November 2023, the Council approved the Land and Property Policy. The policy was due for a review, and the draft Land and Property Policy 2026 policy was attached.

Key issues

The changes to the policy were highlighted in yellow on the draft appendix and could be summarised as follows:

a. Section 2 - Introduction

- Page 4 – paragraph included at the beginning of the policy with regards to Council's obligations under s75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as this was relevant to the policy in its entirety.
- Page 5 – medium term financial plan and Service Unit Plans had been added to the list of key strategic documents that were relevant to Council's management of its land.

b. Section 3 Roles and Responsibilities

- Page 6 "Head of Administration" was now "Head of Corporate Governance"

c. Section 4 Hired Services associated with land and property transactions

- Page 8 – added encroachments into list of matters a solicitor could be instructed on and solicitor was referred to as "the appointed solicitor."
- Page 9 – additional items had been added to the list of documents to be sent to the solicitor with instructions.

d. Section 5 Council Owned Land

- Page 9 – Lands Manager to work with both the finance service and all relevant services to ensure the Fixed Asset Register was appropriately cross referenced to the title deeds database.
- Page 10 (Encroachments) – the Lands team must also notify the Planning Service of any encroachment as that may also represent a breach of planning control.
- Pages 10-11 (Inspection of Council land) – Council land to be inspected every 24 months by officers who had knowledge of the land in question. The section referred to a process being developed for the proactive inspection. Officers had met to discuss this.
- Page 11 (General Considerations) - list of officers who should be notified at an early opportunity when any acquisition, disposal or lease of land and property was being considered. It was also highlighted in this section that officers should notify lands at an early stage where they were dealing with a third party in relation to land and property to obtain guidance.

e. Section 6- Acquisition of Land and Property

- Page 13 (Procedure for Acquisitions) removed paragraph ii as that was dealt with by the overarching paragraph in the introduction.
- Paragraph iv on page 13 – include reference to the Budgeting policy and paragraph viii allows for the Chief Executive to appoint an officer to consult with the appointed valuer and to make an offer.
- Page 14 (6.4 Rectification of title) – that was a new section based on matters that officers had dealt with in the past whereby the Council had been maintaining land that it did not own.

f. Section 7 Disposal of Land and Property

- Page 14 (7.1 Context) reference to Interpretation Act 1954 and definition of a disposal and clarifies that this section relates to a sale (and in some circumstances this may include a lease as per section 7.2) or granting of an interest in land.
- Page 15 (7.3 Procedures for the disposal) – development brief was now referenced in proactive identification of land and property.
- Page 16 (7.3.1 general principles) – includes provision that officers must ask the valuer in all cases to provide advice on the best method of disposal with cognisance given to the Central Advisory Unit Guidance
- Page 18 (7.3.2 preliminary due diligence) paragraph k – any impediments affecting the sale now included the need to check if the land was initially acquired by way of vesting as there may be pre-emption rights applicable.
- Page 19 (7.3.4 procedure) paragraph vii where property was being sold without going to market, the third party would be asked to cover the Council's reasonable legal and valuation fees.
- Page 20 (7.4 Marketing of land and property) – a report from the valuer must be obtained with advice on how to market the land and property and advice would always be sought on the procedure to follow. The formal tender method had been removed as the default method of marketing.

g. Section 8 – Vesting

- Page 22 – emphasis now included that vesting was deemed to be the last method by which to acquire land.

h. Section 9 - Leasing and Licensing of Council Land and Property

- Page 23 – summary of covenants included in list of items listed on Lease Licence register.
- Page 24-25 (9.3.2 Rental/Licence Fee) –Cases will now be referred to DfC to see approval to apply a reduction in rent of 50% where clubs meet the criteria as set out in the policy DfC confirmed that it could not give blanket approval to the abatement policy and would need to assess on a case by case basis.
- Page 26 (9.3.4 Inspections) – following an audit recommendation, leased premises must be inspected regularly (unless they were in effect a disposal). Officers would be writing to all relevant lessees to inform them that the Council would now be carrying out routine inspections of leased premises and that there would be further contact to confirm a date of the inspection.
- Pages 27-29 (9.4 Procedure for new Lease or Licence requests) that now included provision for checking whether the proposed lessee had any arrangements with the Council in relation to the request.
- Page 27- Officers must also carry out affordability/financial checks in advance of a lease being granted.
- Pages 28 and 29 with regards to limited companies, officers should undertake a search at Companies House to verify the information, and evidence must be provided of the Company Resolution and minute to authorise the transaction.
- Page 29 where the requestor was a Club or Community Group, they must provide the Club Resolution and Committee minute approving the lease/licence and a list of authorised signatories (photographic ID is required where the Club did not intend to instruct a solicitor).
- Page 29 where the third party was a registered charity, community group, voluntary group or a registered sports club and it was occupying the land solely for non-commercial purposes, they would not be asked to cover the Council's legal and valuation fees.

i. Section 10 - Requests to use Council Land and Property

- Page 30 (10.1 Context) – included reference to Key Events Space Pilot in relation to McKee Clock and Marine Gardens.
- Page 30 (10.2 General Principles) online form would be available on website. Colour runs had been included in list of prohibited events and mobile saunas had been included as being permitted on Council land via the Expression of Interest process. With regards to banner and advertising notices a line had been added to acknowledge that advertising consent under Planning may be required.
- Page 33 (10.4 Overview of notice period, licence requirements, fees and approval authority). Lands manager had delegated authority in some circumstances. Notice period for a commercial market and funfair had been reduced from 6 months to 4 months.
- Page 34 where a SAG meeting was required, permission to hold the event could still be given in principle on the condition that organisers implemented the recommendations of the SAG.

- Page 35 (10.5 Event Management) – clarification now included that Council run events were not subject to the process detailed in the policy.
- Page 36 (10.6 Requests to use a carpark to which the Off-Street Parking Order applies) – it was noted that that did not apply to events being delivered by the Council.

j. Section 11 – Light up Requests

- Page 37 – policy states that Council did not light up buildings on request.

k. Appendices

- Page 40 Appendix 1 – request to use Council land form requirement to include medical plan and amendment to section regarding charges.
- Pages 42-45 Appendix 2 – Standard Terms and Conditions– requirement to submit Risk Assessments and Event Managements plans within 14 days of the event (unless otherwise specified). By reviewing documentation and giving approval, the Council was not confirming approval in relation to the sufficiency of the safety measures and event arrangements. Organiser must be satisfied of the suitability of the land for the event, and they must obtain expert advice where necessary. Insurance provisions were also strengthened. Applicants were required to engage with such parties as required by the Council who may be affected by the event. Emphasis on applicants having due regard to the Disability legislation and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Organisers must also notify Council if the event was cancelled. The Council also could withdraw permission for the event.
- Pages 46-47 Appendix 3 – Supplementary terms pages– those applied together with the standard terms and may be tailored where appropriate. Inflatables – page 46 further conditions added around safety.
- Page 48 Appendix 4 – Use of land fees– incidental trader fee was previously in line with the temporary street trading fee. The street trading fee was increased from £10 to £20 from 1st April 2025. Subject to approval, it was not proposed to increase the incidental trader fee for the use of Council land as many were linked to community events. Where a price could not be determined or a licence was required, that would usually go to the Council's valuer for assessment. If there was no time, the Lands Manager had discretion to determine an appropriate fee if there was a precedent or comparable past valuation for the event.
- Pages 49-53 Appendix 5 – Safety Advisory Group Terms of Reference – updated to reflect new job title of the Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services.

Next Steps

The next step was to approve and adopt the draft Land and Property policy.

Summary

The changes to the Land and Property Policy were summarised above.

It was important to highlight 2 matters in particular:

1. That regular inspections of leased premises would now take place and that officers would be writing to any lessee who fell under the criteria of requiring an inspection to notify them that the process would be implemented.
2. That DfC was unable to approve the abatement policy and that clubs meeting the criteria under the policy would be referred to the Department on a case-by-case basis to seek a 50% reduction in their rent. Officers would also be writing to DfC in relation to existing lessees who currently paid an abated rent.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves and adopts the draft Land and Property Policy and also Notes the position with regards to inspection of leased premises and the abatement policy.

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

Reports for Approval

10. FINANCE

10a. Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management – 2025-26 Qtr. 3

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that in February 2025, the Council approved its annual Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the setting of Prudential Indicators (PIs) for the current financial year ending 31 March 2026. Those were statutory requirements in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on the PIs and treasury management activity as required by the CIPFA Codes, at the end of December 2025 (Quarter 3).

Key Issues

1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The PIs for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council were affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to those PIs were set out below.

	Original Forecast	Revised Forecast
Table 1.11	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure 2025/26 (Current Year)	26.264	12.879

The original estimate of £26.264M had been revised down to £12.879M, reflecting the capital spend that was now expected to be incurred by 31 March 2026.

The gross forecast underspend was largely attributable to timing delays across several major capital schemes. The most significant movements arose from projects

where construction phases had been deferred. The Digital Innovation Hub, Ward Park Main Works and the Portavogie 3G Pitch had all recorded minimal in-year spend, as activity to date had been limited to early-stage design or professional fees, with substantive works now expected to take place in later periods.

Further reductions stemmed from the Replacement Vehicles programme, where procurement lead times and market-availability constraints continued to impact delivery schedules. As a result, part of the planned fleet renewal was now forecast to slip into the next financial year.

Two major land acquisition schemes - the Tree and Woodland Strategy and Movilla Cemetery - were also forecasting full underspends, as neither transaction was expected to conclude within the current financial year.

Finally, progress on the Greenways – Floodgates project had been slower than planned, with expenditure focused mainly on certification and limited site activity. That reflected a back-loaded delivery profile and contributed further to the overall variance.

Together, those factors explained the majority of the underspend, with consistent themes of deferred construction, extended procurement processes, and later-than-anticipated completion of land transactions.

The revised capital expenditure forecasted for the three-year plan, together with the capital financing implications and previous year activity were summarised in the table below.

	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Table 1.12	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure	15.733	12.879	25.382	42.401
Financed by:				
Loans	3.462	6.031	17.024	29.866
Leasing	5.928	0.076	0.079	0.054
Grants	5.031	5.153	6.983	12.251
Capital Receipts	0.804	0.899	0.730	0.230
Revenue/Reserves	0.508	0.720	0.566	-

1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance was measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). That increased with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP (minimum revenue provision). See section 1.4 for further information on MRP.

Statutory guidance was that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Council had complied and expected to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as shown below.

Table 1.2	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	77.865	76.326	84.936	106.352
External Gross Borrowing	(56.876)	(53.427)	(57.280)	(80.502)
External Gross Leasing	(5.859)	(5.716)	(5.637)	(5.583)
Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement	15.130	17.183	22.018	20.267
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£17.183 25/26 forecast) and indicated that historic capital expenditure had been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. That had been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in previous years and the access to grant funding streams. The position had been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018. Nevertheless, it was predictable that drawdowns of loan finance would begin early next financial year.

1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

The Council was legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit each year, known as the 'Authorised Limit'. In line with statutory guidance, a lower 'operational boundary' was also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

The revised forecast for external gross borrowing at 31 March 2026 was £59M as seen in table 1.2 above. The Council was therefore forecast to remain well within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year as follows:

Table 1.3	2025/26
Authorised limit – borrowing	£ 81.326m
Operational boundary – borrowing	£ 76.326m

1.4 Capital - Revenue Budget Implications

Capital expenditure was not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead, interest payable on borrowings and MRP (minimum revenue provision), together known as capital financing costs, were charged to revenue. Those financing costs were compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from District Rates and general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which was made up of capital financing costs.

Table 1.4	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast
Financing costs (£m)	£8.8m	£10.0m	£10.9	£11.8m
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	13.3%	14.4%	15.7%	15.9%

The forecast financing costs for 2025/26 of £10.0M was in line with the budget set for the year.

2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

The following table summarised the position on long-term borrowings at 30 September 2025.

Table 2.1				
Lender	Balance 01/04/25	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 30/12/25
Dept of Finance	£ 50.601m	£ -	£ (1.319) m	£ 49.282m
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 6.275m	£ -	£ (1.000) m	£ 5.275m
Totals	£ 56.876m	£ -	£ (2.319) m	£ 54.557m

The revised capital financing requirement (table 1.2) showed that the Council could increase its level of external borrowings to £76M by 31 March 2026. However, an assessment of the Council's cashflow position forecasts showed there would be adequate cash reserves to finance capital expenditure for the remainder of the current year and therefore no further borrowing was anticipated before 31 March 2026. The Council did not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

The Council repaid a £1M bank loan in April and Dept of Finance payment of £1.3M in August. A further repayment of £1.27M on existing long-term loans would be made in February 2026 and the level of external borrowings on 31 March 2026 is forecast to be £53.3M.

2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The tables below show the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2025/26	Actual at 30/12/25
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	0%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	100%

Table 2.22

Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2025/26	Upper Limit 2025/26	Forecast 2025/26
Under 12 months	0%	15%	2%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	6%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	19%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	24%
10 years and above	30%	90%	49%

2.3 Treasury Management - Investment Activity

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy were safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its investments on time, with the investment return being a secondary objective. The current investment climate continued to be one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. In line with advice provided by treasury management consultants, officers continued to implement an operational investment strategy of placing short-term investments with approved high-quality counterparties.

For the period 1 April to 31 December 2025, the Council had earned interest of £362k on investment deals with approved financial institutions as summarised below:

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.46%	£95,580
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£2.7m	Call A/c	4.17%	£85,957
State Street Global Advisors	£3.0m	Call A/c	4.13%	£94,282
Barclays Bank	£1.6m	Call A/c	4.09%	£33,438
Bank of Scotland	£1.6m	Call A/c	3.94%	£49,101
Santander	£0.4m	Call A/c	2.60%	£3,259
Totals				£361,617

That compared unfavourably to the budget set for the same period of £409k, resulting in an adverse variance of £47k. The reason was due to a combination of falling interest rates at the financial institutions and in-year accounting changes.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts at 31st December 2025 was £8.5M.

The table below showed the risk and return metrics on the Council's investments held at 30 September 2025 against other NI Councils.

Counterparties	Investments
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Table 2.32	Credit Rating	Liquidity	Rate of Return (%)
ANDBC	A+	100%	4.00%
NI Council Average	A+	60%	3.99%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Dec-25

The Council was just above the NI Council average on rates and cash balances. The treasury management function had been managing surplus cash balances well during the three quarters 2025/26, albeit yields had been falling since the beginning of 2025.

The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days was £500k. The Council had not entered into any such investments during the period.

Next Steps

A final Prudential report for financial year-end 2025/26 would be tabled to Members in early June 2026.

Summary

The Council's latest capital and treasury update highlighted a substantial reduction in 2025/26 capital expenditure, with the forecast decreasing from £26.264M to £12.879M due to delays in major construction projects, procurement challenges, and postponed land acquisitions, resulting in significant re-profiling of spend into later years.

Despite that, the Council remained fully compliant with borrowing regulations, with external borrowing staying well below the Capital Financing Requirement and within both the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary, supported by strong cash reserves that had reduced the need for new borrowing during the year.

Capital financing costs of £10.0M remained on budget and were expected to rise gradually as the capital programme progressed.

Treasury management activity continued to be prudent, with no new long-term loans taken, scheduled repayments made, and surplus cash invested in short-term, high-quality counterparties; however, investment income of £361.6k was £47k below budget due to falling interest rates.

Overall, the Council maintained a robust and compliant financial position while preparing for increased capital activity in future years.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

10b. Strategic Budget Report – January 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that this was the third Strategic Budget Report for the financial year and set out the expenditure and income variance for the first ten months.

Key Issues

None

Next Steps

It was expected the final 2025/26 Strategic Budget Report would be presented to the June 2026 Corporate Services Committee.

Summary

The Report showed a budgetary surplus of £1,182k for the first ten months of 2025/26.

The budgeting policy required officers to forecast potential outturn on four occasions during the financial year – those would occur at the end of June, August, November and January. The final column on page 2 of the report showed that management was forecasting a potential surplus of around £589k.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the Strategic Budget Report for January 2026.

Alderman Smith questioned the forecast underspend and called for an explanation on why it was half. The Head of Finance stated the figure was based on officers' returns and they tended to be on the optimistic side of estimates. Alderman McRandal asked about the underspend in maintenance at Bangor Aurora and repairs related to the floor. He was advised that the Head of Estates had suggested this could be used to improve some car parks by the end of the year.

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

11. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMPARITATIVE ANALYSIS (Appendix XXVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Acting Director of Corporate Services detailing that The Investors in People (IIP) business tool was used by the Council as a means of continuous improvement in terms of employee performance, engagement and development. Assessment occurred every 3 years.

The Council was first awarded IIP accreditation in December 2016, and then subsequently achieved the Silver award in 2019 and 2022.

Its most recent accreditation took place between September and December 2025 and confirmation that the Council retained Silver accreditation was received at the end of January 2026.

Following feedback from the assessor, the main recommendations and a comparative statistical analysis with the 2022 report had been produced and was attached.

Further feedback would be sought from staff on areas for improvement and those would be addressed in the next 'Our People Plan', which outlined how the Council intended to support, develop, engage, and retain its workforce.

The Council's next IIP assessment would be in December 2028.

RECOMMENDATION that the Council notes the attached report.

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

The Chair explained that since the matter under Any Other Notified Business would be taken in confidence, it was suggested that the meeting move into Committee at this stage.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

a) Verbal Update on Bangor Marina

*****In Confidence*****

Reports for Approval

13. GREENWAY – LAND AT REAR OF BEVERLEY WALK, NEWTOWNARDS – TRANSFER TO COUNCIL (Appendices XXVII & XXVIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL OR PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to consider an offer to acquire land for the Greenway at the rear of Beverley Walk, Newtownards for a nominal sum.

The recommendation was that the Council accept the transfer of land.

14. REQUEST FOR A LEASE FROM PENINSULA HEALTHY LIVING LTD (Appendices IXXX - XXXI)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider a request from Peninsula Healthy Living Limited to lease Council Land at Kircubbin Community Centre.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

15. LAND AT GREEN ROAD, CONLIG – PROPOSED ABANDONMENT
(Appendices XXXII & XXXIII)

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

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

The Council was asked by DfI if it would wish to acquire any or all of an area of land at Green Road, Conlig, which the Department proposed to abandon.

The recommendation was that the Department be advised that the Council had no interest in acquiring any part of the subject land.

(Having declared an Interest in Item 16 Alderman Smith left the meeting at 7.40 pm)

16. REQUEST FOR A LEASE AT COMBER COMMUNITY GARDEN
(Appendix XXXIV)

*****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 granting a 5-year lease to Comber Regeneration Community Partnership for Comber Community Garden (former Civic Amenity Site).

The recommendation was that the Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

(Alderman Smith re-entered the meeting at 7.41 pm)

17. REQUEST FOR WAYLEAVE AT PARKLIFE (WARD PARK CAFÉ) AND WORKS ON COUNCIL LAND
(Appendix XXXV)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider a request from Openreach for a wayleave and from Duckpond NI (the tenant) for the installation of broadband at Parklife Cafe, Ward Park.

The recommendation was that the Council agreed to the request from both Openreach and Duckpond NI subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

18. REQUEST TO RENEW LEASE TO THE BANGOR AND NORTH DOWN CAMERA CLUB
(Appendix XXXVI)

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

The Council was asked to consider a request from Bangor and North Down Camera Club to renew the Lease at 100 Ward Avenue, Bangor.

The recommendation was that the Council accede to the request, subject to the terms and conditions outlined.

19. LAND AT 13A CENTRAL AVENUE, BANGOR
(Appendix XXXVII)

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

The Council was asked to consider options in relation to the site at 13A Central Avenue, Bangor.

The recommendation was that the Council considered and decided on an option as detailed in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

20. ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR GREENWAY – COMBER TO FLOODGATES – FLOODWALL
(Appendix XXXVIII)

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that at the December 2025 meeting of Council it was agreed that Council acquired a sufficient interest, whether by way of a 99-year lease at a peppercorn rent or the acquisition of a freehold interest, at a valuation which could be recommended by the valuer acting on behalf of the Council, in the land along the floodwall, including

the area of saltmarsh to enable this section of the Comber to Floodgates Greenway to be completed. Most landowners had worked with the Council on this bar one.

It was recommended that the Council agree to

1. advise the remaining landowner that, whilst it would prefer to acquire the land for the Greenway by agreement, if this is not possible, then it will proceed with the vesting process at the appropriate time; and
2. Include the area of unregistered land in any vesting process to obtain good title.
3. Note that the project board has agreed to remove this section of land from the current contract in order to avoid contractual compensation claims and revisit the implementation of this section, including Council’s right of access, in a contract which will deliver the remaining sections of the Comber to Newtownards Greenway in the future.

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

(At this point Alderman Graham declared an interest in Item 21 and left the meeting at 8.03 pm)

21. NEW CEMETERY LANDS
(Appendices IXXXX & XXXX)

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that following the update provided to the Committee in October 2025, burial space across the Borough continued to diminish. Current projections for Council cemeteries with eight years or less of remaining capacity were detailed below:

CEMETERY	Years before all New Grave spaces will be allocated. (At January 2026)
Movilla	0.5
Redburn	1
Ballyvester	2
Clandeboyne	8
All other locations	12 to 100+

As Members would be aware, the Council had been endeavouring to identify a suitable site for a new cemetery to service the needs of the Borough for many years now. Between 2012 and 2020 approximately 20 sites were considered and eventually over time ruled out as being suitable for various reasons.

The above timeframes represented projections that were contingent on all plots being usable and unobstructed. As capacity was reached, demand would shift to the few remaining open cemeteries, accelerating their depletion.

Since 2020 following a Member's workshop, a number of areas were further identified.

The report laid out in detail lands that had been examined and that a suitable site was now offered by a landowner.

It was recommended that the Council agrees to advise the landowners that whilst it would be preferable to acquire the land for the proposed new cemetery by agreement, if that was not possible, then it would proceed with the vesting process and seek outline planning permission for the site detailed in the report.

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

22. BALLYHASKIN PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

(Appendices XXXXI - XXXXIII)

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

Asserted Public Right of Way from Ballywalter Road to shore, Ballyhaslin, Millisle

Exemption: A claim to legal professional privilege

Summary: The report outlined the issues, and legal advice received, in relation to the asserted public right of way and makes a recommendation to resolve the issues.

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

Reports for Delegated Authority for Approval

23. EXTENSION OF THE OFFICE CLEANING CONTRACT AT 2 COUNCIL BUILDINGS

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

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

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

The Council was asked to approve to extend the Cleaning Services contract with Bidvest Noonan, for a further one-year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. The recommendation was adopted.

24. RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

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

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

The Council was asked to consider extending the contract for the provision of an Employee Assistance Programme for a 12-month period following a satisfactory service review.

The recommendation was that the Council approves the extension of the Employee Assistance Programme contract for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option.

25. RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

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

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

The Council was asked to consider extending the contract for the provision of Occupational Health Services for a 12-month period following a satisfactory service review.

The recommendation was that the Council approves the extension of the Occupational Health Services contract for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option.

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

26. INSURANCE PROVISION 2026

****ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL****

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

Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person
Council was asked to consider and approve a report detailing the required insurance provisions for 2026.

The recommendation was that Council Approves the award of insurance tenders; Lot 1 using Option 3 and Lots 2-5 to the insurance companies set out in the Table 4 in the report.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.40 pm.

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 11 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Ashe

Alderman: Cummings McRandal

Councillors: Boyle Irvine, W
Chambers Kerr (Zoom, 7.34 pm)
Cochrane McBurney
Douglas McClean
Hollywood (Zoom) McKee (Zoom)
Irvine, S

Officers in Attendance: Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Faulkner), Head of Community Development (N Dorrian), Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services (G Kinnear), Head of Leisure (A Cozzo), and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from the Deputy Mayor Councillor Moore, and Alderman Brooks.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Councillor Chambers – Item 16 - Response to Notice of Motion 519 – Queens Hall, Hollywood.

NOTED.

3. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 671 - RESPONSIBLE DOG WALKING IN PUBLIC SPACES (MARCH 2026) (FILE NOM671)**

(Appendix I – II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that a Notice of Motion relating to Responsible Dog Walking in Public Spaces was agreed by Council in September 2025. It stated that the Council, as a Dog Friendly Borough, recognises the need to balance animal welfare, public safety, and shared use of parks and footpaths. It raised concerns about individuals walking multiple dogs, the rise of unlicensed professional dog walkers without insurance, and the associated risks to people and pets. It noted that other councils, including Belfast City Council, had introduced limits on the number of dogs walked at one time and suggested similar measures be considered.

More specifically, the Notice of Motion proposed that the Council resolved to:

1. Produce a report outlining the costs and steps required to introduce a local restriction under the relevant provisions of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act (Northern Ireland) 2011: Limiting the number of dogs that any one person could be in charge of to a maximum of four at any given time in public spaces.
2. Mandating that professional dog walkers were required to have dogs on leads at all times to ensure dog control and accountability for dog behaviours.
3. Include in the report, the provision and cost of a complementary public education campaign, to inform residents, recreational and professional dog walkers about the new limit, about what it meant to have a dog under your control in public spaces (whether on or off lead), and what promoting responsible dog control and safety in shared spaces should be.
4. To write to the DAERA Minister to ask him to introduce, and provide funding support to Councils to enforce, mandatory registration of professional dog walkers to help to ensure suitable animal welfare standards, the provision of suitable training, experience, insurance, and public safety.

Subsequently, a report was brought to Council in January 2026 through the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, in response to the NoM. The report outlined the legal basis, required steps, and estimated costs for introducing a Dog Control Order (DCO) limiting individuals to walking a maximum of four dogs in all public spaces across the Borough.

Key points included:

- Implementation of the DCO would require:
 - Statutory public consultation, and estimated costs were provided.
 - Investment in signage to alert dog walkers on the restrictions that applied at Council owned sites.

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- Possible addition to current enforcement resources; the costs that this would entail were provided.
- Short-term administrative support to manage responses to the public consultation
- Current legislation does not allow the Council to apply restrictions aimed solely at professional dog walkers.
- A public education campaign would be carried out to promote awareness and responsible behaviour.
- A draft letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was prepared, and sought:
 - Ministerial support for mandatory registration of professional dog walkers
 - Funding to assist councils with enforcement and public safety initiatives.

A table summarising potential costs was provided in the report and is included below for reference.

Item	Year 1 costs	Year 2 costs	Total cost	Notes
Stage 1				
Public Consultation Exercise	£2,000	-	£2,000	Includes press notices
Stage 2 – Should Council approve following consultation				
Signage for Council sites	£50,000	-	£50,000	New signs at locations frequented by dog walkers
Additional Enforcement Officer (Salary)	£38,000	£38,600	£76,600 (and continuing)	Per full time officer
IT Provision for Enforcement Officer	£5,000	£2,000	£7,000	Initial setup and ongoing costs
Vehicle Provision	£36,000	-	£36,000	Purchase cost
Vehicle Running Costs	£7,000	£8,000	£15,000	Fuel, maintenance
Public Education Campaign	£5,000	£1,000	£6,000	Press and billboard ads
Total (1 officer)	£143,000	£49,600	£192,600	Approximate combined costs
Total (3 officers)	£315,000	£146,800	£461,800	

The recommendation attached to the report was as follows:

It is recommended that Council approves:

- the undertaking of a public consultation exercise on the proposed Dog Control Order; and
- that the draft letter, attached as Appendix 1, is sent to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland.

An alternative proposal which was made at Committee as follows was agreed at Council :

- That a further report be brought back to the Committee to outline the proposed wording and content of the proposed public consultation. This will include, but not be limited to, options with regards to maximum number of dogs and geographical area/scope against which any restriction might apply.
- That the draft letter, attached in Appendix 1, is sent to the Minister of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland.

The letter was subsequently issued to the Minister following the January Council Meeting.

A draft consultation document, which included options as requested in the amended proposal, had been included as Appendix 1.

Key Issues

The recommendation included in this report asked members to approve proceeding with the public consultation exercise. In deciding whether or not to proceed, it was worth noting that only a very small proportion of dog walkers, professional or otherwise, would be impacted by the proposed DCO. It was unlikely that there would be a significant number of detections of non-compliance or fixed penalties issued. To date, very few complaints had been received by the Neighbourhood Environment Team in relation to excess numbers of dogs being walked by individuals.

While the consultation exercise would not incur significant costs, should we proceed in making the DCO following this process, the question of whether to provide new signage at Council owned sites remained. There was no legal requirement to erect signs in this regard, but traditionally the Council had displayed information on restrictions that applied at different locations. Signs could also be useful from an enforcement perspective, and would likely improve the chance of obtaining convictions in court.

The proposal as put forward in NoM 671 applied to all public space; the legislation permitted the Council to make a DCO that encompasses private land that required an admission fee. Some local sites already had their own restrictions in place with regard to limiting the number of dogs walked by an individual. For example, the National Trust required professional dog walkers to pay £120 for an annual permit, allowing them to walk up to four dogs in Mount Stewart.

A response to the Council's letter was received from the Minister of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland on 24th February 2026 and was attached. The Minister was not inclined to introduce new primary legislation to require the registration of professional dog walkers. He suggested that there were existing powers available to local authorities to safeguard animal welfare and restrict the numbers of dogs being walked, through the DCO mechanism, and that these would have the desired outcomes proposed in the letter.

Next Steps

Should Members have wished to proceed with the public consultation, Environmental Health and Regulatory Services would work with the Council Communications Team to undertake the process.

Following this, the results would be analysed and presented to the Committee for further consideration.

Summary

The proposed public consultation would allow the Council to gather views on potential new controls for responsible dog walking, including limits on the number of dogs walked at one time and the scope of any restrictions. While only a small number of dog walkers were likely to be affected, the consultation would provide essential evidence to guide future decision-making. Should a Dog Control Order ultimately be introduced, further consideration would be required on signage, enforcement resources and associated costs. If the recommendation was approved, Environmental Health and Regulatory Services would proceed with the consultation and report back with findings to inform the next steps.

A response had been received from the Minister of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland. The Minister was not inclined to introduce new legislation requiring the registration of professional dog walkers.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves that officers proceed with carrying out a public consultation exercise, as proposed in the draft consultation document attached as Appendix 1.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council approves that officers proceed with carrying out a public consultation exercise, as proposed in the draft consultation document attached as Appendix 1 and brings a report on our options for a responsible dog ownership and dog control education campaign.

Speaking to his alternative proposal, Councillor McKee thanked officers for the report and welcomed the detailed questionnaire which would help to capture useful public opinion. He stressed the importance of public engagement and the development of an education campaign around responsible dog ownership in terms of addressing issues around dog control, dog fouling and litter associated with dog ownership. He felt this work would be vital for addressing ongoing neighbourhood environmental issues and he looked forward to seeing a report outlining options available for this.

The seconder, Councillor Boyle, supported the proposal and felt it was important that the Committee was well informed on such matters.

Adding further support, Alderman Cummings believed that education should go hand in hand with enforcement and recalled positive initiatives in the past including dog owner accreditation programmes that had been used as an educational tool.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council approves that officers proceed with carrying out a public consultation exercise, as proposed in the draft consultation document

attached as Appendix 1 and brings a report on our options for a responsible dog ownership and dog control education campaign.

4. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 685 - RUBY'S LAW (FILE NOM685)**

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that a Notice of Motion relating to Ruby's Law had been agreed by Council in November 2025. Ruby's Law was a legislative reform campaign launched in England in January 2025, aimed at closing critical gaps in the Family Law Act 1996 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to protect companion animals used as tools of coercive control. The proposal sought to grant courts the power to include pets in Non-Molestation and Occupation Orders, allowing survivors to retain custody and legal protection for their animals when fleeing domestic abuse. A parallel campaign to introduce Ruby's Law was underway in Northern Ireland, with the matter debated at Stormont in October 2025. Ards and North Down Borough Council was the first local authority in Northern Ireland to publicly endorse Ruby's Law.

The Notice of Motion read as follows:

"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 United Kingdom, 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 council 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 relationships and the protection of their pets.
2. Promote public awareness of the connection between domestic abuse, coercive control and animal abuse, in collaboration with statutory agencies and animal welfare organisations.

3. Encourage engagement and collaboration within all Councils and other key stakeholders to support the implementation of Ruby's Law in the community to protect animals and people."

Key Issues

With regard to point 1 in the Notice of Motion, a draft letter to the Assembly Ministers had been attached as Appendix 1, which covered all points referred to. Approval was sought to issue the letter to the relevant Ministers.

As for point 2, this aspect of the Notice of Motion closely aligned with work being carried out by Community Services. Environmental Health and Regulatory Services would work closely with Community Services to identify ways in which Ruby's Law might be incorporated into their existing strategies targeting domestic violence and coercive control. Discussions would also be initiated with the Sexual and Domestic Violence Partnership (SEDVP) to establish whether any funding could be made available to the Council to help raise awareness of Ruby's Law and the principles behind it.

In relation to point 3, Ruby's Law had been raised with representatives from other councils at a meeting of the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG). It was found that there was little previous knowledge of Ruby's Law among members of the Group. We would share details of any strategies applied and any progress made by Ards and North Down at future NIDAG meetings.

Next Steps

Should Members approve the draft letter, this would be issued to the relevant Ministers.

Environmental Health and Regulatory Services would collaborate with Community Development in relation to promoting public awareness of Ruby's Law.

The Council's representative on NIDAG would update the group on progress within Ards and North Down. It might be necessary in the future to formally write to other council Chief Executives to seek support.

Summary

This report provided an update on the Council's response to Notice of Motion 685 regarding Ruby's Law, a legislative reform campaign aimed at protecting companion animals used in coercive control within domestic abuse situations. Ruby's Law sought to close gaps in existing legislation by allowing pets to be included in

Non-Molestation and Occupation Orders, thereby safeguarding both victims and their animals. The Council previously endorsed this reform and committed to writing to relevant Northern Ireland Executive Ministers to support its introduction and to encourage cross-departmental collaboration with Causeway Coast Dog Rescue and other organisations.

The report also outlined progress on the Notice of Motion's additional commitments. Environmental Health and Regulatory Services would work with Community Services to promote public awareness of the link between domestic abuse and harm to animals. Engagement had also begun with other councils through the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group, where awareness of Ruby's Law was found to be limited. Approval was now sought for issuing the draft letter to Ministers, with further work planned to support wider collaboration and future engagement across local authorities.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves that the draft letter, attached as Appendix 1, is sent to the Ministers referred to in Notice of Motion 685.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted with the following amendment to the draft letter at Appendix 1:

'Causeway Coast Dog Rescue has played a significant role in raising awareness of this issue, working closely with PSNI, Animal Welfare officers, domestic abuse services, and other agencies. Their advocacy has given a voice to victims who previously remained silent out of fear for their animals. The campaign has progressed positively in Northern Ireland, with proposals now at the Bills Committee stage following debate at Stormont on 6 October 2025. **In England and Wales, Ruby's Law, by way of amendments to the Family Law Act 1996 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, will have its second reading at the House of Commons on April 17th 2026.** In November 2025, Ards and North Down Borough Council became the first local authority in the UK to formally endorse Ruby's Law, demonstrating strong local support for reform.'

Speaking to his alternative proposal, Councillor McKee praised the draft letter and felt that his proposed additional wording demonstrated the ongoing progress of Ruby's Law elsewhere in the UK.

He referred to statistics on animal abuse and violence against women and girls in Northern Ireland, noting the figures were disproportionately higher than in the rest of the UK. He pointed to the tragic case of Ellie Flanagan and felt that had brought the issue to the forefront of people's minds recently, underlining the need for action.

The proposer referred to the links between domestic and animal abuse and stressed the need for earlier interventions, tracking those links and identifying those situations

before further harm could occur. He hoped that the letter would have significant impact.

The seconder, Councillor S Irvine, expressed the same view, believing that the proposal sent a strong message about recognising the link between animal welfare and human safety. He added that nobody should ever have to choose between their own safety and the safety of an animal.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted with the following amendment to the draft letter at Appendix 1:

‘Causeway Coast Dog Rescue has played a significant role in raising awareness of this issue, working closely with PSNI, Animal Welfare officers, domestic abuse services, and other agencies. Their advocacy has given a voice to victims who previously remained silent out of fear for their animals. The campaign has progressed positively in Northern Ireland, with proposals now at the Bills Committee stage following debate at Stormont on 6 October 2025. In England and Wales, Ruby’s Law, by way of amendments to the Family Law Act 1996 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, will have its second reading at the House of Commons on April 17th 2026. In November 2025, Ards and North Down Borough Council became the first local authority in the UK to formally endorse Ruby’s Law, demonstrating strong local support for reform.’

5. COMMUNITY SERVICES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2026 – 2027 (FILE CW22)

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities 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 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service may have faced in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Key outcomes for 2026/27 include:

- the implementation of the Action Plan recommendations following the conclusion of the Review of Community Development and Community Halls and Centres,
- The implementation of the PEACEPLUS plan including 20 revenue projects and 3 new capital projects for the Borough,
- Supporting households to break the cycle of poverty via the Social Supermarket,
- The implementation of the Good Relations Action plan, and
- The implementation of the PCSP Action plan together with the additional funding to deliver the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in the Borough.

Next Steps

Attached is the 2026/27 Service Plan for Community Services in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans are intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and has been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders, where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026-27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Will be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves attached Community Services Draft Service Plan for 2026/27.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor W Irvine referred to upcoming workshops that would feed into the Grants and Community Halls strategies, adding that it was important for Council to do as much as possible to support the Borough's community groups.

Councillor McBurney noted officer concerns over external funding delays due to the late receipt of Letters of Offer from various organisations. She wondered if Council could engage further with those organisations in order to speed up the process.

The Head of Community Development responded that the issue and its impacts on project delivery were highlighted both in writing and at regular meetings with Department officials where multi-year budgets had been discussed, but those were still awaiting agreement. She also encouraged Members to highlight the matter directly with those relevant organisations.

Councillor McBurney proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted, and that Council writes to relevant external funding bodies expressing concern regarding delays in the issue of Letters Of Offer.

The Director sought clarity on which organisations the Council should write to, and the proposer was content for officers to identify those that were relevant. The Head of Community Development listed suitable recipients and those included Department for Communities, NI Policing Board, Department of Justice and SEUPB.

Speaking to her proposed amendment, Councillor McBurney highlighted the impacts that the delays were having on the community in terms of project delivery timelines – she also pointed to staff retention and forward planning challenges for many of those organisations affected.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McBurney, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted, and that Council writes to relevant external funding bodies expressing concern regarding delays in the issue of Letters Of Offer.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND REGULATORY SERVICES
DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2026-27 (FILE CW22)**

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities 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 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service might have faced in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached as Appendix 1 was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Environmental Health and Regulatory Services in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017–2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026–27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there have been significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan might have needed to be revised.
- Would have been reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December

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Half Yearly 2	October – March	June
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RECOMMENDED that Council Approves attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

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

Councillor W Irvine noted ongoing challenges with regard to the Windsor Framework especially for local business in terms of NI to GB and EU trade. He believed there was a need for the Government to address the impacts this was having on those businesses and asked what support was provided.

The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services advised that support was available from the Food Standards Agency for food products and the Office for Product Safety and Standards for non-food goods and information was exchanged regularly where issues arose.

Councillor McClean noted that the remit of the report covered the issues of littering, dog control and dog fouling, and he referred to key performance indicators on fixed penalties noting a modest increase from 375 to 425 over the last two reporting years. He was concerned that those figures remained significantly lower than pre-Covid levels and asked that officers take action in addressing those figures. He indicated that he would follow up separately on this matter but would not stand in the way of what was an otherwise acceptable, more comprehensive report, which required signing off.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. LEISURE DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2026-2027

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities 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 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.

Key Issues

Any key issues that the Service might have faced in 2026/27 had been detailed within the attached Service Plan.

Next Steps

Attached was the 2026/27 Service Plan for Leisure in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

Summary

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017–2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2026–27 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there have been significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan might have needed to be revised.
- Would have been reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Yearly 1	April – September	December
Half Yearly 2	October – March	June

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves attached Service Plan for 2026/27.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McRandal queried an identified threat in relation to safeguarding with the admissions policy not being in place. The Head of Leisure advised that the policy was being finalised and internal and external advice was being sought. It was felt by

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officers that the interim mitigations were effective for safeguarding and security. A finalised policy was expected to return for approval in May following legal advice. The seconder, Councillor Boyle, spoke briefly to thank officers for a detailed report.

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

8. LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRESS 2025

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Council monitored air quality within the Borough and reported the findings to the Department for Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on an annual basis. We operated a real-time monitoring station on the A2 in Holywood which measured Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and particulate levels (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀).

Real-time results were available on the Northern Ireland Air Quality website <https://www.airqualityni.co.uk>. This location was chosen as the site for analysis as the highest traffic flow within the Borough was recorded there.

The Council also measured Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels using passive diffusion tubes which were placed at numerous sites across the Borough.

Key Issues

Pollutant levels had remained below National Air Quality Objectives in the Borough and the trend over the past 5 years showed no significant change in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) or Particulates.

Despite this stable position, the Council remained committed to further reducing emissions, particularly through targeted behaviour-change initiatives. A key strand of this work was the Engine Off – Prevent the Cough campaign, delivered jointly with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, which focused on reducing vehicle idling outside primary schools. Supporting measures included the installation of No Idling signage in Council-operated car parks, with plans to extend this to household recycling centres. Alongside these actions, the Council continued to promote sustainable travel as a long-term approach to improving air quality. Recent investment in coastal Greenways and new cycling and pedestrian routes had strengthened connections to the Belfast cycle network and the Belfast Rapid Transport System from Dundonald. In addition, Translink's proposal for a 450-space Park & Ride facility in Newtownards was expected to enhance public transport accessibility and help reduce reliance on private car use.

Next Steps

As referred to above, the Council was obliged to report air quality standards within the Borough to DAERA on an annual basis. We were notified by DAERA in February that the Council's Local Air Quality Progress Report for 2025 had been accepted and the information was posted online. A copy of the Progress Report was attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Summary

Pollutant levels in the Borough had remained below National Air Quality Objectives in 2025 and work would continue to monitor levels throughout 2026. DAERA had approved Council's Local Air Quality Progress Report.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the 'Ards and North Down Borough Council 2025 Progress Report' for air quality in the Borough.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McKee praised officers for their focus on air quality despite expanding workloads. He welcomed a reported lack of statutory breaches but was cautious that not all areas were being monitored so there was no guarantee of overall compliance and safety. He warned that areas where there was no monitoring could impact vulnerable residents and he encouraged continued focus and ongoing communication with the public about risks of engine idling and pollution.

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

9. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 687 – RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICERS (FILE PCSP 210)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that at the Council meeting held on 29th October 2025 it was agreed "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".

Background

Council currently employed two full-time Community Safety Officers on a shift pattern as follows:

Monday and Tuesday 9am to 5pm
Wednesday 3pm – 11pm
Thursday 9am – 5pm
Alternate Fridays and Saturdays 3pm – 11pm

Next Steps

Recruitment of additional staff could have:

- Increased borough-wide patrol coverage
- Led to higher-quality problem-solving
- Improved visibility and deterrence
- Strengthened partnerships and public confidence
- Provided capacity to meet future legislative requirements
- Supported long-term stability and innovation for community safety services

Given the wider organisational changes then underway, it was recommended that Council delayed a decision on expanding the Community Safety Team until the outcome of the next phase of the organisational restructuring process was confirmed. This would have ensured that any changes to staffing structures, reporting arrangements, operational responsibilities or cross-service functions were fully understood before permanent additions to the team were considered.

Deferring the decision at that stage would have allowed Council to:

- Ensure alignment between the proposed CST structure and any new organisational model.
- Avoid duplication or unintended overlap with redesigned service areas.
- Consider whether the managerial responsibilities proposed for the CST Manager would sit within a new tier of leadership or within a revised directorate structure.
- Assess future capacity requirements in the context of wider workforce planning.
- Incorporate forthcoming ASB-related legislative changes into the new organisational arrangement.

Once the organisational restructuring process was completed and new structures were confirmed, a business case for CST expansion could have been revisited with greater certainty, ensuring the team's resourcing aligned fully with both operational demand and corporate design principles.

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RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report until the outcome of the next phase of the organisational restructuring process is confirmed.

Councillor Chambers proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Chambers noted that the motion had been brought by his colleague Councillor Wray and the Mayor and he thanked officers for the report, recognising the value of the community safety team despite the resourcing constraints. He accepted the officer's assessment, believing that it was right to hold off until the organisational restructuring process was completed in order to avoid any duplication or inefficiency. He queried the expected timeline of the restructure and when this matter might realistically be revisited. The Committee was advised that the Head of Community Development post had to be filled permanently before any further organisational changes could take place. This was a Council wide exercise and a Human Resources-intensive process which could likely take up to a year to complete.

Councillor W Irvine acknowledged that the community safety team was stretched and the extra resourcing would be valuable, while recognising that this would be subject to a business case and agreement in the rate setting process.

Responding to a query from Alderman McRandal, the officer confirmed that there was no budget available within the existing financial year.

Councillor McClean noted that the Committee had only previously agreed to an officer's report rather than a commitment to fund new posts. He felt it was important to look at the possibility of requesting Central Government funding for the posts, noting that there was possibility for greater powers to be devolved to local Councils.

The officer updated Members on a personnel change within the Community Safety team advising that a vacant position had now been filled.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 668 - FUNDING FOR DANCE GROUPS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that at the May 2025 Council meeting Notice of Motion 668 was agreed as follows:

'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'.

Members were aware that Council operated a range of funding streams to support community, arts, and sports activity across the Borough. Each programme had defined eligibility criteria, including governance requirements, organisational structures, and accountability standards.

Recognition of the Value of Performance Arts

Council acknowledged the contribution that performance arts made to the Borough.

In particular, performance arts supported:

- Community wellbeing, through participation, social connection, and creative expression.
- Education, by providing opportunities for skills development and cultural learning.
- Tourism, by enhancing the cultural offer and attracting visitors to local events and performances.
- The local economy, through employment, event activity, and associated spending.

There was scope for Council to support the growth of performance arts through capacity-building programmes, partnership development, and exploration of future funding models once governance standards were met.

Performance arts activity contributed positively to equality of opportunity by supporting participation across age groups, genders, and abilities, providing accessible cultural engagement, and strengthening community cohesion.

Council currently supported dance groups indirectly through its wider arts funding and cultural programmes. The main mechanisms available were:

- Arts Project Grants (for constituted groups)
- Arts and Heritage Grants & Bursaries
- Youth Arts Training Grants (for individual dancers)
- Participation in Council-supported arts and community events

Governance Requirements

All Council funding programmes for groups required applicants to demonstrate a formal constitution, appropriate governance arrangements, clear financial management processes, and compliance with safeguarding, insurance, and accountability standards. Most voluntary dance groups operated informally and did not meet these minimum thresholds.

Dance Recognition by Sport Northern Ireland

The Sporting Activities & National Governing Bodies recognised by the Sport Councils recognised dance as a sport and listed five disciplines – Ballroom, Latin, Highland Dance, Scottish Country and Folk Dance.

However, within Northern Ireland, under the recognition policy, there was no recognised National Governing Body for Dance.

DanceSport, which included competitive Ballroom, Latin, and Breaking, was the only dance organisation progressing toward National Governing Body status. However, it had not yet been granted recognition and therefore was not included on the official National Governing Body recognition list.

As a result:

- Dance within Northern Ireland did not have a recognised National Governing Body listed within the Sporting Activities & National Governing Bodies recognised list
- Dance groups were not classified as sports organisations under national frameworks
- Therefore voluntary dance groups remained ineligible for funding

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

Councillor Hollywood proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Council Officers provide a further report detailing an existing grant scheme within Ards and North Down Borough Council that voluntary and constituted dance groups can directly avail from.

Councillor Hollywood was disappointed that young people representing the Borough at national dance competitions could not access funding due to the Council's grants criteria. He referred to the financial challenges that this caused for families affected.

Many were from disadvantaged backgrounds yet they were unable to access grants and financial support to meet travel costs, largely due to bureaucracy.

The seconder, Councillor Chambers, echoed that view and called for greater support from the Council.

Councillor W Irvine noted that many dance groups faced unique challenges as they often lacked affiliation to a National Governing Body despite overseas competitions where many local dancers represented the Borough.

Both Alderman McRandal and Councillor McClean sought clarification on whether the proposer was requesting new funding or if the request was for a report on

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existing schemes that were available. The proposer clarified that it was for a report in relation to funding that was already set aside.

The Head of Community Development clarified that most dance groups were ineligible for sport or community grants unless they were formally constituted with relevant governance requirements in place. These were audit recommendations, but the officer explained that there would be opportunity to raise the matters further at an upcoming workshop.

(Councillor Kerr joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.34 pm)

Alderman McRandal, while sympathetic to the proposal, was cautious about expanding the scope to include dance groups, noting that this could unfairly exclude other types of groups that were in a similar position. Councillor McClean indicated that he was content for just a report to be brought back at this stage.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Council Officers provide a further report detailing an existing grant scheme within Ards and North Down Borough Council that voluntary and constituted dance groups can directly avail from.

11. SPORTS FORUM GRANTS QUARTERLY UPDATE (FILE SD155)

(Appendix VIII - X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that in line with the Council's Grants Policy and as agreed at the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, delegated authority had been approved to the Sports Forum from 12th November 2025.

In September 2025, Officers had advised Members that an additional sum of circa £12,000 would have been required above the £70,000 budget agreed for 2025/26, to meet the expected level of applications based on current trends of the grants scheme year to date and subsequently. Council approved the allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year, with the surplus being sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

£82,000 had been allocated within the 2025/2026 revenue budget for this purpose.

Key Issues

During November and December 2025, the Forum received a total of 30 applications: (1 Coach Education, 7 Goldcards and 22 Individual Travel/Accommodation).

A summary of the 27 successful applications was detailed in the attached 2025/26 Successful Goldcard and Travel/Accommodation Appendices. *To note, October's details had been reported to Committee on 12th November 2025 before it*

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2025/26 Budget £82,000	Annual Budget	Awarded to Date	Funding Awarded *November & December 2025	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£2,000	£1,500	£0	£500.00
Coach Education	£3,000	£500.00	£0	£2,500.00
Equipment	£26,750	£25,033.38	£0	£1,716.62
Events	£12,500	£11,922.76	£0	£677.24
Seeding	£2,000	£799.91	£0	£1,200.09
Travel and Accommodation	£32,750	£40,096.83	*£4,100.00	-£7,346.83
Discretionary	£1,000	£340.00	£0	£660.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000	£0	£0	£2,000
	7 Goldcards Awarded in November and December 2025 (29 Goldcards in total during 2025/26)			

In December 2025, the remaining budget for 2025/26 was £1,907.12, equivalent to approximately 2% of the total 2025/26 budget. As such, officers were advised to close the Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants scheme on 6th November 2025, resulting in no further applications being accepted and officers receiving several queries from individuals and clubs affected by the closure of the scheme.

However, Members were aware that at the Committee meeting in December 2025 it was agreed to allocate a further £15,000 to the Sports Forum Grants budget from ABMWLC's budget due to the facility surpassing its income target. This process had been completed, and applications for Sports Forum Grants were being processed.

Summary

This report outlined the *quarter 3 (November & December 2025 only)* grants that had been administered and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum and was for noting purposes only. This was in line with the Council's Grant Policy and the Council ratifying delegated authority to the Sports Forum from 12th November 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Boyle highlighted the value of the Sports Forum grants programme, noting its successful outcomes such as the issuing of gold cards to residents and enabling athletes to travel to international competitions.

He referred to the Ards and North Down Sports Awards that were due to take place on the forthcoming Friday 13 March which would be an opportunity for the Council to showcase and recognise much of this talent along with the dedication of coaches and volunteers who helped to create these opportunities. He praised the Sports

Development team and others involved in organising the event and was confident that the evening would illustrate the benefits of promoting sport within Ards and North Down.

Councillor S Irvine concurred, noting the value of the Borough's sporting achievements and the upcoming awards ceremony. He thanked officers and the Sports Development team for their work.

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

12. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were no Notice of Motions.

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

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

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

14. AWARD OF THE TENDER FOR SUMMER SCHEME PROVISION (FILE CDV62)

ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - SCHEDULE 6

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that at a meeting of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee held in November 2025 it had been agreed that Council would pilot an alternative method of delivery for Council led summer schemes for 2026.

A procurement exercise was undertaken to appoint a contractor to deliver up to 8 schemes across the Borough during July and August 2026. During 2025 Council summer schemes had been delivered in 8 locations for children aged 5–11 years

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and were managed by the Community Development team. The Leisure Services department supported schemes in Comber and Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centres.

The tender for 2026 requested an external provider to provide 8 schemes to be held during the school summer holidays in Council centres at Redburn, Alderman George Green, Donaghadee, Portavogie, Bowtown (using Church), Westwinds, Ballygowan and Comber.

This pilot did not impact the community led schemes in Portaferry, Millisle and Kilcooley.

Tender

The tender for summer scheme provision was published in the *Belfast Telegraph*, Council website and on eTendersNI on Tuesday 9 December 2025 with a closing date of Friday 16 January 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the award of the recommended contractor for an initial 12-month period.

Alderman Cummings proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

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

15. REVIEW OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) LICENCE SCHEME CHARGES AND PROPOSED INCREASE IN LICENCE FEE FROM 1ST APRIL 2026

ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - SCHEDULE 6

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ("2016 Act") had received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016 and took effect from 1 April 2019. The Department for Communities ("DfC") had laid the subordinate Regulations, the Houses of Multiple Occupation (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 ("2019 Regulations"). These Regulations set the maximum level of fee for an application for an HMO licence at £45 per person, per annum.

The policy objective of the 2025 Regulations was to allow the HMO Licensing Scheme to continue to operate on a cost neutral basis for councils. This reiterated

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the policy objective at the time of the introduction of the 2016 Act, which was to ensure that the transfer of the administration of HMOs to councils would be cost neutral and not at the expense of rate payers.

A review of the HMO charging model had forecast that for the current 5year term 2024/25 – 2028/29 the licence application fee needed to increase to £62 per person, per annum.

Note that the Chair of SOLACE would write to the DfC Permanent Secretary regarding the risk being carried by Councils and the need to bring forward legislation on this matter within the current mandate.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the fees as per the report.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Councillor Chambers withdrew from the meeting due to a declaration of interest in Item 16 – 7.43 pm)

16. **RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 519 – QUEENS HALL, HOLYWOOD (FILE CW103)**

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - SCHEDULE 6

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Council previously agreed the following Notice of Motion:

“That this Council recognises the opportunity that a return to Council management of the Queen’s Leisure Complex, Hollywood presents to develop the potential for a revitalised local asset that benefits the whole community, - a space for health, arts, culture, recreation, events and learning.

In light of this opportunity, this Council resolves to facilitate engagement with relevant community stakeholders, the purpose of which will be to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen’s Leisure Complex asset.

A report, to include a costed plan, should be presented to Council before the end of 2022”.

Progress to date

Community consultation took place on 24th September 2024 with a report being brought to Committee in December 2024.

Subsequently it was agreed in December 2024 that the recommendation be agreed, and furthermore Council undertook further community engagement to share information and to address the questions raised at the community event, via open dialogue, ensuring that this opportunity was communicated with plenty of advance notice to local groups and residents via email and social media to ensure engagement. Furthermore, Council agreed to work together with those local groups and residents in Holywood to agree the scope and carry out a feasibility study as soon as practical, that would then be brought back to Council for consideration.

Two subsequent meetings were held between officers and elected representatives of the Holywood DEA to ascertain the focus for the scope of the feasibility study. The initial notice of motion referred to Queens Leisure Complex, but further discussions focused on the community wing of the Centre, rather than the Leisure Centre, and therefore officers focused on this part of the Centre.

It was also noted that SERCO currently managed the running of the whole Queens Complex and this contract was in place until March 2028.

At the consultation event a number of concerns were raised in relation to the condition of the Queens Hall itself, the adjacent toilets and kitchen. It was suggested that initial works to these areas could be undertaken prior to a full feasibility study

Members were also aware that during this time work was ongoing with the Regeneration Team in Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.47 pm.

Unclassified

ITEM 9**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	25 March 2026
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Deputation request from Rights Respecting Schools Ambassadors of Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation Request Form
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None
	Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background

A deputation request has been received from Ms Ruth Wood on behalf of Rathmore Primary School's Rights Respecting School Ambassadors and Strangford College's Rights Respecting School Ambassadors.

The attached request form states, at the outset, that 'the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Ambassadors from Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College, wish to present to Council the importance and benefits of Ards and North Down becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly Community.'

The full request is attached at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Considers the deputation request.



Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk, providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Applicant Details

We apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

Name of person(s) making the deputation request:	Ruth Wood
Date of request:	February 2026
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Rathmore Primary School's Rights Respecting School Ambassadors and Strangford College's Rights Respecting School Ambassadors
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	

Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Why Ards and North Down Borough Council Should Become a UNICEF Child Friendly Community

We, the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Ambassadors from Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College, wish to present to Council the importance and benefits of Ards and North Down becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly Community.

As pupils, we believe that children should be listened to, protected, included and given opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. A 'Child Friendly Community' is a commitment by the Council to place the rights, needs and voices of children and young people at the heart of local decision-making, services and planning.

Our deputation outlines:

1. Children's Rights and Why They Matter

Children have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These include the right to be safe, to learn, to be healthy, to play and to have their views taken seriously. A Child Friendly Community would demonstrate the Council's commitment to respecting, protecting and fulfilling these rights locally.

2. The Value of Listening to Children

Children use and rely upon council-run services every day, parks, schools, libraries, leisure centres and community spaces. We can offer valuable insight into what works well and what needs improved. By engaging with children directly, the Council can make better, safer and more informed decisions.

3. Ensuring Children Feel Safe, Included and Respected

Becoming a Child Friendly Community would help create an environment where all children (regardless of background, ability or identity) feel welcome, supported and valued. This aligns with key principles of equality, inclusion and wellbeing.

4. Long-Term Community Benefits

When children feel valued and listened to, they grow into adults who are confident, engaged and active contributors to their community. Investing in children's rights now strengthens the overall safety and wellbeing of our community.

5. Our Willingness to Support the Council's Journey

As RRS Ambassadors, we are keen to help the Council understand children's rights and contribute ideas that make our community more child-friendly.

We respectfully request that the Council considers adopting the UNICEF Child Friendly Community framework. This would show a strong commitment to children and young

people, demonstrate respect for their rights and voices and help make Ards and North Down an even better place to grow up.

We thank the Council for considering our deputation request.

Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 12, January 2025

12. Deputations

(1) Deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received seven working days notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Council.

(2) In the case of an emergency, deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received one working day's notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Mayor.

(3) The deputation shall be confined to the presentation of a statement, or copy of resolutions, and shall not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address shall not exceed 10 minutes followed by a maximum 15 minutes question and answer session.

(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn (members of the deputation will remain subject to Standing Order 8). Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

Privacy notice – how we will use information about you

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a Data Processor under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers when receiving and administering deputation requests.

You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing it falls within the following three categories:

- a) **Consent** - you consent to the information being processed for the specific purpose of the Council considering your deputation request;
- b) **Public task** - the processing is necessary in order for the Council to consider your request in line with its Standing Orders which were established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and
- c) **Legitimate interests** - the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests (or the legitimate interests of a third party) in order that Council may consider your deputation request.

The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

Your personal data will not be shared or disclosed to any other organisation without your consent, unless the law permits or places an obligation on the Council to do so.

Personal data is held and stored by the Council in a safe and secure manner and in compliance with Data Protection legislation and in line with the Council's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

If you have any queries regarding the processing of your personal data, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Email: dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

ITEM 12**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	25 March 2026
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Notice of Motion Tracker
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None
	Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Choose an item. Choose an item. If multiple:

Background

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 Council **Notes** this 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 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 to May 2026 EC	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. Update to May A&HC Committee.	Gareth Kinnear Head of Environmental Health & Regulatory Services	
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 June 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 Committee if that clarity is obtained in advance. Meeting to be held on 27 November 2025 with the Mayor, Members and Officers had to be postponed until the new year. Update paper went to P&P Committee on 8 January 2026. Report to March A&HC Committee.	Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure & Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)
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 March 2026 - Advice now received, 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	Update report to be brought to a future Committee Officers still awaiting response from EA at January 2026 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. March 2026 - Advice now received on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)

586	Corporate Services	16.10.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Dec 2026 : 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.</p> <p>January 2026 update : The former registrar of the Land Registry has just provided a report to Council's solicitor on the likelihood of Council achieving Good Title on the land at Ambleside and this looks positive. We are waiting for the Council's solicitor to provide advice on the Council's next steps and this will be in the next few weeks.</p> <p>March 2026 update : The Council's solicitor has advised that they are happy to rely upon the expertise of the former Registrar of the Land Registry, in that the risk to The Council is much lower than previously anticipated and the former Registrar's positive view on The Council achieving Good Title on the land at Ambleside. Officers shared this view and have instructed the solicitor to contact the sellers' solicitor to move this towards completion as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)</p>	
595	Environment	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 29.11.2023</p>	<p>Update report to be brought to March 2026 EC</p> <p>NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation</p> <p>Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee Second report to June 2025 C&W Committee.</p>	<p>Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)</p>	

599	Active & Healthy Communities	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	<p>“That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)</p>	<p>Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024</p>	<p>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 to June 2026 A&HC Committee</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	<p>That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams.</p> <p>Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved.</p>	<p>Council 27.03.24 Item 18.3 Environment Committee 10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 06.11.24 Item 3 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Item 3 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 9</p>	<p>Agreed at EC 04.03.26: Alternative recommendation AGREED This Council notes the contents of the report; however, it agrees the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> That the option of an outer breakwater should not be dismissed outright. The RPS Harbour Study (2020) indicated that an offshore breakwater could moderate wave conditions within Donaghadee Harbour to a more acceptable level and potentially reduce wave impacts along the adjacent shoreline. While Council recognises that it does not have the financial resources to deliver such infrastructure independently, officers should continue to explore potential external funding opportunities. That Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on her Department to invest in improved coastal defences for Donaghadee, recognising the Department’s responsibility for flood risk management and sea defence infrastructure in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to coastal erosion and flooding along the town’s seafront. <p>Agreed at EC 11.06.25: 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.</p> <p>Agreed that the Council proceeds with the ‘Phase 1’ further</p>	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	

619	Environment	29.05.24	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson	<p>That this Council notes with concern the temporary closure of Groomspout Tennis Courts due to issues around the safety of the playing surface.</p> <p>Further to this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on Tennis Court maintenance throughout the Borough and will commit to ensuring all our Tennis Court facilities are properly maintained and are fully accessible to all. Council will also promote the use of Tennis facilities in the Borough as we approach the spring/summer season.</p>	<p>Council 29.05.24 Item 20.1</p> <p>Community & Wellbeing 15.01.25 Item 5</p> <p>Environment Committee 07.01.26 Item 8</p>	<p>Agreed at EC 07.01.26: That the Development of the Greyabbey MUGA Project be delivered as a joint Village Renewal and Parks Project with progress report coming to the Council.</p> <p>Agreed at C&W 15.01.25: That the Council agree the recommendation of the Committee but further tasks officers to explore the feasibility of incorporating a MUGA as part of the redevelopment of Greyabbey Tennis Courts including engagement with current users, sports clubs and community groups to ensure use for all sports and maximum investment and sport participation for the community of Greyabbey.</p> <p>Assigned to January 2025 C&W Agenda. Moved to EC due to restructure.</p>	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
624	Corporate Services	20.05.24	Councillor Kendall, Alderman McRandal and Alderman Graham	<p>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.</p>	Council - May 2024 Corporate Services Committee June	<p>January 2026: This matter is progressing in line with the actions agreed by both The Council and Conlig Community Regeneration Group. The NIHE has agreed to the sale of the land and it is with LPS for a valuation.</p> <p>March 2026 update: This matter is progressing in line with the actions agreed by both The Council and Conlig Community Regeneration Group. The NIHE has agreed to the sale of the land, and it is with LPS for a valuation. A site meeting took place in early March with representatives of the group and the Estates team to discuss the next steps for the construction of the Memorial and landscaping of the site.</p>	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance) & Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	

629	Environment	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	<p>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.</p> <p>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.”</p>	<p>Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3)</p> <p>September C&W Committee Environment Committee 3 December 2025 (Item 6)</p>	<p>Update report to be brought to June 2026 EC</p> <p>Update report at EC December: ALTERNATIVE RECOMENDATION AGREED. 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 reps.</p> <p>NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation</p> <p>Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage. Report to June C&W Committee with progress report as communicated to DEA members and local community in April and May 2025 on next steps and plans for enhancement of the site. Update to October 2025 C&WC.</p>	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	<p>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.</p>	Council September 2024 (Item 13.1)	<p>Meeting with Rhys McClenaghan took place in January 2025.</p> <p>January 2026: Progressing - Events on 23 and 25th January 2026 .</p> <p>Remove from tracker after March Council meeting.</p>	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) Environment Committee 3 December 2025 (Item 4)	<p>Report to be brought to April 2026 EC</p> <p>Agreed not to continue with the pedestrian access arrangements in their current form. Furthermore, officers to investigate other means of safely providing pedestrian access to HRC sites alongside vehicular access and report the outcome of this to a future meeting. Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Hollywood and Donaghadee HRCs</p> <p>Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Hollywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1. Further report to follow. Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024</p>	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 March 2026 A&HCC.	Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure	
638	Place & Prosperity	22.10.2024	Councillors Harbinson & McCracken	<p>That this Council should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade, Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Council's Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments. 2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use. 3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive disposal policies. 	Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2) Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)	<p>Report to be brought to 9 April 2026 P&P Committee</p> <p>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</p> <p>Update report to P&P in the first quarter of 2026</p> <p>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</p>	Director of Place and Prosperity	

640		05.11.2024	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair	<p>That this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses.</p> <p>Further to this, Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; further commits to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this budget and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.</p>	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.	Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.		
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	<p>Update report to be brought to EC May 2026</p> <p>Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Environment Committee 05.03.2025.</p> <p>Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council 26.02.25</p>	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	<p>Update report to be brought to EC April 2026</p> <p>NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation</p> <p>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</p>	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 May 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 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 13	Update report brought to EC March 2026 - agreed to note update report NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Assigned to June 2025 C&W Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
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		Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure	
670	Environment	07.05.25	Councillor Morgan and Councillor Irwin	This Council is pleased with the recycling rates for waste that have been achieved in the Borough, however there are currently limited facilities to recycle litter. This sends out a poor message to our residents and visitors. This Council asks that officers bring back a report that explores how, and when recycling litter bins could be introduced to the Borough. Indication of costs should be included.	Council 28.05.25 and Environment Committee 11.06.25 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 4	Agreed at EC 04.03.26: Agreed the proposal in the report to conduct a 'Recycling on the Go' Pilot 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	<p>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: Limiting the number of dogs that any one person may be in charge of to a maximum of four at any given time in public spaces. Mandating that professional dog walkers must have dogs on leads at all times to ensure dog control and accountability for dog behaviours. Include in the report, the provision and cost of a complementary public education campaign, to inform residents, recreational and professional dog walkers about the new limit, about what it means to have a dog under your control in public spaces (whether on or off lead), and what promoting responsible dog control and safety in shared spaces should be. To write to the DAERA Minister to ask him to introduce, and provide funding support to Councils to enforce, mandatory registration of professional dog walkers to help to ensure suitable animal welfare standards, the provision of suitable training, experience, insurance, and public safety.</p>	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.1	<p>Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC</p> <p>Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda. Moved to A&HC due to restructure. Update to March 2026 A&HC Committee. Letter sent to Andrew Muir 12.02.26 by CE.</p>	Gareth Kinnear Head of Environmental Health & Regulatory Services	
672	Place & Prosperity	20.05.25	Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson	<p>Amendment to Notice of Motion 672 submitted by Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson</p> <p>"This Council welcomes the update on Marine Gardens provided by Bangor Marine on 13 August 2025 and agrees that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Report to be brought to 9 April 2026 P&P Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Agreed to adopt NOM at Sept 2025 P&P - ratified at Sept 2025 Council</p>	Director of Place and Prosperity	
673	Environment	21.05.25	Alderman Graham and Councillor Cochrane	<p>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.</p>	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.2 Environment Committee 03.12.2025 Item 3 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 4	<p>Agreed at EC 04.02.26: AMENDMENT AGREED. That we accept officer proposal with the addition of a review in one year's time to ascertain usage and value for money</p> <p>Report brought to December 2025 EC: ALTERNATIVE RECOMENDATION AGREED to note the report and bring back a report on costs and options on extending the summer opening hours to cover April and September as well as May to August, to redevelop and relaunch a community scheme to increase provisions for the public during the summer months and review its impacts in order to bring a report back to Council after a period of review.</p> <p>Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda</p>	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	
676	Active & Healthy Communities	16.06.25	Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum	<p>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.</p>	Council 30.07.25 - Community & Wellbeing Committee	<p>Assigned to September 2025 C&W Agenda. Report to February 2026 A&HC Committee. Remove after call in.</p>	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	March 2026 update: The Lands team are looking at options and a report will be brought back to committee. The Lands policy was reviewed and will form part of the update.	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.	Anton Cozzo 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 discussed 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 conjunction with the Craigavad and Helen's Bay Branch of the Royal British Legion, to bring a military event to Holywood.	Council 24.09.25. Corporate Services Committee	December update : Meeting to take place in Jan 2026 to work up proposal. Once there is a proposal a report will be presented to Committee. January 2026 update : Meeting has taken place, draft plan proposed, facilitator to confirm with relevant parties . Further meeting to confirm arrangements in March and report will be brought back then. March 2026 update: Plans progressing and report will be brought to Committee as soon as they are confirmed with all parties.	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	Report to be brought to May 2026 EC Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC 2025 - 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	<p>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.</p> <p>Therefore, this councils resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write to the Ministers for Justice, Communities, Finance, DAERA, and Health, calling for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 relationships and the protection of their pets. 2. Promote public awareness of the connection between domestic abuse, coercive control and animal abuse, in collaboration with statutory agencies and animal welfare organisations. 3. Encourage engagement and collaboration within all Councils and other key stakeholders to support the implementation of Ruby's Law in the community to protect animals and people 	Council 29.10.25 AHC	Report to March 2026 A&HC Committee.	Gareth Kinnear (Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services)	
686	Corporate Services	15.10.25	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Gilmour	<p>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.</p>	Council 29.10.25 Corporate Services Committee	Reply received from Justice Minister and report to CS Feb 2026. Further response from the Chief Executive sent following meeting. Letter from Justice Minister to be reported to April Committee.		
687	Active & Healthy Communities	16.10.25	Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray	<p>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.</p>	Council 29.10.25. AHC	Deferred to December A&HC Committee. Report to March A&HC Committee.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
688	Corporate Services	16.10.25	Alderman Graham and Alderman McIlveen	<p>That Council in liaison with Belfast City Airport arranges a visit to the Airport for members and officers.</p>	Council 29.10.25 Corporate Services Committee	Visit arranged for 18 March. Deputation request issued to BCA via their representative at Brown O'Connor.		
689	Environment	21.10.25	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	<p>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.</p>	Council 29.10.25 Environment Committee	Report to be brought to April 2026 EC Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC - ratified at November 2025 Council Assigned to November 2025 EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

690	Corporate Services	31.10.25	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	<p>That this Council pledges to oppose the introduction of any Digital ID system that would be mandatory or linked to essential services.</p> <p>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.</p>	Council November 26.11.25 Corporate Services Committee	28.1.2026 Letter sent to Prime Minister from CEX. Reply received and report to go to Corporate Committee in March 2026.		
692	Active & Healthy Communities	12.11.25	Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall	<p>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.</p> <p>This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Further that Council works with AND PCSP to explore how we can effectively tackle the antisocial behaviour associated with fireworks.</p>	Council November 26.11.25 Active and Healthy Communities Committee	Officers to progress. Letter to go to DoJ when Call in expires after Jan 2026 Council.	Gareth Kinnear Head of Environmental Health & Regulatory Services & Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community)	
693	Corporate Services	26.11.25	Alderman McRandal and Alderman McAlpine	<p>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, Craigavon is an integral section of the North Down coastal path and the Ulster Way.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>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.</p>	Council December 2025 Environment Committee 7 January 2026 Item 9.2	<p>Report to be brought to a future meeting of the Corporate Services Committee to include legal advice regarding responsibility for the sea defence wall.</p> <p>NOM reassigned to Corporate Services Committee 11.02.2026 Agreed to adopt NOM at January 2026 Environment Committee</p>	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates) Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
694	Corporate Services	27.11.25	Councillor Ashe and Councillor McBurney	<p>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.</p>	Council December 2025 and Corporate Services Committee January 2026	Corporate Committee decision 13 January 2026 decision to defer. On CS February 2026 agenda. 9.3.2026 - Ratified minute sent to Head of HR.	Head of HR	
695	Active & Healthy Communities	01.12.25	Councillor Smart and Alderman McIlveen	<p>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.</p> <p>A review of this provision would then be included in the current and ongoing policy review relating to council community facilities.</p>	Heard and Agreed at Council meeting December 17 2025	Report to February 2026 A&HC Committee. Remove after call in.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

697	Active & Healthy Communities	08.12.25	Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings	<p>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.</p> <p>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 adaptations.</p>	Council December 2025 and Active and Healthy Communities Committee Jan 2026	Deferred to February A&HC Committee and adopted.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)
698	Active & Healthy Communities	09.12.25	Councillor Wray and Councillor Chambers	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In order to improve this process, Officers will bring back a report considering the implications of making the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Council December 2025 and Active and Healthy Communities Committee Jan 2026	Report to May A&HC Committee	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)
699	Corporate Services	09.12.25	Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum	<p>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.</p>	Council December 2025 and Corporate Services Committee Jan 2026	Final ratified minute to go to Community Planning Manager	Community Planning Manager
700	Environment	10.12.25	Councillor Cochrane and councillor Thompson	<p>That this Council notes the growing popularity of Linear Park in Bangor East as a hub for the local community. Further to this, officers will bring back a report exploring options for providing path markings in both Upper and Lower Linear Park for runners, such as distance indicators eg. 1 km, 2 km, along with appropriate signage to assist those who wish to keep fit in the Park. Officers will also examine options for upgrading the path and accompanying drainage system in Lower Linear Park between the bridge and the Ring Road, in light of persistent flooding and drainage issues.</p>	Council January 2026 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 9.1	Assigned to February 2026 EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)
701	Environment	08.01.26	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	<p>That this Council notes that the natural stone blinding pathways around Londonderry Park are prone to saturation with water resulting in significant standing water and sludginess which adversely impacts on the use and enjoyment of the park. Council therefore requests that officers prepare a business case with a view to paving or tarmacking the paths in the park to improve the user experience.</p>	Council January 2026 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 9.2	Assigned to February 2026 EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)
702	Environment	20.01.26	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor McClean	<p>That this Council recognises its responsibility to ensure that our city, towns and villages are looking the best that they can be, to be welcoming places for visitors and our residents. It is therefore essential that the correct structures and policies are in place to ensure that within the resources made available all expected maintenance is being carried out efficiently and effectively. A proactive maintenance regime was agreed when this Council was created and has worked well in some areas but has not had the desired impact in other areas. Basic maintenance and upkeep of our public realm particularly in our centres and prominent areas can and should be improved. The Council therefore commits to reporting on a review of its current proactive maintenance and cleansing regimes, highlighting options and opportunities for improvement and associated budgetary requirements, so as to allow members to consider potential improvements in outcomes concerning the maintenance of Council property and the public realms.</p>	Council January 2026 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 9.3	Report to be brought to April 2026 EC Assigned to February EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries) Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates) Keith Patterson (Head of Waste & Cleansing)

703	Active & Healthy Communities	20.01.26	Councillor Brady and Alderman McAlpine	This Council pledges to write to Stormont to request the introduction of femicide as a specific hate crime which therefore carries an appropriate sentence, as well as specific deradicalisation support while in prison in order to prevent reoffending. Femicide is defined as the intentional killing of a woman due to factors such as hatred, discrimination or subjugation. It also includes acts motivated by control, possession or domination over a woman, or in relation to her refusal to establish or maintain an emotional relationship, or as an act of limitation of her personal freedom. This Council recognises that the motivation for this crime is rooted in a desire for the control and subjugation of women, driven by patriarchal attitudes in society. That perpetrators can be partners but as our communities are changing, we are also seeing a growing trend of 'honour based' killings of women by family members. That while femicide lies at the extreme end of the spectrum of violence against women, other acts motivated by control, possession, or dominance - such a domestic abuse, coercive control, and harassment - create the conditions in which femicide occurs. These acts serve as warning signs that, when left unaddressed, can escalate to fatal violence. And by establishing femicide as a distinct criminal offence, we send a clear message that gender-based violence will not be tolerated and that the lives of women have inherent value deserving of specific legal protection.	Council January 2026 and Active and Healthy Communities February 2026	Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at February AHC Committee		
704	Active & Healthy Communities	20.01.26	Councillor Ashe and Councillor Moore	That Council notes the success of the inclusion of effigies and emblems to the penaliteis for 'in-programme' bonfires; that Council tasks officers to engage with groups to add flags to the list of penalties for 'in programme' bonfires; and that officers return a report updating Members on these actions by the June committee meeting.	Council January 2026 and Active and Healthy Communities February 2026	Motion Fell at February AHC Committee		
705	Place & Prosperity	06.02.2026	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	That Council recognises the huge benefits to the Ards Peninsula and wider Borough of greater connectivity in terms of tackling isolation, boosting local business and enhancing tourism. Furthermore, that Council is concerned about the increased traffic travelling along Ards Peninsula roads which could be better served by a fixed crossing between Portaferry and Strangford village and which may help in addressing congestion in other parts of the Borough and assist in improving road safety in roads within the Peninsula. Council, therefore, agrees to write to The Minister Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.	Council February 2026 and P&P March 2026	Agreed to adopt NOM at March 2026 P&P, subject to ratification at March Council.	Director of Place and Prosperity	
706	Environment	12.02.2026	Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings	To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen tree over the Enler River, Comber, which has been there since Storm Eowyn.	Council February 2026 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 14.1	Agreed to adopt NOM at March 2026 EC Assigned to March 2026 EC Agenda		
707	Environment	17.02.2026	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks	That this Council notes with deep concern the recent destruction caused to bushes, trees and wild grass in The Commons, Donaghadee. Further to this, Council agrees to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, calling upon him to designate The Commons, Donaghadee as either an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), or another appropriate form of protected status, in order to help safeguard this important green space.	Council February 2026 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 14.2	Agreed to adopt NOM at March 2026 EC Assigned to March 2026 EC Agenda		



Dr Philip Wales
Chief Executive & Registrar General
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028 9038 8430

Council Chief Executive

Via email:

9 March 2026

Dear Chief Executive

DEATHS, STILL-BIRTHS AND BABY LOSS ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2026

I am writing to provide you with an update on the legislative position for the remote registration of deaths and still-births and the electronic transfer of documents that have been in operation in the registration office under the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020.

As you will be aware, following the introduction of emergency legislation in March 2020 temporary arrangements were established to allow death and still-birth registrations to be carried out without the physical attendance of an informant and to enable the electronic transfer of documents between relevant stakeholders.

These provisions were originally intended as short-term measures to reduce face-to-face contact with the public during the pandemic, while ensuring the continued delivery of the registration service. Over time, however, the remote processes and procedures introduced during that period have become embedded operationally and have proven to be effective and efficient.

In light of this, the remote registration arrangements have now been placed on a permanent legal footing through the introduction of the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026. Commencement of the Act will bring about amendments to both the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and the Civil Registration Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 and will revoke the Coronavirus provisions that have been previously relied on.

In addition, new regulations, The Deaths and Still-Births (Signing of Certificates) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026, will shortly come into operation that will

provide the statutory framework for the signing of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death and Certificates of Still-Birth by medical practitioners or registered midwives. These regulations specify the accepted forms of signature as:

- Signed in ink; or
- By approved electronic means, which includes an electronic signature or the printed name of the medical practitioner on the certificate.

The changes through the Act, replicate the temporary provisions previously in place and your registration office will have well established processes in place to continue the remote death and still-birth registration service.

The commencement of the provision in the Act and the regulations will come into operation with effect from Monday 23 March 2026. This will mean that no further six-monthly Coronavirus Extension Orders will be required.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your registration staff for your continued support in the provision of the registration service which is provided in a professional and customer focussed manner.

Should you require any further clarification, do not hesitate to contact us at gro_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Philip Wales

Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and Registrar General for Northern Ireland



The Consumer Experience of the Current Energy Crisis

**Report by the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
4th March 2026**

1. Overview of our response

The Consumer Council for Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to provide a report on the consumer experience of the current energy crisis and recommended protections.

This paper provides detail on current levels of interest noted by the Consumer Council, pricing and the factors influencing prices, storage, regulation, definitions, and immediate advice to consumers.

Key Information

Current levels of interest

From Monday we have logged 9 contacts about oil prices - this will rise to at least 13 by close of business on 4th of March 2026.

We are also starting to log complaints regarding petrol and diesel prices.

Pricing

The Consumer Council actively monitors and publishes home heating oil prices every Thursday, which helps consumers to make informed purchasing decisions and shop around between suppliers. This can be found at [Home Heating Oil Price Checker | Consumer Council](#).

- In relation to petrol and diesel, it is difficult to predict the impact on prices at the pumps. Overall, there tends to be more of a “lag” in changes to petrol and diesel prices compared to home heating oil. It can take some time for changes in the wholesale price of oil to work their way through the supply chain to the fuel pump. Price differences also often reflect when fuel was purchased by retailers and the volume bought at a given price.

The price of home heating oil (HHO) is set at a wholesale level, so suppliers/distributors don't hedge and the margins made by the (NI) suppliers/distributors are very low (<4%).

Factors Influencing Pricing

The price that consumers pay is impacted by a complex range of factors:

- Supply and demand – this is the fundamental driver for oil prices. Oversupply and low demand usually equates to lower prices, tight supply and high demand usually means higher prices. Local oil suppliers tend to only have a couple of days stock at any given time, so any reduced supply or increased demand will drive prices up. The heating season is typically from October through to April in Northern Ireland. Demand was high during the winter cold snap and prices increased. Demand has decreased over the last few weeks due to the recent good weather with householders not needing to put on their oil heating as much.
- Global crude oil prices – these prices are impacted by production capacity, global supply and demand, global economic issues and financial markets, geopolitical issues, and global weather conditions.
- Foreign exchange rates – crude oil is traded in US dollars, so the strength of sterling impacts the price consumers here pay. A weaker pound means more expensive oil. £1 sterling is currently worth \$1.33 US dollars, down from \$1.38 in January.

- Refinery costs – home heating oil needs to be refined from crude oil, so the associated costs can affect the price consumers pay.
- Supplier purchase costs – local oil suppliers purchase oil from larger oil importers/wholesalers mostly on a daily basis and the cost to them, will reflect in the price they charge consumers. If prices are volatile, it can mean they have purchased at a higher price, so need to sell at a higher price in order to cover their costs. If prices are cheaper, then these savings are passed onto consumers.
- Delivery costs – the cost of delivering oil is also factored into the price that a consumer pays. Remote areas may pay slightly more due to transport logistics.
- Localised competition – the number of suppliers operating in an area can have an impact the price a consumer pays.
- Market sentiment – if there is anxiety about supplies, it can push prices up. This can apply on a global, regional and local level. The opposite is also true. The mere belief that oil demand will decrease at some point in the future can result in a dramatic decrease in prices.
- Political and economic factors - Apart from the factors mentioned above, geopolitical events, such as the current conflict with Iran and past conflicts with other oil-producing countries (Russia's conflict with Ukraine that started in Feb 2022), can create uncertainty in the global oil supply, spooking the energy markets, leading to sharp increases in prices.

Regulation

The home heating oil market in Northern Ireland is unregulated, so there are limited price controls in place. It relies on market competition to keep prices under control, and it can mean consumers are directly exposed to the impact of the different factors listed above.

There is good competition and we provide price transparency and consumer choice through our weekly HHO price checker.

Storage Capacity

Northern Irish oil distributors carry very little stock. Additionally, there is no central oil storage capacity available in Northern Ireland.

At present however, the wholesale distributors in Northern Ireland are not reporting shortages of supply, so an additional centralised supply, might be of limited assistance to consumers and also has the potential to adversely affect the local market. Such a facility would require legislation and planning permission, and would not be of assistance in the immediate future.

Definitions - Home Heating Oil and Crude Oil

Home heating oil and crude oil are not the same thing and are therefore priced differently.

- **Crude Oil:** This is the unrefined petroleum extracted from the ground. It is a complex mixture of hydrocarbons and other organic materials. Crude oil must undergo refining to separate it into various usable products, including gasoline, diesel, and heating oil.
- **Home Heating Oil:** This is a specific type of fuel oil that is made from crude oil, through a refining process that separates the crude oil into different “fractions” while removing impurities making it specifically suitable for residential heating.

Consumer Tools and Service Standards

Consumer Council Heating Oil Price Checker

The Consumer Council Home Heating Oil Price Checker samples prices from oil suppliers across Northern Ireland to provide consumers with an indication of current prices for 300, 500 and 900 litres of home heating oil. It provides average prices for the whole of Northern Ireland and for the individual council areas. This tracker does not forecast future prices – they are correct at the time of the survey. Not every town or supplier is represented but this information gives consumers an idea of what they could be paying and empowers consumers to shop around for a better deal. This information is published on our website every Thursday [Home Heating Oil Price Checker | Consumer Council](#)

NI Oil Federation Customer Charter

In September 2013, the Northern Ireland Oil Federation (NIOF) in consultation with the Consumer Council, published a Customer Charter which was then updated in 2025 [NIOF Customer Charter 2025.pdf](#).

The NIOF customer charter means that members will:

- "Deliver oil according to your requirements/specifications within an agreed timeframe (subject to weather and trading conditions).
- Value our customers and engage actively with them.
- Advise you on all the services we provide.
- Ensure our services are accessible to all our customers.
- Comply with all applicable Northern Ireland Health & Safety and Environmental legislation and guidelines.
- Offer you a choice of payment options.
- Produce clear and accurate invoices and bills.
- Provide advice on where to seek advice if you have difficulty paying.
- Provide special help and advice for our most vulnerable customers.
- Make it easy for you to contact us.
- Deal quickly and effectively to try and resolve any problems that you advise us of.

The Members of the Northern Ireland Oil Federation (NIOF) are committed to providing customers the highest level of service and satisfaction www.nioil.com."

Immediate Advice for NI Home Heating Oil Consumers

The Consumer Council is deeply aware that this is a difficult, worrying time for consumers. With over 60% of consumers in Northern Ireland reliant on home heating oil, the continuing price increases we have seen since 1st March have focused attention on how vulnerable Northern Ireland is to international geopolitical instability, and how quickly our consumers can be impacted by resultant price changes. Around six in every ten homes in Northern Ireland are reliant on Home Heating Oil to run their central heating. As we import all of our oil here, we are at the mercy of volatile global oil markets.

It is therefore vital that the Consumer Council provides timely and accurate information to ensure that consumers are protected, as far as possible, in times of energy crisis.

As noted above, the Consumer Council is part of a voluntary standards charter with NI Oil Federation. Consumer law protects against contract breach. (TSSNI)

At present we would advise consumers not to 'panic buy', as this can have the unintended consequence of further inflating prices, but if you are running low and need an oil delivery soon, get a few quotes for prices and think about ordering a smaller quantity than you otherwise would.

The Consumer Council encourages consumers to shop around for the best deal on heating oil. Our Home Heating Oil Checker is updated weekly to show the average prices across Northern Ireland to help consumers make informed choices. When ordering home heating oil, consumers should ensure they agree a maximum price and delivery date if the supplier will not confirm a price.

Joining an oil buying club (Oil Savings Network) enables householders to buy oil at a competitive price through community bulk buying. However, services to oil buying clubs can be suspended during oil crisis situations due to supply issues.

The Northern Ireland Oil Federation has PayPoint facilities to enable consumers to budget and make regular payments towards an oil delivery instead of having to pay for delivery in a lump sum.

We discourage consumers from buying 20 litre emergency oil drums from forecourts as a regular means of topping up their oil tank, as they are extremely expensive and should only be used in emergency circumstances.

The Consumer Council is currently running its 'Save Energy, Save Money' campaign' which sets out support and advice to help households save money on their bills this winter by reducing their energy usage through adopting energy efficiency measures. The advice and guidance, including an overview of all financial help, grants and schemes that are currently available to consumers is available at www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/costofliving/energy.

The Consumer Council was involved in bringing about the establishment of the first Northern Ireland wide emergency energy scheme to help consumers at imminent risk of disconnection in the winter of 2022, this scheme was managed by Bryson and received £2M from DfC after The Consumer Council. The scheme which receives

donations from the energy sector is operating again this winter, and we are actively referring households to it for support. This service is accessed through referrals and is not directly available to the public.

Contact information

If you have any questions, require further information or wish to discuss any aspect of this paper, please contact:

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