

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

22 April 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, 29 April 2026 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4.
 - a) Mayor's Business
 - b) Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of April 2026 (attached)
5. Deputation from Shane Mac Giollabhui and Sharon Ferguson
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 25 March 2026 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 7.1. Audit Committee dated 23 March 2026
 - 7.2. Planning Committee dated 31 March 2026
 - 7.3. Environment Committee dated 8 April 2026
 - 7.4. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 April 2026
 - 7.5. Corporate Services Committee dated 14 April 2026
 - 7.6. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 15 April 2026
8. Deputation Request from Bryansburn Rangers Football Club (Report attached)

9. Nominations to Outside Bodies (Report attached)
10. Shared Island Conference on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (Report attached)
11. Queens Parade update (Report attached)
12. Sealing Documents
13. Transfer of Rights of Burial
14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
15. Notices of Motion

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Graham and Councillor Gilmour

Council notes the extension to the platform at Helen's Bay Station to enhance the safety of high numbers of visitors at peak times. To cope with such influxes of visitors, Council writes to Translink and requests that it provides toilet facilities at the railway station.

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McRandal and Councillor McCollum

This Council acknowledges that the decision taken in January 2026 to adopt Queen's community centre as the preferred site of the proposed Hollywood screen industries innovation hub has the potential to remove an important community asset from Hollywood. Council therefore resolves to undertake an exercise to assess the need for community space in Hollywood, with a report assessing need to be brought back to the relevant Committee.

15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson

That this Council notes the need for adequate coastal defences and the ongoing issues affecting Donaghadee Harbour.

Council further acknowledges the continued work and contribution of Donaghadee Sailing Club and Donaghadee Community Development Association in seeking solutions to these challenges. It further notes that significant engagement has already taken place with some public representatives and government bodies to this regard.

Council therefore agrees to instruct officers to engage with counterparts in Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council to explore the potential for Shared Island Funding as a means of supporting the delivery of necessary coastal defence infrastructure

15.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Moore and Alderman McDowell

This Council notes the findings of the recent report presented to Planning Committee Members in March 2026 on wastewater capacity constraints, including the

identification of closed catchments within parts of the Borough, the impact on planning and regeneration activity, and the wider challenges arising from longstanding underinvestment in wastewater infrastructure.

Council further recognises that, while the report establishes the existence and significance of these constraints, further detailed evidence is required to fully understand the borough-wide impact and to support effective engagement with relevant agencies and the Department for Infrastructure, and to identify potential council-led solutions.

Council agrees:

- To task Council officers to prepare a detailed, borough-wide assessment identifying all locations affected by wastewater and sewage capacity constraints, including mapping of closed catchments, constrained wastewater treatment works and network limitations.
- To quantify the impact of these constraints on Council priorities, including town centre regeneration, the Empty to Energised programme, business development, housing delivery and the non-domestic rate base.
- To compile evidence, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Northern Ireland Water, on the frequency and location of wastewater system failures, including out-of-sewer flooding and Unsatisfactory Discharges, and the associated environmental and ecological impacts across the Borough over the past ten years.
- To write to SOLACE seeking information on how other councils are evidencing and responding to wastewater capacity constraints, including approaches taken in Belfast City Council, Newry, Mourne and Down, and Mid and East Antrim.

15.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan and Alderman McAlpine

That this council strongly condemns the blocking of the establishment of an Independent Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) by the DUP in the Assembly and Executive; further condemns the hypocrisy of those who express concern over the Lough Neagh crisis, the illegal dump at Mobuoy and wider environmental degradation, but refuse to support plans to enhance environmental accountability and safeguards; notes that a commitment to an IEPA was contained within the New Decade, New Approach Deal; agrees that it is undemocratic for an IEPA to be unilaterally vetoed by one party which represents a minority in the Assembly as a whole; agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ask him to urgently convene a process of institutional reform, in consultation with the Irish Government and local parties, to remove blockages and vetoes from Stormont's system of government; and to ask the Secretary of State to take meaningful steps to ensure that commitments in New Decade, New Approach are implemented.

15.6 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McClean and Councillor Cathcart

That Council acknowledges the significant reduction in fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling offences since the service was brought in-house; sets out the reasons for this performance and commits to an improvement plan; that this plan and performance be reviewed in six months following its presentation; and that, following this review, considers any further options for improvement including different service model delivery.

The improvement plan should seek as a minimum to achieve previous enforcement levels for FPNs issued, ensure cost control (including the option of penalty reductions for swift payment), drawing upon best practice elsewhere to include prevention and communication.

Circulated for Information

- a) National Protective Security Authority Guidance (Correspondence from UK Government Security Minister Dan Jarvis MBE MP attached)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

16. Tender for the Provision of Printing Services (Report attached)
17. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2026/27 (Report attached)
18. ITEM WITHDRAWN

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 Kennedy
Alderman McRandal	Councillor Kendall
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor McBurney
Alderman Smith	Councillor McClean
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCollum (Mayor)
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKee
Councillor Brady	Councillor Moore (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Chambers	Councillor Newman
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Quinn
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Smart
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Wray

**LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS
FOR APRIL 2026**

Wednesday 1st April

- 10.30 am Launch of Choral Festival, City Hall, Bangor
- 12.15 pm Photos to promote World Public Transport Day and Easter Campaign with Translink, Bangor Bus and Rail Station
- 3.30 pm Visit to Bangor Marina, Bangor Marina
- 7.00 pm Civic Event in celebration of Donaghadee's Award Success, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 2nd April

- 6.45 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Graduation Ceremony – Mental Health Champions, Bangor Community Foodbank

Wednesday 8th April

- 6.00 pm Bangor RFC Minis P7 Shirt Presentation, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 9th April

- 10.00 am Irish Youth Championships 2026 – Sailing Qualifier, Ballyholme Yacht Club

Friday 10th April

- 9.30 am Opening of Warehouse Re-Loved Community Charity Shop, 2-4 South Street, Newtownards
- 3.00 pm Afternoon Tea – Community Groups in Ards, City Hall, Bangor
- 5.30 pm DEPUTY MAYOR- Irish Opening Swimming Championships & Commonwealth Games Trials, Bangor Aurora

Saturday 11th April

- 1.30 pm Irish Bowling Association Flag Unfurling, Donaghadee Bowling Club

Monday 13th April

- 10.00 am Photo to promote Sea Bangor at Eisenhower Pier and Holywood Maypole for May Day, Bangor and Holywood

Wednesday 15th April

- 2.45 pm Photo – Launch of GP14 World Championships 2026, Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club
- 4.00 pm Afternoon Tea with Conlig Community Regeneration Group, City Hall, Bangor
- 7.30 pm Ards Peninsula Area Women's Institutes Spring Meeting, Donaghadee Presbyterian Church

Thursday 16th April

- 10.00 am Visit from Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College – Rights Respecting Borough, City Hall, Bangor
- 12.30 pm Unfurling of the NI Women's Association Flag, Bowling Pavilion, Ward Park, Bangor
- 2.30 pm IIP Photo, City Hall, Bangor
- 7.00 pm Civic Event for Bangor Ladies Choir 50th Anniversary, City Hall, Bangor

Friday 17th April

- 2.30 pm Promotion Tourism's Guided Tours Programme, Einsenhower Pier, Bangor
- 3.00 pm Afternoon tea with Bayburn Community Association, City Hall, Bangor
- 7.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Charity Quiz Night, Jenny Watts, Bangor
- 8.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR - Carrowdore 100 Film Night, Carrowdore Presbyterian Church Hall

Saturday 18th April

- 2.00 pm Launch of Sustainability Stories, North Down Scout Centre
- 3.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Rededication of UDR Memorial, Court Square, Newtownards
- 7.00 pm Gala Ball with Donaghadee Rugby Club, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel

Tuesday 21st April

- 12.30 pm PR Invite: Seacourt Print School Programme Launch, Seacourt Print Workshop, Main Street, Bangor

- 1.30 pm Photo – Launch of Ards Peninsula Business Awards, Ards Business Hub
- 2.30 pm Walking Football meeting with Sports Development and Club representatives

Wednesday 22nd April

- 10.30 am Coffee with Conlig Seniors, Conlig
- 1.30 pm Photo – New Artist in Residence, Seacourt Print Workshop
- 2.30 pm Afternoon Tea – Ards Community Hospital Ladies Committee in celebration of their 70 Anniversary, City Hall, Bangor
- 5.45 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Celebration of Carers Event, Airtastic, Bangor
- 6.00 pm Exhibition Launch – Ulster Automobile Club, North Down Musuem
- 7.00 pm Mayoral Reception – Chai and Chat Group, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 23rd April

- 9.45 am Official Opening of Bangor International Choral Festival 2026, St Comgall's Parish Centre
- 6.00 pm Start Project Exhibition, Holywood Library
- 7.00 pm Mayoral Reception – Wizards Special Olympic Basketball Club, City Hall, Bangor

Friday 24th April

- 12.00 noon Visit from Austrian Deputy Head of Mission, City Hall, Bangor
- 3.00 pm Afternoon Tea – Camphill Community, City Hall, Bangor
- 7.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Bangor International Choral Festival 2026, St Comgall's Parish Centre

Saturday 25th April

- 6.30 pm Finale Bangor International Choral Festival 2026, St Comgall's Parish Centre

Sunday 26th April

- 11.00 am The Comber Cosmos Softball Team's First Game, North Down Cricket Club

- 12.45 pm Visit to Bangor RFC Minis to celebrate their win, Upritchard park, Bangor
- 1.30 pm Unveiling of RIC Memorial Stone – Dedication Service, Royal British Legion, Newtownards

Tuesday 28th April

- 11.00 am Morning tea – Humanists, City Hall, Bangor
- 1.00 pm PeacePlus Launch Event - Bringing Life To our Historical heritage, Somme Centre
- 7.30 pm Mayoral Reception – Hollywood Rugby Club, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 29th April

- 10.00 am Official Opening of New School Playground Facilities, St Comgall's Primary School
- 1.00 pm Global Intergenerational Week Campaign with Carrickmannon Primary School and Ballygowan Seniors, Village Hall, Ballygowan

Thursday 30th April

- 7.00 pm Charity Danceathon, Queen's Hall, Newtownards
- 7.30 pm Mayoral Reception – Ards Rugby Club, City Hall, Bangor



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:	Keith Russell Shane Mac Giollabhui Sharon Ferguson
Date of request:	27 April, 2026
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	On behalf of concerned residents. Speakers: Shane Mac Giollabhui Sharon Ferguson
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Council Meeting of 29 April, 2026

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.

This deputation wishes to raise concerns regarding the Council's proposed agreement and associated revisions to the Queen's Parade development, as outlined under Agenda Item 11. It focuses specifically on the Council's role in approving changes to land use, site layout, and the overall delivery of the scheme, particularly in the context of long-term regeneration outcomes, financial transparency, and the creation of a high-quality, family-friendly waterfront environment.

This matter is considered urgent due to the late publication of the agenda on Thursday and the associated report not being made available until late Friday, significantly limiting the time available for proper public review and scrutiny ahead of the decision.

Of particular concern is the proposed introduction and positioning of a substantial car park in close proximity to a children's play area. This element of the scheme prompts questions as to whether it aligns with the Council's responsibilities in relation to public safety, air quality, and effective place-making. The deputation seeks reassurance that core objectives such as increasing dwell time, supporting meaningful regeneration, and delivering a modern, attractive play facility are being pursued through people-focused design principles rather than an increased reliance on vehicular access.

This deputation does not seek to comment on, or influence, any current or future planning application. Instead, it addresses the Council's broader decision-making responsibilities in relation to its development agreement and the wider public interest. It respectfully requests that the Council carefully considers whether the revised proposals fully meet its stated objectives and, if necessary, defers agreement until there is greater clarity regarding the financial, environmental, and design implications.

We hope that the Lord Mayor will accept our request to speak on this issue (under point 2), in line with open and transparent decision making. We believe that Council Members would wish to hear our short speech to raise such concerns in person.

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

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 March 2026 commencing at 7.00 pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor McCollum)	
Aldermen:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom, 7.02 pm) Cummings Graham	McAlpine (Zoom, 7.03 pm) McDowell McIlveen McRandal Smith
Councillors:	Ashe (Zoom) Blaney Boyle Brady Cathcart Chambers Cochrane Douglas Gilmour Harbinson Hennessy Hollywood Irvine, S	Irvine, W Kendall Kerr (Zoom, 7.02 pm) McBurney McClellan McCracken McKee Moore Morgan Newman Smart Thompson

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Faulkner), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Environmental Services (G Bannister), Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian, via Zoom), and Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Officer (S McCrea)

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from Alderman Brooks, Councillor Edmund, Councillor Irwin and Councillor Wray.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Boyle: Item 6 - Deputation from National Association of Councillors (NAC)

Members were reminded that they could make a declaration at any stage throughout the meeting.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor welcomed back the Chief Executive and gave thanks to the Acting Chief Executive for his efforts over the last few months, which was met with applause from the Council Chamber.

Congratulations were made to Rhys McClenaghan who had recently won another gold medal which was a huge achievement especially after an injury that had forced his absence from sport for some time.

The Mayor advised Members of the sad passing of Margaret Craig who had served on the Ards Legacy Council and had been Mayor from 2001-02. She gave her condolences to Margaret's friends and family and asked that all those present stand for one minute's silence.

RESOLVED, that the Mayor's business be noted.

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

(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor reported that March had begun with a series of significant engagements, including the auspicious launch of the Newtownards to Bangor Greenway at which the Deputy Mayor fittingly arrived by bicycle. She noted that the project represented an important step forward for sustainable transport, community wellbeing and local connectivity which was much to celebrate. That evening, she attended the launch of a new book marking the 400th anniversary of Donaghadee Parish Church, describing it as a momentous occasion that drew an impressive turnout from the community. She gave thanks to those Councillors from Bangor East and Donaghadee who had shown their support in attending the event.

The following evening, the Mayor participated in an event raising awareness of domestic abuse which also remembered the tragic loss of Sarah Montgomery and her unborn child. Organised by the Donaghadee Community Association, the event addressed both visible and less visible forms of abuse. The Mayor reflected on the

deeply moving contribution from Arthur, who spoke of the loss of his granddaughter, describing the gathering as an outstanding act of solidarity and a powerful call to action. However, the Mayor noted with concern that since that evening, two more young women had lost their lives violently in Northern Ireland, bringing the total to 30 since 2020. Whilst acknowledging the good work taking place across the region and within the borough, she emphasised that women continued to perish at a frightening and unacceptable rate.

The Mayor had been continuing with her Belonging Afternoon Tea series. Groups including Holywood and District Community Council, Ballyholme Men's Probus, Redburn and Loughview Community Forum, the Groomspoint Tuesday Club, Ards and North Down Street Pastors, and the Christmas Hamper Volunteers from Newtownards had joined the Mayor. She highlighted each group's steadfast commitment to their communities and the vital lifeline many of them provided, offering thanks for the nominations from Councillors that brought them forward.

The Mayor had also attended the Council's Local Food Hero event which celebrated the Borough's exceptional culinary talent and hosted a Mayoral reception for St Vincent de Paul in recognition of their life-changing support for families in crisis. Another reception was held for the GAA, which filled the chamber to capacity.

On Friday 13 March, she launched the Borough Sports Awards at the Clandeboye Hotel, praising not only the achievements of athletes but also the dedication of volunteers who made sporting success possible. She commended the Sports Development Team for their efforts, thanked Councillor Boyle for chairing the Sports Development Forum, and acknowledged the support of Councillors' Ashe, Cochrane and W Irvine. She noted the immense pride of those present when it was announced that Rory McIlroy had been named Sportsperson of the Year; a pride no doubt felt across the Borough.

The Mayor went on to attend the Community Volunteers Awards on Monday evening, recognising participants from across the borough including Newtownards and Portavogie. She observed that the Community Development Team had quietly delivered events for adults with additional needs for 36 years and deserved far greater recognition. She described the joy in the Hamilton Hub that evening as uplifting and offered particular thanks to Beverley and Stuart for their enthusiasm and commitment.

The Mayor concluded by noting that there were three days remaining until the Mayor's Concert for Belonging, in aid of her chosen charities: St Vincent de Paul, Women's Aid and Orchardville. She expressed gratitude to the Mayor's Office for their work, to Bangor Elim for providing the venue and additional support, and to the local performers who had volunteered their time. Acts included Bangor Ladies Choir, Donaghadee Male Voice Choir, Jackie Rainey, an MED drummer, Bangor Ukes, Ards CCE with the Cleland Memorial Pipe Band, Bangor Jazz Band and Orchardville's Band with their Makaton Choir. She confirmed that tickets were available online for £12 or in person for £10 at Bangor Castle Reception and the Old Market House. There was a possibility of limited ticket availability at the door, however there would be no guarantee any tickets being left over for door sales.

NOTED.

6. DEPUTATION FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS (NAC)

(Councillor Boyle excused himself from the meeting at 7.15 pm due to a previously declared interest)

The Mayor invited Alderman Hazel Legge and Councillor Billy Webb to make their deputation on the National Association of Councillors. Members were advised that although no presentation was to be made, leaflets had been left on their desks. Alderman Legge explained that she was attending from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council alongside Councillor Webb from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council to speak about the National Association of Councillors (NAC), reflecting on its origins, its current position, and the value of continued collaboration. She noted that another NAC Executive member, Councillor Andrews from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, was present in the public gallery, as was Alderman McDowell from Ards and North Down Borough Council and Councillor Boyle (who had left due to a declaration of interest). She thanked Members for the opportunity to address the meeting.

Alderman Legge provided a brief outline of the NAC's history, explaining that it had been formed 34 years ago in Belfast City Hall and had, from the outset, relied on administrative support, initially provided by David Ballows through the finance department. Annual General Meetings facilitated the printing and distribution of central information, and the organisation later established its own office. Ards Borough Council had remained a natural point of contact and continued to step in when required. Ronnie Ferguson, who served as secretary for 21 years was highlighted as an example of commitment to the organisation. Alderman Legge emphasised that the NAC was the only representative body speaking on behalf of elected members across all 11 councils, with an Executive comprising councillors from every political party in Northern Ireland. No other structure offered the same breadth of representation, ensuring members were supported as part of a unified organisation. She added that the NAC formed one of four national wings, alongside England, Scotland and Wales, enabling it to deliver tangible outcomes over many years.

Councillor Webb continued, advising of the strength of a collective councillor voice and the role of the NAC in providing that support. He noted that local government had changed significantly over recent decades, with responsibilities and expectations increasing, yet the voice of councillors had too often been overlooked in wider discussions. He stated that this was the reason the NAC existed and, having been active for more than 34 years, it had developed into a unique and important body run by councillors for councillors. He distinguished its role from NILGA, which represented Councils as institutions rather than elected members individually. Councillor Webb reported that, through sustained advocacy and engagement with ministers and public bodies, the NAC had secured a range of tangible improvements for elected members. He highlighted achievements such as the introduction of the councillors' pension scheme in 2011 and the partial tax exemption on claimable payments, noting that these were practical measures that directly supported those

serving in public office. He added that the NAC had played a key role during the transition to the modern local government structure, ensuring that the councillor perspective was heard throughout the reform process in Northern Ireland, including in discussions that led to increased allowances for the larger councils.

He explained that the NAC continued to play an active and important role by providing training and development opportunities, recognising long service, supporting members, and offering practical guidance on HMRC tax and expenses. The organisation also maintained ongoing engagement with ministers on issues affecting councillor rules and regulations. More recently, it had taken a proactive approach to shaping the future of local government, securing representation on the Partnership Panel. As part of this work, the NAC had brought councillors and officers together to explore economic development, resulting in 28 participants being recognised as local enterprise champions.

Councillor Webb noted that the NAC had also contributed to wider policy thinking on how the economy could support local government and had sought opportunities to connect councillors with colleagues across the wider NAC network, enabling shared challenges to be addressed at a national level. He added that the organisation had strengthened links with councillors in the Republic of Ireland through the AILG, with the most recent meeting taking place earlier in the month.

Councillor Webb advised that when the value of the NAC was questioned, its record of achievement, influence and support provided a clear answer, emphasising that none of this progress had happened by accident. He stressed that the strength of the organisation depended on the engagement of its members; if councillors stepped back, the collective voice weakened. He concluded that there was a clear choice between allowing the organisation to diminish or working to strengthen it so that it continued to meet the demands of local government. What had been built over 35 years, he said, was not easily replaced and was worth preserving. He encouraged colleagues to engage with the NAC, participate in its work and become more actively involved, reaffirming that it existed to ensure councillors' voices, concerns and contributions were heard and supported.

The Mayor invited questions from Members.

Alderman McIlveen noted that all Councillors had received an email in September of the previous year regarding the response to roles and responsibilities consultation, which had outlined several options, including strike action, and had recommended Option 2 in the first instance. He asked whether there was any recognition that this had been a misstep or an overreach, explaining that parties had given the matter considerable thought, but no response had been received from the NAC. He queried whether there had been time to reflect on the approach taken.

Councillor Webb stated that the letter issued had arisen from meetings attended by councillors from all parties, and that those present had asked the NAC to take that course of action. He emphasised that it had not been a unilateral decision by the NAC but one driven by the membership. He added that social media reactions had overshadowed the factual context, including the Department's indication that councillors were being considered as working 20 hours per week, which had

contributed to the concerns raised. When asked by Alderman McIlveen whether the NAC had reflected but was not changing their position, Councillor Webb agreed.

Alderman McIlveen then raised concerns about the accessibility and completeness of minutes on the NAC website, noting that some appeared patchy. Councillor Webb advised that this was not within his remit. Alderman Legge explained that members' meetings were held every other month and that minutes could not be published until ratified, meaning they were always two months behind. She confirmed that minutes were up to date aside from the most recent meeting and invited anyone with issues to get in touch. She reiterated that minutes were permitted to be published, and the delay was solely due to the ratification process.

Alderman McIlveen highlighted that this created a lag for councillors who were not in attendance and therefore could not easily be kept informed. He then raised a further concern regarding NAC funding, stating that the letter issued in September had given the impression that the NAC was functioning like a Union, yet councils were required to pay a corporate fee, meaning all councillors were members regardless of personal choice. He questioned whether it would be more appropriate for individual councillors to pay membership fees rather than the cost falling to the ratepayer.

Councillor Webb responded that the NAC had never described itself as a Union and could not do so, and that historically, including before the Review of Public Administration, Councils had always made the contributions. When asked again on whether individual membership might be more appropriate, Councillor Webb stated that he could not answer that point and reiterated that Councils currently paid the membership.

Alderman Adair commented that the September email had undermined ratepayer confidence and asked what the NAC was doing to rebuild that confidence. Councillor Webb advised that the NAC continued to meet with the Minister in relation to the ongoing independent report on councillors, noting that Councillor Boyle had attended a recent meeting alongside other NAC members to discuss the report's recommendations.

Alderman Adair then asked how the NAC ensured that its views reflected those of councillors more broadly rather than solely those of office bearers, stating that none of his colleagues had supported the position set out in the September correspondence. Councillor Webb reiterated that the NAC had not called for strike action and that the position had come from members' meetings attended by representatives of all parties. When Alderman Adair queried how many councillors had attended, given that there were more than 400 councillors in Northern Ireland, Councillor Webb referred to an independent count that had been compiled following those meetings.

Alderman Adair concluded by asking what benefit the NAC provided to ratepayers, given that councillors were elected to serve the public. Councillor Webb responded that better trained and better-informed councillors ultimately served the ratepayer more effectively.

(Alderman Graham left the meeting at 7.33 pm)

Councillor Gilmour referred to the latter part of the presentation, noting the comments made that the NAC would not be easy to replace and the importance of working together. She asked whether this was an acknowledgment that the NAC found it difficult to repair the damage caused by the email that had included options such as strike action, particularly for those councillors who wished to distance themselves from such proposals. She recalled similar concerns during the RPA period, when the NAC had produced what she described as a, 'wish list' of equipment such as computers, laptops and photocopiers, which she felt resembled a "generation game," list.

(Alderman Graham returned to the meeting at 7.37 pm)

She was of the view that the NAC often appeared focused on securing as much as possible for councillors, whereas her own motivation in joining politics had been to serve her Borough rather than to seek personal benefit. She explained that, following the email in question, she had attempted to resign from the NAC but had been informed that she could only be removed from the mailing list. She asked whether the NAC had considered reforming its membership model so that the financial burden did not fall on the ratepayer.

Councillor Webb stated that the issue had been considered previously and that he could bring it forward again to the NAC for further discussion. Councillor Gilmour added that the Council had written to the NAC several years earlier after the website had indicated that individual memberships would be permitted, only for this to later change to corporate membership only. She described this as frustrating for councillors who did not wish to be part of the organisation, and reiterated that while some members valued the NAC, the cost should not fall on ratepayers. Councillor Webb advised that he had not been involved in that decision and therefore could not comment.

Councillor Cathcart stated that, in his view, individual membership would effectively amount to joining what he regarded as a Union-type body. He welcomed this Council's decision to withdraw from corporate membership and sought clarification on whether individual councillors could still join the NAC despite the council's withdrawal. Councillor Webb advised that he had not previously encountered that question and had not considered the implications, and as such could not provide an answer.

Councillor Brady commented that although the NAC was not technically a Union, he felt it was an important entity, as from a personal standpoint, the NAC was the only body he could turn to for representation. He added that any councillor should be able to withdraw if they wished but reminded colleagues that the ratepayer would ultimately bear the cost regardless. Drawing on his experience as a member of the National Union of Journalists, he suggested that the NAC offered comparatively good value for money.

As there were no further questions from Members, Alderman Legge and Councillor Webb withdrew from the meeting at 7.39 pm.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the deputation be noted.

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 25 FEBRUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

(Councillor Boyle returned to the meeting at 7.40 pm)

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Planning Committee dated 3 March 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.

8.1.1. Matters Arising from Planning Committee meeting of 03 March 2026 [Appendix I-II]

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity advising that, 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 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.

RECOMMENDED that 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Alderman Graham, that delegated authority be granted to Planning Committee at its meeting on 31 March 2026.

8.2 Environment Committee dated 4 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Alderman McIlveen referred to Item 5, page 7, concerning the playpark refurbishment programme, and sought clarification on the current position regarding the land issues associated with the proposed Glenford playpark. The Director of

Environmental Services explained that Translink remained willing to progress a park and ride scheme at the former Newtownards Leisure Centre site. As the existing playpark occupied part of the land required for that development, it would need to be relocated. The Council was awaiting the Department's final site footprint and red line boundary. Discussions were ongoing, and a further report would be brought back to Council.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether work could commence before the land issue was resolved, and The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that, in practical terms, it could not. He noted that the process was further advanced than before, but final agreement and the land transfer were still required before development could proceed. In response to a further query, he confirmed that the Department for Infrastructure had not yet reimbursed the Council in relation to the land matter, as this remained under consideration by the Department's lands section.

Alderman McIlveen was concerned that, given ongoing delays and the possibility that the park-and-ride scheme might not progress until 2027, there was a risk that the Council might be unable to spend its allocated playpark budget if Glenford could not be advanced in time. The Director of Environmental Services advised that the capital allocation covered six facilities, with Glenford ranked third. If the land was not agreed by the end of the next financial year, an underspend was likely.

When asked which playpark was next on the priority list, the Director of Environmental Services confirmed it was the one previously discussed at Committee, Bowtown, Newtownards. Alderman McIlveen noted that Translink's business case was still several weeks away and that they had been non-committal about a timeline for commencing works. He asked whether progressing the Bowtown playpark would prevent Glenford from proceeding should all necessary elements (business case approval, land transfer, funding and construction), align for 2026/27. The Director of Environmental Services stated that a further report would set out the full detail, and that Council could consider funding options at that stage.

Alderman McIlveen raised a reputational concern about the possibility of Glenford being left without a playpark. The Director of Environmental Services acknowledged that, in theory, there could be a period without provision if Translink dismantled the existing facility to begin their development before the Council completed the replacement. However, he noted that the land transfer and definition of the new playpark site should occur before Translink progressed the remainder of their scheme.

Alderman McIlveen sought reassurance that the Council would not be taken by surprise and would know when negotiations concluded and the land parcel confirmed. The Director of Environmental Services advised that this would be the case and that the land transfer would also be necessary for Translink to proceed with their wider development. He concluded by noting that any capital receipt could be used for capital investment, subject to a report being brought to and approved by Council.

Alderman McIlveen proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman Adair, "that

the recommendation outlined in the report is accepted except, given the circumstances outlined by officers regarding the land transfer issues around the Glenford play park, that the next play park on the list located at Abbot Gardens, Bowtown, Newtownards replaces it in the list of play parks to be refurbished in the 2026/27 financial year.

Furthermore, that once the lands issue is resolved on the William Street site that a further report is brought back to committee with a view to addressing the timing and funding of the refurbishment of Glenford play park.”

Alderman McIlveen explained that the issue under discussion was not a delay to the park and ride project itself but rather the Council’s own timing regarding when it would be appropriate to progress the Glenford playpark. He stressed the importance of ensuring that the new facility was not delivered prematurely and noted that the Bowtown playpark had previously been recognised as inadequate on several levels, including accessibility. It was the only playpark serving a particular area of the town and stated that this was not a matter of competition between areas. Although Glenford was within his own district, he acknowledged the clear need in Bowtown and confirmed that his position was not based on personal preference.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the report, particularly the inclusion of refurbishment works for the Donaghadee playpark. He expressed concern about a proposal for a youth centre adjacent to the new park and sought assurance that consultation would take place before any such development proceeded. He noted that a previous proposal for a fun park had received a mixed response and stressed the importance of engaging with the community before installing a shelter or similar structure.

Councillor Moore confirmed her support for the amendment. As a Newtownards resident, she was keen to see resources retained within the town while also recognising the importance of the Borough-wide assessment of play provision that had informed the recommendations. She valued the balance between local knowledge and strategic oversight to ensure the most effective use of available funding. Councillor Moore recalled that Alderman McRandal had already sought assurances from the Director of Environmental Services that the playpark in question was next in the priority sequence and reiterated her support.

Councillor Smart thanked the Chief Executive, the Director of Environmental Services and the Head of Parks for their engagement throughout the week. He agreed with Alderman McIlveen that the Bowtown playpark was not fit for purpose and commended the local community development group for raising the issue and for their wider work. Having visited the site, he described the limited accessible equipment and poor ground conditions, which he felt were particularly concerning given the needs of families in the area. He noted that although the Council provided more playparks than many other authorities, this was the only facility serving a large residential area, with little scope for an alternative location. He supported retaining the Glenford playpark, highlighting the significant housing in the area and the limited play opportunities available. He recalled the efforts made in 2018/19 to retain the park when the leisure centre closed and the frustration felt by residents, which had been raised with both Translink and the Minister. While the Council awaited progress

on the park-and-ride scheme, he stressed the need to advance both Bowtown and Glenford as soon as possible.

Referring to the Council's assessment process, Councillor Smart observed that while equipment and the ground beneath it were assessed, the ground between pieces of equipment was not. The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that slopes and the ability to move between equipment were not currently included in the assessment but could be incorporated in the future. Councillor Smart advised that accessible equipment was of limited value if the routes between it were not accessible.

Councillor Boyle said that he was disappointed an amendment had been introduced without notice to the Committee, stating that only DUP members seemed aware of it which was not a respectful or proper way to conduct business. He felt Alderman Adair appeared unclear about the amendment he had proposed, noting that all parties except the DUP voted against it while the Green Party and Independent Members had abstained.

Councillor Boyle believed that the amendment attempted to disrupt an agreed plan and a committee structure that had ensured fairness, equality and transparency. He welcomed the Committee's decision to reject it, stating that it was about protecting a process that Members and communities had collectively supported. He cautioned against moving away from a system that was working well and noted that the issue was not about pursuing individual projects or spending proceeds from an asset sale, particularly as no such funds were available.

He urged Members to remain committed to the established approach and advised that undermining the structure would not benefit the Committee or the Council. He concluded that, based on the discussion, there was no need for a recorded vote. Alderman McIlveen asked for a recorded vote.

Alderman Adair stood to speak of his disappointment in the comments made by Councillor Boyle, adding that, had Councillor Boyle listened rather than speaking to colleagues during the committee, he would have heard the explanation clearly. Alderman Adair explained that he listened to every Member, acknowledged that he was not always right, and believed all Councillors deserved the courtesy of being heard. He stated that Councillor Boyle frequently left the chamber or spoke to others while he was speaking, but a lack of listening had prevented the Committee from acting in the best interests of the community. Alderman Adair added that Alderman McIlveen had brought the amendment this evening to seek clarification that had not been available on the night of the committee and urged Members to act in the community's best interests, to move forward regardless of personal views of individual Councillors, and to show respect to one another as democratically elected representatives.

Councillor Gilmour noted that part of the confusion at the earlier meeting had arisen because Members were unclear about which playpark was next on the priority list. She explained that Alderman McIlveen had asked officers to outline the playparks referenced in the report to assist Committee Members in future years and suggested

that an independent report might be attached for reference. She recalled that in previous years, a longer list had been provided.

The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that prioritisation lists had been included in past reports. He explained that the list before Members represented only the first stage of the prioritisation process. Officers then applied local knowledge and considered additional factors, for example, avoiding the development of two playparks in the same village if both were in similar condition, to ensure fairness across the Borough. He noted that if an independent report were included, it would be presented as a list rather than a full report.

Councillor Gilmour clarified that she was not seeking the full independent report but felt that including the list could be helpful for Members in future decision-making. Councillor Kendall, as proposer of the minutes stated that she would be brief and acknowledged the strength of feeling within communities about playpark provision. She recognised the clear need for refurbishment at Bowtown, which had been evident at the earlier meeting. She was surprised that accessibility and topography had not previously been assessed and stressed the importance of obtaining an independent assessment to avoid disputes between Members. She argued that even the best playpark was of limited value if it could not be accessed and believed that both independent assessors and officers should take these factors into account. She explained that she had relied on the independent report because she did not have the same level of local knowledge as some of her colleagues and noted that Councillors with local insight were well placed to advocate for their areas.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared PASSED with 32 voting FOR, 1 AGAINST, 2 abstention and 5 ABSENT.

FOR (32) Aldermen Adair Armstrong-Cotter Cummings Graham McAlpine McDowell McIlveen McRandal Smith	AGAINST (1) Aldermen	ABSTAINED (2) Aldermen	ABSENT (5) Aldermen Brooks
Councillors (23) Ashe Blaney Cathcart Chambers Cochrane Douglas Gilmour Harbinson Hennessy	Councillor Boyle	Councillors Brady Kendall	Councillor Edmund Irwin Kennedy Wray

Hollywood
Irvine, S
Irvine, W
Kerr
McBurney
McClellan
McCollum
McCracken
McKee
Moore
Morgan
Newman
Smart
Thompson

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Adair and by way of a recorded vote with 32 voting FOR, 1 AGAINST, 2 ABSTENTIONS and 5 ABSENT, that given the circumstances outlined by officers regarding the land transfer issues around the Glenford play park, that the next play park on the list located at Abbot Gardens, Bowtown, Newtownards replaces it in the list of play parks to be refurbished in the 2026/27 financial year.

Furthermore, that once the lands issue is resolved on the William Street site that a further report is brought back to committee with a view to addressing the timing and funding of the refurbishment of Glenford play park.”

Item 6 – On Street Residential Charging Scheme Update

Alderman McIlveen advised that he had a second point to raise on the Environment Committee minutes regarding Item 6 concerning electric vehicle charging points. He noted that this represented the final outworking of a motion he had brought to Council in 2018 and that it had been almost eight years later for the work to finally bear fruit. At the time of the original motion, he had produced maps showing the limited number of charging points in the Borough, including only two in the Newtownards area. The intention had been to prepare the groundwork for identifying suitable sites, and the motion had subsequently been integrated into the car park strategy. While some progress had been made through initiatives such as the East Border Region project, he felt it had not matched the scale of need he had identified. He recalled contacting the previous Director of Environmental Services over several years and noted that the original DUP proposal to participate in a regional development scheme under which the Department would have funded 75% of costs. It had been rejected at the time on the basis that hydrogen technology was expected to dominate. Thirteen years later, hydrogen had not materialised as anticipated, and the Borough had been left with substandard infrastructure during that period. He thanked officers for their work in bringing the matter to its current stage.

NOTED.

Alderman Smith also had a number of questions of clarification regarding several items: 7, 8, 10 and 11 which relating to induction targets for 2030. Although not a Member of the Committee, he had reviewed the minutes and sought clarity on the Council's expenditure, progress toward the 2030 targets and the overall financial implications. He noted that Item 7 referred to a 52% reduction in utilities costing £3.5 million, Item 10 highlighted significant challenges around fleet emissions with fuel usage increasing year on year, and Item 11 addressed reductions in oil and gas consumption. He asked how close the Council was to achieving the 70% reduction target, whether the targets were realistic, and what the projected budget requirement would be between now and 2030.

The Director of Environmental Services explained that the various strands of climate action activity were being brought together into a single framework. Targets and progress against the overarching goals would be recorded and reported regularly, and the calculations presented in the reports reflected the work undertaken by individual services. An overarching plan and recording mechanism would be brought to Council.

The Chief Executive added that, following an audit report discussed by the Audit Committee earlier in the week, work was underway to integrate reporting through a new template under the Climate Action Manager. The next reporting cycle would incorporate additional elements such as bin and recycling reductions and fleet performance. Some data was already being captured corporately, and Members would see further developments over the coming months.

Alderman Smith thanked officers for the clarification, noting his concern about the scale of the gap between current performance and the targets set. He looked forward to receiving further reports and updates in due course.

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

8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 5 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor McCracken, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

As a point of accuracy, Councillor Boyle referred to page 16, paragraph 3, line 7 which made reference to the final sailing times of the Portaferry to Strangford ferry. He advised that the final sailing time was 10.45pm as opposed to 9.45pm Monday to Friday and at 11.15pm on a Saturday.

Councillor Brady referred to the minutes on Item 3, stating that Members had been told there was nothing to discuss because Bangor Marine had not yet presented final plans. He questioned why the Council had still not received plans for a project that was already well underway.

The Director of Place and Prosperity explained that, under the development agreement, Bangor Marine was permitted to make changes to the scheme and had the ability to propose amendments. They already held planning permission for the approved scheme and could request alterations as part of that process. He reminded Members that he had stated at the meeting that a workshop had been arranged at which Bangor Marine would present all proposed changes, allowing Members to ask questions before a report was brought to Council at the end of April.

Councillor Brady noted that the Queen's Parade planning application had only granted permission for ten new parking spaces, yet Members had been told in August that 80–90 spaces were being proposed. He suggested that discussions must have taken place between Bangor Marine and Council officers as partners in the project and asked when those conversations had occurred and why they had not been shared with Members.

The Director of Place and Prosperity advised that the Council did not yet have the full facts. At the August workshop, Bangor Marine had outlined a series of potential changes, and since then, had indicated what the revised proposals might include, but nothing had been agreed. Once a final proposal was confirmed and the Council had considered it, a new planning application would be submitted. He advised that officers would bring factual information to Council once it was available, but at present the details continued to change. The Director of Place and Prosperity added that Bangor Marine was still amending drawings to reflect feedback from local residents.

Councillor Boyle referred to Item 9.1 suggested that going to the media before full Council approval was unwise. He noted that Members had engaged with Ministers on the bridge and ferry issue for over twenty years and said that Councillor Morgan's expectation of a negative response from the Minister was accurate, explaining that the Minister had already indicated no progress on a fixed crossing was likely before 2035 and that the motion failed to address several issues he had raised.

Councillor Boyle believed that the immediate priority should be to improve the current ferry service, particularly by introducing a 7.15 pm sailing from Portaferry to ease pressure on commuters and local industries. He was concerned that a feasibility study would be costly, lengthy and constrained by the protected status of Strangford Lough, adding that comparisons with other bridge projects, such as Narrow Water were misleading.

While supporting a feasibility study, he stated that it remained incomplete without the key issues he had already highlighted. He concluded by urging realistic public expectations, noting that even basic infrastructure challenges remained unresolved, and said he awaited the Minister's response with interest.

The Mayor advised Councillor Boyle that he had speaking rights at the Committee and could speak to it there as this was currently a discussion for information on the item.

Alderman McIlveen advised that he wished to address several points as a matter of public record. The work referred to comments made by the Minister during

Assembly debates, in which she had indicated that she would consider the matter if there was political and community support. He stated that this had been the main rationale behind the Motion having been brought to Committee. Alderman McIlveen was concerned that some remarks made during discussion had strayed into the realms undermining personalities or making assumptions about motivations, which he felt was an inappropriate attack.

Councillor Boyle rejected the suggestion that any attacks had been made and asked that the term be withdrawn. Alderman McIlveen agreed to withdraw the word, acknowledging that he should have chosen his language more carefully, but maintained that the remarks directed at him had been uncalled for.

Alderman Adair advised that, as he had said earlier in the meeting, Committee proceedings were open to the press and public, which was how the matter had reached the newspapers and that he had not taken it to the media himself. He emphasised that the Council needed to present a united message, reflecting the strong public support for the proposed crossing. He said it did not matter who had brought the motion forward, as the overwhelming public reaction had been positive. He argued that the focus should be on the Council endorsing the proposal rather than criticising individual Members. He added that residents of the Ards Peninsula did not want to see internal disputes but wanted to see progress and investment fit for the 21st century. He referred to his own proposal establishing the Strangford Ferry Working Group and noted his long-standing efforts to raise related issues with the Council. He concluded by stating that the aim was to move towards a modern fixed-crossing solution.

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

8.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 10 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 11 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

9. DEPUTATION REQUEST FROM RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS AMBASSADORS OF RATHMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND STRANGFORD COLLEGE

(Appendix III-IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that a deputation request, dated in the form as February 2026, had 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 stated, at the outset, that 'the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Ambassadors from Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College, wished to present to Council the importance and benefits of Ards and North Down becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly Community.'

The full request was attached at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Newman, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the Council accepts the deputation request for hearing at an Active and Healthy Communities Committee.

10. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials – D41274-D41309
- (b) Lease of substation site at Bryansburn Road, Bangor – ANDBC to Northern Ireland Electricity.
- (c) Ward Park Redevelopment IST Contract

11. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

No transfers were received.

NOTED

12. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT (Appendix III)

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 Harbinson, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

13.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Notice of Motion be heard Corporate Services Committee.

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 quincentennial. 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be heard at Corporate Services Committee.

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

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be heard at Place and Prosperity Committee.

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be heard at Active and Healthy Communities Committee.

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 Man's 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 excluding 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Notice of Motion be heard at Environment Committee.

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Newman, that the Notice of Motion be heard at Environment Committee.

Circulated for Information

- (a) Letter on Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (NI) 2026 (Correspondence attached)
- (b) CCNI Energy Briefing (Correspondence attached)

RECOMMENDED that Council notes items circulated for information.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the items circulated for information be noted.

(Councillor Boyle left the meeting at 8:33pm)

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

14. LICENCES AND WAYLEAVES FOR NI ELECTRIC VEHICLE CONSORTIUM

[Appendix VII-IX]

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

****NOT FOR PUBLICATION****

SCHEDULE 6 - 5: a claim to legal professional privilege

Council was asked to grant licences to Weev and Wayleaves to NIE for the locations of electric vehicle charging units within Council car parks in accordance with the NI Electric Vehicle Consortium agreement.

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

15. BANGOR MARINA HARBOUR UPDATE

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

****NOT FOR PUBLICATION****

SCHEDULE 6 – exemptions 3 (financial and business affairs) and 5 (legal professional privilege)

A verbal update was provided on Bangor Marina which was noted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.06 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday, 23 March 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor Thompson

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine

Councillors: Harbinson (Zoom) Newman
McKee (Zoom) Wray

In Attendance: Mr Paul Cummings – Independent Member

NIAO – Tomas Wilkinson

Deloitte – Camille McDermott
Prachi Jain

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies had been received from Councillors Hollywood and Morgan.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and continuing he also welcomed Deloitte and Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) representatives as well as Independent Member Mr Paul Cummings.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

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

NOTED.

Reports for Noting

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from 15 December 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

(b) Follow-Up Actions

(File ref: AUD02)

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

Key Issues

Item	Title	Action	Officer	Status
Dec 23 6b	Audit and Assessment Report	Drafting of formal consultation strategy	Head of Comms and Marketing	In draft Sep-25
Sep 25 9	Request for a Members Survey	Alternatives to current report 'noting' process	Chief Executive	Item 7a
Dec 25 4b	Follow-up actions	Review ToR to reduce change in membership	Head of Finance	Annual Meeting Jun-26
5c	Performance Audit	Consider performance improvement audit for 2026/27	Head of Finance	Item 6f
6a	IA progress report	Report detailing how long-outstanding rec's will be prioritised All HoS to provide responses to follow-up requests	Head of Finance	Item 6e

Item	Title	Action	Officer	Status
6c	Community Plan Review	Report on success factors for outcomes based accountability	Community Panning and Climate Manager	Jun 26
7a	Interim Assurance Statements	Review section 3 regarding inclusion of outstanding IA rec's	Head of Corporate Governance	Jun 26

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT

a. ANDBC Audit Strategy 2025-2026(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - ANDBC Audit Strategy 2025-2026 from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Chairman invited Tomas Wilkinson (NIAO) to speak to his report.

Mr Wilkinson provided members with an overview of the report highlighting the salient points within it including:

- One significant Audit risk had been identified, that being Management Override of Control.
- The Audit fees for the year would be £82,600 for the Financial Audit and £17,400 for the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment.
- The replacement of the Finance IT System to take effect on 1 April 2026 and would see it being unsupported from 1 June 2026, leaving the system exposed to cyber-attack, data loss and downtime.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wilkinson for his comments and invited questions from Members.

In respect of the reference made to the Finance IT system, Councillor Wray sought further clarity around that.

Mr Wilkinson indicated that a potential risk had been identified whereby the new system would be unsupported from 1 June 2026 which could see data being lost and potential for risk from cyber attack. As such he believed that it was important to move to the new system as soon as possible.

The Head of Finance reassured Members that his team were actively working on this with preparations well underway to go live on 1 April 2026.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the report be noted.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

a. ANDBC Audit Committee Progress Report (Appendix II)

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

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

Ms McDermott advised that two Internal reports were being presented to the Committee, those being:

- Review of the Labour Market Partnership
- Climate Change Strategy Review

Continuing Ms McDermott reported that there were no changes to the Plan and all additional pieces of work had been undertaken. In respect of Follow Up work, that was set out on Page 14 of report and detailed that:

- 39 Outstanding Recommendations remained in March 2025.
- 30 Items were added to the tracker throughout the year.
- 30 issues had been closed during the year.
- 38 items remained open as at 9 March 2026.

The Chairman thanked Ms McDermott for her comments and invited questions from Members.

Councillor Newman welcomed the report and in particular the review of Leisure Centre procurement arrangements for the provision of synthetic pitches. She was aware that had caused a number of issues for Bangor Hockey Club and other clubs and as such she would look forward to reading the findings around that in due course.

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

(b) ANDBC Review of the Labour Market Partnership (Appendix III)

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Chairman invited Prachi Jain, Deloitte to present her report.

Ms Jain highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1, Priority 2 or Priority 3 recommendations and an overall satisfactory level of assurance given.

There were no queries from Members.

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

(c) **ANDBC Internal Audit – Climate Change Strategy Review**
(Appendix IV)

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Chairman invited Prachi Jain, Deloitte to present her report.

Ms Jain highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, four Priority 2 recommendations and no Priority 3 recommendations. An overall limited level of assurance had been given.

There were no queries from Members.

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

d. **Internal Audit Annual Report 2025-26** (Appendix V)

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

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

Ms McDermott guided Members through the report highlighting the salient points within it. It was noted there were 18 Priority 2 issues and five Priority 3 issues and a Satisfactory level of Assurance had been given.

Queries from Members were sought at this stage.

Alderman McAlpine welcomed that the number of Recommendations had reduced however on reviewing the previous report at Item 6a she had noted that a number of those had been extended. As some of those would now have taken almost nine years to resolve she asked what the major issues were around getting those successfully resolved.

In response Ms McDermott acknowledged that capacity to undertake some of the recommendations had been a challenge particularly as a number of significant transformation projects had been ongoing by the Council.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that in relation to the Travel and Subsistence outstanding recommendation, it was the intention to include that as part of a wider negotiation around Terms and Conditions including Job Evaluations with Trade Unions etc in the future. Continuing he commented that some of the recommendations would require significant large scale projects and added that one of the biggest large scale projects was the Corporate File Plan which commenced last September and was due to be completed in September 2026. It was noted planning for that had commenced six months prior to September 2025. Members were further advised that some items would require other items to be completed and as such there was a knock on effect for many of those which remained outstanding. As such the Director believed, as was often the case, the numbers did not reflect the amount of work which was ongoing in the background.

Alderman McAlpine suggested that it would be helpful if that level of detail could be highlighted in future reports.

Referring to Page 6 of the report, Statement of Assurance, Mr Cummings noted the following statement:

“Additionally, the acting Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services should consider the impact these outstanding recommendations have on the effectiveness of the Council’s control environment”.

He believed that a formal response to that should be sought by the Committee to that request to consider the full effect of the 38 recommendations.

The Director of Corporate Services indicated that would be given further consideration and reported back to the Committee in due course.

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

e. ANDBC Draft Annual Audit Plan 2026-27 (Appendix VI)

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

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

Ms McDermott guided Members through the report highlighting the salient points within it.

There were no queries from Members.

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

f) Detailed Outstanding Recommendations Action Plans (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Council kept a register of internal audit recommendations that were not fully implemented in order to track implementation and allow Deloitte to test actions taken to ensure they satisfy the recommendation.

Key Issues

At its meeting in December 2025, members expressed concern at both the number of recommendations and the length of time taken to implement some of them. The Committee therefore requested officers to bring back a report to the next meeting detailing definite courses of action to see all recommendations implemented as soon as possible. This report fulfilled that request.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Head of Finance advised that the report had been prepared following a request from the Committee at its last meeting and it provided fuller responses and actions from Management in respect of each of the outstanding Actions.

Queries from Members were sought at this stage.

Welcoming the report, Councillor Wray indicated that he had a number of questions and referring to recommendation number 84 noted there were three options and he sought further clarification around those.

In response the Head of Finance advised that the Council's Human Resources service had subsequently appointed a full time Systems Assistant and as an internal candidate they had prior knowledge of the system. It was noted that while a workplan was already in place, the Member's comments would be passed on to Human Resources officers.

Continuing Councillor Wray referred to recommendation number 248 which considered the Council's 5% absence trigger on the system however he noted the commentary around that which was that Line Managers should be reminded that was their responsibility to manage.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that Line Managers often had significant other tasks to complete associated with their jobs and as such what was being considered was a system where reminder emails would be sent to Line Managers once the 5% trigger had been reached by their staff.

Councillor Newman indicated that she wished to make reference to recommendations 195 and 101 which had been started in 2022 and 2022 respectively. She sought clarity that nothing had changed in respect of 195 and suggested that if there had been movement on that the situation currently around Ward Park and Aurora Hockey pitches and carpets could have been prevented.

The Head of Finance indicated that he could not make comment on that particular matter out of confidence, however he confirmed the issue was related to the Council's new finance system which would go live on 1 April 2026. There remained however a number of issues with this and once the system was automated there would be much stronger compliance demands. Members were further advised that significant training had already been undertaken.

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

7. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

a) Draft Procedure for 'to note' Reports

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive stating that at its meeting in September 2025, the Committee agreed to explore implementing a new process around 'to note' reports, whereby such reports were removed totally from the agenda and alternatively, uploaded to Decision Time for Member's information only. Such reports would follow similarly to 'Any Other Notified Business' where Members could request that a 'to note' report was added onto the agenda for the Committee's consideration.

Background

Officers had since undertaken to explore this option with another Council who operated a similar system, referred to as the 'Information and Correspondence Schedule' (ICS).

In practice, the ICS was a separate entry on Decision Time to the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee meeting was scheduled to take place from 7pm-9pm, the ICS was scheduled for 9.30pm. This 'meeting' included reports for noting as well as copies of relevant correspondence.

The ICS papers were also circulated by Democratic Services in line with the deadlines set out in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, which required that agendas and associated papers were circulated to Members within five calendar days of the meeting.

Officers were advised that in the case of ICS reports, Members typically raised questions with the Director directly in advance of the meeting, rather than on the floor of the Committee.

Governance and Transparency

Officers had discussed options from a governance perspective, as the Council was required to have a clear procedural framework of its decisions.

Some concern had been flagged around the decision making and formal record keeping of decisions if items were not contained in one meeting and on one agenda. For example, a report circulated in the ICS 'meeting', which was then not raised on

the floor of the Committee, would not automatically be included in the minutes and would not be ratified at full Council.

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 outlined at 43(1),

“Copies of the agenda for a meeting of a council and, subject to subsection (2), copies of any report for the meeting must be open to inspection by members of the public at the offices of the council [or on the council’s website] in accordance with subsection (3)...

Any document which is required by subsection (1) to be open to inspection must be open to inspection at least five days before the meeting, except that—

(a) where the meeting is convened at shorter notice, the copies of the agenda and reports must be open to inspection from the time the meeting is convened, and

(b) where an item is added to an agenda copies of which are open to inspection by the public, copies of the item (or of the revised agenda), and the copies of any report for the meeting relating to the item, must be open to inspection from the time the item is added to the agenda.

4) An item of business may not be considered at a meeting of a council unless either—

(a) a copy of the agenda including the item (or a copy of the item) is open to inspection by members of the public in pursuance of subsection (1) for at least five days before the meeting or, where the meeting is convened at shorter notice, from the time the meeting is convened; or

(b) by reason of special circumstances, which must be specified in the minutes, the chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.”

To be in line with the Act, it was the view of officers that any reports on Council business should appear on the agenda and in the public domain within the appropriate deadlines.

Scheme of Delegation

Consideration would also be required around ‘to note’ reports that fall under Council Reserved Matters, which were considered at the parent Committee but upon which the Committee did not have delegated authority to make the decision. Such reports would be required to be placed on the agenda of the main Committee meeting, to ensure they were contained in the minutes and ratified at full Council.

Standing Order changes

Should the Council agree to implement a new system in the style of the ICS system as outlined, the Standing Orders would need to change. In line with the Scheme of Delegation, this could only be done at full Council. Therefore, a report would be required at the next Council meeting outlining the Committee’s recommendations and therefore proposing changes to the Standing Orders.

If the Council agreed to proceed with the ICS system, it was recommended that the Standing Orders would be changed as follows:

Standing Order 4 - Notice and Summons of Meetings

4.4 Any Other Notified Business (AONB) cannot be considered at Council meetings or the Planning Committee but may be considered at all other Committee meetings.

AONB must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services not later than 4pm one working day prior to the meeting. This should also be copied to the Chairperson and Director of the relevant Committee. AONB should be of an urgent nature and usually for information and can be accepted or denied at the discretion of the Chair. It should not be a matter that should be raised as a Notice of Motion.

Insert as new **4.5**:

Requests for items from the Information and Correspondence (ICS) schedule to be added to the Committee meeting agenda must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services and the Director not later than 4pm, one working day prior to the meeting. This should also be copied to the Chairperson.

Members should note when making these decisions, that under Standing Order 30 – Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders – any motion to, add to, vary or revoke the Standing Orders would, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned and be referred without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council and any resultant amendment would be ratified at the meeting.

As such, should the Committee wish to change the Standing Orders, a report would be placed on the agenda of the next full Council meeting outlining the proposed suspension and amendment at which point the relevant Standing Order would be stood down until the next full Council meeting when the resultant amendment would be debated and ratified.

Options

The Committee should consider the following options:

1. Introduce an ICS system

When making this decision, Members should consider the governance and transparency issues outlined above. At this time, further work would need to be done to ensure such a system was compliant with the Act.

Members should also note that reports for noting were not the same type of business as Any Other Notified Business, which was of urgent nature and for information and should not be something that could otherwise be a Notice of Motion. Reports, however, regularly stemmed from Notices of Motion. Careful consideration would be required on the nature of such items uploaded to the ICS system.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to the resource impact on the repeated publication of papers to the public, when reports were added to the agenda on an ad-hoc basis.

Given these implications, officers were not proposing this as a reasonable model.

2. Introduce further changes to the agenda format

Members would be aware that in 2024 the agenda format was updated to categorise reports by 'for approval' and 'for noting' both in public session and in confidence. This was an effort to help address the length of Committee meetings.

An alternative option was that the Council did not proceed with an ICS system for 'to note' reports or items for information. Instead, the agenda format was updated again to take all reports for noting into a new section 'Not for Discussion' whereby a proposal would be put to take these items 'en bloc'. In order for a single report to be considered, it would have to be decoupled from the rest and proposed as such. It would be similar to how 'Circulated for Information' items are considered at Council.

The agenda format would look as follows:

- **Public (for approval)**
- **Not for Discussion: Reports noted en bloc.**
- **In Confidence (for approval)**
- **Not for Discussion: Reports noted en bloc.**

Members should consider whether this option would address any concerns around the length of Committee meetings. It was recommended that this option was more favourable than implementing an ICS system.

3. Do nothing

Members should consider whether the most appropriate course of action would be to do nothing or alternatively, refer the contents of this report to full Council for consideration.

Summary

Members should consider the options outlined in the report on the balance of whether changes were required to how reports were considered at Committee, as well as Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to not implement a new process around 'to note' reports and agrees to keep the Agenda format as it is.

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

The proposer Councillor Wray acknowledged that this was a big decision for the Council adding that if any changes were to be made that should be debated by the Full Council. As such he asked if this proposal was noted could other Members with an interest in this matter comment on it at the Full Council meeting when the minutes were ratified.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the minutes of this meeting would be ratified at the April 2026 Full Council Meeting. The report was the result of significant debate at a previous meeting of the Committee and following a benchmarking exercise it was the view of officers that Council continued with its existing approach on the basis of transparency. He confirmed that the minutes would go to April 2026 meeting of the Full Council and Members would have an opportunity to comment at that stage.

The seconder, Councillor McKee stated that he supported the recommendation and understood the reasoning behind the report before them. Committees had previously been running a lot longer than what they did now and as such what was detailed in the report was not necessary as that problem was no longer a significant issue.

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

8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

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

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

Reports for Noting

9. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE (FILE 231329)

(File Ref: 231329)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

The Committee was asked to consider an update on Single Tender Actions (STA's). Each STA is reported to Council by the relevant directorate to request the setting aside of Standing Orders. Three Single Tender Actions were brought to the attention of the Procurement Service Unit since its last report.

10. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA PROTECTION MATTERS

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

Members were advised of any new incidences of fraud, whistleblowing and data protection.

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

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

A meeting was held in the absence of management.

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance, Community Planning Manager and Democratic Services Officer all withdrew from the meeting during the discussion of the item at 7.57 pm and returned to the Council Chamber at 7.59 pm.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.59pm.

ITEM 7.2

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Tuesday 31 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine
McIlveen
Smith

Councillors: Cathcart (Zoom) McKee
Hennessy Morgan
Harbinson Smart
Kendall
Kerr (Zoom, 7.25pm)

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from the Mayor, Councillor McCollum, who was unable to attend due to a Mayoral engagement.

Further apologies were received from Alderman McDowell and Councillor Wray.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alderman McIlveen declared an interest in Item 4.2 (LA06/2020/0844/F) and Councillor Harbinson declared an interest in Item 4.5 (LA06/2025/0405/F).

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2021/1476/F – RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING 29 NO. DWELLINGS

(Appendix I – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards

Proposal: Residential development comprising 29 No. dwellings (comprising 25no. detached and 4no. semi-detached dwellings), including garages, open space, and landscaping, access, internal road network and all other associate site and access works.

Site Location: Lands to the NW of Kiltonga Industrial Estate, SW of Belfast Road and South of Milecross Road, Newtownards

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planner (C Rodgers) explained that the application had previously been presented to Committee on 4 March 2025, when Members had resolved to defer the application to allow time for legal advice and further assessment on a number of matters.

The Officer referred to slides showing the site's zoning for industrial use within the Ards and Down Area Plan, and Members were reminded that under section 6(4) of the 2011 Planning Act, decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicated otherwise.

While the proposal was contrary to the Plan, the planning history of the site represented a significant material consideration.

The Officer explained the site's location relevant to the Belfast Road and the industrial estate, and displayed views from the Belfast Road entrance and the Milecross Road junction, demonstrating its edge-of-settlement location.

The Officer referred to the proposed layout, which adopted a landscape-led approach incorporating generous green buffers, structural landscaping, and a defined meadow area. She highlighted that the layout was spacious and low-density, with dwellings arranged around the existing pond, which would be retained and enhanced as part of the overall scheme.

The Committee was shown examples of the proposed house types and the Officer explained that the dwellings had been designed in a traditional, high-quality style, incorporating brick and slate materials and well-proportioned windows. While the overall design approach included a consistent palette of materials, variation in house types delivered a visually engaging and attractive residential development.

In relation to the planning history, the Officer advised that the principle of residential use had already been established on the site. Relevant planning history included an approved and extant nursing home, with a Certificate of Lawfulness confirming

commencement; approval for 20 retirement dwellings, with commencement also certified; and a PAC decision confirming that the retirement dwellings fell within Use Class C1 dwellinghouses and that their occupation was no longer tied to the nursing home becoming operational. A comparison slide illustrated the layout of the previously approved retirement dwellings alongside the approved nursing home, showing that the earlier approval had included a linear terrace-style arrangement with a uniform design and consistent proportions.

In terms of the deferral, Members had requested legal advice on the age-related occupancy condition, the implications of the PAC appeal decision, and the options available to the Committee. Members had also sought additional assessment relating to potential noise and odour impacts and the safety implications of the pond.

The Officer noted that Members had since had the opportunity to review confidential legal advice circulated in advance of the meeting and confirmed that officers had taken that advice fully into account in forming the recommendation.

To assist the planning balance, the applicant had provided further information on several key issues, including economic and housing land supply - comprising extracts from the technical evidence base associated with the recently published draft Local Plan Strategy - clarification relating to the non-industrial fallback position, and the comparative impacts and benefits of the proposed scheme.

Addressing pond safety, the Officer advised that Members had sought further clarification on this matter. She explained that the pond was an established feature of the site, and its inclusion was not considered to materially increase risk beyond that typically associated with residential development located near open water. She also noted that the pond was not unique to this residential scheme, referencing the recently approved SUDs pond within the Rivenwood development in Newtownards as an example of sustainable drainage practice. The proposal was therefore considered acceptable from a safety perspective.

The Officer summarised the key considerations highlighted in the Addendum report, which were central to the assessment of the principle of development. These included:

- The Council's technical evidence associated with the recently published draft Plan Strategy indicating that zoning NS32 was no longer viable for industrial use.
- Evidence showing no shortfall in industrial land supply, with significant headroom even under ambitious economic growth scenarios.
- The site's extant non-industrial permissions.
- The PAC's removal of the functional link between the nursing home and the retirement dwellings, and confirmation that the approved retirement dwellings fell within Use Class C1.

- Officers' acceptance that there was a realistic and lawful fallback position for non-industrial development.
- Market evidence indicating that the proposed housing mix better reflected local housing needs, with the site being less suited to an age-restricted scheme given the limited convenient access to services and facilities.
- Environmental Health's reassessment of the application, raising no objection on noise or odour grounds subject to mitigation secured through conditions.
- The proposal's ecological enhancement measures, including pond restoration to support the local population of smooth newt, a legally protected species.
- The view that the proposal would not set an undesirable precedent, having regard to the unique site-specific circumstances.

In conclusion, the Officer stated that, taking all matters together, Officers considered that the material planning considerations in this case collectively outweighed the policy presumption to retain the land for industrial use. These considerations provided a clear and defensible basis for departure from the Development Plan. Accordingly, the recommendation before Members was to grant planning permission, subject to the conditions set out in the Addendum report.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer and Alderman McAlpine queried access to the site and if that was through the industrial estate. She pointed to what appeared to be a tricky junction and asked what the applicant's proposal was in terms of footpaths.

The Officer advised that the applicant proposed to make upgrades to the junction and there would be a right-hand turning lane for access – a two-metre-wide footway along the front of the site was also proposed and she understood there was a footpath on the opposite side of the road.

Alderman McIlveen queried the timing of the Certificate of Lawfulness for commenced works in relation to the foundations. He asked if the Certificate had been issued after the application had last appeared before the Committee.

The Officer confirmed that the works had commenced before the previous planning permission had expired and she had evidenced this during a site visit as part of her assessment of this application prior to the last meeting.

The Chair invited Tom Stokes (TSA Planning) and Daniel McConkey (Applicant) and William Orbinson KC forward to speak in support of the application.

Mr Stokes explained this was a residential scheme of 29 family dwellings with generous private and public amenity provision, including a restored pond which significantly enhanced the biodiversity value of the area.

The open space was carefully set out around the pond as a central feature, and whilst there had been concern expressed around the safety of this feature, they

wished to allay these concerns. The use of existing ponds and other water features, whilst not commonplace, did feature in some housing developments (for example, Helens Wood, Bangor) and were enjoyed without incident. Given the desire to increase the usage of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs), integrating water features into housing developments was likely to increase, and one such example in recent times within Ards and North Down was the provision of SUDS ponds at Rivenwood.

Mr Stokes referred to an extensive and perhaps somewhat convoluted planning history to this site over many years, which also overlapped the Local Development Plan process with the publication of the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (with Draft in 2002 and adoption in 2009).

This had prompted careful consideration and debate before the Committee as to the legal standing of the site and whether granting permission for this proposal would cause the potential loss of employment land (due to the designation of the lands within the Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP)) and the nature of the extant planning permissions on the site.

It was concluded from these further investigations, since the application was last presented to Committee in March 2025, that the subject lands had extant planning permission for residential development.

The applicant, Jona Developments, purchased the site in January 2021. They purchased the site with the benefit of planning permission. To the applicant, the planning history at the time of purchase demonstrated that the lands had permission for a residential care home (secured through Certificate of Lawfulness confirming the permission had been enacted) and 20no. Class C1 dwelling houses.

The residential care home was granted permission (X/2011/0347/F) in September 2012, three and a half years after the publication of the ADAP 2015, within which the site was zoned as proposed industry. The Certificate of Lawfulness (LA06/2017/1029/LDE) was granted in September 2017 confirming lawful commencement securing the permission.

Application LA06/2018/0589/F was approved in September 2019, and this was described as 20no. 'single storey retirement living dwellings'. Conditions added to this permission included one requiring the nursing home to be operational prior to occupation of the dwellings, and another placing an occupancy condition on the dwellings restricting them to over 55s. The previous owner of the site appealed the condition requiring the nursing home to be operational prior to occupancy but not the actual over 55s condition.

The Commissioner decision 2019/A0149 explicitly stated that 'the proposed dwellings fall under Class C1(a) of the Use Classes Order'.

That was the context and summation of the planning history that was before the applicant at the time of purchase. The site clearly had planning permission for Class C1(a) dwelling houses, which demonstrated that the industrial zoning had already been lost.

This was further reinforced by the implementation of the 20no. dwellings as confirmed through the granting of a certificate under LA06/2025/0312/CLOPUD.

It was also noted that as the Council prepared its Local Development Plan, the housing and employment evidence papers that had informed the Plan process to date had acknowledged that the site did not contribute towards the expected employment allocation. Indeed, the site was illustrated in the Housing Monitor with a yield of 20 dwellings (due to the planning permission on site, which was now extant).

The applicant presented to the Committee a far superior housing proposal across the subject lands, which best met the local housing needs and, as evidenced by Templeton Robinson, there was clear demand for such.

The new layout had been assessed with regard to ensuring that the proposed housing did not conflict with adjacent land uses and that a quality residential environment was achieved.

There were no objections from any consultees.

In closing, Mr Stokes thanked the Committee for its time and asked Members to endorse the Officer recommendation for this £13m investment opportunity that would deliver 29no. family homes for Newtownards.

(Councillor Kerr joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.25pm)

The Chair invited questions to the speakers.

Alderman Graham queried the maintenance arrangements for the pond and open space within the proposed development, and it was advised that a management company would be responsible for this. The speaker argued that the maintenance arrangements and the restoration of the pond had surpassed what had been proposed in the previous approval.

Councillor Cathcart asked how conflict with the operations of neighbouring businesses would be avoided, and it was advised that acoustic boundaries would be installed and the speaker highlighted that the Council's Environmental Health service had raised no objections.

(Mr Stokes, Mr McConkey and Mr Orbinson KC returned to the public gallery).

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council grants planning permission.

Alderman Smith referred to the planning history of the site and he was satisfied that all of the previous issues surrounding the pond and noise had been resolved. He noted there was no issue in terms of the historic industrial zoning of the site and felt that the applicant's fallback position was also a factor.

The seconder, Councillor Kendall, welcomed what had been a comprehensive response from Officers to the Committee's previous concerns. She felt that there were now only good reasons to approve the recommendation.

Alderman Graham added his support, believing that the Committee's previous objections had not been justified and had only resulted in a waste of time and resources. He welcomed what would now enhance the offering of family housing in Newtownards.

Alderman McIlveen felt that the year-long referral had been worthwhile to resolve many aspects, most notably the restoration of the pond which had been a real positive for the development. He appreciated that some of the concerns related to the previous history of the site and had no reflection on the existing proposal and its current owner. His reservations had been mainly around the proximity to the industrial estate, and his concerns were not just in relation to noise but also difficulties in terms of business development there, noting that future growth and expansion on the site could be met with objection by residents. He felt though that the application was now acceptable and complied with Planning Policy.

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

(Alderman McIlveen withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 4.2 – 7.31pm)

4.2 LA06/2020/0844/F – UPGRADE TO EXISTING FOOTBALL GROUND (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: Application made by Ards and North Down Borough Council

Proposal: Upgrade to existing football ground to include the replacement of the existing grass pitch with synthetic surface, fencing and floodlighting along with replacement changing pavilion, additional car parking spaces and associated siteworks.

Site Location: Football ground to the rear of No. 8 and 10 New Harbour Road, Portavogie

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

Senior Planner (J Hanna) advised that the application was a full application made by the Council with a recommendation for approval.

He advised it also included the widening of the existing vehicular access lane, the partial demolition and making good of the garage at No. 8, the relocation of the vehicular entrance to No. 8, and the construction of new perimeter walls to match those at Nos. 4, 6 and 8 New Harbour Road to provide visibility splays. He confirmed that no objections had been received and statutory consultees had offered no objection to the proposal.

The Officer explained that the site was located on the northern side of New Harbour Road and was accessed between two residential dwellings. There was a small parking area, and a changing room block on the site. The site was bounded by a ball stop fence along with the boundary fence, wall and hedgerows of neighbouring residential properties. The surrounding area was mainly residential in character, although Portavogie Primary School was located to the south-west of the site.

The site was zoned as 'Existing Recreation and Open Space'. PPS 8 – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation was material to the assessment. As the proposal involved replacing an existing grass football pitch with a new synthetic football pitch, the use remained consistent with the zoning and did not offend Policy OS 1 of PPS 8.

The proposal included the provision of a 3G synthetic pitch with fencing and 6m-high ball stop fencing to the rear of each of the goals. There would be a 4.1m-high spectator stand, a 4.8m-high changing pavilion, eight 20m-high floodlights and associated on-site parking. The proposed 3G pitch would result in a reorientation but would encompass much of the footprint of the existing pitch. The boundaries of the site would be defined by 2m-high mesh fencing and 2m-high timber acoustic fencing, while the boundaries of the pitch would be defined by 1.2m-high mesh fencing with 6m-high ball stop fencing behind both sets of goal posts.

The spectator stand and changing pavilion would be located on the southern portion of the site. The floorplans of the pavilion included changing rooms, an equipment store and a function room. The pavilion building would be located a minimum of 9m from the southern boundary, which would reduce the visual impact from New Harbour Road. The design and massing of both structures were considered appropriate for the location and would not cause an adverse impact on the character or visual amenity of the area.

In relation to the proposed fencing and floodlights, the proposed fencing would not be at odds with what currently existed and would cause no greater visual impact than the current arrangement. In relation to the floodlighting, the proposal included eight 20m-high floodlights.

The current lighting on the site was limited to the southern boundary where there were three floodlights. The proposed lighting would be moved away from this boundary to the side of the pitch. From a visual perspective, the floodlights would not be significant during daylight hours as they were set back from surrounding critical viewpoints, approximately 70m from New Harbour Road, and would be largely obscured by existing built development.

It was acknowledged that the visual impact would be more prominent outside daylight hours when the lights were switched on. However, considering the angle of the lighting, orientated towards the proposed 3G pitch, and the separation from the public road, the visual impact was not considered unacceptable given the use of the site. A time-limiting condition was also recommended by Environmental Health that the site could not be in use after 22:00.

The Officer described the existing access arrangement as extremely narrow and not to standard. The proposal involved widening the existing access to bring it up to standard, which required encroachment into the garden and partial demolition of the outbuilding associated with No. 8 New Harbour Road. The front boundary walls at Nos. 4, 6 and 8 would be realigned, and the vehicular access to No. 8 would be relocated from New Harbour Road onto the proposed laneway to the football pitch.

The relevant third parties had been served notice. DFI Roads had been consulted on the upgrade to the existing access and had offered no objections subject to conditions.

It was confirmed that increased parking would be provided at the site, with the provision meeting the Parking Standards recommendation of 49 spaces. Overall, the proposal was considered to accord with the provisions set out under PPS 3.

Referring to Policy OS 4 and Policy OS 7, those were material particularly in respect of the impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents. The hours of operation would be extended by one hour from the existing time of 6–9pm to 6–10pm, with no proposed changes to weekend use. The site was located in close proximity to houses fronting New Harbour Road (Nos. 6, 8 and 10), as well as Nos. 5–9 Brandon Park, Nos. 12, 14, 16 and 17 Seahaven Avenue, and Nos. 5, 7, 11 and 13 Main Road.

Environmental Health had considered an assessment of noise impact. This assessment demonstrated that the proposed end time would be 1dB greater than the existing end time, which was confirmed as normally not noticeable and of low impact. Environmental Health recommended conditions relating to time restrictions and acoustic barriers.

In relation to the floodlighting, an Evaluation of Obtrusive Lighting on Adjacent Properties had been submitted in support of the application. The submission outlined the impact of vertical illuminance on adjacent residential properties and confirmed compliance with the pre-curfew light intrusion requirements of 10 Lux for an E3 suburban location, as set out in the Institute of Lighting Professionals' Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light. Environmental Health had considered the submissions and recommended conditions. Overall, it was considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings.

In conclusion, the Officer stated that he was content that the proposal would not have a significant adverse effect, met the relevant policy requirements, and on this basis the application was recommended for approval.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer and Councillor Cathcart, noting that the application dated back to 2020, queried the delays to the scheme and if they related to the wastewater capacity issues. The Officer referred to various issues including sewage treatment and the access, which were the subject of repeated requests for further information by the statutory consultees.

Councillor Kerr proposed, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted and the Council grants planning permission.

Councillor Kerr welcomed the community benefits of the scheme while Councillor Cathcart believed that the lack of objections had illustrated the high level of need for the upgraded facility, noting that such developments usually attracted objections to floodlighting, for example. He also recognised the work of his colleague Alderman Adair in championing the project.

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

(Alderman McIlveen returned to the meeting – 7.41pm)

4.3 LA06/2025/0992/F – 12NO. DWELLINGS (CHANGE OF HOUSE TYPE E FROM APPROVAL W/2003/1085/F)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: Six or more objections contrary to the officer's recommendation had been received.

Proposal: 12 No. Dwellings (Change of house type E from approval W/2003/1085/F)

Site Location: Site approximately 75m North of 62 Green Road, Conlig

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

Senior Planner (J Hanna) explained that the application had been recommended for approval and was being presented to committee as six or more objections contrary to the officer's recommendation had been received.

He advised that the site was on the northern side of Green Road and was located within the settlement limit and housing designation BR05/13 as identified in Draft BMAP.

Development of the wider site was already underway through the implementation of the 2003 permission, with the extent of this approved site clearly established. The principle of residential development was therefore already established through the previous permission and could not be revisited in the consideration of this application for a proposed change of house type.

The Officer referred to the approved and proposed site layout plans, noting that the siting of the dwellings, their curtilages and the location of parking remained the same.

Photographs taken by the case officer during the site inspection showed construction underway within the wider development, and a number of these dwellings were now occupied.

The Officer confirmed that a detailed landscaping scheme had been submitted with the application, showing proposed landscaping in the same locations as the original approval. He outlined the approved and proposed elevations of the dwellings, explaining that the proposed changes to design were considered to be minor. The main differences included:

- A slight realignment of the rear wall
- Removal of chimneys
- Removal of entrance canopies
- Removal of the first-floor ensuite window
- Removal of exposed truss design
- An increase in ridge height of the middle section of the roof by 0.9m

The Officer advised that Planning Service was content that the proposed development would continue to meet all the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments, respecting the surrounding context and resulting in no unacceptable adverse impact on existing properties.

A total of 10 letters of objection and one petition of objection with 20 signatures had been received in relation to the application. The main issues raised included:

- Loss of privacy
- Impact on water supply
- Density of development
- Road safety

The Officer confirmed that all of these matters had been considered in detail in the planning report.

In summary, he recommended that planning permission should be granted for this change of house type application, subject to the conditions set out in the planning report.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer.

Councillor Cathcart objected to the recommendation noting that it was based on a 23-year-old planning approval and did not recognise significant changes to the roads network and surrounding development. In light of that, he asked why the roads and traffic impacts had not been reviewed after more than two decades. He also sought clarity on what works had considered to have commenced on the site following the 2003 approval.

The Head of Planning and Building Control clarified that the site had been zoned for housing in the extant North Down and Ards Area Plan and that had been reflected in the draft BMAP (as a committed site).

She explained that development had commenced and pointed to a substantial number of dwellings that had been constructed. She clarified that under Planning law, commencement required more than minor works – all pre-commencement

conditions must have been discharged and works materially related to the approved scheme must have begun.

She added that the development plan process was subject to consultation with statutory bodies such as DFI Roads and NI Water who had been content with the previous layout and impact on the networks. As this application only related to a change of house type there was no requirement for consultation with DFI Roads, and the developer retained the right to implement the extant permission irrespective of the current roads network.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, that the Council grants planning permission.

Alderman Smith felt that the argument for approval had been well made and noted that there were only limited changes to the original plan.

The Chair sought agreement and Councillor Cathcart indicated he wished to be recorded as against the decision to approve planning permission.

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

4.4 LA06/2024/0222/F – DEMOLITION OF EXISTING DWELLING AND ERECTION OF 2NO. DWELLINGS AND 1 NO. DETACHED GARAGE

(Appendix VI – VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye

Committee Interest: a local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which were contrary to officers' recommendation.

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 2 no. dwellings and 1 no. detached garage.

Site Location: 31 Old Cultra Road, Holywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

Principal Planner (G Kerr) outlined the case officer's report, advising that a previous application for this site had been presented at the Planning Committee meeting of 5 December 2023. The recommendation to grant planning permission had been overturned by Members, the reasoning being that the proposal would affect a yet-to-be-built house extension adjacent to the site. There had been one refusal reason which related to overshadowing and loss of light.

Slides displayed of the previous application had shown the site layout and elevations of the two dwellings that had been overturned by Planning Committee.

The adjacent dwelling at 30a Cultra Avenue had been granted planning permission for demolition of rear and side returns to accommodate a two-storey extension to the side, and single-storey extensions to the front and rear. This had been approved on

14 December 2021 but had not been built out when the previous application, which had been refused, was presented in December 2023. The extension had since been constructed.

The application now before Members had originally been submitted as 2no. two-storey dwellings, one to replace the existing dwelling on site and one on the rear portion of the application site. The proposed site layout had been amended during processing to 2no. single-storey dwellings, one with an integral garage and one with a detached garage.

The crucial difference between the previous application and the current proposal was that both dwellings were now single storey, significantly reducing any adverse impact on neighbouring dwellings.

This was reflected in the number of objections received: 19 objections from nine addresses, but only two objections from two addresses had been received following the amendment to single-storey units. All objections had been considered in the Case Officer Report and addendum.

The site lay within the settlement limit where residential development was acceptable in principle in conjunction with compliance with regional policies and other material considerations.

The site consisted of an existing two-storey, pitched-roof detached dwelling finished in brick and painted render with a conservatory and sunroom to the rear. The topography of the site sloped slightly upward towards the rear boundary.

Vehicular access had been from Old Cultra Road via a curved gravel driveway leading to a parking area directly in front of the dwelling, with a further access at the south-east corner via a private lane from Cultra Avenue.

Garden areas were laid out in lawn to the front and rear with several mature trees, particularly in the front garden.

The site was a mature plot with strong boundaries. The rear boundary was denoted by a stone wall approximately 2 metres high, and mature vegetation and rendered walls formed the other boundaries. The site was not visible from Old Cultra Road.

The wider area was residential in nature with various house types in mature plots with off-road parking.

The North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984 - 1995 was the current statutory plan for the area, however the draft BMAP Plan 2015 remained a material consideration. The site was located within the settlement limits of Holywood and lay in the proposed Marino, Cultra and Craigavad Area of Townscape Character as identified in draft BMAP.

The proposed demolition of the existing dwelling in the proposed ATC did not conflict with policy. The existing dwelling, which sat back and was screened from views on

Cultra Avenue by existing vegetation, had no particular design merits and did not make a material contribution to the distinctive character of the area.

The proposal sought to subdivide the existing large plot with a proposed replacement dwelling on the position of the existing house, retaining access onto Old Cultra Road, and a second dwelling to the rear accessed off Cultra Avenue.

House A, the proposed replacement dwelling, had originally been submitted as two storeys but had been reduced to single storey and was to be sited on the approximate footprint of the original dwelling, which was well set back from Old Cultra Road.

The design was appropriate to the existing character of the area and was in line with the design requirements set out in Policy QD1 of PPS 7 'Quality Residential Environments'. The style was traditional, including features such as chimney stacks and pots, quoins, pitched roof, veranda and dormers. High-quality materials were proposed, including natural slate for the roof and ridge tiles, random coursed stone to external walls with select clay brick and clay chimney pots.

House A did not cause any conflict with adjacent land uses and did not result in overlooking, overshadowing or loss of natural light to neighbouring dwellings given the single-storey height. The previous design for House Type A had been two storey and had been amended to single storey for this application.

House B and its garage were situated at the rear of the site, accessed via a separate lane from Cultra Avenue to the northeast, with a hedge between House A and House B. House B was also single storey and more modest in scale than House A. It was to be located 4.3 metres from the rear of the site. With a 2-metre-high stone wall along this boundary, it was considered that there would be no unacceptable impact on properties along Orchard Way to the rear.

As with House A, the style was traditional with period details incorporated. It had a pitched roof with twin gables at the front, chimney stacks and pots, and a fanlight over the main doorway. High-quality materials were proposed, including natural slate for the roof, rendered off-white walls, and hardwood sliding sash windows painted white. A single-storey detached garage was proposed adjacent to the front side boundary.

With the proposal being single storey, combined with existing site boundaries and separation distances between proposed and existing dwellings, there would be no adverse impacts. There was no loss of light to neighbouring properties, and the proposal met the light test.

Extensive mature landscaping, particularly within the front garden of House A, would soften the visual impact of the proposal.

The proposed replacement and additional dwelling would sit comfortably within the existing built form and would not detract from the overall character and appearance of the immediate or surrounding area.

Concerns had been raised in objections regarding the use of the existing lane onto Cultra Avenue. DfI Roads had offered no objection subject to conditions for visibility splays and sightlines to be put in place prior to commencement of development.

Despite the previous application being overturned, no refusal reason relating to access had been included, and the access was the same as previously proposed.

Given the overall assessment of the proposal, it was the Officer's professional planning view that the proposed development was acceptable and grant of planning permission was recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer and Councillor Kendall queried the desktop-based survey in relation to protected mammals and asked how that had been sufficient. The Officer advised that this assessment had also included Officer site visits.

The Chair invited Mike Crowe, speaking in opposition to the application, to address the Committee.

Mr Crowe stated that access to his house, and his neighbour's at 30A, was via a private laneway which served the two houses. The said accesses were very much historic.

The structure of the old Coach House at 30A, dating back some 286 years, had been retained, totally refurbished and extended.

The proposal, to permit an infill site to the rear of 31 Old Cultra Road, had already been refused on three separate occasions. After the first refusal, the decision was taken to the Planning Appeals Commission where the decision to refuse was upheld. The Planning Appeals Commissioner deemed the rear infill site to be contrived.

Furthermore, the proposal to split the application site in two, in itself, gave rise to a double breach of Planning Policy, as neither of the two resultant sites met the minimum 1-acre plot size as stipulated in the Area Plan – site B didn't even measure up to one third of the designated plot size.

In the Case Officer's Report, it was stated that 'the principle of a dwelling using the laneway access was previously accepted, as the only reason for refusal was in relation to the impact on amenity.' He stated that this was a totally misleading statement, as during the last hearing (before Planning Committee) very considerable concern was expressed over access along the lane due to lack of sight splays – the photo submitted in his written objection in December past clearly exemplified the historic danger with exiting from his property. The same danger would have arisen at 30A if vehicles were to exit, without proper sight splays, from the proposed contrived site.

He stated that Alderman Graham had expressed uneasiness that there was a shortfall in the drafting of the Planning Legislation allowing both DFI Roads (the recognised authority on road safety) and the Planning Department to totally disregard any and all safety concerns over the proposed access onto the narrow

private laneway, refusing to make any comment or decision, thereby exonerating them from any accountability down the line should there have been any accidents or injuries.

Yet he recalled, Alderman Graham had noted that it was now being left to the Council Members to make that very decision and adjudicate as to what was safe and what was not, and this troubled him in terms of where accountability would lie.

DFI Roads would not have approved a new residential access onto a public road without strict sight splays being provided on safety grounds, so it begged one to ask the question – if, because lands were in private ownership, as with their private laneway, did these very same risks and dangers just disappear into thin air. He contended that the risks were, if anything, further compounded by the fact that there were numerous young children and grandchildren that played on the open forecourts of both 30A and 30B.

As pointed out in previous written objections and also noted in the Case Officer's Report, there were 3 no. sets of gates along the private laneway. The proposed new access to site B located at the end of the lane was simply not practical. Access disruption to the current owners would have been totally unacceptable from a congestion and safety perspective both during construction and further down the line.

There had been 19 letters of objection reflecting the strength of feeling in the matter. No exceptional circumstances had materialised to warrant overturning the three previous refusals. Site B remained a contrived site and the proposed access was not safe.

In closing, Mr Crowe urged the Committee to refuse planning permission.

The Chair invited questions to the speaker and Councillor Smart queried Mr Crowe's safety concerns in relation to the laneway and Cultra Avenue in relation to sight splays. He also asked how many properties accessed the lane and Mr Crowe explained that DFI Roads did not address safety on private roads. In relation to ownership of the lane, Mr Crowe referred to a three-part ownership which included a right of way agreement obtained by the owner of the application site with a former property owner at No 30a.

Councillor Hennessy appreciated the concerns raised by Mr Crowe but had noted that the reasons for the previous refusal at the site was due to potential overshadowing and loss of light. He put that to the speaker and Mr Crowe recalled previous concerns raised by Members at that meeting around the lack of sight splays on to the laneway. He confirmed in a follow up query from Councillor Hennessy, that he was no longer concerned about overshadowing, but his primary concern was due to the lack of sight splays which was a safety issue that DFI Roads would not address.

(Mr Crowe returned to the public gallery).

Stewart Beattie KC and David Donaldson (Donaldson Planning), speaking in support of the application, were invited to address the Committee.

Mr Beattie KC explained that he intended to address two main points. The first concerned the Committee's single reason for refusal which had two subpoints: overshadowing and the loss of sunlight.

He explained that he was usually involved at the planning appeal stage after a decision to approve was overturned. In this instance the applicant had not followed that route and had instead chosen to address the Committee's reasons for refusal directly, making substantial changes such as moving the proposed building, reducing it to single storey and removing any possibility – acknowledged by Mr Crowe – of overshadowing or loss of light. He described this approach as different from his usual presentations and suggested it indicated that the applicant had properly considered the Committee's prior concerns.

Mr Beattie KC added that various points raised, specifically regarding plot size, had already been addressed and had not formed part of the prior reasons for refusal. He stated that plot size was no longer included in draft BMAP and recalled that in 2017, the Planning Committee granted permission on the lane for a plot smaller than the current proposal, and he believed that meant there was no issue with the proposed plot size.

Referring to roads and access, Mr Beattie KC highlighted the importance of treating all developers and applicants consistently and referred to the Committee's discussion over the previous application, noting that although there had been concerns about traffic, the Committee's stated reason for refusal pertained to design, overshadowing, and sunlight issues. He argued that consistency was a legal requirement and that there had been no material change regarding the access points. He added that the application site was lawfully permitted for vehicular access.

Referencing comments by Officers in relation to a fallback position in an earlier application, he stated that the same principle applied in this application. There was nothing to prevent the current site occupier from parking a car to the rear and using the access, and he believed this was a legally significant issue that deserved considerable weight.

Mr Beattie KC argued in response to the claim that there was a gap in legislation, in his experience, DFI Roads were never reluctant to raise concerns about safety, and this also applied to planning officers. He noted that Officers would have considered such concerns twice in relation to access at the application site.

He argued that the access and sight splays were safe and the users were familiar with the lane and its width, and that it had posed no difficulties for anyone since the construction of any of the houses.

The Committee had given careful consideration over the last application for the site and there was no material change in that regard.

In closing, Mr Beattie KC argued that there was now no impediment to granting planning permission as the sole reason for refusal had been comprehensively addressed.

The Chair invited questions to Mr Beattie KC and Mr Donaldson and Alderman Smith asked for further details around the planning history of the area in terms of the properties that accessed the private lane.

Mr Donaldson advised that the lane had originally served a single dwelling, No 30A, which had been granted permission for a significant flat roof extension which fronted the lane. This had been approved despite the previous application for a dwelling on the applicant's site already being in the planning system, and the occupants of No 30A had been aware of that.

He explained that Mr Crowe's property had been approved in 2017 and as a result two dwellings were now served by the lane. He added that at the time of both of those approvals, the applicant had access to the lane and there was clear knowledge from 2021 that the applicant's site was intended for two additional dwellings.

He added that the lane also served the rear of No 31 whose owners could decide to use it and build a garage at any time if they wished. He argued that it was clear how the lane had developed over time and that the applicant had addressed all issues identified by the Planning Service which was reflected in the existing application.

Councillor Morgan queried the distance of the lane, and it was estimated to be 70 metres in total. Alderman McAlpine asked who was responsible for maintaining the lane and asked for confirmation that the application property had a right of way to use the lane to access the public road. It was confirmed that the applicant had a right of way and that was separate from any planning matter and it was the responsibility of all of the owners to maintain the lane.

(Mr Beattie KC and Mr Donaldson returned to the public gallery).

The Chair invited questions to the Officer and Alderman Graham noted the arguments by the objector in relation to road safety on the private lane and he asked if safety on private roads was a material planning consideration. The officer advised that it was not and explained that this was a single laneway and the owners were aware of the conditions and had to be responsible for their safety.

Councillor Smart queried the PAC ruling that was referred to by Mr Crowe and the Officer advised that while it was noted in the planning history, it was a matter that had fallen under a different policy context of BMAP, but the application before the Committee complied with existing policy.

Councillor Kendall sought clarity around townscape density considerations and noted in the report that the Council was not required to 'slavishly' comply with the relevant policy. She recalled a similar application regarding an infill site that the Committee had debated extensively, and she wondered if it was being consistent in its approach to this application by not strictly following that policy.

The Officer urged caution on the use of the term 'infill site' because that was associated with PPS21 under a different policy context. This was an ATC and ATCs needed to be considered as a whole. She returned to a slide which showed varying density of the wider area. This site had a density of 4 dwellings per hectare, but surrounding areas had a density of 5.5 dwellings per hectare. She explained that this was a visual harm test and the site was not visible from the public road so had been deemed acceptable.

The Chair queried Mr Beattie's assertion that plot size had fallen out of BMAP and could almost be put aside completely.

The Officer explained that the material consideration would be in relation to the North Down and Ards Area Plan and that it stated that it was not a requirement to slavishly follow the policy.

The Chair asked if the Committee was bound by its approach to the previous application, noting that the Committee's objection had only been in relation to one single matter which the applicant had now addressed.

The Officer advised that, as a fresh application, this should be considered on its own merits but urged extreme caution, warning that it would be remiss of the Committee not to take into account previous planning history and the reasons for refusal in December 2023. She highlighted that there was no change in terms of access and plot size but the application had been significantly amended to single storeys.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Alderman Smith was content that the issues from the previous application had been dealt with. The size had been reduced significantly and there was no impact on the character of the area. The only issue that had been raised was around access and it was clear that the applicant had a right to use the lane. He recognised that neighbours had concerns, but he felt that the Planning Committee had no choice but to support the recommendation.

Taking a similar view, Alderman McIlveen acknowledged that some matters raised by Mr Crowe had been discussed in relation to the previous application but, significantly, those were not reasons for refusal. In terms of this application, he felt it dealt with a lot of the issues that had been raised previously and he could not see how the Committee could turn down the application.

Alderman Graham was not happy with the situation on the laneway but accepted the professional opinion of the Officer and acknowledged the applicant's genuine attempt to address the overlooking issues by lowering the height of the development.

Councillor Kendall felt it was a difficult decision because she was unhappy with the subdivision of the site and those types of approvals were in danger of setting a precedent. She recognised however that the applicant had taken into account the previous decision and made significant changes. While she did not like the plan, she

felt there was no reason in terms of planning policy for the Committee to refuse planning permission.

The Chair indicated that he was abstaining from the decision.

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

(Councillor Harbinson withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 4.5 – 8.33pm)

4.5 LA06/2025/0405/F - RETROSPECTIVE CHANGE OF USE FROM BOOKMAKERS TO HOT FOOD UNIT

(Appendix IX – X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Comber

Committee Interest: Additional objections received since appearing on the list, along with works ongoing.

Proposal: Change of use from bookmakers to hot food unit.

Site Location: 61 Castle Street, Comber, BT23 5DY

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Principal Planner (G Kerr) outlined the Case Officer's Report, advising that as the application related to a change of use from a bookmakers to a hot food carry-out premises, it was noted that under legislation this was known as being "Sui Generis", which was a land use not falling into any particular use class in the Planning (Use Classes) Order.

Members were advised that the application had originally appeared on the delegated list for the week commencing 24 November 2025 and, as a result of additional objections received since appearing on the list, along with works ongoing, it had been required to be presented before Members of the Planning Committee.

Development had been ongoing on the site with a takeaway (Domino's Pizza) now operational; therefore, the application was considered to be retrospective development.

Updated plans had been submitted along with an updated description to reflect the changes as detailed in the Addendum to the Case Officer Report. The description now read:

Retrospective change of use from bookmakers to hot food unit. Proposal includes retrospective installation of extraction vent to rear, alterations to the front and rear elevations and increase in ridge height of rear return.

The site had formerly consisted of a bookmaker in the town centre as designated in the local area plan.

Being located in a town centre, there was a mixture of uses, mainly commercial, retail, hot food bars and residential dwellings.

With regard to the principle of use in town centres, the SPPS acknowledged that it was important that planning supported the role of town centres and contributed to their success. The aim of the SPPS was to support and sustain vibrant town centres through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first-choice location for retailing and other complementary functions.

The proposed hot food unit was considered a main town centre use and therefore complied with the strategic objective of a town centre first approach.

Given the commercial setting of Comber and the continued source of employment, it was considered that the proposal would be a positive addition to the site. It was also considered that there was no material change to the local character as a result of the development.

The rear return extension as built measured 3.6m in height. The original proposed height for this rear return had been 3m. The finished materials of the proposed rear return differed from the original, which had been render, to now grey steel cladding. The changes described were considered minor in nature and did not deviate significantly from the proposal as originally assessed.

A small extraction vent was positioned to the rear. This had been reduced from two larger aluminium vents originally proposed, which had been considered highly visible given the corner site. While Environmental Health had requested the vent, discussion between the consultee and applicant had resulted in a more aesthetically pleasing vent being submitted for consideration.

The development as built was then described.

Given the presence of residential properties in the vicinity, full consideration had been given to any potential impacts, particularly in relation to odours, noise and traffic.

There was an extraction flue to the rear of the building. A Noise Impact Assessment had been carried out and submitted with the application and assessed by Environmental Health, which confirmed it was content that no unacceptable noise impact would occur as a result of the proposed extraction system.

An Odour Impact Assessment had also been submitted. Environmental Health considered this along with the proposals for the odour abatement system and was content that there would be no adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residential properties, subject to recommended mitigation measures secured by planning conditions.

Consideration had also been given to the context of a town centre location with two existing hot food units within close proximity (Happy Valley Chinese takeaway and Express Pizza), both open in the evenings. The footfall and traffic associated with the

proposed hot food unit at this location would not result in any significantly greater impact on existing residential properties by way of noise or disturbance.

To ensure that residential properties would not be disturbed late at night, Environmental Health recommended a condition restricting opening hours for customers to 10:00–23:00, with the premises open between 23:00–00:00 for deliveries only.

Given the separation distances between the unit and the nearest residential properties, along with the mitigation measures detailed, it was considered that there would be no unacceptable impact on existing residential properties by way of odour or fumes.

The property, last used as a bookmaker, had no vehicular access from the public road and no in-curtilage parking. This remained unchanged for the proposed hot food unit.

The takeaway unit would continue to rely primarily on on-street parking provision. There were parking restrictions immediately adjacent to the site around the Castle Street/Castle Lane junction, with on-street parking available within reasonable walking distance further along Castle Lane, Castle Street and Mill Street.

Existing hot food takeaways already operated along Castle Street, with customers using short-term parking provision along this stretch. While anticipated to be busy at peak times such as weekends, the nature of hot food takeaways was such that any on-street parking would be very short term, ensuring a fast turnaround of available spaces.

Taking all material factors into account, including the town centre location where it was commonplace for established businesses to have no dedicated in-curtilage parking, it was considered that the proposed use would not result in a significantly greater impact on parking than the last lawful use. The proposal therefore met the requirements of policy AMP7 of PPS3.

Objections to the development had been fully considered in the Case Officer's Report and Addendum.

The recommendation was to grant retrospective planning permission.

The Chair invited Michael Worthington (Pragma Planning) and Stephen O'Connell (Domino's Pizza) speaking in support of the application, to address the Committee.

At the outset, Mr Worthington advised that the owner of the property, Mr Brannigan, had been overseas and unable to attend.

The building had been vacant for several years before being purchased by Mr Brannigan in the summer of 2025. He had marketed the property for approximately three months through a local estate agent, during which time the predominant interest in the building had come from hot food users.

Following the letting of the property to Domino's, a £150,000 investment had been undertaken to refurbish the building to a modern standard, followed by a further £250,000 to fit the unit out as a Domino's Pizza outlet. Local contractors had been employed to undertake the work, providing approximately 12 full-time jobs over a construction period of around four months. Domino's had then invested a further £300,000 in additional works to the unit and in erecting signage.

Mr O'Connell explained that Domino's Pizza had been operating in Northern Ireland for over 30 years, since opening its first store on Lisburn Road, Belfast. The Comber store represented the 49th store and the 5th in Ards and North Down. It employed local people at all levels, including 9 full-time and 14 part-time roles, covering drivers, sales staff, chefs and store managers.

There was no dine-in facility, and the proposal was for takeaway only. Since opening, delivery sales had accounted for around 60% of total sales, with carryout sales at 40%. Customer footfall through the shop had been low. Of all sales, 87% had been placed online through the App, 12.78% by phone, and approximately 0.22% by walk-in without prior order.

The store had not generated significant customer footfall or traffic. To date, there had been no complaints from neighbours, no parking violations or tickets issued, and no police reports of road traffic incidents. Although not a planning matter, it was noted for clarity that Building Control had reviewed and approved both the landlord's and tenant's shop-fit plans. Domino's had remained committed to enterprise, job creation, charitable support and inward investment in Ards and North Down, with franchisees operating stores to the highest standards. The company had been a charity partner of Northern Ireland Children's Hospice since October 2011 through the Pennies electronic charity box system and had also supported North Down Cricket Club in Comber.

Mr Worthington added that Planning officers had carried out a thorough assessment of the proposal, considering all relevant policy and all objections received, and had found those objections to be baseless.

Conditions had been proposed to control opening hours, noise and odour. Any breach could be investigated and, if necessary, enforced by the Council, ensuring appropriate control measures were in place within the Council's jurisdiction.

The Committee was asked to accept the Planning Service's recommendation to grant planning permission.

The Chair invited questions from Members and Councillor Kendall queried the proposed parking arrangements for delivery drivers. It was advised that there were a yard and a laneway to rear, parking facilities were also available on Castle Street. There was a high turnover rate of vehicles as delivery drivers had no interest in hanging around the shop.

(Mr Worthington and Mr O'Connell returned to the public gallery)

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, that the Council grants planning permission.

Alderman Smith felt that the changes were minor in nature and his only concern was in relation to the nearby Castle Lane junction and the impacts on that, but he noted there were double yellow lines.

Councillor Morgan recognised the concerns around parking in what was a narrow street but overall, she felt this would be a positive addition to Comber.

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

(Councillor Harbinson returned to the meeting – 8.47pm)

(Councillor Kerr withdrew from the meeting – 8.47pm)

4.6 ITEM WITHDRAWN FROM SCHEDULE

5. REPORT ON THE SECOND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLANNING ACT

(Appendix XI – XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that further to a report brought to the Committee on 03 March, this report was to advise Members of the proposed response to the Department's Second Review of the Planning Act.

Members would recall that a first review of the Implementation of the Planning Act was undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure in 2021 with its Report being published in 2022. A copy of that report was attached for ease of reference.

The Department was now preparing for its Second Review and the Chief Planner clarified in her letter of 04 February 2026 that there was no requirement to reiterate issues identified in responses to the First Review.

Detail

The purpose of this review was to ensure continued oversight of the legislative framework underpinning the two-tier planning system, and to assess whether it remained appropriate and fit for purpose going forward in accordance with the associated Review Regulations.

Dfl stated that, given the Councils' role in the implementation of much of the Act and associated subordinate legislation, it would welcome the Council's assessment as to whether it would be appropriate to, amend or repeal any of the existing provisions, supported if possible, with additional information and/or evidence where available, including operational experience.

The Department was seeking to build upon its existing body of evidence to assist the review, with a focus on supplementing that response to the 2021 Call for Evidence associated with the first Review. Therefore, the focus of this second review was to bring forward any additional comments the Council wishes to make.

Those elements that continued to be progressed via the outworkings of the NI Audit Report and Public Accounts Committee Report (Feb and March 2022 respectively) and/or within the Regional Planning Improvement Programme, were identified accordingly.

Matters were discussed amongst Heads of Planning and it was determined that any major issues of concern had been, or were in the process of being, addressed; however, it was determined appropriate to seek updates in relation to items whereby the Department had previously advised of no proposed action to be taken, but where the matter was to remain under review, alongside other elements of continued concern. Those elements were detailed overleaf.

It was the intention to therefore respond in this manner to DFI.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Approves the approach as set out above and as set out overleaf.

Alderman McIlveen indicated that he wished to make an alternative proposal as follows:

That the recommendation be adopted with the following amendment:

That in relation to Part 5 Committee suggests that the Department also considers the introduction of provisions similar to that contained in s124 of the Localism Act 2011 and that consideration is also given to enhancing enforcement by making the breach of planning control a criminal offence prosecuted summarily with a reverse burden of proof similar to that introduced in the Republic of Ireland.

This was seconded by Alderman Smith.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman McIlveen praised the response, particularly the inclusion of a 10-year limit. It was a particular point of frustration for him, and he felt it would be useful to look at the practice in other jurisdictions in terms of improving parts of the planning system.

Enforcement was an area where he felt the Planning Service lacked sufficient powers and he noted that England had seen the introduction of Section 124 of the Localism Act 2011 which dealt with concealments of change of use. This had resulted from a famous case of a man who had hidden his house behind a haystack.

While he recognised that piece of legislation might not be introduced here, he felt it would be a useful tool.

Alderman McIlveen made a further point around enforcement, pointing to legislation used in the Republic of Ireland which made certain breaches of planning criminal

matters. This eased time and resources by reversing the burden of proof, requiring the accused party to prove that they had not breached planning regulations rather than planning authorities having to prove they had. He understood this approach had operated effectively in the Republic of Ireland for several years and if the Department chose to adopt it here, he felt it would bolster enforcement powers.

The seconder, Alderman Smith, welcomed the proposal, recognising that it could strengthen the Planning Department's enforcement capabilities. Referring to the wider policy, he noted the stated objective in the first review was to create a planning system that was quicker, clearer and more accessible, and noted that this had not been achieved over the five years and questioned if it would ever be achieved, though he appreciated the optimism. He stressed the importance of simplifying the system and making it easier for applicants to navigate as well as encouraging economic development.

Continuing, Alderman Smith welcomed the remarks regarding the Local Economic Development Plan, whilst believing that it was overdue and could potentially be strengthened.

Whilst expressing overall support, he was amused that the document had been issued by DFI, noting that the DFI was viewed as the main barrier, particularly in relation to water and roads infrastructure.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted with the following amendment:

That in relation to Part 5 Committee suggests that the Department also considers the introduction of provisions similar to that contained in s124 of the Localism Act 2011 and that consideration is also given to enhancing enforcement by making the breach of planning control a criminal offence prosecuted summarily with a reverse burden of proof similar to that introduced in the Republic of Ireland.

6. REQUEST FOR MONIES FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO PROPERTY IN MILLISLE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing officers had been made aware of a building located at 59 Main Street, Millisle, whereby the roof slates present a danger to members of the public using a portion of the Main Street footpath.

Key Issues

Roof slates were missing, and there were a number of dislodged slates. When open to the elements, in this situation, the roof continued to present a danger to those using the footpath.

While efforts continued to locate an owner to take responsibility for removal of the danger, initial efforts were not yielding success.

Consideration

Officers sought approval of Council for expenditure up to £3,000 to carry out works in this emergency situation should the owner not be found or should they default in making suitable arrangements to remove the danger.

It would be the intention of Officers to place a charge against the building for the full cost, should it be necessary to carry out these emergency repairs.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves emergency works up to £3,000 for this property.

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

7. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

(Appendix XIV – XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailed as follows:-

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal decision was issued on 6 March 2026, whereby the terms of the Enforcement Notice were varied.

PAC Ref	2025/E0044
Council Ref	LA06/2020/0227/CA
Appellant	Richard Cusick
Subject of Appeal	Alleged: Unauthorised building Unauthorised sale, storage and distribution use known as Maintech Solutions
Location	Land at 16a Cardy Road, Greyabbey

The Council served an Enforcement Notice (EN) on 31 July 2025.

The appeal was brought on Grounds (a), (d), (f) and (g) as set out in Section 143(3) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act). There was a deemed planning application by virtue of Section 145(5).

The Appellant had submitted an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development (CLEUD) on 11 July 2025 which sought to regularise the use of the land and three sheds (that appear as one building) but wasn't determined by the time of service of the EN due to lack of sufficient evidence.

The CLEUD was issued in November 2025 to state that the 'Use of building and yard area as an engineering business, including importation, storage and distribution' was lawful, but did not extend to a fourth building included within the certified yard. The operation development and use therein remained unauthorised.

In considering the ground (a) appeal for the fourth building, the Commissioner considered that the building increased the floorspace of the engineering business, thereby its capacity for storage on site and a greater number of vehicular movements, and as such a satisfactory means of access was required and the standard of sight splays sought by the Council and DFI were necessary. As such it was found that the appeal proposal offended Policy PED 9 of PPS 4 and concerns in respect of road safety were upheld and the deemed application refused.

The Notice was varied in respect of the removal of the elements certified as lawful, and the time to comply with removal of the shed extended.

2. The following appeal was upheld on 25 February 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/L0004
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0189/CLOPUD
Appellant	Alannah Savage
Subject of Appeal	Proof of commencement of works for dwelling - X/2008/0101/RM
Location	140m South of 10 Loughdoo Road, Kircubbin

The Council had refused to certify that works undertaken on site proved commencement of the development of a dwelling approved under X/2004/0446/O and X/2008/0101/RM within the requisite time frame.

The Council had considered that the access had not been constructed within the timeframe of the permission and that there was insufficient evidence to show that foundations had been poured within the timeframe, and that they were in a different location than the approval.

The Commissioner considered that given the original outline had been conditioned for the dwelling to be erected within a specific area, the fact that the location of the foundations were not exactly in alignment with the approved plans (but within the prescribed area) was not significant given the distance back from the road, and the dip in the landscape, this would be a non-material change to the reserved matters, and thus certified the works as lawful.

New Appeals

3. The following appeal was lodged on 27 February 2026:

PAC Ref	2025/E0075
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0134/CA
Appellant	Denis Crawford
Subject of Appeal	Alleged : i. Unauthorised erection of a building used as a dwelling unit; ii. Unauthorised laying of area of hardstanding; iii. Unauthorised erection of an oil tank

Location	Land adj to 2d Tullymally Road, Portaferry
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4. The following appeal was lodged on 26 February 2026:

PAC Ref	2025/A0132
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0058/F
Appellant	Glenn McDowell
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for two storey dwelling with attached garage
Location	Site between 45 Ballyhay Road and 11 New Line, Donaghadee

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 Smith, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS AND WORKS REQUESTS

(Appendix XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that this report represented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees.

The table attached set out the figures from the date of the last report to Committee, 3 February 2026, and brought this report back in line with quarterly reporting.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

9. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS (Appendix XVII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

****NOT FOR PUBLICATION****

SCHEDULE 6 - Exemption 6a: statutory provision

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person. It relates to the status of current Planning Enforcement cases or Summons in respect of proposed actions.

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.54 pm.

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 8 April 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Kendall

Aldermen: Adair
Cummings (Zoom) McAlpine

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

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 (S McCrea).

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies and received an apology for non-attendance from Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and none were noted.

NOTED.

3. PROPOSAL FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL TRUST COCKLE ISLAND TERN CONSERVATION PROJECT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services, outlining a proposed partnership between ANDBC Harbours and the National Trust to safeguard the Tern colony at Groomsport through the deployment of a dedicated nesting raft.

Cockle Island, located within Groomsport Harbour, was a critical summer breeding site for several hundred pairs of Arctic Terns and Common Terns. Managed by the National Trust, this colony was of significant local and ecological importance.

However, the colony faced two major threats at the time of writing:

- **Sea-Level Rise and Tidal Surges:** High spring tides frequently washed over the low-lying island, destroying nests and eggs.
- **Ecological Fragility:** Significant losses due to Avian Influenza in 2023 had made the remaining population more vulnerable, increasing the risk of the colony abandoning the site for the Copeland Islands.

To mitigate these risks and provide a "high-ground" nesting alternative, the National Trust had proposed a Tern Raft Project.

Key Issues

To ensure the success of this conservation initiative, it was proposed that Council supported the National Trust by providing essential infrastructure and logistical assistance.

The proposed commitments were as follows:

- **Mooring Provision:** Provide a suitable mooring for a Tern raft (up to 6 metres, provided by National Trust) adjacent to Cockle Island. The proposed location will utilise an existing mud anchor. This service would be provided free of charge.
- **Secure Storage:** Allocate space within the Groomsport Harbour locked storage area for the raft during the off-season, free of charge.
- **Operational Support:** Assist with the seasonal launch and berthing of the raft at the start of the breeding season, and its subsequent recovery to storage at the season's end.
- **Maintenance:** Conduct a safety check of the mooring twice annually to ensure the raft remains secure.

Next Steps

Harbours and National Trust staff would review this arrangement on an annual basis to ensure operational compatibility and project efficacy.

Summary

The report proposed a partnership with the National Trust to protect the vulnerable Tern colony at Cockle Island by supporting the installation and seasonal management of a nesting raft. The Council would provide a mooring, off-season storage, operational assistance, and safety checks, with the arrangement reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness and reinforce the Council's commitment to local biodiversity.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves this collaborative approach, reinforcing ANDBC's commitment to local biodiversity and the protection of a signature species within the Borough's coastal waters.

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

Councillor Boyle noted that the proposal offered an opportunity to demonstrate the Council's commitment to biodiversity and to develop future partnership work with the National Trust.

Councillor Cathcart provided some background information, explaining that Peter Martin MLA had been engaging for some time with local stakeholders in Groomsport, including DAERA, the Cockle Island Boat Club and conservationist Andrew McGeehean. He highlighted concerns raised regarding the threat to arctic terns, noting that while the source of the threat was unclear, it was important that efforts were made to protect the species. He explained that the proposal sought to support tern nesting and had originally been suggested by Mr McGeehean several years earlier in relation to the low-lying section of the island. He queried whether, if the birds were under threat in that area, they might also be vulnerable on the raft itself.

The Head of Estates explained that the Harbour Master had discussed the matter with the National Trust, and the understanding at the time of writing was that the threat stemmed from rising tides and high sea levels washing out nesting areas.

Councillor Cathcart was concerned that it could also be some form of predation but was hopeful that the proposed measures would be effective, while acknowledging that further review might be required if seagulls were found to be a threat. He noted that the most recent count recorded approximately 250 terns and emphasised the need to monitor the situation.

Councillor Kendall asked whether a progress report would be brought back at a later stage to assess the impact of the nesting rafts. The Head of Estates confirmed that a report could be provided at the end of the season.

[Councillor Wray left the meeting at 19:06.]

Councillor Harbinson noted that Councillor Hennessy and former Councillor Irwin had also been engaged on the issue, described the initiative as worthwhile, and stated that he looked forward to receiving the report.

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

4. ITEM WITHDRAWN

5. CAR PARK CAPITAL WORKS 2026-27

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services which explained that the Council's agreed Maintenance Strategy incorporated a "needs based" approach for its refurbishment programme. Car Parks were scored every year and the lowest scoring of them were earmarked for resurfacing, subject to budgetary constraints.

Background

The Council's agreed Maintenance Strategy incorporated a "needs based" approach for its refurbishment programme. Car Parks were scored every year and the lowest scoring of them were earmarked for resurfacing, subject to budgetary constraints.

Key Issues

As resurfacing works were carried out from our capital budget, a set amount was required to be identified each year to facilitate accurate capital budget forecasting.

An annual figure of £50k was included in the capital budget, however as noted in previous reports and our Car Park Strategy, this amount was inadequate in terms of achieving a vision of a modern, attractive and fully fit for purpose public car park estate.

Our Car Park Strategy, agreed in 2021, set out a vision for a high standard public asset that realised its full potential in helping to promote a sustainable Borough – driving forward economic, environmental and social well-being. The implementation of a number of key improvements to our car parks was essential, including:

- Resurfacing
- New line marking, utilising the upper end of the standard widths for parking spaces to help accommodate the larger, SUV type vehicles that have increased in popularity in recent years.
- New fully DDA compliant spacing with drop-kerbs for wheelchair use.
- LED lighting that provides a clearer, brighter light but uses less power and incorporates automatic dimming features.

In addition to the above, several further enhancements had been identified as being important in terms of realising our vision for high quality modern car parks, including:

- Enhanced signage
- Enhanced environmental features, planting etc.
- Bicycle and motorcycle parking facilities
- EV charging infrastructure

The implementation of such an improvement programme would not be possible within the current budget availability.

A new tariff structure had been agreed, with projected additional revenue of £0.5M, based on current usage patterns. This would provide much needed additional funds to implement the Car Park Strategy, paid for by car park users.

Implementation of these tariffs was dependent on the Department for Infrastructure resolving the legislative impediment allowing Council to legislate the transferred car parks. Although Officers believed the Department may make steps to revoke the legislation in Autumn 2026, a formal timeline had not been provided, and therefore plans could not be made for this projected revenue.

Condition Scores

The table at Appendix 1 provided a list of all car parks. They had been surveyed and ranked in order of their condition. Given that their users could reasonably have expectations of a higher standard; charged car parks had had a weighting added to lower their scores so that they gained priority over others. Similarly, car parks within town/village centres also had a (slightly lesser) weighting added so that they could be prioritised over the less frequently used, more rural car parks. Works identified,

and costings provided generally only related to more 'essential' maintenance/enhancement works (resurfacing) and did not include the further desirable enhancements set out above.

Cognisance of wider strategies and plans for these assets was essential to reducing the likelihood of spending significant sums of money on assets that may be disposed of or replaced in the foreseeable future. Therefore, discussions with relevant officers had taken place to ensure that proposed works reflect any known plans for the assets concerned.

Any car parks with known imminent works to be carried out had been exempted from the scoring.

Next Steps

Within the current limits of our agreed 2026-27 capital budget for car park works, it was planned that the following works would be undertaken in accordance with the prioritisation process outlined in this report:

- Upgrade of Old Cross East, Newtownards
- Upper Court St, Newtownards

These two projects had an estimated total of £38,920. Whilst the remaining budget of £11,080 was not sufficient to complete any further projects, officers would keep budgets under review and if sufficient surplus budget became available (from income or underspends) officers will complete a third project at:

- Newtownards Road/Church St, Bangor.

RECOMMENDED that Council Agrees the car park capital works for 2026-27 as outlined in this report.

[Councillor Wray returned to the meeting at 19:08.]

Alderman Adair proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council agree the recommendation but further task officers to source funding opportunities to further upgrade car parks across the Borough.

Alderman Adair thanked officers for the detailed report and noted that one of the lowest-scoring car parks was Shore Road in Kircubbin which was in very poor condition. He acknowledged that the Council did not have the resources to upgrade all car parks to the standard desired and that the 2026/27 budget would only allow for two schemes. However, undertaking Shore Road alone would exhaust the allocation. He suggested that officers explore external funding opportunities, referring to previous investment secured through the Mourne Coastal Route initiative, and noted that similar opportunities on the lough side might allow for enhancements where full repairs were not feasible. He emphasised that while the report highlighted the significant need for investment in car parks, the budget was insufficient and external support should be sought.

Councillor Edmund seconded the proposal and remarked that Members were well aware of the circumstances under which the Council had inherited the car parks, describing them as “second-hand car parks gifted to us,” without funding and stressing the importance of seeking funding.

Councillor Cathcart recalled that DFI had carried out very little maintenance prior to the transfer of responsibility. He thanked officers for the work completed at Holburn Avenue car park the previous year, noting that it had been an excellent job and that the space would be used for events during the summer. He raised concerns regarding the Newtownards Road/Church Street car park, observing that although £11,000 was included in the budget, this was not sufficient to complete the necessary works. He suggested that part of the site was owned by a nearby chemist, which created complications as it would be unusual for the Council to resurface only its portion while the privately owned section remained untreated. He also noted that, as some of the parking spaces were owned by the chemist, this could create a grey area for enforcement which would also be problematic as the line markings had deteriorated. He asked whether the matter could be addressed urgently, as the car park would otherwise be unenforceable.

The Head of Estates advised that they were not aware of the land ownership issue at Church Street and confirmed that relining was funded from a separate budget covering all Council-owned car parks. He undertook to check progress on the relining programme and stated that, if funds remained available, they would be content to arrange for the car park to be relined.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted and further task officers to source funding opportunities to further upgrade car parks across the Borough.

6. NOTICE OF MOTION 632 HRC PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services which explained that, from July 2025 to September 2025 the Council led a pedestrian access trial at two of the Council's smaller household recycling centres, Hollywood HRC and Donaghadee HRC. The pilot involved setting aside and publicising specific periods for pedestrian-only access. Evaluation of the trial found that these periods were not well used.

A report summarising the results of the pedestrian access trial were presented to Environment Committee in December 2025. The report recommended that Council should not continue with dedicated pedestrian access periods and committed that officers would explore alternative good practice which might allow safe pedestrian access to HRCs.

Key Issues

A four-part review had been undertaken, including reviewing:

1. Published good practice relating to pedestrian access in HRC operations.
2. Health and safety regulations and guidance relating to HRC operations.

3. Good operational practice at HRCs in other Northern Ireland councils.
4. Site-by-site review of potential pedestrian access at AND's HRCs.

1. Published good practice

There was limited published guidance on pedestrian access at HRCs. Extracts from two key guidance documents were included below.

WRAP's HWRC Guide

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wrap.ngo%2Fresources%2Fguide%2Fhousehold-waste-recycling-centre-hwrc-guide&data=05%7C02%7Cjenna.frazer%40ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%7C495280d84bb6427d21e408de5e9d919a%7C39416dee5c8e4f5cb59d05c4bd0dd472%7C0%7C0%7C639052228005576232%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIlwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIlIdUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fWIKiBauhGpYYEuseFdUme6%2FHbZ5gljH3JIMOd9c6jk%3D&reserved=0>

Section 6.2, Pedestrian and cycle access

Pedestrian and cycle access at HWRCs is typically restricted or carefully managed due to health and safety concerns. HWRCs historically have primarily been designed for vehicle access, with busy traffic flows and large waste-carrying vehicles on site, which can pose risks to pedestrians and cyclists. Where pedestrian and cycle access are allowed, strict guidelines are usually in place to ensure safety. These may include designated pedestrian and cycle lanes, restricted access to certain areas, or supervised entry. Some HWRCs require pedestrians and cyclists to book an appointment or wear high-visibility clothing. Retrospectively providing dedicated access to pedestrians and cyclists can be challenging but should form part of any new design to facilitate improved access for a broad range of users.

WISH Safe traffic management on waste and recycling sites

<https://www.wishforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/WISH-WASTE-09-Safe-traffic-management-on-waste-and-recycling-sites-V2.pdf>

3.2.2 Segregated/separated walkway design

All vehicles (including mobile plant) and pedestrians should be segregated/separated from each other, so far as was reasonably practicable following the general guidance hierarchy below:

- Provide walkways which are separated from roads/vehicle routes or trafficked areas
- Provide physical barriers to segregate pedestrians from vehicles, in the preference order of:
 - Solid and permanently installed concrete or similar construction
 - Double Armco or similar 'vehicle proof' designs
 - Single Armco or similar
 - Permanent railings/fencing
 - Removable/moveable barriers and similar
 - Raised kerbs
- Or a combination of the above. For example, a raised kerb with a pedestrian railing/fence mounted on it

- Where physical barriers cannot practicably be installed, the use of painted walkways, avoiding any potential vehicle blind spots, may be considered (along with the use of hi-vis PPE). As noted above and in the case study on page 14 of this document these can be unreliable as an effective control as without strict monitoring they can easily be bypassed
- Control measures need to be implemented that provide sufficient protection for pedestrians considering the volume and type of vehicles operating at the premises and the activity being undertaken. For example, a raised kerb may be adequate at the side of a straight access road but may not be acceptable where vehicles reverse
- If pedestrians and vehicles must share the same route, such as an access road, it should be wide enough to allow vehicles to pass pedestrians safely. At the least, suitable warning signs and road markings should be displayed and where practicable physical protection provided
- Provide barriers at buildings' pedestrian exits to prevent pedestrians walking unexpectedly onto roads/vehicle routes
- Provide adequate lighting to increase visibility of pedestrians during the hours of darkness. Consider increasing/improving lighting where this would assist in improving visibility and reducing risk dependent on factors such as the type of activity taking place in the area
- Vehicle speed retarders (speed bumps/humps) may be required to protect the areas where vehicles and pedestrians interact, such as when approaching pedestrian crossing points or at the entry to higher-risk traffic areas
- Where there are high volumes of pedestrians, consider installing subways, bridges and traffic lights, or a combination of these
- Ensure pedestrians are a safe distance from, and as practicable excluded from, areas where vehicle loading/unloading, tipping, sheeting and reversing take place



Figure 1 Example of physical barrier and a separated walkway

2. Health and Safety Regulations and Guidance

In 2016, the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) advised the Council to ensure the safety of members of the public by providing suitable vehicle and pedestrian segregation, particularly at the entrance to and the exit from its sites. It was the responsibility of the Council to determine a safe method of implementing this. The Council's HRCs, however, were designed for vehicular access and the disposal of larger items not suitable for disposal through kerbside or bring bank services. There was consequently no separate, dedicated pedestrian access at the Council's HRCs. The Council, in undertaking its statutory duty to take all reasonable

steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and other users, considered practical options before suspending pedestrian access at its HRCs.

Communication with HSE (NI) in February 2026 affirmed that HSE’s position remained unchanged. They advised that it remained the responsibility of the Council to decide what measures were to be put in place based on the findings of risk assessments for specific sites and to ensure that the requirements of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (NI) 1993 – No. 37 and in particular (Reg 17) were being met and effectively managed on site.

The HSE (NI) officer noted that there would always be an element of pedestrian movement when drivers exit their vehicles, and this must be safely managed. The officer commented that they had been made aware of occasional accidents involving pedestrians and vehicles at HRCs, and that it was difficult to fully eliminate the risk. A requirement for ‘suitable segregation’ of traffic routes ‘without causing danger to the health and safety’ applies to all persons entering a site.

3. Good operational practice at other Northern Ireland councils

Belfast City Council had four Household Recycling Centres, and the Council was introducing pedestrian access. This included a dedicated walkway and access gate and full segregation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Officers reported that, where pedestrian access was provided, the sites received 2 or 3 pedestrian visitors per week, and that the waste was primarily black bags from vans bypassing the Council’s booking system.

ANDBC officers visited Alexandra Park HRC on Tuesday 10 March 2026 to gather information on how pedestrian access is implemented safely on site. The images below showed a separate entrance for pedestrians, metal block barriers on pedestrians’ immediate access and egress point, clear markings on the ground which included two pedestrian crossings and high visibility bollards throughout the site to separate the pedestrians from vehicle movement.

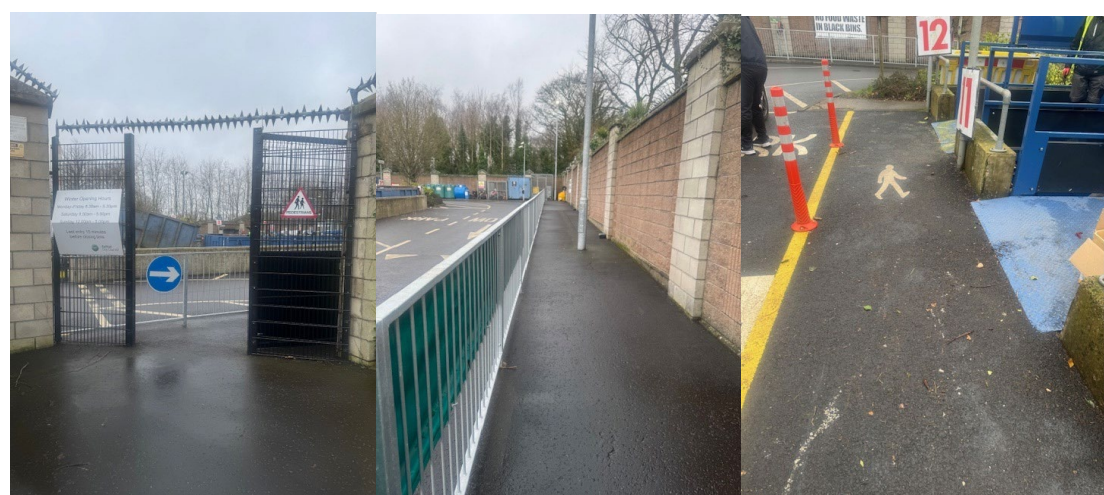


Figure 2 Pedestrian access measures at Belfast City Council’s Alexandra Park Avenue HRC

4. Site-by-site review of AND's HRCs

Baloo

At Balloo Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 5mph. This site was located in a busy industrial estate and had pedestrian footpaths leading towards the site. This site was not located close to a residential area.

*Pedestrian access at Balloo Household Recycling Centre was for building access only.



Figure 3 Balloo HRC entrance and signage

Newtownards

At Newtownards Household Recycling Centre, there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules include a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. This site was located in a busy industrial estate beside North Road Depot. It did have a pedestrian footpath leading towards the site, but this was normally blocked by vehicles parking on the footpath. The closest resident to the site was at the bottom of North Road some distance away.



Figure 4 Newtownards HRC entrance and signage

Ballygowan

At Ballygowan Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. This site was located on a national speed limit road and there are no pedestrian footpaths leading to the site entrance. There were no residential properties close to this site.



Figure 5 Ballygowan HRC entrance and signage

Comber

At Comber Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were no footpaths leading to the site entrance. This site had a few new residential properties adjacent to the site.



Figure 6 Comber HRC entrance and signage

Kircubbin

At Kircubbin Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was only one gate for vehicles to entrance and exit. Site rules included a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were no footpaths leading to the site entrance and this is a single manned site. This site was located in a residential area.



Figure 7 Kircubbin HRC entrance and signage

Donaghadee

At Donaghadee Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were footpaths leading to the site entrance. This site was located in a residential area.

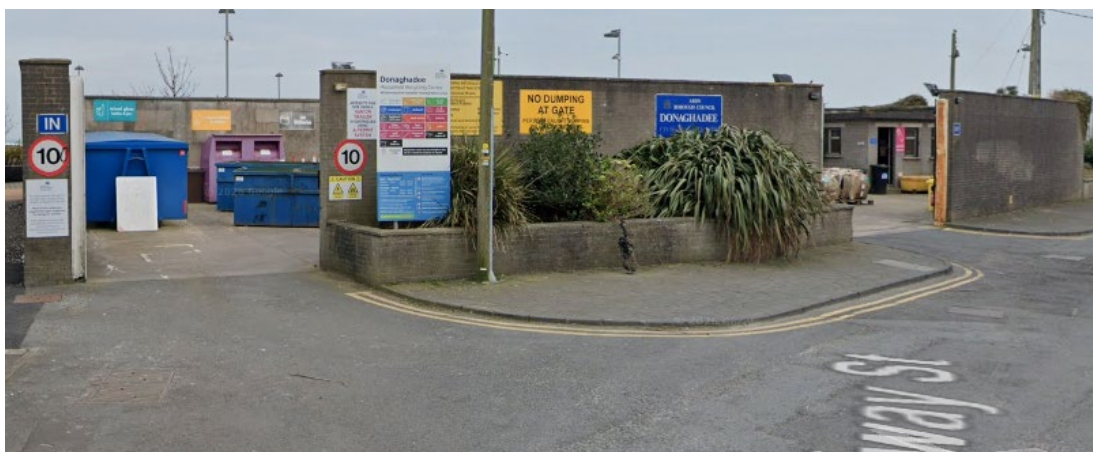


Figure 8 Donaghadee HRC entrance and signage

Millisle

At Millisle Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were footpaths leading to the site entrance. This site had several residential properties adjacent.



Figure 9 Millisle HRC entrance and signage

Hollywood

At Hollywood Household Recycling Centre, there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles, one exit gate for vehicles and one separate gate for pedestrians. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were footpaths leading to the site entrance. This site had several residential properties close by and was close to the town centre.



Figure 10 Holywood HRC entrance and signage

Portaferry

At Portaferry Household Recycling Centre there was, at the time of writing, no pedestrian access. There was one entrance gate for vehicles and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules included a one-way system and a restricted speed limit of 10mph. There were no footpaths leading to the site entrance and this was a single manned site. There were no residential properties close to this site.



Figure 11 Portaferry HRC entrance and signage

Summary of findings

Ards and North Down's HRCs had some of the highest recycling rates of any sites in Northern Ireland. This was, in part, due to managed access to the sites, and clear directions to separate items for reuse and recycling.

If introduced, a pedestrian accessing the Council's HRCs should be required to make a booking using the online HRC booking system. One booking would count for one entry. A pedestrian should be able to carry items without blocking their vision i.e., items should not be piled high in their hands. In accordance with HSE (NI) guidance, a pedestrian should be required to access and egress a site through a dedicated pedestrian gate and not through the vehicle access and egress.

Following a detailed review of the Council's HRC network, officers did not recommend pedestrian access at the following sites:

- Balloo HRC – Located in an industrial complex, internal site layout not suitable, site not located close to residential properties, no additional space to introduce a pedestrian access gate.
- Newtownards HRC – Located in an industrial complex, reduced footpath access to site.
- Ballygowan HRC – Site not located close to residential properties, no footpaths leading to site entrance, site on a national speed limit road.
- Comber HRC - No footpaths leading to site entrance
- Kircubbin HRC - No footpaths leading to site entrance, no additional space to introduce a pedestrian access gate.
- Portaferry HRC – Not close to residential properties, no footpaths leading to site entrance
- Donaghadee – A time bound option was the only feasible possibility and the previous trial indicated low usage and potential displacement of vehicular access users.

To introduce pedestrian access into any of the Councils HRC sites would cost a significant capital investment to ensure proper segregation between pedestrians and vehicles, and not require a 'pedestrian only access' time slot which Council had rejected on the basis of the results of last years trial. This was not provided for within the 2026/27 budgets.

Subject to the implementation of additional safety measures, officers considered pedestrian access during all opening hours could be introduced at the following sites from a practical perspective and their proximity to housing.

- Millisle HRC – Additional space existed to introduce a pedestrian access gate. Internal layout would need improved i.e., pedestrian walkways, bollards, line markings etc.
- Hollywood HRC – A pedestrian gate was already in place. However, to use this, the internal layout would need improved i.e., pedestrian walkways, bollards, line markings etc. This would be a different approach previously trialled which was time bound and therefore may yield different usage.

It was important to note that the above sites must close while being serviced which meant exact booking times sometimes needed to be flexible. Servicing was often outside the control of the Council as many waste stream collections are contracted out.

Next Steps

The pedestrian access trial in the summer of 2025 identified that dedicated pedestrian access periods were not well used. The 'pedestrian only access' time slot approach also removed access for vehicle bookings at those sites and therefore in accordance with the Council decision on the matter was not being reconsidered.

A routine refresh of site markings at all 9 HRCs, including those marking vehicle zones and pedestrian walkways (for vehicle occupants / site users), would be

undertaken from April 2026 and had been scheduled. Parallel to this, officers could work up a business case for 2027/2028 for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at the two HRCs referred to, including an analysis of demand.

Summary

If it was to be agreed to implement further measures to allow pedestrian access at the two sites this would require additional works and a phased introduction as follows.

1. Holywood HRC had a separate pedestrian access gate; however, the current layout did not adequately segregate vehicles and pedestrians. It was recommended that pedestrian access was considered following improvements to the site layout, refreshed site markings, and introduction of bollards. This was subject to availability of budget.

A separate new pedestrian access gate as provided at Millisle HRC. This would be in addition to refreshed site markings, changes to the site layout, and introduction of bollards. This was subject to availability of budget.

Therefore, work up a business case for 2027/2028 for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at the two HRCs referred to, including an analysis of demand.

Alternatively, members may wish to

2. Keep current arrangements and don't allow pedestrian entrance

Or

3. Consider pedestrian entrance as part of the wider strategic reviews of HRC provision in the Borough

RECOMMENDED that Council Agrees to consider the way forward.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that a version of Option 1 be adopted.

Alderman McRandal read out the chosen option for clarity, "that the Committee notes the report and tasks Officers to prepare a business case for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at Holywood and Millisle HRCs. A further report, including analysis of demand, is to be presented to Committee in advance of the business case being considered during the 2027/2028 rates setting process."

He reminded the Committee that the report had arisen from a Notice of Motion submitted jointly by himself and former Councillor, Hannah Irwin, and expressed thanks for the detailed and significant amount of work undertaken to date. He stated that, although the results of the Holywood trial did not reflect it, there was clear demand for pedestrian access as he regularly received queries from residents. He

highlighted that many people lived close to Holywood HRC and wished to recycle without having to travel by car, which he felt was inconsistent with the Council's environmental objectives. Alderman McRandal added that a significant number of residents did not drive due to age or medical reasons, creating a sense of exclusion. He also referred to concerns raised by residents that, once they exited their vehicles within an HRC, they effectively became pedestrians. He welcomed officers' consideration of the issue and emphasised that the proposal sought only a report, with no commitment at this stage, and that he wished to see a full cost-benefit analysis.

Councillor Harbinson supported obtaining further information to explore options that would enable non-drivers to access facilities.

Councillor Wray asked that the alternative proposal be read again, and the Chair, Councillor Kendall, did so. Councillor Wray stated that the matter was not a significant issue within his DEA but acknowledged that it was a concern in others. He did not support pedestrian-only time slots, noting that the previous trial had demonstrated the challenges of removing capacity from other users. He recognised the concerns about pedestrians within sites but stressed the need to comply with health and safety regulations. He noted that Alderman McRandal's proposal related to Option 1, which would involve officers preparing a business case for Millisle and Holywood, and asked for clarification on the scale of work required.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that the business case could be completed in-house using existing templates and processes. Councillor Kendall commented that the cost would therefore be minimal.

Councillor Cathcart agreed, noting that the issue had been ongoing for several years. He stated that only one resident in Bangor had raised the issue of pedestrian access with him, and that many HRCs were unsuitable for pedestrian access due to their rural locations and lack of footpaths. He suggested that Holywood might be reconfigured if an existing gate could be utilised and looked forward to receiving costing reports. He did not consider it necessary to examine sites across the entire Borough.

Alderman Adair agreed with Councillor Wray, noting that the issue was rarely raised in the Ards Peninsula, with only a small number of queries in Millisle. He highlighted that many pedestrians sought access primarily to dispose of small electrical items and, from his own research, advised that some English councils offered kerbside collection for such items. He recalled that the Council had previously explored kerbside clothing collection which had not progressed due to market conditions, and suggested that a similar service for small electricals might benefit residents and lessen the burden of HRC operations.

Councillor Kendall had also received regular queries within the Holywood DEA and supported Alderman McRandal's view that requiring residents to drive in order to recycle was counterintuitive to environmental aims.

Councillor Brady also supported the proposal, suggesting that some residents may not have been captured in the survey because they were unaware of the timeslots or

unable to attend during the allocated hours. He questioned the need for designated pedestrian times and was of the view that pedestrians and vehicles had coexisted safely for many years, provided users exercised common sense. He suggested that signage encouraging mutual awareness might be sufficient.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that risk assessments were required to meet statutory health and safety obligations and that general signage alone would probably not satisfy legislative requirements. He confirmed that the recommended approach included undertaking the necessary assessments for the two identified sites.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that a version of option one be adopted; that the Committee notes the report and tasks Officers to prepare a business case for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at Hollywood and Millisle HRCs. A further report, including analysis of demand, is to be presented to Committee in advance of the business case being considered during the 2027/2028 rates setting process.

7. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN IN BLOOM ANNUAL GRANTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services which explained that its purpose was to note the 31 applications for the annual Ards and North Down in Bloom funding grants. Ards and North Down Borough had a reputation for leading the way with our floral displays. The Borough had won regional and national competitions in recent years and the common theme throughout all the success was the incredible hard work and enthusiasm shown by our staff and the local communities they work with.

The grant scheme assists the Ards and North Down in Bloom initiative which had been developed with three overlapping objectives: horticultural excellence, community participation and environmentally sustainable practices. These were in line with objectives of Translink Ulster in Bloom and other regional awards schemes. By actively supporting this competition, applicants not only made their communities more attractive, but also contribute to the Borough's entry to the Translink Ulster in Bloom Competition and other regional awards.

This collective effort continued to pay off. Recent award successes included Hollywood achieving Runner-Up for Best Kept Medium Town, Groomsport winning Best Kept Large Village, Donaghadee securing the title of Best Kept Small Town, Bangor earning Runner-Up for Best Kept City, and Newtownards being named a Finalist for Best Kept Large Town. These achievements built on an impressive track record including Donaghadee winning Gold in Britain in Bloom 2025 — a remarkable accomplishment and a powerful showcase of the Borough's dedication to excellence.

Key Issues

Ards and North Down Borough Council, at the time of writing, had budget provision for the allocation of funding to community groups in order to assist with floral displays in the city, towns and villages throughout the Borough, to assist with the Council's commitment to the Translink Ulster in Bloom competition. The allocation for funding

was intended to supplement floral display and amenity area maintenance currently carried out by the Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service. This may be in the form of planters, flower beds, sustainable wildflower displays or equipment to support this work, either on Council or other statutory bodies land or privately owned non-domestic areas in public view.

The Ards and North Down in Bloom Grants Policy Review was approved by Council in January 2025. The maximum limit for funding is £1,250 per annum per group. This increase was approved by Council in January 2025. A further grant may be provided for funding, in whole or in part, for appropriate liability insurance covering the floral display work over and above the group's normal insured activities. Insurance grants could be provided for up to 40% of the total project costs. Funding would be allocated with 50% advance payment, with the further 50% paid upon the receipt of invoices as per Council wide policy.

Council welcomed applications from multiple groups within the same town or village, recognising that different organisations may be working in distinct areas and that funding was limited. However, projects must demonstrate coverage across a wider area and must not duplicate or overlap in a way that suggests double funding. To promote collaboration and ensure fair distribution of resources, where more than one group applied from the same city, town or village, the Council may only be able to support one project if funding was limited.

Next Steps

The 31 applications were assessed against the following criteria:

- Meet the core objectives of Ards and North Down in Bloom – Horticultural excellence, Environmental Sustainability and Community.
- Provide a vision as to how the funding will enhance the particular areas and how this will be sustained in subsequent years.
- Evidence of approval from relevant landowner where works are to be carried out.
- Where appropriate insurance liability cover is in place, copy of certificate and schedule to be submitted.
- How the works are to be carried out, and by whom.
- Detailed breakdown of how funding will be utilised, and receipts submitted accordingly.

Summary

Appendix 1 summarised how each application met the criteria. In the assessment, 31 of the applications were considered to have met the criteria with minor stipulations. Currently, there was a budget allocation of £37,000 for the In Bloom programme. The applications amount to a total of £33,090.85 plus £500.00 for insurance.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the report, noting that the projects supported through the scheme were particularly positive, not only for their environmental benefits but also for the community focused planting initiatives they enabled. She highlighted the dementia friendly garden being developed in Castle Gardens with the involvement of local schoolchildren and how it would help young people learn new skills while contributing to their community and fostering inter-generational connections. She also commended the success of groups in Bowtown and Westwinds in securing grants and remarked on the positive impact that bright planting had on community wellbeing. She praised the project delivered by Ards Rugby Club and expressed her appreciation for the wide geographical spread of initiatives. She encouraged continued community involvement and thanked officers for their work, emphasising that the committee's community-based projects could have a lasting impact.

Councillor Wray echoed these comments and was proud of the work of volunteers. He asked that his objection to the 50/50 funding split be placed on record, stating that it was unfair to expect volunteers to contribute large sums of their own money upfront. He looked forward to the forthcoming report and advised that his concerns should not detract from the positive nature of the report.

Councillor Boyle stated that the Borough was fortunate to have a level of community engagement that many others did not. He observed that the colourful appearance of towns and villages was a testament to the dedication of volunteers, with 31 organisations participating and many receiving external recognition through awards. He noted that the scheme fostered healthy and constructive competition between communities and hoped that funding and volunteer involvement would continue. Councillor Kendall added that the funded projects had made areas look attractive and noted that five organisations in Holywood had been successful, commending their efforts.

Councillor Cathcart agreed with his colleagues and remarked on the high number of applications from Holywood. He queried the comparatively low number of applications from Bangor and asked how this was being addressed.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the grant scheme had been running for five years, beginning with low uptake but increasing steadily. He confirmed that this year had seen the highest number of applications so far and that officers were actively promoting the scheme. Though the funding available was modest, they had generally been able to support almost all applicants. He confirmed that the Council intended to seek further funding for 2027/28 and would continue to promote the scheme widely.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the news but asked whether officers were undertaking targeted engagement in areas with low participation.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that the grant was promoted through the Council's email system, social media, and through the extensive programme of approximately 150 parks-related events and activities delivered annually. Officers engaged with communities to build capacity in areas without established groups and supported the formation of new groups where they could. He noted that the list of

applicants had grown significantly since the previous year, including participation from groups that had not previously been involved, such as sporting organisations.

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

8. NOTICE OF MOTION 689 – FEASIBILITY OF PERMITTING WOODEN MEMORIALS

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

“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.”

At present the Council agreed document ‘Procedures, Rules and Regulations for Cemeteries’ did not permit the erection of any wooden memorials. Below outlined the practical, regulatory, environmental, legal, and operational considerations of such a policy change, with reference to the Burial Ground Regulations (NI) 1992.

Key Issues

Councils in NI operated under the Burial Grounds Regulations (NI) 1992, which required cemetery authorities to ensure safe conditions for visitors and staff.

The installation of Wooden Memorials would require a regulatory approach and an application process. While generally constructed from a more perishable material than conventional stone memorials, there would still be a form of foundation required to ensure stability and minimise structural failure.

Wooden memorials deteriorate more rapidly than stone because of exposure to moisture, frost, fungal decay and insect damage. Burial Grounds Regulations (NI) 1992 emphasised the need to ensure memorials remained structurally sound and safe due to historical health and safety incidents linked to unstable memorials.

Memorial safety was a statutory duty and required memorials to be stable and built to specific standards for long-term safety. Council, at the time of writing, carried out an industry approved inspection regime and the introduction of wooden memorials would need to be included in this regime but with a more regular inspection programme due to the perishable nature of the construction material. This would be at an additional cost to Council. Rapid degradation increased the risk of collapse, making wooden memorials potentially more maintenance-intensive for the grave plot owner. As all memorials were subject to a robust application and approval process, significant risk may be mitigated by the introduction of size limitations and installation requirements, similar to those of stone memorials.

Council would potentially face higher maintenance demands when memorials degraded prematurely. Ensuring safety (removal, repair or repositioning) would require additional officer time, inspections and possible costs recoverable from grave owners.

Council maintained cemetery “lawn-style” layouts with consistent memorial materials, usually stone. Wooden markers would introduce visual inconsistency, not in keeping with the aesthetics of the cemetery layout. As referred to previously, all memorials were subject to a robust application and approval process, aesthetics of the cemetery layout may be controlled by the introduction of size limitations.

Wooden memorials could be seen as sustainable if sourced responsibly. However, untreated timber had limited lifespan; treated timber may raise environmental concerns regarding chemical leaching. In addition, wood was more vulnerable to vandalism (fire, carving, breaking).

Such risks may mean increased reporting, repairs and possible insurance implications. While memorial maintenance fell with the grave owner, Council would be the first point of contact regarding a memorial failure and responsible for ensuring the safety for all site users.

In the Council agreed document ‘Procedures, Rules and Regulations for Cemeteries’ Sections 31 and 32 were most relevant to this report. Section 31 clearly states that all headstones shall be of stone or other non-perishable material and shall be placed on a solid foundation and that Council did not permit the erection of any wooden memorials. In addition, headstones were not to exceed 1.371m in height, depending on headstone type. It also stated that other items, other than the headstone, should be no more than 508mm. Section 32 stated that each grave owner must keep the grave, monument or railing in good order and repair to the satisfaction of the Council, and should anyone fail to do so the Council may put in order and/or repair at the expense of the grave owner and refuse opening until the costs of such repairs or removal is paid.

Across Northern Ireland, Councils followed the Burial Grounds Regulations (NI) 1992, which set strict guidance on cemetery functions including memorial permissions. In Ards and North Down Borough Council the Council’s cemetery rules did not expressly permit the erection of wooden memorials. To consider a change to the burial rules, an Equality Impact Assessment was required along with Committee approval.

Officers had reviewed a selection of other Councils regarding permitting wooden memorials in their current regulations. The findings are as follows:

Antrim & Newtownabbey: All such erections shall be of stone or other non-perishable material and shall be located only on the solid foundation. No reference to wooden memorials.

Belfast City Council: The Council’s memorial management policy emphasises memorial stability, adherence to strict material and fixing standards, and the need to avoid memorial types that present safety risks. All memorials must be made of stone or another non-perishable material, such as granite. Temporary hardwood memorials are allowed only for the first year after burial with a height restriction of 76.2cm.

Mid Ulster District Council: The Council's cemetery management policy outlined detailed rules on memorial structures but restricted materials to those capable of meeting safety standards and long-term stability. All memorials/headstones must be made of stone or other non-perishable material such as granite. Temporary hardwood memorials could be erected but only for six months.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council: The Council regulations similarly required durable materials and compliance with safety and working standards. All memorials and headstones must be made of stone or other non-perishable material such as granite. Temporary hardwood memorials could be erected but only for the first year, a height restriction of 110cm was in place.

Derry City & Strabane District Council: The Council regulations stated that all memorials/headstones must be made of stone or other non-perishable material such as granite. No reference to wooden memorials.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council: All memorials and memorial stones must be made of stone or other non-perishable material such as granite. No wooden memorials permitted.

Lisburn and Castlereagh District Council: Materials for Headstones/Tablets: All such erections shall be of stone or other non-perishable material and shall be located only on the solid foundation. No reference to wooden memorials.

Newry Mourne and Down District Council: All memorials and memorial stones must be made of stone or other non-perishable material such as granite. Temporary hardwood memorials could be erected.

Next Steps

The Council agreed document 'Procedures, Rules and Regulations for Cemeteries' was due for review in September 2027, during the consultation period Officers will assess demand for wooden memorials.

Summary

In the Council document 'Procedures, Rules and Regulations for Cemeteries' Section 31 stated that all headstones shall be of stone or other non-perishable material and shall be placed on a solid foundation and that Council did not permit the erection of any wooden memorials. In addition, headstones were not to exceed 1.371m in height, depending on headstone type. Although, some councils did permit wooden headstones this was a temporary measure and height restrictions applied.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that council amend cemetery regulations to allow the inclusion of wooden memorials provided they have a concrete base and meet health and safety requirements.

Alderman Adair stated that grief affected everyone differently and that each memorial was unique to the family concerned. He explained that he had brought forward the Notice of Motion following a request from a family in his constituency who wished to

install a wooden memorial. Alderman Adair had been disappointed with the recommendation before Members, noting that it effectively meant no change, with only a suggestion that the matter be considered as part of a wider review in 2027. He said this was not what he, nor the family had hoped for and stressed the importance of addressing the issue sooner. He referred to the report's comparison with other Councils, noting that Antrim and Newtownabbey and Derry City and Strabane did not explicitly reference wooden memorials in their regulations. He had contacted those Councils and a sculptor, all of whom confirmed that wooden memorials were permitted provided they were installed on a concrete base and met health and safety requirements. Alderman Adair asked Members to support offering families this choice, emphasising that many people visited cemeteries daily and that memorials were deeply personal. He noted that some religions would use wooden crosses and that families' wishes should be respected, subject to compliance with safety standards.

Councillor Edmund supported Alderman Adair's comments, stating that cemeteries were places where people spent time reflecting on loved ones and that memorials were personal expressions of grief. He believed that, provided memorials were dignified and appropriate to their surroundings, there should be no objection. He said the Council should assist families at difficult times and ensure that policies did not add to their distress.

Councillor Boyle noted that he had supported the previous request for further information and questioned why Members could not support a more detailed report. He observed that policies and procedures were amended regularly and that officers had outlined the current position, yet the amendment sought to set this aside. He asked how long the existing regulations had been in place and whether they originated from the amalgamation or legacy councils.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the current regulations had been adjusted and agreed approximately five years earlier and were due for review the following year. He said they were broadly similar to previous policies and to those of other authorities and that they had always permitted stone memorials but not wooden ones. He explained that temporary wooden crosses, usually around one foot high, were sometimes used until a permanent stone was installed. He noted that Newtownabbey's Parks Manager had confirmed to him during his research that wooden memorials were not permitted there other than on a temporary basis.

Councillor Boyle acknowledged that wooden crosses were commonly used in Catholic cemeteries before a headstone was erected. He recognised the sensitivity of the issue and asked officers to outline the practical concerns associated with allowing wooden memorials, including any implications for maintenance or cost. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries referred to the concerns set out in the report, including additional monitoring and potential costs. He cautioned against changing policy in response to a single request, stating that good policy should be shaped through broader consultation.

Councillor Boyle asked whether the matter could be included in the forthcoming full review of cemetery regulations. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that was what was intended by the report and a fundamental review was planned, which

would include simplifying the regulations, improving clarity, and exploring potential changes. He emphasised the importance of public consultation and sound evidence and advised that a report was expected by September 2027.

Councillor Wray advised that the report did not offer any more information than what would have already been known to those present. He acknowledged the time required to prepare reports but said the reasons given for maintaining the current policy, such as the limited lifespan of untreated timber and concerns about vandalism, were not compelling. He argued that vandalism could occur regardless of material and that Members had a responsibility to listen to constituents and amend policy where appropriate. He believed the change would be a minor adjustment and that only a small number of families were likely to request wooden memorials, but that the option should be available.

Councillor Brady supported this view, stating that restricting families' choices at a time of grief placed unnecessary stress on them. He shared his own experience of bereavement and said he would have been extremely upset if told he could not choose a particular memorial. He noted that while wooden crosses might have durability issues, it was the family's responsibility to maintain them, and replacements could be arranged if needed.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter said that Councillor Wray had covered many of the points she wished to make. She advised that while respectful of officers' advice, Members must listen to constituents. She noted that the issue had not arisen frequently and was unlikely to become widespread, but should nonetheless be considered. She referred to concerns about officer time and maintenance but suggested that these could be mitigated if memorials were installed on a hard base. She felt that allowing wooden crosses was a reasonable and compassionate option and that, if problems emerged, the policy could be revisited, adding that cemeteries were deeply meaningful places and that families often faced challenges in securing the memorials they wanted.

Councillor Blaney stated that policies naturally evolved and that practices once considered unusual, such as wicker coffins, had become more common. He viewed the proposal as an example of the Council adapting to changing expectations and acting compassionately.

Councillor Kendall asked whether, if the alternative proposal were agreed, officers would amend the policy and return it to Members, particularly in light of health and safety considerations. She also queried whether an equality impact assessment would be required and what the timescale would be.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that the proposal was to consider the matter as part of the wider review in 2027 and that wooden memorials would be included in that updated set of rules and regulations. He explained that any amendment would need to follow the Council's internal policy development process, including an equality impact assessment, and that even a single-issue review could take several months. He noted that religious considerations would also need to be assessed and that the earliest timeframe would be autumn or winter.

Alderman Adair concluded by stating that Members were asking for the policy to be amended and that additional procedures were unnecessary. He said it was important for the Council to demonstrate compassion and that, while officers provided advice, it was for elected Members to make decisions. He reiterated that he had brought the matter forward to support a constituent whose application had been refused and asked Members to support the proposal on behalf of that family and others in similar circumstances.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council amend cemetery regulations to allow the inclusion of wooden memorials provided they have a concrete base and meet health and safety requirements.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION 677 – PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC HIRE BICYCLE SCHEME

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

“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 Department for Infrastructure [DfI] Active Travel to inform a Council decision on progressing such a scheme.”

With the first Ards and North Down (AND) Greenway opening soon between Newtownards and Bangor, this Council could become a cycling Borough by prioritising active modes of transport for short journeys, that people usually drove but could easily cycle.

Not everyone had access to a bicycle or the means or willingness to invest in one, especially those who are only starting out or visiting the area. Public cycle-share schemes could bring significant benefits in these circumstances.





Cycling improved physical health and psychological wellbeing, and it saved money on fuel or public transport. Fewer motor vehicles meant reduced congestion, fewer collisions, lower emissions, and improved air quality.

Providing bicycles was known to positively influence behaviour and the environment by increasing micromobility through active travel and using nudge techniques such as bicycles, active travel challenges, and apps that inform and motivate people to cycle.

Key Issues

Public cycle share schemes fell into two models: docked and dockless, as illustrated in table below:

<p>Docked at fixed docking stations</p>	<p>Dockless model with bikes parked out of the way in designated areas on pavements and at other points</p>
	

With a variety of schemes around the UK, currently managed by nine different operators. The most well-known local example was the Belfast bike hire scheme.

Belfast Bikes Scheme

The scheme had operated since April 2015 and continued to use a subscription and usage fee model, with pricing set by Belfast City Council to maintain affordability and accessibility. The scheme was established with £700,000 of external funding, delivering 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. A strategic review in 2020 identified: consistent growth in users and rentals and strong public support, with clear evidence of modal shift and improved health outcomes. In 2025, a new provider, Beryl, partnered with Frank and Honest Coffee Company to install 60 docking bays, with a 300-bike and 100-e-bike serviced network, expanding greener journey options across Belfast.

Edinburgh Dockless Cycle Hire Scheme

Launched in September 2025, this scheme introduced 50 electric bikes across an 8sq km zone. Key features include: No cost to Edinburgh Council; Bikes rented via the Voi app; Fares: £0.11 per minute (£6.60 per hour), with bundles and subscriptions available; dockless model with designated parking points; and improved bike durability and better technology to manage coverage.

Active Travel Hubs

The first Active Travel Hub to open in Northern Ireland was located in East Belfast and was a base for The Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (formally Sustrans) to encourage commuters and locals in East Belfast to try travel alternatives, such as public transport or cycling and walking along the Comber Greenway. The project ran from an eye-catching container hub based in the new community pocket park in the East Side Urban Villages area. A similar scheme was later launched in Derry-Londonderry.

The project, funded by the Urban Villages Initiative, regenerated a previously derelict site, transformed with landscaping, planting, street furniture and three shipping containers for various uses, including the Active Travel Hub and a cycling café. The venue delivered lessons in cycling for all ages and abilities, journey planning for cyclists, bicycle repair and skill development.

It should be noted that the East Belfast Active Travel Hub was located at the busy intersection of two Greenways.

As the AND Greenway Network continued to develop, an opportunity existed to potentially connect Beryl bikes from Belfast along the Greenways, creating a wider cycling loop and improving access for visitors.

Risks and Considerations

- Choosing the right mix of modes, Pedal bikes; E-bikes; E-scooters etc, to match the objectives and therefore maximise active travel and the users move away from car usage.
- Providing a dense network of docking stations [300-500m apart] within existing cycling infrastructure for connectivity.

- Vandalism of publicly accessible bikes, ensure robust bike design and considerate docking locations.
- Costs of installation and operation. Installation of docking stations has an estimated cost of £35,000-40,000 per station and could include 12 docks each with 10 bikes. Dockless system with provider such as the Voi model runs at no cost to Council.
- Operation including maintenance and effective stocking of popular docking stations.
- Tariff pricing model should be designed to be inclusive and had potential to be made up of 3 price plans: pay as you go, casual and annual.
- Subsidy income was generated through subscriptions and usage fees, with pricing kept affordable to encourage uptake.

Potential partnership opportunities through sponsorship could involve associating the image of one or more companies to the service, exploiting the values and visibility offered by the public bike service in cities or towns. This included advertising on the bikes; operational vehicles; digital media; naming of docking stations by local businesses.

Funding Opportunities

The Belfast Bike scheme was developed as part of the Belfast City Council Physical Investment Programme launched in 2012. The Department for Infrastructure (Department for Regional Development in 2012) provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget.

While funding of this nature did not exist at the time of writing, the launch of the new DFI Active Travel plan may provide opportunity in future. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 underscored the crucial role of active travel in addressing climate goals. It mandated the development of sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budgets of 10%. The plan aimed to maximise the benefits of this increased investment, creating a seamless, integrated network that allows more people, regardless of age or ability, to choose active travel for many of their everyday journeys.

A new bike hire scheme for Ards and North Down could of course be funded by Council which would be subject to an approved business case and budget availability.

The Active Travel Hub detailed in this report was developed using a central government funding stream. While a similar funding stream was not available at the time of writing, this may change in future and Officers will continue to actively pursue such funding. A similar scheme to the Active Travel Hub.

Opportunity did exist to advertise the operation of the service through an Expression of Interest and allow a contracted company to operate the service at no cost to Council, similar to the scheme described in Edinburgh. However, the installation of infrastructure etc, would be unlikely to attract interest at this stage of the AND Greenway project.

Next Steps

Council was amidst the process of developing a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough, which was being compiled by the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust. This Masterplan would consider how to encourage Active Travel in the Borough, enhance connectivity, improve accessibility, support sustainable tourism and contribute to net zero goals. There would be an Action Plan suggesting what infrastructure was required at a settlement level to enable these aims to be delivered as well as wider recommendations to support behavioural change and modal shift.

Council also provided a range of activities to promote and enhance the use of community trails and Greenways by residents and visitors. This was achieved through the provision of a range of activities that increase participation in active travel, physical education and mental wellbeing.

Activities such as Park Pedal, Teens on Wheels and the disability bicycle scheme at Bangor Sportsplex, all contributed to maximising the usage of the new Greenways network in Ards and North Down. These activities would continue on the new AND Greenways with continued engagement and understanding on user needs. This may, in future, lead to the conclusion that active travel Hubs or similar would be beneficial.

Council would also continue to deliver the Newtownards to Comber Greenway through the current capital project, actively working with partners in DFI to link Greenway sections and cycle paths.

Summary

While it was a good news story that the first phase of the AND Greenway network was nearing completion, it had also been noted that a large project remained to connect the network directly to the existing Comber Greenway and to fully connect urban sections of the new route, in partnership with DFI. While a similar scheme to the Belfast Bikes could be introduced it would not be feasible to do it at present, a rental scheme would be considered as Council progresses our Greenway network.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the above report.

[Councillor Harbinson left the meeting at 19:59.]

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

Councillor Wray noted that the proposal had originally been brought forward by Alderman Smith and that the reports already highlighted the benefits of cycling, as well as examples of successful schemes in Belfast and other parts of the UK. He acknowledged that funding and timing were key issues and sought clarification from officers on whether the intention was to proceed once the cycling network could be fully connected with support from DFI. He asked whether the matter was primarily a timing issue, whether a realistic timeframe could be identified, and whether potential funding sources could be explored in the interim.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that the intention was to use a route masterplan, with implementation forming one of its actions. He advised that there was little value in progressing the scheme until full connectivity could be achieved. Officers were currently working on other greenways and cycle routes across the Borough in partnership with DFI and Translink. He stated that the proposal was a good idea and should be implemented, but that the timing was not yet right. He added that discussions with DFI and other partners would continue, although the project would be costly. He was unable to provide a timescale, noting that work was still ongoing on the Comber to Newtownards connection.

Councillor Blaney asked whether consideration was being given to locations beyond greenways, noting that such schemes were commonly found in towns and cities elsewhere.

[Councillor Harbinson returned to the meeting at 20:02]

He suggested that bike-hire facilities might also be appropriate in those settings. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the masterplan would map the safest possible cycling routes across the Borough and that this would guide future decisions. While greenways had been examined, the work extended to urban centres as well.

Councillor Blaney added that the final railway halt to Bangor would be a logical location for bike provision, enabling onward travel for commuters and visitors. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to a trip she had taken to Nashville, where cycle and scooter hire schemes operated successfully and were well integrated with other modes of transport. She noted that not all visitors to the greenway would have their own bicycles and that such schemes could support both active travel and tourism. She emphasised the importance of seeking funding not only through health and active-lifestyle programmes but also through tourism initiatives, and suggested working with the Place and Prosperity team to identify opportunities. She added that a scheme limited to Bangor or Newtownards alone would be too restrictive and that a wider approach would be more beneficial.

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

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

10.1. 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 Man's 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 excluding 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.

Councillor Edmund speaking on the Notice of Motion advised that that, having long experience in the fishing industry, he was deeply concerned about the impact of recent Manx regulatory changes on fishermen and coastal communities, particularly in the Newtownards Peninsula. He explained that livelihoods were now under threat due to new Isle of Man transit visa requirements, which prevented UK-based crew from operating in Manx waters unless they held an Isle of Man visa. To obtain such a visa, vessel owners were required to register their businesses in the Isle of Man, creating significant financial and administrative burdens.

He noted that the local fleet already struggled to recruit crew, with around 70% of workers being overseas fishermen who contributed greatly to coastal communities. The new rules, he said, took no account of this reality and warned that Northern Ireland vessels, despite holding lawfully purchased licences and having fished in those waters for generations, now risked being excluded from the 12-mile zone. He recalled previous challenges, including exclusion zones introduced two years earlier on environmental grounds, which many believed had favoured Manx vessels.

Councillor Edmund advised of how the sector was already under severe pressure from rising fuel costs, regulatory demands and tight margins, and that removing access to these grounds placed businesses in jeopardy. He referred to correspondence from Michelle McIlveen MLA to the Minister of Agriculture highlighting the need for urgent action and stated that the resilience of the sector had limits. Councillor Edmund believed any and all affected by the change should be brought together by the Minister to enter direct discussion with the Isle of Man authorities. Michelle McIlveen MLA had also written to the Isle of Man Government. If actions were taken without regard of the consequences, the long term future of the sector was at risk. Councillor Edmund urged Members not to allow the industry to be disadvantaged without challenge.

Alderman Adair thanked Councillor Edmund and noted that it had been some time since a fishing-related motion had come before the Council, but that the challenges were now greater than ever. He stressed that the issue would have significant consequences for Northern Ireland, as fishing rights in those waters dated back centuries. It was essential to send a strong message of support for the industry. Alderman Adair welcomed the engagement of Michelle McIlveen MLA and Minister Andrew Muir and stated that the Council must make clear that the new regulations were unworkable and unjust. He highlighted the rising cost of fuel, which had more than doubled, and the concerns expressed by industry representatives. He urged Members to support the motion, emphasising the importance of protecting not only the fishing fleet but also the many associated jobs and businesses that depended on it.

Alderman McRandal expressed his support and thanked Members for bringing the matter forward. He noted that Minister Muir had been working closely with industry representatives and had raised concerns directly with the Manx Government. He advised that the Minister was due to travel to the Isle of Man the following week to discuss the issue in person.

Councillor Boyle acknowledged the difficult and dangerous nature of the fishing profession, noting that it carried significantly higher risks than most occupations. Fishing was central to the life of Portavogie and that the industry was already struggling to attract younger workers. He welcomed the involvement of Michelle McIlveen MLA and the DAERA Minister and asked whether there was value in involving the local MP, given the wider implications for other fishing ports. He warned that the consequences of the new rules would be severe if not addressed and that the industry had faced many obstacles over the years. He stressed the need to use all available representation to support fishermen.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted that Jim Shannon MP represented the area and also spoke for fishing communities in Kilkeel and Ardglass. She said similar concerns had been raised in Newry, Mourne and Down, where crews from Northern Ireland were permitted to work in local waters but were now restricted in Manx waters. She reported that Mr Shannon had met with both the Immigration Minister and the Fisheries Minister to highlight the issue, including the fact that fishermen possessed high skill levels and salaries that did not match. She argued that fisheries required their own visa category and that the Isle of Man's position was unacceptable. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter said Members would continue to fight for the sector and stressed that young people would only enter the industry if it offered a viable future. She emphasised the importance of the Council sending a clear message of support for fishermen and rejecting the Isle of Man's ruling.

Councillor Blaney advised he had a small declaration of interest, noting that some of his clients worked in the industry. He said they had expressed frustration at the last-minute nature of the changes and urged that this point be raised with the Minister. He argued that any future legislative changes by the Isle of Man should be subject to a consultation period of at least six months, allowing time to assess the impact on fishermen's livelihoods.

Councillor Edmund summarised, noting the long history of Northern Ireland's fishing presence in Manx waters. He described how his grandfather had taken over the family boat at the age of 14 and had fished until the age of 84, illustrating the generational nature of the industry. He said the new rules were unjust, particularly as Manx scallop boats could enter Northern Ireland waters during unfavourable weather, often in significant numbers. Councillor Edmund shared a personal account of losing a relative at sea near the Isle of Man, whose body had never been recovered, and described the hardship faced by families in the industry. He thanked Members for their support and noted that colleagues in Kilkeel had brought forward similar proposals. He said pressure must be applied collectively across the entire coast to ensure the issue was addressed at the highest levels.

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

10.2. 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.

Councillor McCollum joined the meeting at 20:26 to speak on her Notice of Motion.

Councillor McCollum introduced the motion and spoke of the tragic loss of life on the roads of Ards and North Down in 2025, noting that seven families had received devastating news during that year. Among them was the family of 16-year-old Jaidyn Rice, whose death on 8 July 2025 had profoundly affected not only her loved ones but the wider Clandeboye community. She said the community had lost a young woman who was both a role model and a source of light, and who had already made an extraordinary impact through her leadership in the DICE project. Jaidyn's empathy, compassion and natural leadership had earned her responsibilities beyond her years, and she believed deeply in the power of community and in helping others to grow and thrive.

Councillor McCollum highlighted that Jaidyn had also been a committed Army Cadet, a role she took seriously as an opportunity to serve and support others. Although her life had been short, her impact had been significant, and it was the enduring wish of her family, friends and community that her legacy continue. She stressed that community safety, whether in homes, towns, villages or on the roads, was a shared responsibility and lay at the heart of the Council's work, including through the PCSP. Inspired by Jaidyn's values, the Rice family had worked with various groups since her passing to improve road safety and support others.

Councillor McCollum explained that the family wished to create a bench in an agreed and appropriate location, not as a traditional memorial but as a living space for reflection, connection and support. The bench would incorporate a QR code linking to the Here to Help app, which provided quick access to support services covering mental health, addiction, domestic abuse, housing and emergency pathways such as 999, Lifeline and Samaritans. The bench would offer a discreet way for people in distress to seek help without judgement and would serve as a reminder that support was always available. The proposal was not intended to bypass the Council's memorial bench policy, as it was not a static memorial but a practical and compassionate resource reflecting Jaidyn's outward-looking nature. If the bench helped even one person, she said, it would have fulfilled its purpose and become a meaningful legacy.

Councillor Wray seconded the motion and thanked the Mayor for her work with officers and the Rice family. He said he had mentored Jaidyn in 2022 and described her as kind, driven and committed to helping others. Her involvement in DICE and the cadets reflected her desire to ensure young people knew support was available

and that they could achieve great things. He said the bench was a fitting tribute and an important tool for all ages. He also reflected on recent frustrations about negative generalisations of young people, noting that the vast majority were like Jaidyn; positive, engaged and community-minded. He said the bench would support both victims of harm and those who caused it, by signposting them to help. He commended the compassionate approach taken and urged Members to support the proposal.

Councillor Cummings, speaking as the Council's representative on the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, expressed his thanks to the Mayor and Councillor Wray. He said Jaidyn had been held in high esteem within the cadet community and that the bench would be a fitting tribute, reflecting her values and leadership. It would provide a place for reflection and a practical source of support for those in need. Councillor Cathcart thanked Members for their contributions and said that although he had not known Jaidyn, the tributes made clear the depth of her impact and the loss felt by the community. He commended the Rice family for their strength in using their grief to advocate for improved road safety and said the proposed bench would be a meaningful tribute.

Councillor Newman also expressed her support, noting Jaidyn's commitment to service through DICE and the cadets. She said the bench would offer hope and reflection for young people and others, and she trusted officers to work closely with the family to progress the project in time for her anniversary.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reflected on the loss of Jaidyn's life and future, and said it was heartening that the lives she might have touched could still be reached through this initiative. She spoke of the pressures facing young people, including online bullying, and said the bench and QR code would remind them they were not alone. She hoped the Council could help send a message of hope.

Councillor Boyle thanked the Mayor and Councillor Wray for bringing forward the motion. He said the themes of reflection, connection and outreach were powerful and important for young people. Although he had not known Jaidyn, he felt he had come to know her through the tributes. He noted that the loss of young life had a profound impact on communities, recalling that another young person had died in Portaferry on the same date. He said the bench would provide a place for people to sit, talk and feel supported, and that such gestures demonstrated the Council's care. In summing up, Councillor McCollum thanked Members for their kindness, compassion and support, and conveyed the gratitude of the Rice family.

Councillor Kendall concluded that it was a privilege to support the proposal, noting that the bench would be much more than a physical structure. She said it would be a place of compassion, connection and outreach, honouring Jaidyn's life and supporting others.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

12. TENDER REPORTS

12.1. TENDER FOR THE SUPPLY OF LIQUID FUELS AT ARDS AND NORTH DOWN COUNCIL PROPERTIES

****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE****

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

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

SCHEDULE 6 – Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the current contract for the Provision of Fuel Oil Supplies had been in operation from 1 April 2024. This tender had previously been procured through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) operating on the Council's behalf under a call-off contract, National Fuels Framework Agreement. Council Officers provided details to CCS of liquid fuel consumption and storage information for inclusion in a new tender exercise.

The Crown Commercial Service had undertaken a tender exercise including Council's consumption data, to obtain the most economically advantageous contractor for the provision of liquid fuel oils. The contractor recommended under this tender exercise and were also the incumbent contractor, was Nicholl Fuel Oils.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree that Crown Commercial Service continue to be utilised and the Contract for the Provision of Fuel Oil Supplies be awarded to the highest scoring company as recommended by Crown Commercial Services.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

12.2. TENDER EXTENSION FOR THE PROVISION OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT REPAIRS AND SERVICING

****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE****

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

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

SCHEDULE 6 – Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the tender for the Provision of Grounds Maintenance Equipment Repairs and Servicing was awarded on 9 July 2025 for an initial period of 12 months with an option to extend for a further three periods of one year each.

Following a satisfactory service review, Officers wished to extend the contract for a further 12-month period as permitted in the original tender documents.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves an extension of the Tender for the Provision of Grounds Maintenance Equipment Repairs and Servicing contract for a further twelve-month period under the existing Tender Option.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

12.3. TENDER EXTENSION FOR THE PROVISION OF MEMORIAL TESTING

****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE****

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

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

SCHEDULE 6 – Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the tender for the Provision of Memorial Testing was awarded 1 July 2025 for an initial period of 12 months with an option to extend for a further three periods of one year.

Following a satisfactory service review, Officers wished to extend the contract for a further 12-month period as permitted in the original tender documents.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves an extension of the Memorial Testing contract for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

12.4. APPOINTMENT OF ICE CREAM AND HOT DRINKS VENDORS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN THE BOROUGH 2026-27

****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE****

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

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

SCHEDULE 6 – Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services to update Elected Members on the appointment of Hot Drinks Vendors at three available locations in the Borough and sought approval to move forward following the recent expression of interest period.

Officers identified one winning bid from applications The two remaining locations (Groomsport and Cairn Wood) would be re-advertised.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the appointment.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 20:55.

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 9 April 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McCracken

Aldermen: Adair McDowell
Armstrong-Cotter

Councillors: Blaney (Zoom) McCollum (Zoom 7.03pm)
Brady Morgan
Edmund Newman
Gilmour Smart (Zoom)
Hennessy Thompson
Hollywood (Zoom)

Also in Attendance: Councillor S Irvine
Councillor W Irvine

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

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies for lateness had been received from the Mayor, Councillor McCollum.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were declared.

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

3. ARDS PENINSULA BUSINESS AWARDS (FILE 160094)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that officers recently liaised with Newtownards Chamber on its annual business awards ceremony arrangements for 2026. Last year’s successful awards ceremony held in April 2025 was the first time the awards ceremony covered areas

outside of Newtownards, to include Comber, Donaghadee and the Ards Peninsula.

Details

The Ards Peninsula Business Awards ceremony would take place on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 7.00 pm in the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor. The Council had been requested to sponsor the “Business Growth Award” with two subcategories, Business Growth Awards under 10 employees and Business Growth Awards over 10 employees.

As part of the package, four complimentary tickets were being made available to Council, one of the four tickets would include the Mayor who would present the Council’s sponsored award. If additional tickets were required, those could be purchased from Ards Chamber at a cost of £85.00 plus VAT per ticket.

The package also offered the Council publicity by having the Council logo added to all sponsorship and event publicity. This included the launch event, social media marketing campaign in the lead up to the ceremony, photo opportunities on the evening of the ceremony, and photos with other category sponsors and winners.

These awards ceremonies were a valuable opportunity for Council members and officers to forge new relationships and connections with the local businesses. It was one of the key aspects of Economic Growth to provide support to local businesses and understand barriers to growth as well as emerging needs. Taking this into consideration, it was recommended that two additional tickets were purchased for Council officers to attend the ceremony as well as members.

Budget

The Ards Peninsula Business Awards organisers had requested an uplift in contribution as, since last year, they had covered all of the Ards and Peninsula areas.

A budget of £3,000 had been set aside under the Economic Development revenue budget for this event and for its equivalent in Bangor. The budget had been agreed by the Council and, with a view to remain consistent with the amount offered for this type of event in the Borough, it was recommended that the contribution remained as agreed in this year’s budget, namely £3,000.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- Approves a contribution of £3,000 to support the Ards Peninsula Business Awards 2026.
- Nominates three Members, in addition to the Mayor, to attend the Ards Peninsula Business Awards on 14 May 2026 and that two additional tickets are purchased for Council officers to also attend the ceremony.

(The Mayor, Councillor McCollum joined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 7.03pm)

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted.

Nominations were then sought for Members to attend the Business Awards in addition to the Mayor and the following nominations were made:

Councillor Thompson – proposed by Councillor Gilmour and seconded by Alderman Adair.

Alderman McDowell – proposed by Councillor Morgan and seconded by Councillor Hennessy.

Councillor Smart – proposed by Councillor Blaney and seconded by Councillor Hollywood.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that the following Members be nominated to attend the Business Awards in addition to the Mayor:

- Councillor Thompson**
- Alderman McDowell**
- Councillor Smart**

REPORTS FOR NOTING

4. LOCAL ACTION GROUPS

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the new Local Action Groups had been established and the initial round of introductory meetings had been conducted.

Copies of the minutes from these introductory meetings were available in the attached Appendices.

Membership

Membership details of each Group were provided below with notable additional members agreed at the Introductory Meeting:

Bangor –

Elected Members	Bangor Central DEA (6)
NI Executive Depts	Dept for Infrastructure (1) Dept for Communities (1)
Commerce/Business	Bangor Chamber of Commerce (2) Bangor Business Improvement District Steering Group (1)
Sports	AND Sports Forum (1)
Arts and Heritage	Booms Studios / Seacourt Print (1)*
Community	North Down Community Network (1)

	Over 50s Council (1) YMCA (1)
Faith	Ministers Forum (1)
Culture and Events	Open House Festival (1)
Council Officers	Regeneration (3)
Statutory Agency	Police Service of Northern Ireland (1)

Comber –

Elected Members	Comber DEA (5)
NI Executive Depts	Dept for Infrastructure (1) Dept for Communities (1)
Commerce/Business	Comber Chamber of Commerce (2)
Regeneration	Comber Regeneration Group (1)
Community	Comber & District U3A (1) Comber Rotary Club (1)
Youth and Faith	NET Youth Project (1) Clergy Forum (1)
Council Officers	Regeneration (3)

Donaghadee –

Elected Members	Bangor East and Donaghadee (6)
NI Executive Depts	Dept for Infrastructure (1) Dept for Communities (1)
Commerce/Business	Donaghadee Community Development Association (2)
Sports	AND Sports Forum (1)
Youth and Faith	Donaghadee Youth For Christ (1)
Community	Donaghadee Community Development Association (1) Ards Peninsula U3A (1)
Historical	Donaghadee Historical Society (1)
Council Officers	Regeneration (3)

Holywood –

Elected Members	Holywood and Clandeboye DEA (5)
NI Executive Depts	Dept for Infrastructure (1) Dept for Communities (1)
Commerce/Business	Holywood Chamber of Trade (2)
Faith	Holywood Street Pastors (1)
Youth	Holywood Family Trust (1)
Community	Holywood Shared Town (1) Holywood Residents Association (1) Redburn Loughview Community Forum (1) Holywood District and Community Council (1)
Council Officers	Regeneration (3)

Newtownards –

Elected Members	Newtownards DEA (6)
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NI Executive Depts	Dept for Infrastructure (1) Dept for Communities (1)
Commerce/Business	Newtownards Chamber of Trade (2)
Faith	Ards and North Down Street Pastors (1)
Sports	AND Sports Forum (1)
Youth and Community	Ards Arena Youth Centre (1)
Historical	Ards Historical Society (1)
Council Officers	Regeneration (3)

The annual schedule of meetings was outlined as follows:

Introductory Meetings	February/ March 2026
Q1 Meeting	April 2026
Q2 Meeting	June 2026
Q3 Meeting	September 2026
Q4 Meeting	November/ December 2026
Annual Conference of all five groups	January 2027

An official launch of the new Local Action Groups would be held in May 2026.

Members should note the appointed Chair and Vice Chair for each group:

Bangor	Chair: TBC Vice Chair: TBC
Comber	Chair: Alderman Trevor Cummings Vice Chair: Councillor Patricia Morgan
Donaghadee	Chair: Adrian Kerr, Donaghadee Community Development Association Vice Chair: Councillor Eddie Thompson
Holywood	Chair: Mayor, Councillor Gillian McCollum Vice Chair: Helen Aston, Holywood Chamber of Commerce
Newtownards	Chair: TBC Vice Chair: TBC

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this information.

Councillor Brady proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Brady expressed disappointment following the inaugural meetings of the Groups upon realising that a budget was no longer available to them. As such concerns had been raised that the Groups could become 'talking shops'. Continuing he also noted that representatives from Youth Voice had not been included on the membership lists.

In response the Director reminded Members that no budget had previously been made available for the former Town Actions Groups (TAGs). He added that it had been hoped to make a budget available for the new Groups through the Council's recent Rate Setting process but regrettably that had not been possible. In respect of representation by Youth Voice he advised that he would raise the matter with officers.

The seconder, Councillor Hennessy commented that he looked forward to the work of the Groups going forward.

Thanking officers for the report, Councillor Morgan noted that some of the Groups included sporting representatives and she sought further clarity around that.

The Director advised that the Sports Forum referred to by the Member comprised of a number of different sporting organisations which had come together to create the Forum. He confirmed that he would ask officers to look into this matter also.

Councillor Morgan welcomed the Director's comments adding that she would look forward to sports organisations being encouraged to come together rather than a focus being on just one sport.

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

5. DFE PROJECT GIGABIT – UPDATE (FILE DEVP34) (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Telecommunications, including digital infrastructure, was a reserved matter which sat with the UK Government. The Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE) played a key operational role in this area particularly where there was evidenced market failure.

Update

On 4 February 2026, DfE invited representatives from the 11 Northern Ireland Councils to be briefed on work done and work planned by DfE in the area of Digital Infrastructure.

DfE reported against work done to avail of UK Government committed funds for digital infrastructure (£5 billion across the whole of the UK for hardest to reach communities).

This work had included:

- Open market review with digital infrastructure solution providers
- Public review
- Procurement launch with standard selection Questionnaire stage
- ITT Procurement stage
- Final Tender evaluation

As a result of this work, the Department had now procured Fibrus Networks Ltd to deliver what was being called “Project Gigabit” throughout Northern Ireland. The project was part of the Gigabit infrastructure subsidy scheme operated by Building Digital UK (BDUK), part of DSIT (Department of Science Information and Technology), which provided the capital funding for gigabit subsidies here and in Great Britain.

Following DfE’s compliant procurement and evaluation process, which included social value and risk analysis, the UK Government had approved DfE’s recommended award of £34.6m. This would result in 9,333 premises in Northern Ireland being serviced with gigabit capable infrastructure in a contract managed by the department.

The DfE process and subsequent approval by UK Government had arrived at a list of premises identified for intervention (Premises in Bid) and Premises that were identified but which were not being addressed by Project Gigabit (Premises not in Bid).

Local Government District	Premises in Bid	Premises not in Bid
Antrim and Newtownabbey	335	123
Ards and North Down	309	75
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	1,619	184
Belfast	17	18
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,766	331
Derry City and Strabane District	647	145
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,918	137
Lisburn and Castlereagh	316	44
Mid and East Antrim	381	178
Mid Ulster	944	127
Newry Mourne and Down	1,056	211
No Longer on address lists	25	3
Total	9,333	1,576

DfE had reported that premises not in the bid were as a result of factors such as:

- Commercial entities in the digital infrastructure market were already looking to services those areas
- Areas had already been serviced
- Wayleave issues
- Located on islands
- Issues of proximity to nearest connection point and AONB

In addition, DfE had reported that officials were actively exploring additional funding sources and alternative solutions to enhance service provision for those locations.

Next Steps

DfE would begin work on Local Area Reviews. This would determine any required changes to the intervention areas based on current information from the market.

DfE had provided maps (Appendix 1- DfE Project Gigabit PowerPoint) illustrating intervention areas for all 11 Councils in addition to a post code checker to verify if a post code was set for intervention. The post code checker was available at:

<http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/project-gigabit>

RECOMMENDED Council Notes the content of this report and the attached DfE PowerPoint presentation.

Councillor Hennessy proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Hennessy, welcomed the report and recommendation.

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

6. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL

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

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by 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.

The proposer, Councillor W Irvine, commented that the impact of the services provided by SEFF had been both profound and far-reaching, particularly for individuals and communities affected by conflict and trauma. At its core, SEFF existed to support those who had experienced loss, violence, and hardship as a result of the Troubles. Through its work, it had become more than just an organisation, it was a lifeline for many who might otherwise feel forgotten or overlooked. By offering practical assistance, emotional support, and advocacy, SEFF helped individuals rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

One of the most significant impacts of SEFF's services was its commitment to victims and survivors. Many people carried invisible wounds such as grief, trauma, and unanswered questions. SEFF provided a safe space where those experiences were acknowledged and validated. Through counselling services, support groups, and remembrance initiatives, individuals were given the opportunity to heal, connect, and find strength in shared experiences. In addition, SEFF played a crucial role in ensuring that the voices of victims were heard. It advocated on their behalf, engaging with policymakers and the wider society to highlight their needs and concerns.

Councillor Irvine stated that this work was essential in promoting justice, recognition, and fairness, ensuring that those affected by the past were not left behind in conversations about the future.

Continuing Councillor W Irvine stated that education was another key area where SEFF made a meaningful difference. By promoting awareness of the realities of conflict and its lasting consequences, the organisation helped to foster understanding among younger generations. This was vital in building a more peaceful and inclusive society, where the mistakes of the past were neither repeated nor forgotten. Furthermore, SEFF's community-based approach strengthened social bonds. It also brought people together across divides, encouraged dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect. In doing so, it also contributed to reconciliation and the gradual healing of communities still affected by division. In conclusion, the impact of SEFF's services could not be measured solely in numbers or programme, instead it was seen in the lives transformed, the voices empowered, and the hope restored. Its work reminded us that even in the aftermath of conflict, compassion, support, and understanding could pave the way toward healing and a better future for all.

The memorial quilt created by the SEFF was displayed for several interconnected reasons, mostly tied to remembrance, education, and recognition of those affected by the Troubles:

1. Remembrance of victims

The quilt served as a visual memorial to individuals who lost their lives during the conflict. Each panel typically represented a person, helping to humanize statistics and ensure victims were not forgotten.

2. Acknowledging impact on families and communities

By displaying names, images, and personal details, the quilt highlighted the lasting emotional and social impact on families and local communities, not just the individuals who were killed.

3. Raising awareness of the Troubles

It helped educate the public especially younger generations about the realities of the conflict in Northern Ireland, making history more tangible and personal.

4. Giving victims a voice

The quilt reflected the perspective of those represented by SEFF, many of whom were from unionist/loyalist backgrounds. Displaying it allowed their experiences and narratives to be seen and heard in wider discussions about the past.

5. Promoting reflection and dialogue

Public display could encourage conversation about memory, justice, and reconciliation, even if interpretations of the past differ.

6. Community healing and recognition

For many relatives, having their loved ones included in a memorial provided a sense of acknowledgment and dignity, which could be an important part of healing.

Continuing Councillor W Irvine referred to John McCready (Protestant civilian) who was murdered in a case of blatant sectarian murder. John was shot by Republican terrorists and died ten days afterwards from his injuries on 6 February 1976. Councillor Irvine advised that his son Martyn had asked him to bring forward this motion. John had been returning from a Masonic meeting when he was stopped by two IRA men in a car who then opened fire and shot him four times. This happened on his wife's birthday. John was a well-liked and well-respected builder in Belfast. He grew up in Groomsport Village and Bangor where he was a part-time member of the Fire Service. He met and married Catherine (Renee) Rainey and they had a son, John Edward Martyn McCready. Councillor Irvine stated that John was a drummer with the Cleland Memorial Pipe Band for many years and a member of the Orange Lodge and Masonic fraternity. He was remembered on SEFF's most recent memorial quilt - A Patchwork of Innocents. His life centred around his work, home, family and his membership of those organisations and that was why the emblems had been chosen for John's patch on the Memorial Quilt.

In summing up Councillor Irvine reiterated the importance of members of the Council supporting his motion.

Rising as seconder of the motion, Councillor S Irvine commended the continued work of the SEFF. For many years, SEFF had stood as a vital source of support for victims and survivors and for people whose lives were forever changed by the violence of the Troubles. Their work was not just about services or advocacy but instead was about dignity, recognition, and ensuring that those who suffered were never overlooked or forgotten. Continuing he stated that it was worth noting that even today, this work of remembrance continued. He informed Members that today, SEFF had shared on their social media two patches from the Ballydugan Four - Private Smart and Private Birch. That simple act of remembrance showed how their commitment was ongoing, ensuring that individuals were not reduced to statistics, but remembered as people with names, stories, and families.

Councillor S Irvine confirmed that the proposal to display the SEFF memorial quilt within the Borough was both fitting and important. The quilt he stated was far more than a collection of stitched panels and instead it was a powerful, visual testament to human loss, resilience, and remembrance. Every piece told a story. Every name represented a life that mattered, a family impacted, and a community changed.

Displaying the quilt in a public space offered several key benefits.

Firstly, it provided a place of reflection and for victims' families and survivors, it was a visible acknowledgment of their pain and their experience. Something that should never be underestimated.

Secondly, it served an educational purpose for younger generations, who had not lived through the Troubles. The quilt helped bridge that gap in understanding and encouraged learning, reflection, and a deeper awareness of our shared history, something which was essential if we were to build a more peaceful and respectful future.

Thirdly, it promoted reconciliation and understanding. By recognising all innocent victims, a clear message was sent that every life lost mattered, and that remembrance could unite rather than divide.

Councillor S Irvine commented that this was not about reopening old wounds. Instead, it was about acknowledging them with honesty and respect, and ensuring that the lessons of the past were not lost. In supporting this motion, the Council would be affirming its commitment to remembrance, education, and compassion saying clearly that the voices of victims and survivors mattered, and that their stories deserved to be seen and heard. As such he urged Members to support the motion.

Rising in support of the motion, Alderman Adair thanked both Members for bringing the motion forward. It was particularly timely given that today was the anniversary of death of the Ballydugan four. On the morning of 9 April 1990, Private John Birch, Lance Corporal John Bradley, Private Michael Adams and Private Steven Smart, all members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, were murdered by the Provisional IRA in an attack on their mobile patrol on the Ballydugan Road, Downpatrick. Alderman Adair commented that he knew the Birch family well and as such his thoughts were with them today. The quilt included reference to Private John Birch and ensured that history was not rewritten. He made reference to recent comments made by the First Minister for Northern Ireland or 'First Minister for all' who had suggested there was no alternative to violence whenever there was an alternative to violence. He believed that the Council should stand with the innocent victims of the Troubles to ensure that their voices and the voices of their families along with their stories were never forgotten. Continuing Alderman Adair stated that he had seen the quilt at a variety of locations throughout Northern Ireland and believed that it would be very fitting to have it brought to the Borough adding that it would mean a lot to many families. He said that today and everyday thoughts would be with all of those families who had lost loved ones as the result of the Troubles. SEFF was one of many organisations which provided a voice for victims and he reiterated that all of those in the Council would never forget the loss and sacrifice of those families adding that they would always be remembered. As such he believed that this was a small but important step forwards and he urged Members to support the motion.

Councillor Hennessy indicated that he was very happy to support the motion adding that he noted the quilt comprised eight different sections and as such he asked if the entire quilt would be brought to the Borough or just one section.

To clarify Councillor W Irvine advised that each section could be pieced together to make one large quilt and that was what was hoped could come to the Borough.

Thanking both Councillors for bringing forward the motion, Councillor Gilmour believed that it was fitting, right and proper for the quilt to be brought to the Borough. She added that it was important that a suitable place was found to display the quilt such as North Down Museum, Ards Arts Centre or Bangor Library. Continuing Councillor Gilmour commented that she would be keen for the entire quilt to come to the Borough as it told the entire story of the troubles particularly as was often the case history was being rewritten with innocent victims becoming confused with those set out to commit murder. The quilt not only represented those who had been left behind but also encouraged reflection on those who were robbed of their futures. One example was that of a thirteen year old girl blown up by the Shankill bomb

whose mother had been determined to work towards justice for her daughter and had chosen not to be defined by that event. She added that for someone to say the victims were legitimate targets was very crass indeed especially to all of the innocent victims. As such she reiterated her support for the motion and looked forward to welcoming the quilt to the Borough.

Wishing to also add his support and thank both Members for bringing their motion, Councillor Smart indicated that he had had many dealings with SEFF over the years and the support they provided had been second to none. He acknowledged that the wider community had suffered as the result of the terrible conflict with some communities and families bearing a heavier burden than most. Having attended the unveiling of the quilt he had found it quite emotional to see and he was fully supportive of it being brought to Borough as it told the story of those who had lost their lives while trying to preserve our safety. At this stage Councillor Smart paid tribute to his own cousin who had died in 1990, a dedicated soldier and Liverpool Football Club fan and that story of him and his three comrades on that terrible day was an important story to tell. As such Councillor Smart stated that he would be delighted if the Council could play its part in remembering him, his service and sacrifice along with all of those who had paid the ultimate price or suffered physical or mental hardship due to the conflict.

At this stage the Mayor (Councillor McCollum) expressed her support for the motion and thanked the Members for bringing it forward. Remembrance was vital she stated as grief needed a space and trauma did not have an end date. Continuing she referred to ongoing research which enabled further understanding of intergenerational trauma and how it did not end with one generation but was carried down through younger generations. Councillor McCollum acknowledged the tremendous work carried out by SEFF and following on from some of the comments made she agreed that it would be fitting for the quilt to travel around the Borough to different venues.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also rose in support thanking Members for their motion which she felt provided an opportunity to remember those innocent lives which had been lost. She recalled a conversation she had had with her children the previous week during the Easter holidays around the resurrection of Jesus and they had asked her if she knew anyone who had died for them to which she replied yes in the Wars and the troubles. As such she realised that in an attempt to shield her children from the devastation of the troubles there was also a need for them to know the history behind them now being able to live in peace in the Borough. As such and following conversations with her colleague she suggested that it might be nice for local schools to be invited along to view the quilt whenever it came to the Borough. Continuing Alderman Armstrong-Cotter agreed that the Town Hall in Newtownards could be the perfect location for the quilt to be viewed in the first instance and then it could travel around the Borough. The quilt she believed represented not only remembrance but hope that those lives lost were not given in vain. She expressed her thanks to SEFF for this project which provided an opportunity to remember the truth of all of those lives which had been given and taken. As such it was important for the Council to give it a home and give it space as well giving it promotion.

Councillor Edmund also thanked the two Members for their motion and wished to add his support for it. He believed the quilt would give the innocent people of the Borough who had suffered through injury or death time to reflect.

Also rising in support Councillor Newman thanked both Members for bringing forward their motion adding that it would be very useful for GCSE History students to have access to this in the Borough. It would enable those young people to see the enormity of the loss of life during the troubles and looking at the quilt would enable those victims to be brought to life and demonstrate the huge loss during that time.

At this stage Councillor Thompson commented that he had previously lived on the Shankill Road, Belfast and lived through two bombings and was thankful to have walked away from those. He thanked both Councillors for bringing forward their motion agreeing wholeheartedly with all of the comments which had been made in the Council Chamber. The memory of those who died needed to be preserved particularly as the impact on all of the families involved was devastating. Councillor Thompson reiterated his support for the motion.

By way of summing up Councillor W Irvine thanked Members for their supportive comments and welcomed the suggestion of involving local schools. He added that he looked forward to working with officers to bring that to fruition in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by 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.

(Councillor W Irvine & Councillor S Irvine left the Council Chamber at this stage - 7.38pm)

7. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL (IN CONFIDENCE)

8. LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP) UPDATE (FILE ED136)(Appendix III)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Exemption Reason:

4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

If

Multiple:

SUMMARY The LEP report is in confidence given the negotiations that are happening in the task and finish groups and which will form the base of the procurement for each programme. There is also HR issues about staff being recruited.

DIRECTOR SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

The Director gave an update on the appointment process for the Head of Economic Growth and the Head of Strategic Capital Development positions.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.52pm.

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."

On 12 January 2026 a letter from the Chief Executive was sent to Mrs Naomi Long MLA, Minister of Justice. In her response, the Minister outlined that the matters contained within the letter were of a party-political nature and that it would not be appropriate for her to respond in her Ministerial capacity. She offered to respond within her capacity as Leader of the Alliance Party. However, in doing so, that would not be in line with the resolution agreed by the Council, which sought a Ministerial response.

Key Issues

At its meeting in February 2026, the Committee considered the response from Mrs Naomi Long and agreed to pursue the letter to the Justice Minister as previously decided by the Council.

On 26 February 2026, the Council's Chief Executive wrote to the Justice Minister again, requesting that she respond in her capacity as Justice Minister. A copy was included as an appendix.

A response was received from the Justice Minister on 9 March and was also included as an appendix for the Committee's consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the response.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. BLAIR MAYNE BURSARY MINUTES AND AWARDS 2025-26 (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Blair Mayne Bursary Fund was administered by a sub-committee of the Corporate Services Committee. Four awards of £1000 are made annually to successful applicants under predetermined criteria.

The categories were:

- Sport
- Academic Study
- Adventure Training
- Disability Award

A meeting of the subcommittee was held in person on Thursday 26th March 2026 which detailed the recipients of this year's bursary. The minutes were attached.

Next Steps

The presentation of the awards would take place on 13th May 2026, and all Members would be issued with invitations in due course.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the minutes.

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

Proposing Alderman McIlveen described his great pleasure in having been a member of the panel and had been greatly impressed by the depth of talent being presented. He felt frustrated that the Council could not provide greater funding to the programme but looked forward to the presentation of the awards on 13th May. As seconder Councillor Moore echoed those comments and recognised the excellence of the applications presented by special participants.

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

5. NOTICES OF MOTION**5.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers**

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.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Smith considered that the desire to reduce the level of rates payable by residents of the Borough was self-explanatory but accepted that that was easier said than done. He reminded Members that the rates increase within the Borough was the lowest in Northern Ireland the previous year but this year it would be the highest at 4.5% and accepted that small margins could make big headlines. Of that total 3% could be contributed to the effects of inflation and 1.5 % would be for capital expenditure. Few would wish to cut the Council's programmes or reduce its services so the Council would need to dive in to the organisation's cost base. He referred to the introduction of zero based budgeting and the Council's priorities could be set from that point. Over time goals could be set, budgeted for an reviewed and officers could accept that if it was done incrementally. He believed that that process would reduce wasteful spending and increase accountability.

The Alderman went on to refer to the Council's major plans for capital investment and its ongoing review of capital spending and wise strategic decisions needed to be made. He suggested a consultation to establish if the Council's direction correlated with what residents wanted and so an engagement process could be undertaken to

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explain the budget, showing planned expenditure and gauging the public's priorities. Whilst participation rates were likely to be low he considered that it would still be worthwhile to get views from outside the organisation. He promised this would be no 'magic wand' but that the three actions would clarify direction and in time drive down costs for the Council. He finished by saying that he hoped this was not contentious and that other Members could get behind the Motion.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Chambers considered that at the core of the Motion was the expectation of trust and openness on how decisions were made. He thought that reviewing and engaging ensured good management and that decisions would be balanced and practical as well as being more accountable and in tune with those the Council represented.

Alderman McIlveen sought further clarification on the proposal and considered that a further report prepared by officers would be helpful in order to address the questions he had, such as what exactly was being proposed, remembering that some of the Council's costs provided community services which rarely made a profit. He also tried to establish if the Motion would require endless meetings on what would stay or be removed from the budget and how often that would take place – as a one off or on an annual basis. He hoped for a further explanation on the scale of what was anticipated but agreed with the Motion that it was absolutely important that there was greater transparency and there was an argument for going deeper but exactly how deep was the question. It was also accepted that the Council did already engage with residents widely through its Corporate Plan. In finishing he asked if Alderman Smith would accept his amendment on asking for a further report. Alderman Smith was happy to include it in his Motion and suggested it was implied that a report would come back.

Councillor McCracken believed that in principle there was a lot of merit in the Motion stating that in any large organisation behaviours became embedded and change to new ways of working was often slow to be implemented compared to the profit driven private sector. A zero based budget would be an opportunity to review decisions to make them as cost effective as possible. He pointed to issues related to staff overtime, as an example, and there were, in his view, simple ways to reduce that. In terms of frequency he did not think the Council could commit annually but thought once a term would be appropriate and he agreed with the previous comment that the Council already did consult already so there was the potential for duplication. He viewed it as primarily an internal as opposed to an external exercise.

In closing Alderman Smith thanked Members for their views and was happy to accept the amendment which made an officers report explicit. He agreed with Councillor McCracken that once a term would be the appropriate frequency but he was open to suggestions. He also noted the consultation that the Council was already involved with but stressed that many residents did not have a clear view of the work of the Council. He looked forward to reading the officers' ideas when they came back to the Committee and hoped this would be the start of a journey of progress.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Chambers that a report be brought back detailing how the 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.

5.2 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 Semiquincentennial. 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.

Proposed by Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor McClean referred to the historical act of the United States Declaration of Independence and stressed that this was an occasion worth acknowledging and celebrating. He referred to the founding fathers of the United States many of whom had roots in what was now Northern Ireland. The bond between the two countries was obvious and went back generations and he believed that locally within our country the historical connection had not always been well told. However, the fact remained that the Ulster Scots were not to be considered a footnote but were rather at the heart of the American story, indeed Northern Ireland could claim a link to 17 of the United States' 44 Presidents. He said that most Members would have heard that the American frontiers were largely shaped by the Scots Irish who were known as a proud, hearty people. On St Patrick's Day at the White House, the previous month local man Trevor Marshall had given a presentation to which the President had listened intently.

Councillor McClean referred to the work of other local Councils to celebrate the occasion and believed that more could be done by working together. Each of those Councils was planning several small events and he proposed that Ards and North Down do likewise. He was aware that the American Consulate would be distributing trees to be planted across the region. He hoped that this Council could join working groups to put something forward that appropriately celebrated the scale of the event possibly by obtaining funding from government Departments since a significant financial contribution would be required.

He compared the celebration to The Fleadh which had recently been agreed which he welcomed and believed that similarly the Council should accept this as a one off extra investment since the event would afford extraordinary attention in telling the story of those who had originated from this land and travelled to build the new America. He was grateful for the work of officers and hoped that engagement would be made with the United States administration and the result would be good for investment and engagement to ensure that the link was better understood on both sides of the Atlantic.

Councillor Gilmour was pleased to second the Motion believing that the proposal gave the Council a valuable opportunity to recognise and mark a moment of real historical significance. She thought this was not simply an anniversary for another nation but rather one that resonated here in the Borough and across Northern Ireland.

The Ulster connection with the United States was long-standing and meaningful and generations of people from this land had made the journey across the Atlantic, helping to shape the story of America, just as America, in turn, had influenced our country's own development, economically, culturally, and socially.

Nowhere was that connection more tangible than in the Borough's own local history. From the harbour at Groomsport, the *Eagle Wings* had set sail in 1636, carrying settlers across the Atlantic in search of a new life. Although that voyage did not reach its intended destination, it remained a powerful symbol of the ambition and spirit that linked this place to the American story. The Eagle Wing festival was a legacy North Down Borough Council event that attracted over 10,000 attendees.

That connection continued through later history since during the Second World War, Bangor Harbour had played its part in preparations for D-Day, with United States forces among those present in the lead-up to that pivotal moment. It was another reminder that the ties between our communities had been shaped not only by migration, but also by shared effort during significant moments in history.

Those links were not just historical since they continued today. Ards and North Down had a Sister City relationship with Virginia Beach, reflecting ongoing civic and cultural connections between our communities. She believed that a set of exchange students of Tallwood High School, Virginia Beach, had visited the Borough only a matter of weeks ago were they visited the pupils of Glenlola Collegiate.

She welcomed that the proposal was practical and proportionate and did not commit the Council to anything excessive. Instead, it asked officers to consider options, whether that could mean incorporating a theme into an existing event or looking at what might be appropriate to deliver later in the year.

She added that the reference to working alongside other Councils was sensible, but importantly, it allowed for flexibility. Any activity could be scaled appropriately and developed in a way that reflected local priorities and available resources.

There were also some clear, modest opportunities within the Motion since marking the anniversary could help highlight our local heritage, contribute to tourism, and provide a positive way to acknowledge our international connections. She referred to the weekend celebration of Rory McIlroy's momentous back to back Masters wins, when the world was looking to where Rory had come from and she stressed that we need to be clear that Ards and North Down was where his skills were nurtured and developed.

Importantly, the Motion did not prescribe a single format but left room for officers to bring forward ideas that were suitable, achievable, and proportionate.

Councillor Moore thought that this would be an opportunity to approach the anniversary in a balanced and thoughtful way. She had noted the wording of the Motion referred to “marking” as well as celebrating, and she thought that was important and it gave space not just to celebrate, but to reflect on history, to learn, and to provide proper context.

The period of American independence was also a time when slavery was part of society, that was an uncomfortable reality, but it was part of the full picture and while it may be easy to judge the past by today’s standards, that did not mean we should overlook what we now recognised as clearly wrong.

For that reason, she asked that officers consider how they could mark and reflect on the anniversary, rather than simply celebrate it. There should be room for learning, for discussion, and for different perspectives to be heard. She considered that the Council’s museum staff would be an important resource in shaping that approach. They had the expertise to help ensure that there was reflection on both the positive connections with the United States and the more difficult aspects of that period in history in a way that was accurate and responsible.

In her view taking that approach could ensure any associated events were open, balanced and honest, and that they contributed meaningfully to public understanding rather than presenting a one-sided view.

Alderman Smith was very happy to support the Motion and commended those who had brought it forward. The links between the two countries were significant and indeed the Seal of the United States was designed by Charles Thomson, who had emigrated from Ulster. He thought those stories should be told and he referred to Trevor Marshall who had performed recently for the President and he had said that he would be happy to be involved. He hoped that all Members would support the Motion and the budget for it could be set aside.

Councillor W Irvine also thanked those who had brought the Motion and shared the view that it should be marked. He agreed the connections were deeply rooted and had shaped the political and economic fabric of both countries. He gave Pennsylvania as an example where many Ulster emigrants had settled and there was evidence of the shared history in both place names and the Presbyterian communities.

Alderman McIlveen also gave his support and referred to the Livingston family who had built Eagle Wings were from Killinchy and Viscount Castlereagh who had negotiated the United States’ border with Canada. Bangor and Newtownards had links with cities in the United States through Sister Cities connections so the story needed to be told that Ulster born men and women had been nation builders and had influence right across the world.

Councillor S Irvine was happy to support the Motion and referred to a church service he had attended recently where he had learned more about the Presbyterian migration to the United States. He felt the Motion was well worth being developed and he thanked those who had brought it.

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In summing up Councillor McClean thanked Members for their comments. He referred to the Magna Carta which had led to the Bill of Rights and the foundation of western democracies. He believed that those freedoms should also be celebrated. Referring to Councillor Moore's comments about being nuanced in the commemorations he stressed the need to celebrate this anniversary because what happened with the foundation of the United States was a good thing and a reminder of the story of western culture. He was aware that history would always be multi layered but the story needed to be told and any planned event would have huge potential.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

7. CORPORATE OVERDRAFT FACILITY (Appendices IV & V)

*****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 adopt a resolution to authorise a Facility Agreement to put an overdraft facility in place.

The recommendation was adopted.

8. MERCHANT SERVICES

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

Exemption – relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Council was asked to agree award a contract for merchant services procured through Crown Commercial Service Framework RM6325 for a maximum 48 months to the named company in the report.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

9. REQUEST FOR A LEAN-TO AT PARKLIFE CAFÉ, WARD PARK
(Appendices VI & VII)

*****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 Duckpond NI to erect a lean-to at Parklife Cafe, Ward Park.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

10. LICENCE FOR DFI RIVERS WORKS AT KILTONGA NATURE RESERVE, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendix VIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to consider granting a licence to Dfl to carry out works at Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

11. REQUEST FROM BRYANSBURN RANGERS FC TO EXTEND LEASE OF BALLYWOOLEY PLAYING FIELDS (Appendix IX)

*****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 Bryansburn Rangers FC to extend their Lease of Ballywooley Playing Fields

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

12. RENEWAL OF LEASE TO CAAND – HAMILTON ROAD HUB
(Appendix X)

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

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

The Council was asked to agree to renew the Lease to CAAND until 31st March 2027. The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

13. TRANSFER OF LAND – COOTEHALL ROAD, CRAWFORDSBURN (Appendices XI - XIII)

*****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 agree to transfer land at Cootehall Road.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

14. RECTIFICATION OF TITLE – BALLYWALTER PITCH AND PAVILION (Appendix XIV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to agree to proceed with the title rectification of land and property at Ballywalter playing pitch.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to proceed with the title rectification. The recommendation was adopted.

15. REQUEST FOR A LEASE FROM HOLYWOOD CO FARM AT THE FORMER ALLOTMENTS, HOLYWOOD

(Appendices XV - XVIII)

*****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 Hollywood Co Farm to lease land adjacent to Kerr Park (the former allotments).

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

16. NOTICE OF MOTION – LEASE CHARGES TO SPORTS CLUB

*****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 note the response to a Notice of Motion in relation to Lease charges applied to sports clubs.

The recommendation was adopted.

17. LAND ADJACENT TO CROMMELIN WOOD

(Appendices IXX & XX)

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

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

Council was asked to note the position with regards to land adjacent to Crommelin Wood, Donaghadee.

18. NIE SUBSTATION LEASE – MCKEE CLOCK TOILETS

(Appendix XXI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Council was asked to note the Lease term and some amendments to conditions on a previous report.

The recommendation was adopted.

19. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

(Appendices XXII - XXIV)

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.53 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 15 April 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Ashe

Alderman: Brooks (Zoom)
Cummings

Councillors:	Boyle	Kerr (Zoom, 7.03 pm)
	Chambers	McBurney
	Douglas	McClellan
	Irvine, S	McKee (Zoom)
	Irvine, W	Quinn

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 (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillors Cochrane and Hollywood. An apology for lateness had been received from Councillor Kerr due to technical difficulties while attempting to join via Zoom.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and the following declarations of interest were notified:

Alderman Brooks and Councillor Boyle: Item 3: Consultation on Amendments to the Landlord Registration Regulations

Councillor Chambers: Item 17: NCLT Q3 2025/26

NOTED.

3. CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE LANDLORD REGISTRATION REGULATIONS

(Alderman Brooks (Zoom) and Councillor Boyle withdrew from the meeting due to a Declaration of Interest at 7.02 pm)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained that the Landlord Registration Scheme was launched in 2014 to drive forward standards in the private rented sector through having a complete, single database of landlords and their properties to effectively target enforcement.

The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 required all private rented sector landlords to register with the Scheme, with a fee of £70 for online applications or £80 for paper applications. Registration lasted for three years and could cover multiple properties. Responsibility for administering the scheme originally lay with the Department for Communities (DfC), but this transferred to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) on 1st April 2025.

LCCC had operational responsibility for the scheme and served as the host authority for all local councils in Northern Ireland. The consultation document "DfC Amendments to Landlord Registration Scheme Regs NI 2014 Consultation" had been attached as Appendix 1, and proposed new regulations are attached as Appendix 2.

Key Issues

The new regulations would formally appoint Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council as Landlord Registrar in legislation. Other proposed changes included:

- **requesting mandatory information from Landlords on the standards of properties.**
This would require Landlords to declare their compliance (or otherwise) with various requirements of tenancy related legislation, such as smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms, electrical safety inspections and fitness for habitation.
- **allowing data from the register to be shared with the Northern Ireland Health and Safety Executive for NI for safety purposes.**
At the time of writing, a limited number of Environmental Health Officers in each local council were permitted to access data held on the Landlord Registration Database via a secure logon process. The new proposals would give employees of the Northern Ireland Health and Safety Executive access to the database in the same manner, in order to obtain information relating to a property's compliance with gas safety requirements.
- **allowing data to be shared with Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to help inform policy.**
The new proposals would give employees of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency access to the database in the same manner in order to obtain information which will inform policymaking processes.
- **minor technical amendments proposed to reflect the fact that the administration of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) is now operated by Belfast City Council & Causeway Coast and Glens Council on behalf of all local councils in Northern Ireland.**

Next Steps

The DfC had provided a short response period to this Consultation of initially 8 weeks which had been extended to 10 weeks with a final date for response set for 11th May 2026.

The attached documents from DfC detailed the proposed changes and these included information about screening considerations.

Also attached as Appendix 3 was the draft response to the consultation, prepared by Environmental Health and Regulatory Services.

Summary

The proposed changes to the Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations were largely welcomed. However, Environmental Health and Regulatory Services did not agree that the Northern Ireland Health and Safety Executive should have direct access to the Registrar's Database. As stated in the consultation, it had been suggested that this agency request information from the Landlord Registrar to allow for existing and established rigorous data controls to be maintained, and ensure that Councils could then be kept informed of any relevant enforcement issues with landlords and tenanted properties in Northern Ireland.

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

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

Councillor W Irvine asked for clarification on any changes to the Council's role under the emerging arrangements and queried whether Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council would assume the lead responsibility on behalf of the Council in relation to property standards.

The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services advised that further detail would follow in due course, noting that the Department for Communities was expected to lead a broader review. He explained that additional safeguards were likely to be incorporated into the landlord registration process, and he expressed hope that these measures would be introduced as the scheme developed.

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

(Councillor Kerr joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.03 pm)

(Alderman Brooks (Zoom) and Councillor Boyle returned to the meeting at 7.03 pm)

4. CONSULTATION ON THE CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS WHITE PAPER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing how Members should recall that a report was presented to this Committee in February 2026 concerning the “Publication of the Single Construction Regulator Prospectus”. The associated public consultation represented the first stage in a wider reform of the regulation of construction products in the United Kingdom. This report, along with Item 5 on the agenda, forms part of the subsequent steps in that ongoing reform process through a series of consultation exercises.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017 resulted in significant loss of life and exposed major shortcomings in the systems intended to protect residents and the built environment. It highlighted substantial weaknesses within the United Kingdom’s construction products regulatory framework.

Construction products were a critical component of the built environment. Findings from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, together with independent reviews by Dame Judith Hackitt, Paul Morrell OBE, and Anneliese Day KC, confirmed that the existing regulatory arrangements did not adequately ensure public safety. Systemic vulnerabilities allowed some manufacturers to exploit regulatory gaps, leading to severe consequences for residents affected by unsafe cladding and other materials. These issues demonstrate a clear need for comprehensive and system-wide reform of the construction products regulatory system.

The Government published the Construction Products Reform Green Paper in February 2025, alongside its response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report. This White Paper had set out the Government’s response to that consultation and confirmed a programme of reforms designed to strengthen public safety, support investment and economic growth, reduce trade barriers, and improve productivity. These reforms are also intended to facilitate the delivery of high-quality homes, buildings, and infrastructure.

Key Issues

The Construction Products Reform White Paper had been provided as Appendix 1. The White Paper highlighted deep, systemic problems across the construction-products regulatory landscape, many of which were exposed through the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Hackitt Review, and the Morrell-Day Review. Core issues included:

1. Safety Is Not the Central Focus of the Current Regime

- Existing UK regulations were originally designed to support trade, not safety.
- Product marks such as CE/UKCA were widely misunderstood as confirming safety, even though they simply confirm conformity to a technical standard (which may or may not include safety-related criteria).

2. Limited Regulatory Coverage

- Only ~37% of construction products fell under a designated standard, leaving a large proportion unregulated, meaning many products entered the market without safety oversight.

3. Fragmented Regulatory Landscape

- Overlapping responsibilities across Building Control, Trading Standards, Environmental Health and the national regulator create gaps, duplication, and opportunities for unsafe products to slip through.
- There was poor integration between construction-products regulation and building-safety requirements.

4. Weak Testing, Certification and Oversight

- Evidence of inconsistency, lack of transparency, conflicts of interest, “golden samples”, and inadequate UKAS oversight.
- Limited national testing capacity, particularly affecting regions such as Northern Ireland.

5. Poor-Quality Product Information and Misleading Marketing

- Incomplete, unclear or misleading information was common.
- There was limited product traceability and poor digitalisation across the sector.

6. Insufficient Enforcement and Deterrence

- Historically almost no enforcement or prosecutions under construction-products regulations on a UK wide basis.
- Sanctions were weak, and regulators lack modern, fit-for-purpose powers.

7. Lack of Competence and Clarity of Accountability

- Responsibilities were unclear at multiple stages of the product lifecycle, design, specification, installation and oversight.
- A widespread culture of prioritising cost over safety remained pervasive.

8. Sustainability and Environmental Requirements

- Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) methodologies such as EN 15804+A2 were not consistently applied.
- Many products fell outside clear environmental standards.

9. The Need for a Single Construction Regulator

- Fragmentation across regulatory bodies contributed to poor accountability and inconsistent enforcement.
- Inquiry recommendations support a single, unified regulator covering buildings, products, and competence.

Next steps

A draft response to the consultation had been prepared by Environmental Health and Regulatory Services and was provided as Appendix 2. Overall, we strongly supported the Government’s objective to create a safer, more coherent and more accountable construction-products system. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry and subsequent independent reviews had clearly demonstrated the urgent need for reform across product regulation, testing, information quality, market surveillance and accountability.

While broadly supportive of the proposed direction, our responses emphasised the need for clarity, consistency, robust oversight and proportionate implementation, as well as recognition of Northern Ireland’s specific regulatory context. Ensuring that the

reformed system operated effectively across the UK required consideration of Northern Ireland's regulatory position, capacity pressures, and the practical realities of enforcement on the ground.

This consultation window was due to close on 20th May 2026.

Summary

The Construction Products Reform White Paper had set out the Government's intended programme of regulatory change in response to the systemic weaknesses identified through the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and subsequent independent reviews. The White Paper highlighted a series of deep-rooted issues across the existing regulatory system, including limited product coverage, fragmented responsibilities, weak testing and certification arrangements, poor-quality product information, and historically low levels of enforcement. These failings had contributed to a regulatory environment in which safety had not been the primary focus and where gaps in oversight and accountability had been able to persist.

The draft consultation response prepared by Environmental Health and Regulatory Services supported the overall direction of reform and recognised the need for a more coherent, transparent and safety-focused system of construction products regulation. The response emphasised the importance of clarity, consistency, proportionality and strong oversight, while noting the practical considerations that applied across different parts of the UK, including operational factors relevant to Northern Ireland. Ensuring that the new regulatory framework functions effectively nationwide would require attention to regulatory capacity and the practical realities of enforcement on the ground.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the draft consultation response relating to the Construction Products Reform White Paper.

The Chair, Councillor Ashe advised that as Item four and five shared similar discussion points, they would be agreed together.

Councillor McClean made an alternative proposal, seconded by Alderman Cummings.

In the first instance, Councillor McClean advised that the following alternative proposal would apply to both Items four and five.

That each response begins with this wording (which is to be prominently featured):

"Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of public safety, Council expresses concern that the UK Government's proposals are predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime for construction products than Great Britain.

Council believes the treatment of all manufactured goods moving between GB and NI as imports - flowing from the undemocratic imposition of EU law - continues to be entirely unacceptable. It is causing disruption to supply chains within the UK internal

market and adding confusion and complexity for impacted businesses locally and in Great Britain.

Council therefore would not endorse a new general safety requirement for construction products which creates new barriers to trade between GB and NI, including through additional labelling and conformity requirements, or, indeed, an outcome which requires local authorities to enforce such controls."

And that, further, in our responses to individual questions, where there is reference to importers or distributors, and where otherwise relevant the response to every question a) ticks 'does not agree'/'neither agrees nor disagrees' and further, stresses no additional burdens be placed on NI businesses by virtue of interpreting them as 'importers' or 'distributors' in the Windsor Framework understanding, and that the only additional burdens or requirements for importers/distributors into the UK are for those defined as importers or distributors provided in item 5.9 of white paper document Consultation on the General Safety Requirement for Construction Products.

Councillor McClean stated that most of the responses set out in the report were well presented and he appreciated the work of the officer. Public safety was paramount and incidents such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy must never be repeated. He reiterated the long-standing need for stronger regulatory alignment with Great Britain, noting that such alignment would be beneficial given the size of the internal market and the difficulties already experienced by businesses and homeowners under the current arrangements.

Referring in particular to Item 5 and appendix section 5.3, Councillor McClean highlighted inconsistencies in the definitions of "importer" and "distributor" between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. He cautioned that the current approach effectively empowered the authors of the white papers to determine what was acceptable, whereas he believed it was sufficient to identify that Northern Ireland operated under a different regime while continuing to press for alignment with Great Britain. He stressed that his intention was not to obstruct progress, but to ensure clarity, noting that the report itself represented an implementation of the Windsor Framework and that the white papers did not always assist in providing certainty. There also appeared to be differing definitions of "importer" within appendix sections 4.2 and 5.2, and he queried whether the references to importing in questions 7-10 of the appendix were framed from the perspective of the importer. He described the matter as a technical adjustment rather than a point of contention.

Councillor McKee thanked officers for the consultation response and remarked that the Council was fortunate to have the necessary expertise to provide informed and considered input on such an important area of product safety. He observed that a tragedy similar to Grenfell could have occurred in Northern Ireland and expressed hope that the outcome of the process would lead to a more robust safety regime. He added that it was essential for government to ensure that legislation and regulatory frameworks in this field were fit for purpose.

Councillor W Irvine also stressed that safety was paramount and stated that a tragedy like Grenfell should never be repeated anywhere. He further commented that

Northern Ireland should be treated in the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom in respect of export arrangements.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the alternative proposal be agreed.

5. CONSULTATION ON THE GENERAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained how the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017 that claimed 72 lives and exposed a pervasive crisis in the United Kingdom's construction products regulatory regime. This devastating loss of life laid bare failures in the mechanisms designed to safeguard homes and residents.

The Government published the Construction Products Reform Green Paper in February 2025, alongside the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report. The Construction Products Reform White Paper confirmed how government would progress a series of reforms to deliver a safer, more accountable system that enabled long term growth and productivity, supporting the delivery of 1.5 million safe homes during this Parliament and beyond.

This consultation built on the reforms to construction products regulation outlined in the White Paper and introduces a proportionate, risk-based General Safety Requirements (GSR) framework. The GSR would operate alongside existing UK construction products legislation to ensure that all construction products placed on the UK market were safe. These measures would enhance reassurance for consumers and residents, while giving developers and the wider sector greater confidence that the products they relied upon met consistent and robust safety standards.

The current regime only applied to products covered by designated standards or voluntary technical assessments. Recent research undertaken for government by the Adroit Consortium suggested around 29% to 61% of products had a designated standard, with a mid-point of around 37% of the UK market being regulated under the Construction Product Regulations. This creates a regulatory gap that contributed to the systemic safety failures identified by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

The GSR will address this gap by operating alongside existing UK construction products regulations, bringing all products into the regulatory regime. A Consultation Document is attached as Appendix 1.

Outcomes

Outcomes may include key proposals such as:

- **mandatory risk assessment:** Manufacturers must identify and assess safety risks in relation to a product's intended and reasonably foreseeable conditions of use and implement proportionate mitigation measures
- **product information:** Clear, accurate, and complete information must be provided, including detailing the intended use, technical specifications,

- installation guidance, safety warnings and restrictions of use. Marketing claims about safety must be evidence-based
- **labelling and traceability:** Products must carry unique identifiers and manufacturer and (where applicable) importer details, supported by digital solutions, such as QR codes, barcodes, or similar, to enable traceability to facilitate recalls
 - **record keeping:** Manufacturers and importers must retain risk assessments, product documentation, and safety incident records for 10 years to support accountability and enforcement
 - **storage and transportation:** Economic operators must ensure that construction products are stored and transported in ways that maintain their safety and integrity
 - **obligations for importers and distributors (including merchants):** These importers and distributors must verify compliance, maintain records, and implement controls to prevent unsafe products from entering the market
 - **monitoring safety issues:** Economic operators must monitor products to identify and address safety risks, investigate and record complaints, and take corrective actions such as amending information or enabling the withdrawal of unsafe products from the market

Next steps

The consultation closes on 20th May 2026. A draft response has been prepared by Environmental Health and Regulatory Services is attached as Appendix 2.

Summary

The draft consultation response expresses broad support for the introduction of General Safety Requirements (GSR) for construction products, recognising the importance of consistent safety standards, improved traceability, and clearer accountability across the supply chain. It endorses regulating reused products to the same standard as new ones unless exemptions apply, and supports overarching duties on economic operators, risk-based assessment measures, enhanced labelling, and strengthened post-market surveillance. Across these areas, the response stresses the need for clear and practical guidance to ensure proportionate implementation, particularly for SMEs, and alignment with existing regulatory frameworks to avoid duplication.

The draft response also raised concerns about the omission of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from the proposed enforcement framework, despite their established regulatory role in Northern Ireland. While supportive of tools such as undertakings, civil monetary penalties, and cost-recovery notices, the response noted that these mechanisms are not currently used in NI and would require careful consideration before introduction.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the draft consultation response attached as Appendix 1.

Please note, as Items four and five were to be agreed together, the below alternative proposal and subsequent discussion could be found under Item 4 in full.

Councillor McClean made an alternative proposal, seconded by Alderman Cummings.

That each response begins with this wording (which is to be prominently featured):

“Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of public safety, Council expresses concern that the UK Government’s proposals are predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime for construction products than Great Britain.

Council believes the treatment of all manufactured goods moving between GB and NI as imports - flowing from the undemocratic imposition of EU law - continues to be entirely unacceptable. It is causing disruption to supply chains within the UK internal market and adding confusion and complexity for impacted businesses locally and in Great Britain.

Council therefore would not endorse a new general safety requirement for construction products which creates new barriers to trade between GB and NI, including through additional labelling and conformity requirements, or, indeed, an outcome which requires local authorities to enforce such controls.”

And that, further, in our responses to individual questions, where there is reference to importers or distributors, and where otherwise relevant the response to every question a) ticks ‘does not agree’/‘neither agrees nor disagrees’ and further, stresses no additional burdens be placed on NI businesses by virtue of interpreting them as ‘importers’ or ‘distributors’ in the Windsor Framework understanding, and that the only additional burdens or requirements for importers/distributors into the UK are for those defined as importers or distributors provided in item 5.9 of white paper document Consultation on the General Safety Requirement for Construction Products.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the alternative proposal be agreed.

6. FSA AUDIT – DELIVERY OF OFFICIAL CONTROLS AT APPROVED ESTABLISHMENTS IN ANDBC

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained that, as part of their role, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) undertook audits of local authorities to assess the effectiveness of official controls in approved establishments. These audits evaluated whether local authority food law enforcement was compliant with UK and EU legal requirements, the Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement, and associated codes of practice. The approved establishment audits focused on:

- Local authority policies, organisation and management in delivering official controls;

- Compliance with the regulations;
- Inspection, verification, and enforcement procedures applied in approved facilities.

The primary purpose of such audits was to provide assurance that enforcement services protected public health and maintain consumer confidence. They also helped identify areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement.

An audit of controls in Ards and North Down Borough Council was conducted over two days from 26th & 27th January 2026.

Audit Findings

The audit found that the Council's regulatory arrangements were effective, well managed, and compliant with legislative requirements. Officer qualifications, competency, and training were all appropriate, and authorisations were granted in a structured, staged manner supported by suitable internal monitoring. Procedures for approving Food Business Operators were robust, with all approvals examined found to be accurate, timely, and correctly referenced. Records of inspections and official controls over the past four years were comprehensive and demonstrated consistent, detailed oversight. Audit checks also confirmed that food complaints were appropriately recorded and managed, and that informal enforcement was generally effective in securing compliance. Reality check visits further validated that inspection records accurately reflected on-site activities.

The audit concluded that overall delivery of official controls in the approved establishments was effective, with only one recommendation issued. This reflected strong compliance, with the recommendation intended to enhance consistency and strengthen existing controls. A copy of the audit report was attached as Appendix 1.

Next Steps

The recommendation contained in the report was that the Council should review its Scheme of Delegation (SoD) to ensure it was clear with regard to how it delegated powers from the Council to the Food Control and Consumer Protection unit officers in the following areas.

- Authorising officers
- Granting, withdrawal, suspending and refusal of approval under Regulation (EC) 853/2004
- Instigating legal proceedings

Officers from Environmental Health and Regulatory Services had reviewed the existing SoD and proposed an amendment which provided greater clarity as suggested by the FSA. A reviewed version of the SoD would be presented to the Corporate Services Committee in May, and will incorporate the suggested amendment.

Summary

Overall, the audit provided strong assurance that the Council delivered high-quality, proportionate regulation and was committed to continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the Audit Report, attached as Appendix 1.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Moore thanked officers for their work and congratulated them on the positive outcome of the audit. She remarked that the Council was extremely fortunate to have such experienced and dedicated staff in this area of business and confirmed that she welcomed the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. PCSP ACTION PLAN 2026-2027

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing how the Code of Practice for the Exercise of Functions by the PCSP stated that an Annual Action Plan must be submitted to the Joint Committee of the NI Policing Board and Department of Justice each year. This must be informed by the strategic objectives set by the Joint Committee and the Council community plan under the community planning process and address the identified needs of the local community. It should also take account of crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots and other local issues of relevance, including key dates and events that have an impact on the life of the community.

PCSP three Strategic objectives were:

1. SO1: To ensure effective delivery in response to local need and improve the visibility and recognition of the work of the PCSP through effective consultation, communication and engagement.
2. SO2: To improve community safety by prioritising and addressing local community safety issues, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.
3. SO3 3: To support confidence in policing, including through collaborative problem solving with communities.

In order to agree the Action Plan for 2026 – 2027 a Turning the Curve Exercise was undertaken in November 2025. As a result, the following Indicators/themes had been identified as local priorities:

- ASB.
- Drugs and Alcohol Abuse.
- Hate Crime.
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse.
- Cyber Crime.
- Road Safety.

Delivery would be via a mixture of direct delivery, tenders, grant funding calls and partnership working with other statutory agencies via SLAs. Progress would then be reported on a quarterly basis to the PCSP.

The Action Plan had been developed in line with the PCSP Strategic Review 2025-2028.

Key Issues

Members had requested the introduction of participatory budgeting for groups to enable them to address some of the lower-level community safety issues in their local areas.

Next Steps

The Annual Action Plan for 2026-2027 was approved by the PCSP on 26th January 2026 and submitted before the required deadline of 13th February 2026. Delivery would begin following receipt of a Letter from the Joint Committee of the Department of Justice and NI Policing Board. To date there had been no indication when a Letter of Offer may be received.

It is recommended that Council Notes the Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2026-2027.

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

Alderman Cummings noted that the letter of offer had not yet been received and asked whether there was any indication of when it might be issued. The Head of Community Development advised that no timeframe had been provided, confirming that officers had tried to seek clarification on the matter, however, funding had yet to be released

Councillor Moore congratulated the team, and in particular the current PCSP staff, on their work. She observed that several Members had commented in recent months on the positive output and impact of the PCSP. Reflecting on a recent internal exercise, she stated that it had been a more enjoyable and meaningful experience than previous external processes, and that engagement with external stakeholders and partners had been notably constructive. She added that the exercise had allowed her, as a Member, to see clearly the benefits of the partnership's work, noting that although Members could at times feel removed from day-to-day activity, the tangible impacts were evident.

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

8. GRANTS UPDATE IN RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 599

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing how, in January 2024 Council had agreed to the following notice of motion:

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:

1. Accessibility

- Simplify application forms, review all funding applications to ensure that they are simple, clear and don't unnecessarily over burden applicants with information required.
- Digitisation of community grants, tenders and reporting to allow those that wish the option for simple and more efficient submissions.
- Building capacity in the community, creating a scheme to help the community to write and deliver more successful applications and bring in more external funding to this Borough.

2. Communication Enhancement

- Single grants list or 'open grants' page on council website with uniform advertisement of grants so that everyone receives the same information on available funding with a clear grants timetable, with scoring criteria clearly outlined including ranking and amount available across borough etc.
- A single point of contact to direct community and voluntary groups to support and assistance across different Council departments.
- Showcase & celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers are delivering on this section of website.

3. Equity

- Make funding available proportional to size of communities/activities being delivered and the type of needs being addressed, community groups represent different sizes of population and area (areas of deprivation etc) and are doing different work ('essential needs' and 'non-essential') yet often funding is allocated 'per group' rather than area/numbers targeted or type of work being delivered.
- Funding available to reflect the continued rise in costs., e.g., ensure funding available for community events is adequate to actually host events & activities. Funding is offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder, which may not be Council.
- Up front funding is uniform, that groups get the same up front funding percentage (e.g.,80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.
- Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups are not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and can apply for all they are eligible for.
- Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.

4. Efficiency

- Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure Council can allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds are returned to Departments.
- 'Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided quicker.

- o Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants are delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.

Updates outlining progress had been regularly tabled via the Active and Healthy Committee and a further update had been included in the table below. The remit of the overall Grants Policy had since fell under the remit of the Head of Finance and therefore further updates on the Council wide grants policy would be brought to meetings of the Corporate Committee.

Category	Update	Next steps
<u>Accessibility</u>		
Simplify application forms, review all funding applications to ensure that they are simple, clear and don't unnecessarily over burden applicants with information required.	This has been ongoing across all Council departments over the past year and is now complete.	Completed – will be kept under review by each department.
Digitisation of community grants, tenders and reporting to allow those that wish the option for simple and more efficient submissions.	The Transformation team have been viewing systems with a view to choosing the most suitable package for Council to purchase asap.	Transformation Team progressing with a view to purchasing a new system asap.
Building capacity in the community, creating a scheme to help the community to write and deliver more successful applications and bring in more external funding to this Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Development team offer support and advice, where possible and each section must provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants to assist them with future applications. • Funding is provided to the three community networks for the provision of community support also. • Funding workshops are held twice per year to raise awareness of funding opportunities and offer help and support. • CD team upload question by question guidance for completing application forms to YouTube. 	Complete – will be kept under review.
<u>Communication Enhancement</u>		

<p>Single grants list or 'open grants' page on council website with uniform advertisement of grants so that everyone receives the same information on available funding with a clear grants timetable, with scoring criteria clearly outlined including ranking and amount available across borough etc.</p>	<p>Website has been updated to reflect this request. Will be further enhanced when online grants system is launched.</p>	<p>Complete – review when new grants system in place</p>
<p>A single point of contact to direct community and voluntary groups to support and assistance across different Council departments.</p>	<p>This is being considered as part of the restructuring process.</p>	<p>To be considered via phase 2 of the restructuring process</p>
<p>Showcase & celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers are delivering on this section of website.</p>	<p>A number of the events are showcased via Council social media sites and via the website. Will be further enhanced when online grants system is launched.</p>	<p>Complete – will be reviewed when the online system is live.</p>
<p><u>Equity</u></p>		
<p>Make funding available proportional to size of communities/activities being delivered and the type of needs being addressed, community groups represent different sizes of population and area (areas of deprivation etc) and are doing different work ('essential needs' and 'non-essential') yet often funding is allocated 'per group' rather than area/numbers targeted or type of work being delivered.</p>	<p>Funding is offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder and where funding is secured externally, Council must abide by and pass on the conditions determined. Some grants, such as festival funding, is offered in tiers dependent upon predicted attendee numbers.</p>	<p>Each funding stream is approved by Council. Community Development funding is under review and updated application process will be presented to Council in April 2026</p>
<p>Funding available to reflect the continued rise in costs., e.g., ensure funding available for community events is adequate to actually host events & activities. Funding is offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder, which may not be Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants received have not increased, and in most cases have decreased, from central Government despite repeated requests stating the need for increased budgets from local government. • A Council funding facilitator and a grants management team would be beneficial to external 	<p>Complete – will be kept under review as part of the rate setting process for the Community Services section.</p>

	<p>source funding for the benefit of the borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has ringfenced an additional £30,000 towards Community Development running costs for 2026-2027. 	
Up front funding is uniform, that groups get the same up front funding percentage (e.g.,80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.	This has been amended in the updated Grants policy dependent on the amount of grant awarded.	This is being reconsidered following a further notice of motion and a report will be brought to Active and Health Committee in May 2026.
Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups are not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and can apply for all they are eligible for.	Grants are open to all who meet the criteria agreed by the awarding body.	Complete
Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants are open to all who meet the criteria agreed by the awarding body. • Council grants are awarded via a competitive process. 	Complete
<u>Efficiency</u>		
Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure Council can allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds are returned to Departments	This method is undertaken by some departments but again this is determined by where the funding originates and the terms and conditions of any letter of offer to Council.	Complete
Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided quicker. Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants are delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.	Grants are being processed more efficiently as a result of the updated Grants Policy.	Complete

Next Steps

A workshop was held on 26th March 2026 where all members were invited to consider how best to utilise the limited funding available for Community Development running costs.

At the workshop it was agreed to review the eligibility criteria and create a two-tiered grants policy for community development running cost grant funding for 2026-2027. Tier 1 was to include groups who were volunteer led and had a responsibility for utility bills. Tier 2 would be for all other groups who met the eligibility criteria.

Summary

Community Development running cost grant funding process could not be launched for 2026-2027 until a way forward had been agreed by Council and the relevant paperwork was updated and equality screened. An amendment would be made to the eligibility criteria and a two-tiered grant was to be developed for community development running cost grant funding for 2026-2027. Tier 1 was to include groups who were volunteer led and had a responsibility for utility bills. Tier 2 would be for all other groups who met the eligibility criteria.

A report detailing these changes was to be brought to Council in April 2026 for approval. This would cause a delay of 3 weeks in the funding being launched.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the way forward.

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

Councillor McKee welcomed the progress report, noting that it stemmed from a lengthy Notice of Motion, and expressed his appreciation that a further report would be brought following the recent workshop. Although he had been unable to attend the workshop, he looked forward to considering proposals such as potential tiering within the running-cost grant. It was important to ensure that volunteer groups supporting those most in need of financial assistance received greater help than at present. He welcomed the increase in funding available for the running-cost process as a result of the rates decision, acknowledging that while £30,000 would not fully bridge the gap between need and demand, it nevertheless represented valuable support for volunteer groups and individuals. He added that the Council had, in recent years, been able to enhance support for organisations, including through increased bursaries, and he was pleased that community development continued to be prioritised. He hoped this commitment would be maintained and reviewed annually.

Councillor Boyle also welcomed the progress report, observing that the issues raised were being actively addressed. He looked forward to the next update, due to be presented to full Council and thanked officers for their work.

Councillor McBurney sought clarification on the proposed single point of contact for groups applying for grants, noting that this was pending the organisational restructure, and asked when the restructure was expected to be finalised. The Head of Community Development advised that the intention was for the grants team to

assume this role, and that letters of offer currently included a named officer as an interim point of contact until the restructure was complete.

Councillor McBurney further queried the anticipated delays to the 2026/27 grants process arising from the outstanding report, asking whether any mitigation or impact assessment had been undertaken to safeguard groups that relied on grant funding to meet ongoing costs. The Head of Community Development explained that grants had been issued around 19 May in the previous year and were expected to follow a similar timeline this year. She noted that the Council did not receive funding early enough to accelerate the process but that officers were progressing preparatory work in the background to enable faster delivery once funding was released.

Councillor W Irvine highlighted concerns raised by several groups regarding running costs, particularly for those renting premises and facing significant overheads such as electricity. He referred specifically to the Whitehill area, where volunteer capacity had reduced to only a few individuals and where the community house was likely to revert to the Housing Executive. He asked whether any support could be offered and wished to place these concerns on record.

The Head of Community Development confirmed awareness of the situation and advised that a member of the team would contact the group to explore what assistance might be possible. She noted that the group had not received funding this year but assured Members that officers would engage with them directly.

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

9. PORTAFERRY SPORTS CENTRE UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained that members would have been aware of the ongoing issues with the Sports Hall floor in Portaferry Sports Centre. As reported to Committee in February 2026, a positive meeting towards achieving a resolution was held between officers from the Council's Leisure and Estates departments and the Department of Education (DE) in January 2026.

Key Issues

Since this meeting, dialogue had continued between the Council and DE regarding the planning for the intrusive investigations, communications with stakeholders, and responsibilities in relation to the costs associated with the works.

On the 25th March the Council received written confirmation from the DE that they were content to cover costs associated with the intrusive investigations. (the letter was attached in Appendix 1). In order for DE to secure the budget required, the Council had been asked to provide the estimated scope and costs to the DE for approval. At the time of writing this report, the Council officers were finalising an estimated scope and costs for the works which would then be provided to the DE for their approval.

DE had confirmed in the letter that they would be content to cover the costs for the remedial works, subject to a review of the outcomes of the intrusive investigations and agreement on the scope and scheduling of the required remedial works.

The DE had acknowledged the sports hall's significant benefit to the school and the local community. Furthermore, considering the number of competing demands and pressures for the delivery of Minor Works within DE, the Department had thanked the Council for commissioning the inspection on the floor in October 2023, progressing the intrusive survey plans as detailed, and the assistance provided with the boiler replacement completed earlier this year.

Next Steps

It was hoped that the investigations would have been conducted during the Easter holidays however, given DE's required processes to release the budget, a delay was mutually beneficial and necessary towards the completion of the project. The school and St. MacNissi's Educational Trust had been informed and were content with the planned next steps in the project. Estates were re-engaging with the required contractors on potential dates to meet on site and begin the intrusive investigation works.

Estates and Leisure were mindful that once the investigations began, the sports hall would be closed for all and so would consider this during the planning of the works as much as possible. Leisure officers were engaging with Community Halls to enquire if some sports hall activities and/or classes could be facilitated in the Market House. Leisure would continue to keep in contact with the School and Trust regarding the new dates for the works to commence.

Management Agreement

Leisure officers had reviewed the Management Agreement regarding the dual use of the sports facility between the Council and the St. MacNissi's Educational Trust. A draft agreement had been shared with the Trust for further consideration.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Boyle asked whether, since the publication of the report, any information had been received regarding the cost of the intrusive investigations. The Head of Leisure advised that the leisure service had developed the scope of works but had not yet received costings from contractors.

Councillor Boyle noted that the benefits of the sports hall to the local community were now being widely acknowledged, and he emphasised that it had taken four years to reach this point. He reminded Members that June 2026 would mark the fourth anniversary of the hall being out of operation and stated that the Department of Education and the Education Authority had been slow to progress matters. He expressed his thanks to the Director and staff for commissioning the inspection in October 2023 and for assisting with the boiler replacement, noting that without these interventions the project would not have advanced. He reported that the efforts of

officers had been recognised and appreciated in Portaferry, and he thanked the Head of Leisure and the Leisure Centre Manager for their continued presence and support. He also thanked the membership of the Portaferry facility for their loyalty during a difficult period. He looked forward to works commencing in the near future, noting that although they had not begun over Easter, he hoped they would start before or during the summer. He sought confirmation that the gym would remain open during the works.

The Head of Leisure confirmed that the gym would remain open, but that the sports hall would be unavailable once works commenced.

Councillor Boyle referred to earlier discussions regarding alternative accommodation and asked whether the Portaferry Market House was being considered, noting that it was not an ideal building. He queried whether the Council was required to use only Council-owned facilities or whether options such as the Portaferry Community Centre or Ballyphilip Hall could also be explored. The Head of Leisure advised that Council-run facilities were being considered initially for ease of access and management, but that demand and availability would determine whether other local facilities might also be used.

Councillor Boyle then raised the draft management agreement, noting that the existing arrangements had been a longstanding point of contention and lacked clarity. He asked how other stakeholders - such as St Columba's, the Education Authority and the Department of Education - would be involved, given their role in previous delays. The Head of Leisure explained that the Council and the Trust would first work together to agree the maintenance responsibilities, after which the draft would be shared with other stakeholders with vested interests. Councillor Boyle sought confirmation that only the two organisations would be involved at the initial stage. The Head of Leisure confirmed this, stating that the draft would be agreed between the Council and the Trust before wider engagement.

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities added that other stakeholders would be consulted and invited to provide their views once the two principal partners had reached broad agreement on the draft document. Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the clarification.

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

10. SPORTS FORUM GRANTS BREAKDOWN

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained that Members would have been aware that delegated authority was approved in 2015 to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum to enable the administration of sports grants funding on behalf of the Council.

£70,000 was allocated within the 2025/2026 revenue budget for sports grants. However to meet the expected level of applications based on trends early in the 2025/26 financial year, an additional £27,000, sourced from the success of Ards Blair

Mayne’s income performance, was agreed to be allocated to the budget. The total allocation for 2025/26 was £97,000.

Key Issues

It was agreed at the Active and Healthy Communities Committee meeting in December 2025 that officers would bring back a report providing a comparison of successful grant applications over the past three-year period, including commentary on trends.

Next Steps

Officers conducted a review and had provided commentary below on the identifiable trends.

Table 1 provided an overview of the number of Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grant submissions for the past three years.

Table 1 Annual Overview Sports Forum Grant Applications

Financial Year	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Successful	226	267	289
Unsuccessful	45	53	89
Total Number of grant applications	271	320	378

The following trends had been identified by officers:

- The total number of grant applications was rising each year: for example, + 49 between 2023/24 and 2024/25, and + 58 between 2024/25 and 2025/26. This equated to an increase of 40% in applications for the grant during the 3-year period. This demonstrated the effective enhanced communication between Sports Development and potential applicants and aligned with the requirement for additional budget in 2025/26.
- The percentage of successful applications however was reducing (80% in 2023/24 and 2024/25, and 70% in 2025/26). This possibly indicated the need for further support with the application process.

Table 2 showed an overview of Grant Applications per Grant Category for the Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants.

Table 2 - Grants Applications awarded per Grant Category

Financial Year	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Anniversary	1	5	2
Coaching	6	7	2
Equipment	30	23	20
Events	9	7	10

Seeding	2	0	1
Individual Athlete - Travel & Accommodation	143	164	198
Goldcard	28	60	30
School / Club	7	1	0
Total	226	267	263

The table illustrated that the strongest upward trend in demand for financial support was from individual athletes (for travel and accommodation). Potential rationale for this noticeable upward trend included:

- The rise in travel and accommodation costs resulting in athletes & sports clubs seeking financial support
- Increased awareness of potential financial support as a result of enhanced communication from Sports Development via the Sports Forum, additional information available on the Sports Development website, communication to affiliated clubs throughout the year informing clubs on grant information. Officers had seen yearly increase on the number of queries from both individuals, parents and sports clubs seeking grants information
- Council officers delivering annual Grant workshops that provided opportunities for individuals and sports clubs to seek information on sports development grant funding

Table 2 also showed a downward trend in Coach Education, Equipment, and School/Club grant applications. The reasons for the decrease for coach education grants may be linked to demand being met from other providers. For example, funding bodies and Governing Sports bodies provide dbasic training, coaching courses, committee training, and volunteer training as part of some club capacity training.

Goldcard funding spiked dramatically in 2024/25 however had since returned to close to its baseline figure. In officers’ experience, significant spikes or decreases in Goldcard applications could be as a result of new squad members of a particular sport being unaware of this type of support. Additionally, as Club’s facilities and range of equipment improved the need, or reliance, of Goldcard membership would decrease. This was aligned to the steady decline in equipment funding applications.

The decrease in the School/Club grant category could be due to lack of awareness and required greater promotion or criteria not meeting the needs of schools and sports clubs. In addition, officers considered the potential that pressures within the Education Authority and the Department of Education may have detrimentally impacted the available resources for schools to collaboratively work with sports clubs.

Appendix 1

The information Table 2 had been further broken down and was displayed in Appendix 1, outlining:

- the sport
- the type of grant (Anniversary, Coaching, Equipment, Events, Seeding, School / Club)
- the funding allocation for each type of grant across the 3-year period. It should be noted that Sports Clubs were only eligible to apply for one grant per grant category but could avail of more than one grant across the range of grant categories.

In summary of Appendix 1:

- Equipment grants were the most prevalent type of grants on the basis of the number received and monetary value, particularly in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 years across sports such as Football, Gymnastics, Golf and Sailing.
- In 2023/24 the majority of funding (across the various types of grant funding) was concentrated on a limited number of sports, for example Football, Hockey, Sailing and Cricket. However, in 2025/26 applications from a significantly increased number of sports could be evidenced, for example Pickleball, American Football, Triathlon, Karate, and Swimming. This trend aligned with the increased requirement of the funding amount during the 2025/26 year. Equally, this increased funding uptake aligned with a noticeable increased level of participation, and success, of some of these sports within the Borough. This demonstrated the Council's support to a broader range of sports in addition to continuing to provide support to the more established sports within the Borough in alignment with the Leisure Services, Corporate Plan, and Big Plan's objectives and priorities.
- Across the 3 year funding period, a significant variation in the funding requirement could be evidenced. For example, funding increased by 54% between the 2024/25 and 2025/26 years. This provided further rationale for the requirement of an increased level of funding budget in order for Sports Development, and wider Council, to support as many applications as possible and continue to support our athletes

Whilst Equipment grants remained the most in demand type of grant the funding, data illustrated a positive trend whereby Sports Development and the Sports Forum was providing funding in a dynamic manner in response to a broader range of sports across the majority of grant types. The increased number of grants provided for Coach Education, Events, and Anniversaries demonstrated sport clubs within the Borough increasing their community engagement.

Appendix 2

Given the prevalence of Travel and Accommodation grants awarded to individuals, a further analysis and commentary on trends had been provided in Appendix 2.

The spreadsheet contained an overview of:

- the unique grant reference number
- the unique identification number for each grant recipient
- the amounts each applicant had been receiving in each year
- the total amount each grant recipient across the 3-year period. It should be noted that the maximum amount of grant aid that an athlete was able to apply per year was increased from £500 to £600 in 2025-26.

In summary of Appendix 2:

- The majority of athletes in the 3-year time period only received funding once however, it was clear that some athletes had successfully applied for multiple grants in more than one year however very few applicants received grants across all three years.
- Athletes in receipt of more than one grant across multiple years were successful at their sport hence the requirement for regular funding and a higher amount of funding requested due to increased frequency, duration, and distance required to travel to events.

Conclusion

There were a minority of athletes that had successfully applied for funding throughout the 3-year funding timeframe, and their application frequency and amount was consistent with the level they compete at in their sport. Equally, there were some athletes that had consistently applied for smaller amounts of funding to support their travel and accommodation. Again this aligned with the level they competed at in their sport, for example more regional competitions and less of a requirement for accommodation closer to the venue.

It was acknowledged that some athletes did receive a higher level of funding than others, sports development and the sports forum were content that each applicant awarded funding was done so in accordance with the agreed process and eligibility criteria.

Similarly to the grants detailed in Appendix 1, the Travel and Accommodation funding fluctuated significantly between each year, for example across the 3-year time period 2024/25 equated to 15% of the total funding allocation, whereas the 2025/26 funding amount equated to 57% of the total funding amount across the 3-year time period. This demonstrated the challenges faced by officers in regard to forecasting the likely requirement for funding for this type of grant to support the Borough's athletes.

The increased requirement for funding to support the Borough's sports clubs and individual athletes was clear and the noticeable diversification of the sports and types of grants being applied for is encouraging. The figures provided demonstrate that eligible applicants are receiving meaningful financial support from the Council and this correlated with the increased participation in various sports for recreational and / or competitive purposes.

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Members would have been aware that the success of many of our athletes and clubs at a local, regional, and international level was celebrated at the recent Sports Awards and this positive trend in terms of support from the Council and success of our athletes and clubs, it was hoped, would continue.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report.

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

Councillor S Irvine commented that the report was exceptionally detailed. He noted that he had not been present at the December meeting when the matter was raised and questioned why the report had been commissioned, given that similar information was already provided to Members on a monthly basis. He observed that staff had invested a full day of work, involving three officers, to produce the report and suggested that their time could have been better directed elsewhere. While acknowledging the quality of the work, he expressed the view that the request had amounted to unnecessary duplication and urged Members to consider more carefully the demands placed on officers in future.

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities explained that the report had been requested by Members in December, when officers had brought forward a proposal to allocate additional in year funding to the sports grant. At that time, Members had agreed to increase the allocation, but had also sought a report analysing not only the pattern of awards for the current year but trends over a three year period. The intention had been to identify whether the same clubs or individuals were receiving recurring or multiple grants, thereby enabling more informed decision making on future funding allocations. She clarified that this had been an alternative proposal to the officer recommendation at that meeting.

Councillor Moore stated that the report had been extremely useful, particularly in providing clarity on recipients who had received multiple grants across several years. She noted that this information helped Members understand how funding supported individuals to progress and develop within their sport. She emphasised the Committee's responsibility to ensure that funding was distributed as fairly as possible and commented that, given increasing demand and additional requests, it was helpful to have a clear picture of need at the outset of the year rather than seeking further funding later.

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

11. CREATIVE COMMUNITIES – SHARED ISLAND

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities which explained how The Creative Communities on a Shared Island initiative was part of the broader Creative Ireland Programme, which aimed to enhance cooperation and mutual understanding across the island of Ireland.

This initiative supported a range of creative projects that encourage collaboration between communities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The goal was to build a shared sense of community through artistic expression and cultural engagement.

Shore to Shore was a community-led creative exchange connecting the harbour communities of Dunleary and Bangor through storytelling, shared heritage and collaborative cultural participation. Rooted in the working harbours of both towns, the project brought residents, harbour workers, young people and community groups together to explore coastal identity and capture the traditions, skills and lived experiences of their blue economies.

Delivered through creative residencies, mirrored workshops and a shared Coastal Culture Week, participants would collaborate across both locations using art, film, storytelling and participatory creative practice. The programme built on existing shared connections including Purple Flag status, coastal tourism and food heritage while creating a new structured harbour-to-harbour exchanges.

Through sustained engagement and cross-border mobility, Shore to Shore would capture and preserve cultural knowledge, strengthen community relationships, revitalise lost harbour skills and create a replicable model for creative placemaking across Shared Island coastal communities.

Key Issues

This was a 3 year project funded via Shared Island funding of €150,000. The project was based on the many similarities between Dunleary and Bangor.

Year 1 – Listening and Research (2026): Project setup, governance establishment and community outreach. Initial residencies began and stories and heritage knowledge were gathered.

Year 2 – Engagement and Exchange (2027): Mirrored workshops and creative residencies took place in both towns, supported by cross-border visits.

Year 3 – Sharing and Evaluation (2028): Coastal Culture Week showcased outcomes in both locations and final evaluation and dissemination took place.

Project partners are:

1. Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council,
2. Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Chamber,
3. Bangor Chamber of Commerce,
4. Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

Next Steps

This 3-year project would enable artists to be embedded within both harbour and shored coastal communities through structured residencies, enabling sustained engagement rather than short-term interventions. Delivery would include mirrored participatory workshops in both locations, collaborative north-south creative

production, and cross-border exchange visits allowing participants to experience tangible creativity through the lens of their counterparts. This approach ensured balanced participation, shared learning, and genuine community-to-community exchange.

Creativity would function not only as artistic expression but as a mechanism for participation and dialogue, creating safe and inclusive spaces where residents, marginalised groups and intergenerational groups could connect through shared experience. The project would prioritise collaborative making, storytelling, and creative exploration as tools for building empathy and understanding across communities.

Shore to Shore aimed to engage residents of all ages and backgrounds, fostering inclusive participation and shared ownership of the creative process. The project would provide accessible pathways into cultural activity for individuals who may not traditionally engage with the arts, particularly those experiencing social or economic disadvantage, social isolation, or barriers to participation.

Representatives from Bangor Chamber of Trade, the Chief Executive of Retail NI and Council attended the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in the Royal Marine Hotel, Dunleary on 2nd April 2026.

Summary

Bangor Chamber representatives had invited representatives from Dunleary Rathdown County Council, Dunleary Rathdown County Chamber and Institute of Art, Design and Technology to visit Bangor to progress the Shared Island Project and to explore further opportunities for partnership working.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine was pleased with the report and was glad the Chamber of Commerce had made the proposal.

Councillor McKee shared Councillor W Irvine's views regarding the positive nature of the report. He raised one concern, noting that on four or five occasions the name "Dunleary" had been used, which was an incorrect spelling and had not been used in its anglicised form since the 1920s. He remarked that the inaccuracy appeared repeatedly throughout the document and asked for guidance on correcting it.

Councillor Ashe, having taken advice from the Director of Active & Healthy Communities, stated that if all Members were in agreement, the correction could be made. She suggested that the spelling on the report should be amended to the official and legal form, Dún Laoghaire.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

12. AURORA - COMMONWEALTH GAMES SWIM TRIALS

By way of a verbal update, the Head of Leisure reported that the Open Championships, held between 8 and 12 April, had been highly successful despite significant operational challenges. He explained that a range of equipment-related and strategic issues had required prompt action, but thanks to the collaborative efforts of all involved; including the Council, NCLT, SERCO, Swim Ireland and partners, the event had been delivered to a high standard and had provided a welcome boost to the local economy.

A further report containing detailed facts and figures would be brought to Members in May. The event had attracted 390 athletes from 68 clubs, with a total of 1,170 competitors from across the UK, Ireland and Europe. Several records had been broken, and some competitors had achieved consideration times for the Commonwealth Games, demonstrating the value of hosting the event.

The Head of Leisure gave his thanks to his team, particularly the operational manager, who had worked both within and outside normal hours, as well as to NCLT, Swim Ulster, Swim Ireland and the Aurora staff, all of whom had been instrumental in ensuring the event's success. Swim Ulster and Swim Ireland had formally conveyed their appreciation to the Council, and NCLT had also extended its thanks.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the verbal update.

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

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the success of the event, noting the scale of participation and the positive economic impact. He asked whether the timing system had operated as planned. The Head of Leisure confirmed that it had, although some issues had arisen with timing pads, which were rectified.

Councillor Boyle recalled earlier discussions regarding the timing clock and asked whether a new system had been installed. The Head of Leisure confirmed that a new timing system had been procured, with installation beginning on 21 March and completed by 30 March. Training had been provided to Swim Ireland, Swim Ulster and staff. He acknowledged that the installation had been completed very close to the event but confirmed that it was a brand-new system and expressed hope that this would be the first of many major competitions hosted at the facility. Councillor Boyle welcomed the update and the successful outcome.

Councillor McClean sought clarification on the nature of the new system, noting that the justification for not going to tender had been based on the understanding that the work constituted a repair rather than the purchase of a new system. He was concerned that the description of the system as, 'brand new,' appeared inconsistent with that rationale, although he was pleased that the event had gone well and hoped the Aurora Leisure Complex would avoid further unexpected costs.

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities clarified that the works had involved the installation of some new components within the existing Swiss Timing system, including a new screen and new pads and confirmed in fact it was not a new system and that the Head of Leisure was not in post during that time. She emphasised that, for example, the underlying infrastructure and other unseen components beneath the pool had been retained, meaning the project had constituted a repair and partial replacement rather than a full system replacement.

Councillor Moore, who had attended the event as Deputy Mayor, endorsed the Head of Leisure's comments. She reported that she had been seated alongside the Chief Executive and Chair of Swim Ulster, both of whom had expressed their gratitude for the Council's efforts in ensuring the timing system was operational. She noted that it was only upon arriving poolside that she realised the new system had been installed, recalling earlier discussions about balancing the need to host the event with the need to spend public money responsibly.

She acknowledged the significant investment involved but observed first-hand how essential the system had been to the event's success. She looked forward to receiving the forthcoming report on the economic impact, noting that competitors had travelled from Cork, Galway and Dublin and had stayed both within the borough and in the wider region. She thanked officers for their work and reiterated the positive feedback received from Swim Ulster.

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

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

13.1. 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.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Cummings noted that the annual Sea Bangor event would take place the following month and reported that two traditional rigged tall ships, *Pellew* and *Spirit of Falmouth*, would visit the borough while carrying the flags of the Invictus Games as part of a 2,000-nautical-mile voyage around the UK. He explained that, given the proximity of the 2027 Games, the visit presented an opportunity for veterans and

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serving personnel across Northern Ireland to consider putting themselves forward for participation.

Introducing his Notice of Motion, Alderman Cummings stated that the Council could play a meaningful role in supporting potential competitors, particularly by assisting them with training and fitness. He advised that he had spoken informally with Invictus organisers, who had indicated that they would welcome any assistance with training programmes. Although applications had closed and the selection process had begun, he believed it was a timely moment for officers to engage with the organisers regarding training pathways. He asked that officers liaise with the Invictus Games Foundation, Sport NI and Disability NI to explore how the Council might facilitate training opportunities.

He noted that the Council had worked successfully with Sports Series Event NI the previous year and expressed confidence that similar success could be achieved for Invictus. He added that costs were unlikely to be prohibitive, as the number of Northern Ireland applicants was expected to be in single figures, with the UK team comprising around 40 competitors. He asked Members to support the Motion, emphasising the Council's commitment under the Armed Forces Covenant and the determination of injured veterans to overcome adversity.

Councillor Douglas thanked Alderman Cummings for bringing forward the Motion and stated that he had outlined the matter comprehensively. She reminded Members that the Invictus Games, established in 2012, aimed to inspire recovery and rehabilitation and demonstrated the transformative power of sport. She referenced the achievements of Andy Allen MLA, a former Royal Irish Regiment soldier who had secured several medals at the 2025 Games. She noted that the Corporate Committee had discussed the potential availability of funding from the William John Blair Mayne Trust. She fully supported officers engaging with Invictus to assist potential future participants from within the borough, stating that the Council should help residents achieve their goals for 2027.

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities sought clarification on whether the Motion asked officers to explore support for competitors from Northern Ireland generally, or specifically for those residing within the borough. Alderman Cummings suggested that both should be included, given that the identities of selected competitors would not be known until around November, when the Invictus Foundation would confirm the successful applicants. He believed that a broader scope would allow officers to plan effectively.

Councillor S Irvine expressed his support, noting that the borough prided itself on its training facilities and its record of producing elite athletes, including Barry McClements, the first Northern Irish swimmer to win a Commonwealth medal, and a world champion competing in the Special Olympics. He stated that the Council should support the Invictus Games in any way it could.

Councillor W Irvine also gave his support, noting that this would be the first time the Invictus Games were held in the UK. He emphasised the importance of assisting athletes who already faced significant barriers and hoped that competitors from the

borough would be selected. He added that the Council had strong facilities and should do its utmost to help.

Councillor Moore asked whether support would be prioritised for borough residents or whether it would extend beyond that, and how the Council could ensure that its own ratepayers were best placed to benefit. The Director of Active and Healthy Communities acknowledged the point and advised that officers would consider how support could be structured. She noted that it would likely be more straightforward to provide assistance where selected competitors resided within the borough.

Councillor Chambers was pleased to support the Motion and welcomed the prospect of officers identifying ways in which the Council could assist. He noted that logistical and financial barriers could be significant for competitors and that even small interventions could help veterans compete and succeed.

Alderman Cummings concluded by noting that officers would require flexibility until the identities of participants were known. He referenced previous collaborations with UK Sport and Help for Heroes, noting that the borough had successfully hosted training activity in the past. He believed the borough had suitable venues to support all competitors and looked forward to receiving further detail from officers. He thanked Members for their support, stating that the Games embodied courage and that any assistance the Council could provide to help individuals overcome adversity would be worthwhile.

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

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

(a) Update on the efforts to combat anti-social behaviour in Bangor including recent attack

The Head of Community Development provided a verbal update to Members, advising that the PSNI investigation into the recent attack remained ongoing. She advised that the Community Safety Team continued to work closely with statutory partners and that six youths, all under the age of eighteen, had been charged to appear before the Youth Court. She confirmed that joint patrols were being undertaken with the PSNI, the Education Authority, Street Pastors and the YMCA, and that Street Pastors had increased their patrols across the borough, particularly in Bangor.

She noted that the Ards and North Down Secure Scheme, funded through the PCSP, had provided home security equipment to residents in central Bangor and had installed equipment where appropriate. Officers had attended meetings of the Beaches and Coastal Resource Planning Group, where partners were preparing for the forthcoming good-weather season. Work was ongoing; however, there was no budget currently available to enhance resources. She explained that the remit of the Community Safety Team included awareness and prevention work in schools, Officers were therefore focusing on patrols and had increased their presence, but could not undertake additional work until budgets were confirmed.

Councillor W Irvine stated that it had been important for the Council to demonstrate full support for Ryan following the incident. He noted that there had been a build-up of antisocial behaviour in the Bangor area, ranging from low-level nuisance to more serious activity, culminating in what he described as a despicable act. While recognising that the matter could not be discussed in detail due to the live investigation, he emphasised that the Council stood firmly behind Ryan in his recovery and in the vital work he and his dog carried out.

He recalled that he and the Deputy Mayor had attended the opening of the K9 Community Hub shortly before the incident and welcomed the response from community partners and the increased patrols. It was important to reassure the public and local retailer that Bangor remained a safe place, supported by a coordinated plan. He thanked officers for their work over the previous two weeks and wished Ryan a speedy recovery so that he and his dog could resume their life-saving work.

Councillor McBurney echoed these sentiments, extending her thoughts to Ryan, Max and all those affected by the incidents that had occurred over the surrounding weekends. As a Bangor resident with two teenage sons, she described the situation as deeply concerning. She thanked officers for the update and suggested that further updates be provided over the summer, subject to Members' agreement.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

15. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF PRE AND POST BONFIRE CLEARANCE

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

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 - exemption 3 – relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Committee considered arrangements for the safe and environmentally responsible management of seasonal bonfires on Council-owned land. An open procurement process was completed for pre- and post-bonfire clearance services, with tenders assessed on quality and cost in line with Council procedures.

Following evaluation, Council agreed to award a one-year contract for these services, with options to extend subject to performance and review. The contract will support the maintenance of Council land and contribute to safer, cleaner environments before and after bonfire events.

16. PEACEPLUS REVENUE TENDERS

ITEM DELEGATED FOR APPROVAL

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 - exemption 3 – relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Committee considered a report on progress in delivering the Borough's PEACEPLUS Plan, which was developed under three agreed themes focused on regeneration, peaceful communities, and respect for cultural identities.

A competitive procurement process was undertaken for a range of revenue projects under the Plan. Most tenders had already been approved and awarded, with the remaining tenders amended in response to feedback and re-advertised in line with funding body requirements.

Following evaluation in accordance with Council procedures, It was resolved to approve the award of the remaining tenders, supporting the continued delivery of PEACEPLUS initiatives across the Borough.

17. NCLT Q3 2025/26

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 - exemption 3 – relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Committee considered a quarterly performance update from Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT), the organisation responsible for delivering leisure services on Council's behalf. The report provided a high-level overview of performance for Quarter 3, including service delivery and operational matters.

It was agreed to recommend that Council notes the contents of the report.

18. PCSP MINUTES

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 - exemption 6a – Statutory Provision

The Committee considered a report outlining the role of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and noting recent meetings of the local Partnership.

A meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council PCSP was held on 8th December 2025. At the meeting on 8th December the PCSP Partnership approved the minutes of the PCSP Partnership meeting on 24th November. A meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council PCSP Partnership was held on 22nd February 2026. At the meeting on the 22nd February, the PCSP Partnership approved the minutes of 8th December 2025.

A recommendation for Council to note the minutes was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.17 pm.

Unclassified

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	29 April 2026
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Deputation Request from Bryansburn Rangers Football Club
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 Alan Dempster on behalf of Bryansburn Rangers Football Club.

The attached request form states, at the outset, that 'Bryansburn Rangers Football Club wishes to make a deputation to outline the club's proposed facility development project at Ballywooley (Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor) and to update elected members on the substantial community benefits the project would deliver. The club is seeking the opportunity to brief members on progress to date and highlight how the project aligns with Council priorities around health, wellbeing, sports participation, community engagement and local sporting infrastructure.'

The deputation request form 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:	Alan Dempster
Date of request:	30 th March 2026
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Bryansburn Rangers Football Club
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Environment OR Active and Healthy Communities (whichever is more appropriate)

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.

Bryansburn Rangers Football Club wishes to make a deputation to outline the club's proposed facility development project at Ballywooley (Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor) and to update elected members on the substantial community benefits the project would deliver. The club is seeking the opportunity to brief members on progress to date and highlight how the project aligns with Council priorities around health, wellbeing, sports participation, community engagement and local sporting infrastructure.

Founded in 1974, Bryansburn Rangers FC is a long-established grassroots club with a significant role in the Bangor community. The club fields four senior teams and operates a rapidly growing Youth Academy which has expanded from zero to over 160 children and young people in less than two years. This growth demonstrates high local demand for sports participation and community opportunities. The club also engages widely with local schools, community groups, and businesses, and receives strong support from the North Down & Ards Youth Football & Futsal League, particularly around expansion of the girls' game and increasing pitch capacity within the borough.

The club's facilities sit on ANDBC-owned land, and Bryansburn is now in its second 25-year lease with the Council. This long-term arrangement underscores the stability of the site, its established role within the community, and the appropriateness of investing in facilities that will continue to serve residents for decades to come.

The club has recently completed plans and professional cost estimates for a major upgrade to its facilities, including:

- Construction of a new full-size 3G pitch with floodlighting
- Improvements to pitch drainage
- Expansion and refurbishment of the clubhouse
- New and upgraded changing, shower and toilet facilities, including a DDA-compliant toilet
- Improved capacity and accessibility for women and girls
- Enhanced storage and safety for volunteers and grounds teams

The club is applying to the Northern Ireland Football Fund (NIFF), a capital investment programme delivered by the Department for Communities to improve grassroots football infrastructure across Northern Ireland. The fund supports projects that increase participation, enhance accessibility, improve health and wellbeing outcomes, and deliver modern, safe, year-round facilities. The club's secured and anticipated match-funding package of £181,000 (12%) strengthens the NIFF application and demonstrates the club's capacity to leverage external funding and deliver value for public investment.

This work aligns closely with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) facilities audit, which identified a deficit of six full-size artificial grass pitches within

the Ards and North Down area. This evidence highlights the strategic importance of community-based projects such as this in helping to address the identified shortfall, improve access to year-round facilities and alleviate pressure on existing Council-managed (and privately run) pitches.

A key strength of the Bryansburn project is its high deliverability. Community-led capital projects of this nature are typically delivered at significantly lower cost than Council-delivered equivalents (community rates from professional volunteers and suppliers; existing relationships with contractors) and on shorter mobilisation timescales, reducing exposure to inflation and enabling quicker impact for residents.

The purpose of the deputation is to:

- Provide elected members with a clear overview of the project and progress to date
- Highlight the significant community, health, participation and inclusion benefits of the proposed redevelopment
- Demonstrate the strong volunteer, financial and organisational capacity within the club
- Outline how the project supports local demand for additional pitch capacity and aligns with the priorities of the North Down & Ards Youth Football and Futsal League
- Request the Council's support for the project in principle, including consideration of a 'token' contribution towards match funding should we be successful in our NI Football Fund application
- Seek guidance on how partnership working with Council could help maximise the benefits of the project for the wider community

Given the scale of community involvement, rapid growth in participation and the need for modern, accessible facilities in the North Down area, the club believes that a short deputation to the Committee would allow members to fully understand the proposal and assess where the Council may be in a position to support or collaborate.

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 9**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	29 April 2026
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Nomination to Outside Bodies
Attachments	
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 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation If multiple:

Background

Places on working groups are filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and are thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position becomes vacant, it reverts back to Council to nominate a Member to fill the place rather than the Party Nominating Officers.

Following the resignation of Hannah Irwin (Bangor East and Donaghadee DEA) from the Council. Nominations are sought to fill each of the below positions for the remainder of the term as necessary:

1. Body: Fair Trade Working Group – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)
2. Body: Ards and North Down Sports Forum – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)
3. Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment)

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

Body: Fair Trade Working Group – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Irwin
2	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
3	Alderman Keery	Vacant (<i>No replacement nominated to replace Cllr Gilmour Nov 2024</i>)
4		-

Body: Ards and North Down Sports Forum – 8 Places (4 Year Appointment)

	2022/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Chambers	Councillor Cochrane
2	Councillor Smart	Councillor Edmund
3	Councillor Irvine	Councillor Boyle
4	Alderman McRandal	Vacant (formerly Councillor Irwin)
5	Councillor Thompson	Councillor S Irvine
6	Alderman Irvine	Councillor Chambers
7	-	Councillor Wray
8	-	Councillor W Irvine

Additional Nomination

Following the resignation of Linzi McLaren in 2025, nominations were sought to fill the vacant positions on Working Groups. These positions were agreed at Council at their December 2025 meeting. Due to an oversight, one Group was not filled. This was the International Relations Working Group. Nominations are now sought to fill this position as well.

Body: International Relations Working Group

	2024	
1	Alderman McDowell	
2	Councillor Gilmour	
3	Vacant – formerly Councillor McLaren	

Summary

Nominations are sought from Council to fill the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Agrees to nominate a Member(s) to the bodies as outlined in this report.

Unclassified

ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	29 April 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community Services (Acting)
Report title	Shared Island Conference - Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Attachments	
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 decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background

NILGA and the Association for Irish Local Government (AILG) hosted a cross-border event on developing the leadership and influence of councillors in relation to Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG) on 24th and 25th March 2026 in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan.

NILGA has been working with the Executive Office to develop the leadership role of councillors in EVAWG and brought councillors with experience of tackling this issue together to discuss challenges and opportunities with their counterparts in AILG.

Two spaces were allocated to each Council in Ireland. As no members were available to attend NILGA offered the free spaces to officers and the Director of Active and Healthy Communities attended together with the Interim Head of Community Services. Councillor McDowell was also present as a NILGA representative.

At the event attendees learned of the vital role of local government in prevention, awareness-raising, and building safer communities.

The event, supported by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, brought together elected members, advocacy organisations, and policy experts to discuss practical actions all councils and councillors can take to support the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) campaign.

Throughout the programme, discussions focused on how councils can champion safer public spaces, work collaboratively with frontline services, and ensure that the lived experiences of women and girls inform local decision-making effectively.

Participants also heard from organisations working directly with survivors, as well as practitioners specialising in prevention and community engagement. The discussions also included the roles and responsibilities of the media and technology companies.

The event provided Councillors with practical tools, resources, and best practices that can be applied across cities, towns and rural areas. It also offered opportunities to strengthen collaboration among local authorities, share learning, and promote consistent political leadership on EVAWG across the island of Ireland.

At the event Councillor Mary Hanna Hourigan, President of AILG, stated that “Councillors are often the first point of contact for communities, and we have a duty to show leadership and allyship on EVAWG, which is one of the most urgent issues facing society today. AILG is delighted to partner with NILGA in equipping elected members with the tools they need to champion prevention, support local organisations, and influence policy. The safety and wellbeing of women and girls is not confined by borders, and neither is our responsibility to act. By working together, we strengthen our collective capacity to end violence against women and girls across the island of Ireland.”

Councillor Billy Webb, President of NILGA added: “Local government has a powerful role in shaping safer communities, and councillors are uniquely positioned to lead meaningful change. Through this event and our broader partnership, NILGA is proud

to work jointly with AILG to support councillors not only with the knowledge and tools they need, but also with the alliances and allyship that drive real progress on the EVAWG agenda. Today's collaboration reaffirms our shared commitment, and the personal commitments of councillors to step up as allies, challenge harmful behaviours, and ensure women and girls feel safe, supported, and heard in every community, in every council area."

At the event, AILG and NILGA formally launched a Joint Pledge on Leadership in Local Government to End Violence Against Women and Girls. The pledge reinforces local government's responsibility to help end violence against women and girls, committing both associations to high standards in public life, zero tolerance for intimidation, and the integration of EVAWG across all areas of council work. Under the Memorandum of Collaboration, councils north and south will continue to work together, strengthen capability, and demonstrate the leadership and accountability needed to support safer, more inclusive communities.

Council has submitted an application for EVAWG to TEO for 2026 – 2027. Included in the application was a request for funding to support the development of an EVAWG Strategy for the Borough. A further update will be brought to The Active and Healthy Communities Committee once a Letter of Offer has been received.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the report.

Unclassified

ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	29 April 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Queen's Parade Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - current scheme Appendix 2a - Letter from Bangor Marine (Appendix G - Commercial in Confidence) Appendix 2b - Letter from Bangor Marine (Public) Appendix 3 - Proposed additional land required Appendix 4 - Proposed new layout
File Reference (if applicable)	RDP 63
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: None
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 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy

If multiple:

	If multiple:
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Background

As Members will be aware, the Council and the Department for Communities (DfC) entered into a Development Agreement with Bangor Marine Ltd (BM) for the development of lands at Queen’s Parade, Bangor in May 2019. Following that, Bangor Marine finalised its plans for the development and submitted a planning application. The application was agreed by the Council on 26 January 2021; however, the Department for Infrastructure did not permit the Council to issue the determination until 29 September 2022.

Under the terms of the Development Agreement (DA), as amended by the first Deed of Variation which was agreed in January 2023, BM had to submit plans, including the technical specifications, for the proposed works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock arena. These had to be to RIBA stage 3 and be consistent with the Quality Specification that was agreed between BM and the Council as part of the DA. These specifications were agreed.

Following further negotiations amendments to the plans were agreed, with some other technical changes and these were incorporated into a second Deed of Variation which was agreed by the Council in March 2025.

In the summer of 2025, the structure of BM changed with Oakland Ltd taking over the position formerly held by Farrens Ltd, therefore, BM is now in a partnership between The Karl Group and Oakland Ltd.

Following this change a review of the agreed design took place as it was believed that some enhancements to the scheme could be made especially as substantial Levelling Up Funding had been secured. To take this forward BM made a presentation to Members at a workshop in August 2025 showing some new proposals. Following this and considering the comments from the elected Members and a series of community engagements a further workshop for elected Members was held on 20 April 2026 where BM presented their final proposals. The presentation can be accessed using this link: https://bangormarine.com/wp-content/uploads/securepdfs/2026/04/Bangor-Marine_ANDBC-INFORMATION-SESSION-PRESENTATION_v4.1.1_PUBLIC_WEB_SFS.pdf

The presentation and a press release were made publicly available on 21 April.

The agreed development scheme and land required for this is shown on the plan at Appendix 1. Planning permission for the previously agreed scheme has been granted, and further planning permission would be subject to agreement as outlined later on this report.

Key Issues

BM has now finalised their plans and submitted a letter dated 23 April 2026, which is attached at Appendix 2a, detailing the various aspects of the scheme which they propose to change or add to and asking the Council to consider the same. These requests are detailed on points 1 to 6 on page 1 with more details and supporting information contained in the remainder of the document. **Please note that**

appendix G in appendix 2a – Financial Calculations of the letter is confidential and therefore will not be included in the copy of the letter that is made available to the public (appendix 2b).

Requests:

1. The map attached at Appendix 3 now shows the entire area that will be required for the new proposed scheme. The area which is shaded is additional and will be required for the enhanced play park and car park.

This land is also leased to the Council from the Crown Estate Commissioners (CE). Initial discussions have been instigated to gauge whether the CE would be agreeable for the additional land to be sub-leased to BM with the areas that have been already agreed which are the two pavilions and four kiosks.

The term of the sub-lease, which is to be issued on completion of the works, is 125 years and this has been agreed previously by both the Council and the CE. Therefore, the request for the additional land, if agreed, would be on the same terms.

Consent from the CE has as yet not been received and discussions are ongoing. Once confirmation of the CE's position is known Council will be updated.

2. As part of the agreed scheme BM was to install a playpark to a tier one standard. Following BM's successful grant application resulting substantial funding from the Levelling Up Fund they have proposed to upgrade the play park to a new unique, area specific, play park. The appointed designers have been working with Council officers [add: to ensure this unique facility meets the Council's play strategy and play values. The indicative layout is shown on Appendix 4.

The cost of this facility is estimated in excess of £1m and once completed will remain under the Council's control. Council officers have also been assured of the high quality of the design and manufacturing of the equipment and with the substantial warranties that are being provided. However, the Council will need to be mindful of the replacement costs of this facility as and when that is needed and a financial provision for this may need to be put in place.

BM's research (detailed in their letter) has suggested that this play park, which will be in the top 1% in the island of Ireland, will attract c200,000 visitors to the area. If this is realised it will greatly boost the economy/and increase visitor dwell time in Bangor and wider area.

To facilitate this enlarged play area and the proposed car park an additional 1000sqm of green space will be required. It is important to note that when the scheme is completed 3500 sqm of green space and shrub planting will be created which is a gain of 2500 sqm with 100 new trees being planted.

3. Linked to above is the proposal to create an 81-space car park. Following consultations BM has reduced the size from their initial proposal.

BM will create, manage and maintain this car park and take the income received. As mentioned earlier, negotiations with the CE are ongoing concerning this. It is also proposed, but not finalised, that the Council will also receive an income from net profits. The percentage is still to be agreed but will be c5%. The future use of this income can be determined by the Council in due course.

BM believe that with the creation of the enhanced play park the small car park in this area is essential for families, elderly visitors and those with accessibility needs. The layout of this is also shown at Appendix four.

BM also suggest that the dwell time and spend from visitors will be increased. For further information please see appendix B contained within the letter from BM.

BM has also very clearly set out in appendix C and G 1 why the creation of the car park is essential for the viability of the scheme. BM has prepared these valuations and believe the additional income from the car park is the only way the scheme becomes viable. This was made very clear by BM at the workshop on 20th April. They also stated that if this is not agreed they are not sure how the scheme could proceed.

A number of other alternative car parks were suggested that may be used instead of creating a new one. However, after considering these no viable alternative was found. BM also considered a number of different configurations on the Marine Gardens site, however none of these were workable.

4. To enable the creation of the enhanced play park the pavilion at the western side of the development needs to be relocated to the new location as shown on appendix four. As well as creating additional space, it is believed that this fits well with the creation of the gardens with a pavilion at each end.

The Council's officers and its Integrated Consultancy Team have discussed this request, and no concerns have been raised.

5. As part of the agreed scheme BM was to create four bespoke kiosks. The location of each is shown on appendix 1. As detailed in appendix C.2 and G.4 of BM's letter they believe the construction and management of these are no longer viable. BM is proposing not to construct the kiosks, but to leave the areas finished to the same standard as the promenade and to bring services to each area. This will greatly assist the Council should it in the future decide to develop these areas.
6. BM is also proposing installing additional equipment. These will include 2 volleyball tables, chess tables and chairs, secure bicycle stands with e-

charging capacity, DJ table, art lead causal play equipment and an enhanced band stand which will be available for use for a number of activities. Council officers and the ICT have assessed these and are content with the proposals.

The Council will agree the type and size of the bandstand and play equipment and then BM will run a design competition for these.

Planning Implications

If the Council accedes to all the above requests the planning implications are detailed at appendix D in BM's letter. It will be essential that the necessary applications are made immediately.

Timeline

If the above is agreed the handover of the site will be in two phases. This is further detailed in appendix E of the letter. In simple terms phase 1a includes the McKee Clock Arena and 2/3 of Marine Gardens will be completed and handed over this Autumn. This will allow for the installation and unveiling of the Dove statue and for Christmas activity to take place on the McKee Clock Arena. The remainder of the development will be finished by March 2027 in line with the LUF funding.

Next Steps

It is now necessary for the Council to consider the requests from Bangor Marine. The Council needs also to be mindful of the financial position conveyed by Bangor Marine concerning the viability of the scheme should all the new proposals not be agreed.

The Council also needs to finalise with the Crown Estate whether it will accede to BM's requests and if so the financial implications of these.

If the Council agrees to these new proposals, and the Crown Estate issues are resolved satisfactory, then the Authority (being the Council jointly with the Department for Communities) will confirm acceptance of the proposals which will then be incorporated in the Development Agreement by way of an additional Deed of Variation which will be brought back to Council for approval.

Summary

The development of Queen's Parade has been ongoing since the Development Agreement with Bangor Marine was signed in 2019. Work on phase 1 – Marine Gardens started in August 2025 and is ongoing. It is anticipated that if the new proposals from BM are agreed Phase 1 will be completed by March 2027 with new facilities which will greatly enhance the offering in Bangor and the wider area.

Members also need to be aware of the timeline as outlined by BM and the risks of that any delay would have in terms of securing the LUF grant and match private sector funding totalling £14m investment into phase 1 of Queens Parade.

RECOMMENDATION

After carefully considering the above, it is recommended that the Council **Agrees** to the requests from Bangor Marine Ltd subject to finalising the negotiations with the Crown Estate and Bangor Marine Ltd securing the necessary planning consents.



Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Via email: Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Wednesday, 23rd April 2026

Dear Susie

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO THE PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS TO PHASE 1

Bangor Marine Ltd (BML) formally requests the consent of Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC), for the proposed enhancements to Phase 1 of the Bangor Marine Ltd's Queen's Parade Regeneration Project

Background

Phase 1 is well underway, with BML commencing development on site in August 2025. As presented to ANDBC prior to commencement, BML identified a number of enhancements to Phase 1, designed to improve the project's long-term viability and public benefit. These proposals have been developed collaboratively with the officers of ANDBC, the Department for Communities, and specialist consultants over several months.

Summary of Proposed Enhancements - See Appendix A

BML seeks consent for the following amendments to Phase 1:

1. Extension of the Phase 1 boundary westward to accommodate the reconfigured layout.
See Appendix A
2. Addition of a free, inclusive destination playpark, designed in collaboration with Unipark (Czech Republic) and endorsed by AccessibleUK, as a replacement for the Council's agreed play scheme which was approved under LA06/2024/0572/F.
See Appendix A
3. Provision of an 81-space short-stay managed car park to serve visitors to the playpark and new public realm at Marine Gardens, which will also benefit visitors to Pickie Fun Park and the coastal path.
See Appendix A
4. Relocation of Pavilion A to facilitate development of playpark under bullet 2.
See Appendix A
5. Removal of 4no. kiosks as previously approved as part of the overall redevelopment approval, replaced with flexible serviced areas for seasonal activation. These areas will remain under ANDBC control.
See Appendix C.2
6. Additional activation proposals for Phase 1 to support the use and vibrancy of the new public realm. Subject to relevant planning approvals.
See Appendix F

Public Benefit - See Appendix B

The proposed enhancements will deliver significant public benefit for the City of Bangor and the wider Borough. The playpark will be the first free, inclusive destination playpark at this scale in Northern Ireland, serving families, residents, and visitors of all abilities. It has been designed to bolster and complement the existing and proposed waterfront attractions, extend visitor dwell time, and make Bangor a go-to intergenerational destination, resulting in a significant increase in spend in the City. Visitor numbers to this new landmark play attraction have been estimated to be some 200,000 p.a, generating an additional £1.7-£2.3m p.a. in visitor spend for the City.

Although, the reconfiguration removes at the western end c.1,000 sqm of existing green space to accommodate the playpark and car park, Phase 1 when completed will deliver more than 3,500 sqm of new green space and shrub planting, a diverse range of native and climate-resilient species, and over 100 new trees. In short, Phase 1 will provide a significant improvement in the quality, diversity, and volume of planting.

The proposed car park is short-stay and visitor-focused, primarily serving families with young children, elderly visitors, and those with accessibility needs. It will be a pay and display facility and is not intended for commuters or private use for future phases. The layout includes 10% disabled parking and a significant proportion of widened spaces for accessibility and families. It will have landscaped screening at the front and rear, allowing Queen's Parade residents to continue to enjoy a marina view. Existing trees will be retained where possible, with 51 new native trees planted in this section alone.

Viability - See Appendix C

The proposed enhancements are interdependent and together underpin the overall viability of Phase 1. The rationale supporting this position is provided separately in Appendix C and is consistent with the information presented to ANDBC prior to commencement of works in August 2025.

Planning Strategy - See Appendix D

BML will submit a planning application to ANDBC's Planning Service for the playpark, car park, and relocation of the western pavilion. A separate application will be submitted for the remaining Phase 1 amendments. The planning strategy has been discussed and agreed in principle with ANDBC's Planning Service. Full supporting documentation, including a Transport Assessment, planning statement, tree survey, and landscape proposals, will accompany the applications, as appropriate.

Completion Timeline & Handover - See Appendix E

Subject to obtaining the necessary planning consents, BML envisages that all Phase 1 works will be completed by 31 March 2027. Phase 1 will be handed over in two sections: Phase 1A, comprising the eastern section including the promenade, will be completed and handed over this Autumn or immediately following the installation of the Dove Sculpture, permitting pedestrian access to the coastal path. Phase 1B, comprising the western section, including the playpark and car park, will be completed and handed over before the end of March 2027, subject to obtaining planning consents and commencing works by the required date.

Urgency Relating to Levelling Up Fund (LUF)

BML commenced Phase 1 in August 2025, with ANDBC's agreement, specifically to protect the £9.8m Levelling Up Fund (LUF) grant. **Any delay to ANDBC's decision-making or planning processes will jeopardise both public and private funding totalling £14m.**

The proposed enhancements require ANDBC's consent to enable submission of the planning applications to proceed not later than Monday, 4th May 2026; accordingly, BML respectfully requests ANDBC's consent at the earliest available opportunity.

If required, we are happy to discuss this request in greater detail or provide any additional information ANDBC may require.

Yours sincerely



Aran Blackbourne
Director
Bangor Marine Ltd



Damian Mitchell
Director
Bangor Marine Ltd

Appendices

Appendix A - Westerly Reconfiguration Layout

- A.1 - Site Boundary
- A.2 - Phase 1 Consented Scheme
- A.3 - Proposed Enhanced Phase 1
- A.4 - Consented Layout Plan (Including Pirate Ship Playpark)
- A.5 - Unipark Tender
- A.6 - CGI Visualisations

Appendix B - Public Benefit Case

- B.1 - Rationale For Enhancing Phase 1
- B.2 - Underpinning Data

Appendix C - Viability

- C.1 - Creation of a larger car park to help service the proposed changes
- C.2 - Removal of Four Kiosks

Appendix D - Planning Strategy

Appendix E - Completion Timeline & Handover

- E.1 - Gantt Chart/Development Programme
- E.2 - Phased Handover

Appendix F - Activation Plan

Appendix G – Financial Calculations (Commercially Sensitive - Not for Public Disclosure)

- G.1 - Car Park - Viability Calculations
- G.2 - Estimated Revenue Paid to ANDBC
- G.3 - Four Kiosks - Ground Rent
- G.3 - Four Kiosks - Viability Calculations

Appendix A - Westerly Reconfiguration Layout

See files in associated transfer folder as below:

A.1 - Site Boundary: A.1_SITE BOUNDARY.pdf

A.2 - Phase 1 Consented Scheme: A.2_PHASE 1 CONSENTED SCHEME.pdf

A.3 - Proposed Enhanced Phase 1: A.3_PROPOSED ENHANCED PHASE 1.jpg

A.4 - Consented Layout Plan (Including Pirate Ship Playpark): A.4_CONSENTED LAYOUT PLAN.pdf

A.5 - Unipark Tender: A.5_UNIPARK TENDER (Folder)

A.5.1_UNIPARK TENDER.pdf

A.5.2_UNIPARK TENDER_UPDATE.pdf

A.6 - CGI Visualisations: A.7_CGI VISUALISATIONS (Folder)

Appendix B - Public Benefit

Appendix B.1 – Rationale For Enhancing Phase 1

This new playpark will be a substantial addition, helping bolster Marine Gardens as a significant catalyst for Bangor's regeneration. It will not only help attract residents from across Bangor and the wider Borough to visit the city centre, but it will undoubtedly help attract visitors from further afield. This will bring much-needed visitor spend into the City, increase dwell time, and support the wider viability of the project.

Independent analysis projects that the playpark will attract a significant volume of new visitors. Combined with the Belfast Region City Deal's projection of 100,000 new visitors per year to Bangor and the council area, the economic impact for the city should be substantial. Bangor's waterfront already demonstrates this dynamic - the Open House Festival alone has generated an estimated £13.6 million in economic impact since 2013. The playpark adds a permanent, year-round family attraction to this ecosystem, with extended dwell times supporting overnight stays.

Existing Visitors: Dwell Time

Pickie already attracts around 400,000 visits a year, rising to an estimated 440,000 after its own new investment. Those visitors are already on the waterfront. The free playpark, enhanced public realm, and art installations give them reasons to stay longer. Even modest increases in dwell time generate significant additional spend - if just 10% of existing visitors spend an additional £12 per visit, that's an estimated half a million pounds a year in additional linked spend for Bangor's city centre. That's not new visitors. That's existing footfall, staying longer, spending more.

New Visitors: Destination Appeal

The playpark alone could be expected to attract 200,000 visitors per year. The enhanced waterfront draws new visitors from across the borough and beyond. A conservative estimate of a 10-15% increase in visitor numbers means an additional 40,000 to 60,000 visits per year. At around £30 per visit, that generates £1.2m to £1.8m per year in additional spend. Combined with the dwell time uplift from existing visitors, total additional visitor spend is estimated at £1.7m to £2.3m per year. These figures are conservative — NISRA's average same-day visitor spend is £70.50 per person. These estimates use a conservative per-visit spend of approximately £30, significantly below the NISRA average.

Why the Car Park is Required

The car park is essential for families, elderly visitors, and those with accessibility needs - the very people a free, inclusive, accessibility-designed playpark is for. It maximises the visitor experience and encourages repeat trips; a family that can park easily stays longer in the city and comes back. NISRA's 2024 data, published for the first time last year, confirms 80% of same-day leisure visitors in Northern Ireland travel by car. Recent studies show that short-stay parking at this end of the waterfront is insufficient to accommodate the anticipated increase in visitor numbers. Conservatively, 10,000 to 16,000 new car visits per year will require city centre parking.

Appendix B.2 – Underpinning Data

The sections below provide the published data and benchmarks underpinning the visitor economy case. All statistics are cited from official sources.

1. Northern Ireland Visitor Economy

Northern Ireland's visitor economy generated approximately £1.8 billion in 2024, comprising £1.1 billion from 4.7 million overnight trips and £703 million from 10 million same-day visits (NISRA Annual Tourism Statistics 2024). The average spend per same-day visit was £70.50. 80% of same-day visits were made by NI residents, predominantly travelling by car. This day trip data was published by NISRA for the first time in 2024 and was not available at the time of the 2019 consent.

2. Independent Visitor Projections

Independent analysis by the appointed playpark supplier, Unipark, projects that the Marine Gardens playpark will attract in the region of 170,000–250,000 visits per annum. This is based on the facility's 2,000m² footprint, a conservative operational capacity of approximately 250 users, peak busy occupancy of 300–400 users, and an average dwell time of 1–2+ hours per visit. The free, open-access civic model increases visit frequency and repeatability, particularly among local families. These are directional projections based on capacity, seasonal patterns and behavioural use of open-access civic environments.

3. Local Benchmark: Open House Festival

The Open House Festival has attracted a combined audience of 362,000 since 2013, generating an estimated £13.6 million in economic impact for Bangor (Open House Festival / Bangor by the Sea; ANDBC / Visit Ards and North Down, April 2024). That equates to approximately £37.50 in economic impact per visitor - a figure derived from a programme that, like the playpark, includes a significant proportion of free events and draws a mix of local residents and visitors from further afield. Applying this benchmark across the projected visitor range of 170,000–250,000 visits per annum would suggest an annual economic impact of £6–9 million for Bangor and the wider borough.

4. UK Precedent: Lilidorei, Northumberland

Lilidorei, a destination playpark at The Alnwick Garden in Northumberland, attracted 250,000 visitors in its first year following its opening in May 2023. Official STEAM tourism data confirmed that Northumberland's visitor economy recorded its highest-ever gross value of £1.262 billion in 2023, with the growth in day visitors - an increase of 214,000 - attributed in large part to Lilidorei and other new attractions (Northumberland Gazette; Destination North East England STEAM data, May 2024). AtkinsRéalis, which provided project management for Lilidorei, confirmed that a significant increase in hospitality sector activity was observed in the wider area immediately after opening. Both the UK and Scottish Governments accepted the economic case as the basis for £5.5 million in public funding through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

Alnwick has a resident population of approximately 8,000 within a predominantly rural district of around 31,000. Bangor's population is 64,596, with a regional catchment of over 600,000 within a 30-minute drive. Marine Gardens will be free to access, unlike Lilidorei's paid-entry model. Although somewhat larger in scale, Lilidorei demonstrates the significant economic impact that investment in a leading play attraction can create for a region.

5. Convergence of Benchmarks

The convergence of these published benchmarks - local data from Open House, comparable UK facility data from Lilidorei, and NISRA's per-visit expenditure figures - reinforces the scale of economic opportunity that the enhanced playpark represents for Bangor and the wider regeneration scheme. The extended dwell time directly supports overnight stays, with the Ards and North Down Borough already recording the joint longest average visitor stay in Northern Ireland at 4 nights (NI Tourism Alliance analysis of NISRA 2023 data). A landmark free-play destination strengthens Bangor's competitiveness as a short-break and day-trip family destination, with economic benefits compounding over time as repeat visitation builds.

Sources

- *NISRA (2025). NI Annual Tourism Statistics 2024. Published 29 May 2025.*
- *DfE / NISRA (2024). Tourism Statistics for NI to Quarter 1 2024. Published 12 November 2024.*
- *Unipark (2025). Bangor Waterfront Destination Play Park: Visitor Capacity & Influence Summary.*
- *Open House Festival / Bangor by the Sea (2025). Festival history and impact data.*
- *Visit Ards and North Down / ANDBC (2024). Open House Bangor returns with month-long summer Festival. Press release, April 2024.*
- *NI Tourism Alliance (2024). Analysis of NISRA Tourism Statistics for 2023.*
- *Northumberland Gazette (2024). Lilidorei and Ad Gefrin help drive up tourism numbers in Northumberland. May 2024.*
- *AtkinsRéalis (2024). Lilidorei Play Village - Case Study.*
- *Ards and North Down Borough Council. Belfast Region City Deal documentation and visitor projections.*

Appendix C - Viability

Appendix C.1 - Creation of a larger car park to help service the proposed changes

To help service this new play park attraction and maximise its economic impact for Bangor, an improved car park offering is required. This will help improve access and accessibility to the playpark, the Marine Gardens, and the wider waterfront regeneration, including Pickie Fun Park and the coastal walk.

The car park is essential for those with physical and additional accessibility needs, as well as for families with young children and the elderly. We envisage a significant increase in visitors from further afield to the play park and gardens; therefore, improved car parking provision is essential to assist visitors unfamiliar with the area or unable to access public transport.

Location and number of spaces

The car park is proposed to be constructed on the narrow strip of land as shown on the attached plan. It will extend to 81 spaces and contain the following split:

- 8 Disabled parking spaces.
- 23 Family spaces.
- 46 standard spaces.
- 4 EV charging spaces.

The 23 family spaces are wider than standard to accommodate families with buggies and those with accessibility needs.

The location and layout has been designed to fit within the rearranged Phase 1 lands, including the additional lands, while utilising the existing car park entrance. The location will also benefit visitors to Pickie Fun Park and the Coastal Path.

The quality of finish, including boundary treatments and planting, will be commensurate with the overall vision for Marine Gardens and the wider waterfront regeneration.

We have listened to feedback from residents, including those opposed to the proposed car park. To address their concerns, we have reduced the number of spaces from over 100 to 81, widened spaces for accessibility and families, designed a landscaped and screened space to front and rear, and adjusted the layout to retain residents' marina views and preserve existing trees where possible. Equally, we need to balance these concerns with the project's overall viability. Further reductions in parking would harm the visitor experience and jeopardise the wider regeneration project.

The reconfiguration at the western end involves removing approximately 1,000 sqm of existing green space and some evergreen shrubbery within the proposed extended lands. We propose to retain 7 of the 15 existing trees, plant an additional 51 new native trees, and plant a substantial amount of new shrubs covering nearly 600 sqm. The planting has been designed with a coastal character, incorporating a diverse range of species with year-round interest, in contrast to the existing planting which is predominantly evergreen and visually uniform.

Across the completed Phase 1, there will be over 3,500 sqm of new green space and shrub planting, and over 100 new trees, creating a significantly improved landscape for Bangor's waterfront.

See attached plans in **Appendix A.3** for more details.

Car Park Lease and Management

BML requests consent to lease and operate the lands as a premium public car park, with an estimated hourly parking tariff as previously provided. BML will be responsible for constructing, managing and maintaining the car park, subject to all standard leasing covenants.

We confirm there is no intention to rely on the proposed additional parking capacity to support any revisions to the current approved scheme in phases 2-4. This car park is to be used by the public.

Viability

The inclusion of this car park helps to improve the economic viability of Phase 1. As we outlined prior to commencement on-site in August 2025, the primary challenge for Phase 1 is its fundability. As previously designed, Phase 1 incurred a significant loss, which has been the main challenge to the commencement of works. The car park will generate revenue and capital value, helping to reduce any loss in phase 1.

This is more fully explained in the summary financial in [Appendix G.1](#)

Without car park revenue, the funding viability of phase 1 is at significant risk, as previously highlighted by BML before the works commenced on site in August 2025. Not only is the proposed car park necessary to support the new play-park attraction, but it will be the principal source of revenue underpinning the financial viability of phase 1.

Estimated revenue paid to ANDBC

Refer to [Appendix G.2](#)

Appendix C.2 – Removal Of Four Kiosks

We are proposing not to erect any of the 4no. consented kiosk units in Phase 1. After consultation with our advisors and listening to public opinion, there is significant concern that these units may sit empty for many weeks each year and blight the waterfront. There is also concern about having too many permanent F&B offerings, which could negatively impact nearby F&B establishments already established in the city centre.

We therefore propose to finish these areas as suitable serviced-surfaced retail areas, in line with the existing approved surface finishes, and with power and water similar to those at the other pop-up locations. These will then be handed over to ANDBC as part of the wider phase 1 lands and leased out by ANDBC as it so agrees.

All revenue from these areas will go to ANDBC, and Bangor Marine Ltd will have no responsibility for or financial benefit from them. Allowing flexibility of use in these spaces creates year-round interest that changes with the seasons and appeals to a wider variety of users. It also opens views from the gardens towards the marina. There is also an opportunity for ANDBC to consider installation of the Kiosks in future should market conditions change.

We appreciate that this will impact the level of ground rent proposed to be paid to The Crown Estate (TCE) from these kiosks; however, overall, the ground rent payable to TCEC should be higher, given the inclusion of the proposed car park and the retained pavilions. This is outlined in **Appendix G.3**

Viability

The 4 kiosks as consented were financially unviable to construct and placed additional pressure on the funding viability of Phase 1. This is explained in the summary appraisal in **Appendix G.4**

Removing the 4no.fixed kiosks from Phase 1 helps open access from the gardens to the waterfront's promenade, both visually and as walking routes. These areas are better activated seasonally, with temporary or semi-permanent provisions that change the look and feel of the area depending on the time of year, helping to vary the mix of offerings year-round. Allowing this flexibility greatly enhances the viability of both Phase 1 and the wider development, including the city centre, by reducing reliance on fixed F&B offerings, which are accommodated elsewhere in the city; and instead encouraging placement throughout the city centre, thereby supporting pedestrian flow. Instead, the retail pitches should allow places of interest to be established that vary by season and event.

Appendix D – Planning Strategy

Status and Proposed Changes

- Phase 1 (Marine Gardens) of the main planning permission (LA06/2024/0559/F) is well underway.
- Design and project review has identified a number of changes which are required and which have been presented to ANDBC.
- Some changes to the landscape design for Marine Gardens are proposed. These include opportunities for greater public interaction with and use of the public realm. No change to the red line boundary of the main planning permission (LA06/2024/0559/F).
- A new destination play park with associated modest car park to the western part of Phase 1, and lands beyond the main application boundary.
- The western pavilion building will be shifted further east, and the motorcycle parking to the southeast of Phase 1.
- Removal of the 4no. kiosks

Full Planning Application (FPA) 1 - (Destination Play Park, Car Park and western Pavilion)

- A 'drop in' planning application which includes the play park, car park, western pavilion and associated access and landscaping.
- This will have a red line which overlaps partially with the red line for the main permission. Drawings for this application will be cognisant of the relationship with the wider permission.
- Policy OS 1 justification and supporting evidence will be fully set out in a planning statement, and ANDBC Planning Service has confirmed the list of documents expected, is being prepared.

Non-Material Change - the Activity Plan and other changes to Phase 1 of LA06/2024/0559/F

- The minor changes sought for the Activity Plan, and the other changes outlined above, will be sought via an application for Non-Material Change (NMC).
- As per the previous NMC, the full package of affected drawings will be revised to account for the changes.
- Where there is overlap with the new FPA boundary for the play park, we will show the 'overlap area' as 'subject to' the other FPA application in a similar approach to what was done previously (see LA06/2024/0572/F).

Full Planning Application 2 - (Motorcycle Parking)

- Given the need to consult DFI Roads, a full planning application will be submitted alongside the above for the relocated motorcycle parking area to the southeast of Marine Gardens.

Full Planning Application 3 – (Bandstand/Hub & Art Piece)

- FPA required for Band stand/hub construction and basketball hoop/art piece

Kiosks and Pavilions

- We will seek partial discharge of Condition 12 for the shelters only – as a new discharge application.
- Pavilions will be discharged under Condition 11 as per the existing discharge application. A similar condition could be added to planning permission for the Full Planning Permission (FPA 1) for the play park to enable the detailed design to be signed off concurrently. If the detail becomes available prior to, or during the determination of the application, it could be included and assessed under the new FPA.

Appendix E – Completion/Handover Timeline

See files in the associated transfer folder as below:

E.1 - Phased Handover: E.1_PHASED HANDOVER.pdf

E.2 - Gantt Chart: E.2_GANTT CHART_DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.pdf

Appendix E.1 – Phased Handover

We have included a Gantt chart/development programme in **Appendix E.1** to show the anticipated updated programme of works for Phase 1. The Programme includes sufficient time to obtain all necessary planning consents.

Subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent for the proposed changes to the western end of Phase 1, we envisage that all Phase 1 works will be completed in full by 31/03/2027.

We do envisage handing over Phase 1 in two sections. See plan in **Appendix E.2**:

Phase 1A

Phase 1A, shaded red on the plan, will be finished and handed over in October 2026 or immediately after the installation of the 'Dove Sculpture'. We propose to complete all works on the promenade as part of this phase to permit pedestrian access to the coastal path.

Phase 1B

The remaining section shaded in blue will be completed and handed over before the end of March 2027, subject to obtaining all the necessary planning consents.

We understand, and we are aware we are progressing in advance of obtaining all statutory consents; however, as explained in our workshop and presentations, prior to starting works on site in August 2025, we are doing so in order not to lose the £9.8million Levelling Up Fund grant monies that would be at jeopardy if we were not progressing on site.

For clarity, BML are not seeking an extension of time to deliver the proposed changes.

Appendix E.2 – GANTT Chart/Development Programme

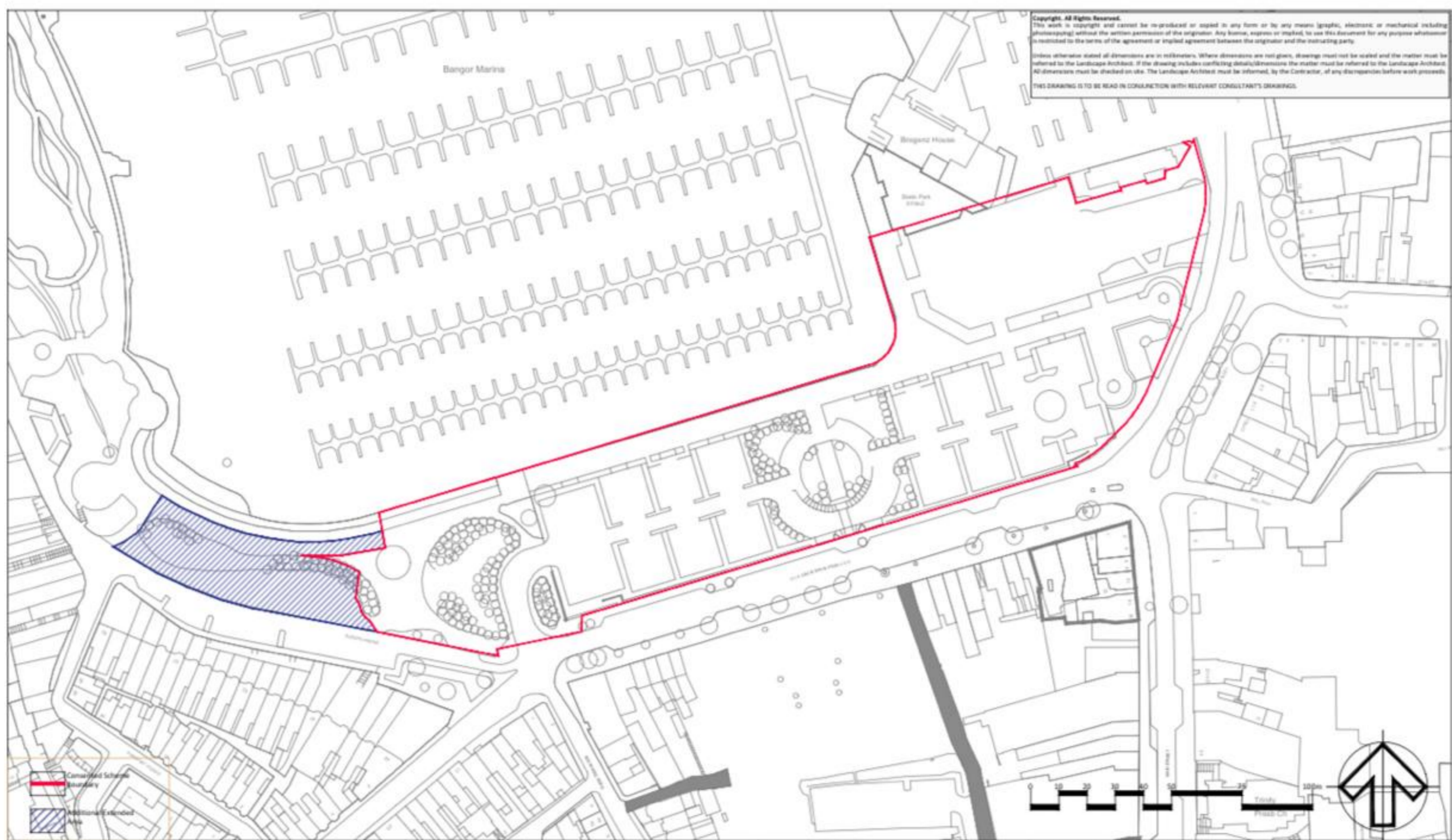
See files in the associated transfer folder:

E.2 - Gantt Chart/Development Programme: E.2_GANTT CHART_DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.pdf

Appendix F - Activation Plan

See file in the associated transfer folder:

F - Activation Plan: F_ACTIVATION PLAN.pdf



Description	Revision Notes	By / Chk	Date	Rev	Status: PLANNING APPLICATION

Park Hood
 Chartered Landscape Architects

Hawarden House, 163 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3HZ
 T: +44 (0) 28 9029 8000 E: info@parkhood.com parkhood.com

Client: Bangor Marine	
Project: Marine Gardens Bangor	
Title: Site Location Plan Consented & Extended Areas	
Job No: 8140	Scale: A3 Custom
Date: April 2026	
Drawing Number	
Project	Originator
Volume	Level
Type	Role
Number	Revision
8140	PHL
ZZ	ZZ
DR	L
0005	00



Anticipated Location of Voyager Sculpture

Colin Davidson's Sculpture

Pastie Man Sculpture

Area Subject to Further Development

Christmas Tree location

Sub. Station

Proposed Trees

Band Stand

DJ Table

Play Area

Drinking Fountain

Table Foot Volleyball

Picnic Table

Mindful Garden

Existing Gazebo Repainted, & Relocated with new Granite Plinth

Location of Parking Availability Signage

Picnic Table

Chess Table

Drinking Fountain

Secure E-Bike Charging Zone 22 no Bikes

EVEVEY

Unclassified

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	29 April 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	Multiple Multiple If multiple: all

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 McLroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McLroy 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 McLroy 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)	
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 April 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 June EC 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. April 2026 - Advice now recieved 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	That this Council, further to recent positive discussions with landowners, agrees to reexamine the April 2014 decision of North Down Borough Council to accept a gift of open space at Ambleside, Bangor, which was never completed and tasks Council Officers to bring back a report looking at (i) acquiring the land and (ii) options around future uses for the land.	Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024	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. 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. 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. April 2026 update: Officers received an update that one of the two landowners is still considering the matter (to dispose of the land to the Council), whilst one is ready to proceed. The Council's solicitor has given them a one-month deadline to move matters forward or the Council will withdraw. To date £1,700 of legal costs have been incurred on the matter and we await an up-to-date bill which will include the advice from the former Registrar of the land registry.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	

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>	Council 29.11.2023	<p>Update report to be brought to September 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>	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
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</p> <p>Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024.</p> <p>Corporate Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary.</p> <p>First working group was on 10th May 2024.</p> <p>Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Update to April 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>Update Report to be brought to May 2026 EC Council wrote to DfI 08.04.26 - no response received yet</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: 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.</p> <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</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 Groomspoint 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 Community & Wellbeing 15.01.25 Item 5 Environment Committee 07.01.26 Item 8</p>	<p>Update report to be brought to June 2026 EC</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	This Council notes that, subsequent to submission of a Notice of Motion in 2017, Council agreed to provide funding to assist in the building of a new war memorial in Conlig village; and to liaise with, and assist, the Conlig War Memorial Project Group in their efforts to build a monument to the seventeen men who are known to have lost their lives in World War I.	Council - May 2024 Corporate Services Committee June	<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> <p>April 2026 update: As March update - The group has fundraised £8,000 towards the project, but the balance, which the Council agreed to pay, is likely to be in the region of £30,000.</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>	Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3) September C&W Committee Environment Committee 3 December 2025 (Item 6)	<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)	

632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	<p>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.</p>	<p>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) 8 April 2026 (Item 6)</p>	<p>Update report to be brought to October 2026 EC</p> <p>Agreed at April 2026 EC - based on Option 1:</p> <p>That the Committee notes the report and tasks Officers to prepare a business case for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at Holywood and Millisle HRCs. A further report, including analysis of demand, is to be presented to Committee in advance of the business case being considered during the 2027/2028 rates setting process.</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.</p> <p>Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs</p> <p>Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1. Further report to follow.</p> <p>Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024</p>	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	
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. 	<p>Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2) Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)</p>	<p>Report to be brought to May 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	
655	Environment	18.02.2025	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	<p>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</p>	<p>Council 26.02.2025 Environment Committee 5 March 2025</p>	<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	Update report to be brought to EC June 2026 NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Agreed that Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Islandview Road Greyabbey to ensure future intermediate football standards by the local sporting clubs and community of Greyabbey	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)
658	Environment	03.03.2025	Councillor McClean & Councillor Cathcart	That Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City Centre, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for Christmas 2025. Further, that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practice and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting over Main Street. The report should look at the feasibility of the future expansion of these concepts to the remainder of the Borough, if proven successful in Bangor.	Council 26.03.2025 Environment Committee 02.04.2025 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Council 25.06.25	Update report to be brought to EC 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 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	Report to March A&HC Committee. Update to May A&HC Committee.	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. Update to May A&HC Committee.</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> <p>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.</p> <p>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&P 4.9.25 Council 25.06.25	<p>Report to be brought to May 2026 P&P Committee</p> <p>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</p> <p>2. Re: commercial marketing plan, update report to P&P in first quarter of 2026.</p> <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:</p> <p>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:</p> <p>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)	

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 at EC April 2026 noted - Council is currently in the process of developing a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough 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. April 2026 update: Report brought to Corporate Committee in April 2026. NOM now closed. Remove from Tracker in May.	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. Report to May Committee	Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure	
681	Corporate Services	09.09.25	Alderman McIveen 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. NAC attended March Council for Deputation. Remove from tracker after ratification by April Council.	CEX Office	
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. April 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> <p>1. Write to the Ministers for Justice, Communities, Finance, DAERA, and Health, calling for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of Ruby's Law in Northern Ireland; and 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. Promote public awareness of the connection between domestic abuse, coercive control and animal abuse, in collaboration with statutory agencies and animal welfare organisations. 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. Update to June 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	<p>Reply received from Justice Minister and report to CS Feb 2026.</p> <p>Further response from the Chief Executive sent following meeting.</p> <p>Letter from Justice Minister reported and agreed at April Corporate Services Committee. To be removed following ratification after April Council meeting.</p>	CEX Office
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	<p>Alternative proposal agreed at April 2026 EC:</p> <p>That council amend cemetery regulations to allow the inclusion of wooden memorials provided they have a concrete base and meet health and safety requirements</p> <p>Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC - ratified at November 2025 Council Assigned to November 2025 EC Agenda</p>	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)
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> <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. To go to next PCSP Committee (ND to action).	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	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. That this Council reassess whether it has responsibility for maintaining the road and for strengthening the sea wall and sea defences along the North Down coastal path section of Station Road, in view of: the fact that Council was prepared to assume responsibility for the road and sea defences under the failed Greenway project; the fact that this is a right of way as asserted by Council. That a report is brought back to the relevant Committee, to include assessment of who owns or is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the sea wall and sea defences along Station Road.	Council December 2025 Environment Committee 7 January 2026 Item 9.2	Report to be brought to a future meeting of the Corporate Services Committee to include legal advice regarding responsibility for the sea defence wall. NOM reassigned to Corporate Services Committee 11.02.2026 April 2026 update : Seeking legal advice, report will be brought back as soon as possible. Agreed to adopt NOM at January 2026 Environment Committee	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates) Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
694	Corporate Services	27.11.25	Councillor Ashe and Councillor McBurney	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.	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	
697	Active & Healthy Communities	08.12.25	Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings	That this council is deeply concerned regarding the length of time that people battling with Motor Neurone Disease must wait to receive help through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Disabled Facilities Grant. To write to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Minister for Communities to ask what the current length of time is for MND sufferers to have home adaptations completed and to ask them to implement a scheme to fast track these vital and much needed home adaptations.	Council December 2025 and Active and Healthy Communities Committee Jan 2026	Deferred to February A&HC Committee and adopted. N Dorrian has letter drafted and will send to CE for approval.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
698	Active & Healthy Communities	09.12.25	Councillor Wray and Councillor Chambers	Council acknowledges the vital role that our voluntary community groups play across the borough. Through our grants programmes these groups deliver initiatives such as community events, sporting activities, and festivals promoting tourism. As we rely on these groups to continue this important work across the borough, we must ensure they are supported, and that the management of these grants is easy to navigate. Advance payments are essential for small organisations who don't have large reserve sums of money in their bank accounts. Another complication for groups is being passed across various council departments during the delivery of their initiative. In order to improve this process, Officers will bring back a report considering the implications of making the following changes: <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	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.	Council December 2025 and Corporate Services Committee Jan 2026	Methodology to identify ANDBC's anti-poverty levers across all council services has been developed and is currently being tested. Workshops will be used across all services areas to gather additional information. Final ratified minute sent to Community Planning Manager	Community Planning Manager	
700	Environment	10.12.25	Councillor Cochrane and councillor Thompson	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.	Council January 2026 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 9.1	Assigned to February 2026 EC Agenda	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

702	Environment	20.01.26	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor McClean	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.	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	
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	Letter issued by CEx 15.4.26 Ratified at March 2026 Council. Letter to be issued to Minister Department for Infrastructure. Agreed to adopt NOM at March 2026 P&P, ratified at March Council.	Director of Place and Prosperity
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	Council wrote to DfI 08.04.26 - no response received yet Agreed to adopt NOM at March 2026 EC Assigned to March 2026 EC Agenda	
708	Corporate Services	18.02.2026 and amended sent 11.03.2026	Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers	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.	Council March 2026 Corporate Committee	On Corporate Services Committee agenda for meeting on 14 April 2026.	
709	Corporate Services	10.03.2026	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 Semiquincentennial. 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.	Council March 2026 Corporate Committee	On Corporate Services Committee agenda for meeting on 14 April 2026.	

710	Place & Prosperity	11.03.2026	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	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.	Council 25 March 2026 April Place & Prosperity Committee	Agreed at April P&P to be ratified at April Council Ratified by March 2026 Council and referred to April P&P	Director of Place and Prosperity	
711	Active & Healthy Communities	13.03.2026	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.	Council March 2026 Active and Healthy Communities Committee	Report to September A&HC Committee.		
712	Environment	16.03.2026	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 Man's 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 excluding 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.	Council March 2026 Environment Committee	NOM agreed at April 2026 EC Agreed to refer NOM to April 2026 EC	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
713	Environment	17.03.2026	Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray	That this Council notes the profound impact on the Clondeboye 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.	Council March 2026 Environment Committee	NOM agreed at April 2026 EC Agreed to refer NOM to April 2026 EC	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	



Dan Jarvis MBE MP
Security Minister
Cabinet Office and Home Office
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
SW1A 2AS

Council Leaders in England, Wales,
Scotland and Northern Ireland

Council Chief Executives in England, Wales,
Scotland and Northern Ireland

27 March 2026

Dear Council Leaders and Council Chief Executives,

NATIONAL PROTECTIVE SECURITY AUTHORITY GUIDANCE

Counter Terrorism Police arrested three individuals earlier this month as part of an investigation into suspected National Security Act (2023) offences. In a statement to Parliament, I confirmed that these arrests relate to foreign interference activity targeting UK democracy. Along with the sentencing of former MEP Nathan Gill and the MI5 security alert to Parliament on China espionage operations last year, this serves as a critical reminder of the persistent and evolving threat we face.

I am writing to ensure you are equipped to identify, report and take action to protect against the real and evolving interference and espionage threat to local authorities. In November 2025, the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) published guidance. It outlines how state-backed actors and their proxies attempt to manipulate, discredit or secretly gather information on political figures and the effective steps you, your colleagues and the institutions you work with should take to protect against espionage and foreign interference. A copy of this guidance is attached.

In addition, I encourage you to follow and share the NPSA's 'Applicant Beware' guidance, which is designed to help you spot the signs of online targeting from foreign intelligence services, to ensure you and your staff are better protected.

Council representatives often have public-facing roles and need to interact with a range of people as part of everyday business. Not every foreign state actor who seeks to engage with you will have harmful intentions. However, we do know that several states have the intent and capability to interfere in our democracy, including local government, to achieve a strategic advantage against the UK.

As council officers and leaders, you are in high profile roles and have access to information, networks and communications that will be of interest to foreign states to pursue their national interests. This is not just about classified information. Other privileged information may be considered valuable by a state to build a wider picture of our political system, confirm or refute other sources and identify points of influence.

This guidance is not intended to stop you interacting with those you need to – it is to ensure you do so with full knowledge of the risks and the actions you can take to protect yourself.

There is also an ongoing cyber threat to the personal accounts of UK officials across central and local government. Through methods such as spear phishing, states can obtain sensitive information by compromising personal credentials. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the NPSA offer a range of information and support on their websites aimed at helping high risk individuals to protect themselves against these threats. As Council Leaders and Council Chief Executives, I strongly encourage you to sign up to the Individual Cyber Defence services available from NCSC, alongside their longstanding Active Cyber Defence Programme, to improve your personal cyber resilience. Simply email individualsupport@ncsc.gov.uk for further information.

The Government is clear that interference in any part of the UK's democracy is unacceptable and we are committed to improving support available for those who may be at risk from foreign interference.

The Government continues to strengthen security protections through legislation. The National Security Act 2023 provides robust powers to UK law enforcement and intelligence agencies to disrupt foreign interference and espionage threats. The Government also commissioned Philip Rycroft to undertake an independent review to investigate foreign financial interference in the UK's political and electoral systems. In response to the findings, the Government will take decisive action and introduce new measures as amendments to the Representation of the People Bill to help safeguard democratic processes from foreign financial influence and interference.

The Government continues to take all necessary steps to keep the UK safe, but we all have a responsibility to safeguard the integrity of the UK's democracy. If you have any concerns that you, your staff or colleagues may be the target of foreign interference or espionage, you should report it to your immediate security team or the Police – either through 999 if there is an immediate threat or 101.

Thank you for your assistance with these matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dan Jarvis', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dan Jarvis MBE MP
Security Minister
Cabinet Office and Home Office



National Protective
Security Authority

Protecting our democratic institutions

Countering espionage and foreign interference



Espionage and foreign interference pose a significant threat to the UK's democracy, economy and fundamental rights and freedoms. As an elected politician, candidate, member of the House of Lords or a staff member¹, you are a potential target. Protect yourself and your team by understanding the threat, and applying simple countermeasures.

What is espionage and foreign interference?²

Espionage is the secret gathering of information to benefit a foreign state. This can be done through human agents, cyber attacks, or other means. State actors seek to collect classified information and other information of value to them, and target those they believe have access to, or could establish access to, that.

Foreign states also try to **interfere** with decisions and issues in the UK in a way that is deceptive, corruptive and/or coercive. This includes **political interference**: aimed at influencing, manipulating or discrediting political processes or decision-making to seek advantage or to harm the UK.

Information operations are an interference tool used by foreign states. They include disinformation (false or manipulated information designed to deceive audiences) and 'hack-and-leaks' (using cyber tools to access and selectively release stolen material into the public domain).

¹ Including elected members of the House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru and Northern Ireland Assembly, and candidates; members of the House of Lords; mayors; local councillors; London Assembly members; Police and Crime Commissioners; and those working for those institutions.

² These descriptions summarise the activity that you should be aware of. They do not reflect full legal definitions, including those in the National Security Act 2023.



When foreign states steal vital UK information or manipulate our democratic processes they don't just damage our security in the short-term, they erode the foundations of our sovereignty and ability to protect our citizens' interests. Everyone reading this guidance cares deeply about the role they play in UK democracy. Take action today to protect it – and yourself.



Sir Ken McCallum
DG MI5

Why are you a target?

State actors target people working in democratic institutions because you:

- **Possess information** which allows other states to build an understanding of political and policy priorities and activity. This isn't just about classified information – other privileged information may be considered valuable by a state actor, even if it appears inconsequential;
- Can **influence decisions** on issues like technology, foreign affairs or investment;
- Are in a position to **promote a positive narrative**, or dampen criticism, about another state;
- Have a **public profile**, which means foreign states may seek to use information about you – and/or influence your actions – in order to discredit you, the political party you represent or the government;
- Have **access** to someone of interest, and therefore may be used to gather information about or reach them – for example by targeting your internet/email accounts.

Which actors are involved?

The UK is a target of long-term strategic foreign interference and espionage from elements of the Russian, Chinese and Iranian states which, in different ways, seek to further their economic and strategic interests and cause harm to our democratic institutions.

Other states may also be interested in obtaining information about the UK system, in the furtherance of their own national objectives.

It is difficult to differentiate a benign approach from one made by or on behalf of a state for interference or espionage purposes. Foreign intelligence officers operate undercover, posing as diplomats, journalists, academics or lobbyists, for example. Individuals working in these and other fields may also act as 'proxies', with their links to the state concealed. Those proxies may or may not be aware of who they are working for. Some states have legislation compelling individuals and/or companies to co-operate with intelligence efforts.



What should you look out for?

Most approaches to you will of course be legitimate and of no concern. Espionage and interference efforts are different because, whilst they may try and look legitimate, they are generally deceptive and/or coercive in nature. What might begin as an apparently genuine interaction can transition into something more malign. It's important you remain alert and trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, report it to your security team promptly.

We have provided some indicators of potential espionage and interference activity. It is not an exhaustive list; it gives you an idea of how threat actors work and what this activity could look like in your role.





Elicitation

Attempts to manipulate you into sharing information, for example through seemingly casual conversations or requests for ‘non-public’ or ‘insider’ information (in person, online or both). A threat actor could provide you with incorrect information, in the hope that you will correct them.



Cultivation

The process of building long-term, deep relationships to gather information, recruit or manipulate – for example to influence deceptively towards a particular position. Cultivation begins with a simple introduction; shared interests and social gatherings are often leveraged. Even if you resist the manipulation, a threat actor may use any association with you to lend credibility to their approaches to others.

In Australia, Senator Sam Dastyari resigned his position following allegations that he had taken money from a benefactor connected to the Chinese United Front Work Department in return for advocating positions favourable to the Chinese Communist Party.



Blackmail

The use of blackmail and/or threats represents one of the most aggressive forms of recruitment and coercion. Blackmail material could be garnered from information stolen via, for example, a cyber compromise. A threat actor may also seek to place you in a compromising situation, which they could then exploit.



Online approaches

Threat actors act anonymously and/or dishonestly online to connect with people who have access to information, for example through online professional or social networking sites. They do this by obfuscating their real identity and intentions – for example posing as recruiters or talent agents and approaching you with enticing opportunities, when their real intent is to gather as much information as possible and/or recruit you to work for them.

In 2023, the Director General of MI5 said there had been more than 20,000 cases where actors working for other states had made disguised approaches on professional networking sites, with the aim of accessing sensitive information.



Financial donations

Threat actors seek to use financial donations to influence your decision-making, public statements on policy issues or the questions you ask in debates. They may seek to use you as a proxy to conduct illicit financing on their behalf. Political parties and candidates may also receive funds seemingly from a UK national which may in fact have originated from a foreign actor. Foreign states may also donate indirectly – for example to a charity you are affiliated with or a project in your area – with a view to influencing your activity.

In 2022, MI5 issued an Interference Alert about the activities of Christine Lee, a UK-based individual who had facilitated financial donations to political parties and individuals seeking political office in the UK on behalf of foreign nationals while concealing the true source of her funding. Lee founded the British Chinese Project, and helped set up the Chinese in Britain All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). Media scrutiny followed in the wake of the Interference Alert.



Cyber compromises

Threat actors use spear-phishing and social engineering, in the form of highly personalised messages, aimed at tricking specific individuals into revealing sensitive information or clicking malicious links, to compromise accounts and devices. The proliferation of commercial spyware has enabled a wider range of actors to compromise devices.

In 2023, Stewart McDonald MP was targeted in a spear-phishing attack by suspected Russian actors. The phishing email appeared to come from a staff member – after their account had been hacked – and led to the compromise of his personal email. Mr McDonald feared the stolen data could be used in a disinformation campaign and publicly raised awareness to pre-empt manipulation.

Stolen information can be used – including via release into the public domain – to manipulate public discourse or undermine individuals and institutions.

Russian cyber actors, assessed to be part of Star Blizzard (a cyber unit of the Russian Intelligence Services), hacked and leaked sensitive UK-US trade documents ahead of the 2019 general election. These were amplified online to influence political discourse.

In March 2024, the UK and allies identified that Chinese state-affiliated organisations and individuals were responsible for malicious cyber campaigns targeting democratic institutions and parliamentarians, as part of a large-scale espionage campaign. This included a compromise of the Electoral Commission, and reconnaissance carried out to cyber target parliamentarians, the majority of whom were publicly critical of China.



Disinformation

State actors can cultivate fake or misleading content to shape public debate and policy decisions and/or discredit individuals. Fake social media accounts and automated bots can push large quantities of disinformation. Personal data – for example from cyber targeting – can be combined with fake information to create realistic-appearing disinformation. You should be on the lookout for a call or message which purports to be from a colleague but which in fact is generated by a threat actor, potentially in the form of a ‘deepfake’ or a hoax call. You should also take care to check the sourcing of content you draw upon in your own messaging.

In March 2022, fraudulent emails purporting to be from the Ukrainian Embassy in London were sent out to government departments seeking phone calls with Ministers. A clip of a call between an imposter posing as the Ukrainian prime minister and the then Defence Secretary was subsequently released in a manner intended to discredit him and the government. The perpetrators, ‘Vovan’ and ‘Lexus’, were Russian pranksters working to the objectives of the Russian state.



Exploiting your overseas travel

When travelling abroad, you are easier to target – either because espionage and interference activity is more common or the environment is more conducive to it. Foreign intelligence services will try to access your data – assume everything could be of interest, but particularly that relating to your work – personal belongings, CCTV and telecommunications data. These can be exploited to collect information or provide opportunities to influence or coerce.



What can you do to protect yourself?

The purpose of this guidance is not to stop you interacting with those you need to – it is to ensure you do so with knowledge of the risks, and the actions you can take to protect yourself.

Keep up-to-date with National Protective Security Authority (NPSA), National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and your security team's guidance. Use the **BEST** principles to take simple actions to help protect yourself, your team, your family – and the UK.

B Be alert

- **Understand how the threat can manifest**, and what you should look out for. Use your intuition to spot deviations from the norm.
- **Conduct due diligence.** Check the identity of someone who asks to meet you for the first time, and consider taking someone with you. Take reasonable steps to understand the source of donations or gifts, and adhere to relevant regulations and policies regarding these. Speak to your security team if in any doubt about the source of potential funding or if you receive inappropriate financial approaches of any kind. If asked to speak at an event, research the organisation that is hosting and who else will be on the panel with you (or your principal). Carefully research all overseas travel invitations.
- **Keep track of odd social interactions**, frequent requests to meet privately, and out-of-place introductions or engagements. If an approach is vague, involves overt flattery or pressure to respond quickly to avoid missing out or appears just too good to be true, you should be cautious.
- **Withdraw from contact if you have concerns.** If you think you've been talking to someone who has ulterior motives or an unclear agenda, withdraw from the conversation and report this contact to your security team straight away.
- **Protect your team.** Political staff, colleagues and family may be targeted to gain access to you. Make them aware of the risks, and ask them to adopt this guidance.



Enhance your security overseas

- **Consult your security team before travelling** and act on their advice, including about whether you need a travel-specific device for your trip. Take only the minimum number of electronic devices with you. Remove unnecessary apps and check the security permissions of those you keep. Do not conduct any sensitive business (i.e. that which you would not want entering the public domain) using your phone. Keep devices and papers on your person rather than leaving them in your hotel room, and use privacy screens if working in public environments.
- **Be alert to the heightened risk of approaches by foreign intelligence services.** Avoid any situations which you would not be happy being publicised at a later date.



Secure your information

- **Reduce the risk of cyber compromises.** Use strong, unique passwords for key accounts, and a password manager. Enable multi-factor authentication. Keep devices and software up-to-date. Check if you're eligible for NCSC's Individual Cyber Defence Services for high-risk individuals, which include free monitoring and support. Full guidance is available at [ncsc.gov.uk](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk).
- **Protect your online profile.** Be discreet. Understand what information about you exists online (your 'digital footprint'). Regularly review your privacy settings. Use multi-user social media accounts rather than sharing passwords. Be alert to approaches on professional and social networking sites that may not be what they seem.

Trust your instincts

- **If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and report to your security team immediately** so they can investigate, help resolve and support you. Nothing is ever too small and it will not be an inconvenience – your security team are there to help you. This guidance provides an overview but threat actors will change and tactics will evolve. It is therefore vital that you trust your intuition.



National Protective
Security Authority

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Applicant Beware - Who is Recruiting You?

Spotting the Signs of Online Targeting

The UK is a target for Foreign Intelligence Services (FIS) who use a variety of methods to collect information that they believe will give them advantage over the UK. We have previously warned about the use of direct approaches over professional networking sites. A new method deployed at scale by FIS and third parties acting on their behalf is the **use of online job platforms to attract applicants who have direct or indirect access to privileged information.**

This guidance helps you to **recognise suspicious adverts and recruiter behaviours** and understand how you can protect yourself and your organisation by **reporting concerns and ceasing engagement** if something doesn't look right.



ARE YOU LOOKING AT JOB OPPORTUNITIES?

Foreign Intelligence Services are targeting a wide range of individuals, including current or former government staff, clearance holders, academics, think tank employees, private defence firm and consultancy employees and people with networks that provide them with access to these groups



CAN YOU RECOGNISE SUSPICIOUS ADVERTS?

The signs of suspicious adverts include:

- Company has limited online presence
- Job titles are generic and descriptions focus on privileged or unique insight and access
- Adverts and websites are of poor quality with spelling and grammatical errors, stock imagery and broken links



WHAT DO SUSPICIOUS RECRUITER BEHAVIOURS LOOK LIKE?

The signs of suspicious recruiters include:

- Communications may avoid video and encourage a move to encrypted messaging services or in-person meetings
- Pace of engagement escalates quickly, asking for 'non-public' information and details about your network
- Payment through unconventional means such as online payment platforms and cryptocurrency



REPORT SUSPICIOUS ADVERTS

- Research the advert and the company and do some due diligence
- If something doesn't look right, report the suspicious advert to the online platform without delay
- If you hold a security clearance or are - or used to be - in a sensitive profession, you should inform the department's security team
- Remove yourself from the recruiter's network and cease engagement immediately

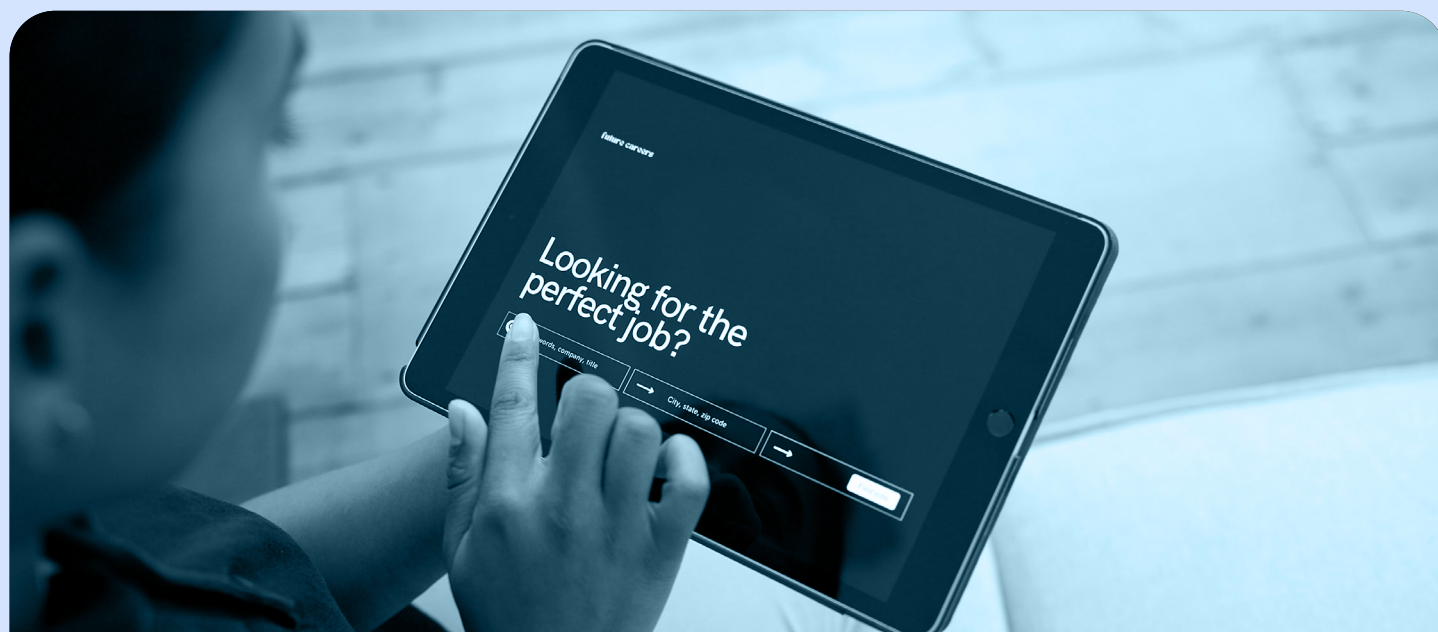
We recommend that you use the 4Rs when reviewing jobs adverts and throughout the application process:

R **realise**
the evolving threat

R **recognise**
the signs of suspicious adverts
and recruiter behaviours

R **report**
your suspicions without delay, and

R **remove**
them from your online network and
cease engagement





Realise

the Evolving Threat

**Think
before
you link**

Our [Think Before You Link](#) campaign highlights direct approaches over professional networking sites by FIS with the goal of accessing information that harms UK national security and economic wellbeing. This type of approach still occurs. Our experts have identified that this tactic has evolved, and FIS are **posting job adverts to online platforms to attract applicants with direct or indirect access to sensitive and protected information.**

Thousands of suspicious job adverts have been posted to online job platforms, with more appearing daily.

Information sought by FIS **may not be “classified” or have an obvious target for espionage**. Your insights and network of contacts can form valuable ‘pieces of the jigsaw’ when brought together with other information. Desirable information includes non-public, sensitive, or protected information on a wide range of topics, for example:



UK HMG policy



Geopolitical issues



Western military capabilities and alliances

Applicants bear the consequences

This includes potential prosecution under the [National Security Act \(2023\)](#) for offences such as disclosing protected information or obtaining a material benefit from or assisting a Foreign Intelligence Service.

Who is of interest?

Job adverts target a wide range of applicants, including:

- UK government and parliamentary employees
- Military employees
- Current or former clearance holders
- Academics
- Think tank employees
- Private defence firm and consultancy employees
- Former staff, and individuals who can provide access to the categories above

How do Foreign Intelligence Services hide their identity?

A variety of techniques are used to covertly post job adverts online, for example:



Using headhunters and recruitment consultants to act on their behalf



Setting up fake companies



Spoofing legitimate companies



It will never happen to me - navigating tactics used at scale

When an unsolicited email arrives in your inbox, you are more likely to be suspicious as it can bear the hallmarks of a scam: urgency, high reward, too good to be true...

This evolving tactic is effective because you make the initial approach in applying for a job opportunity, and are unaware that you are at risk of engaging with a state actor.

In a legitimate recruitment process, the person you're talking to assesses your background and quality of work because they are considering if you're the right candidate. A FIS is assessing whether the access and information you could provide will be useful to them.

Case study

A UK-based consultant, Adam, applied for the following freelance analyst role advertised online by a consultancy company via a job seeker website:

- Part-time, remote working with flexible hours
- Report writing and insights into international politics and geopolitical issues
- Desirable experience: freelance analyst, with experience of government, security or military sectors
- Payment: US\$500 per project
- Company details referenced a consulting firm in Singapore

Adam provided a CV and cover letter detailing his professional experience and previous UK government employment. The email response from a company representative requested further information about his UK government experience. The company expressed the need for 'exclusive information and high-quality analysis' and interest in his government-related professional connections. Adam recognised the recruitment process as suspicious and reported it to the online platform and his department's security team without delay.

Subsequent research indicated the 'consultancy company' was a Chinese Intelligence Service's cover company who hid this using Western names and false information on a company website.

Recognise the Signs:

They may (initially at least) look legitimate, but it is possible to spot the signs that job adverts and recruiter behaviours are suspicious, as illustrated by the graphics below.

When reviewing jobs, look out for signs of suspicious adverts

WHO IS OF INTEREST?

- Applicants with access to **non-public information**
- Applicants seeking **remote or part-time roles**

LOOK AND FEEL

- **Spelling or grammar errors**
- **Names and emails similar** to well-known consulting companies
- **Broken website links**
- **Generic job titles, e.g.:**
 - "geopolitics"
 - "international affairs"
 - "political risk"
- **Buzz words, e.g.:**
 - "unique insights"
 - "hot topics"

ACCOUNT POSTING THE JOB

- **New account, or lacks activity prior to posting**

Geopolitical Risk Analyst - Asia Pacific Region (Remote, Part-time)
Most Valuable Insights Consulting
GRA-APAC-001
Posted 10 hours ago | 17 applicants

Company Description
A strategic consulting firm that connect business, governments and institutions across the Asia-Pacific region. A research-driven consultancy firm that delivers actionable intelligence, insightful reports. With offices in Singapore and Hong Kong, we are well placed to provide complete coverage across Asia.

Role Overview
We are seeking a highly skilling Geopolitical Risk Analyst to join our team on a part-time, remote basis. You will provide unique insights into global political trends, with a specific focus on the Asia Pacific region. You will analyze hot topics and emerging risks, and leverage your network to obtain actionable intelligence to inform strategic decision-making.

Responsibilities

- Conduct in-depth analysis of geopolitical trends and risks in the Asia Pacific region
- Provide insights into the policies of Western governments towards China, Taiwan, and the Indo-Pacific region, including their military capabilities and strategic postures
- Analyze the complex relationships between China, the US, and other Western countrys, identifying potential areas of cooperation and conflict

Requirements

- Stay up-to-date on the latest developments in Western political affairs, including elections, policy changes, and shifts in public opinion
- Experience in geopolitical risk analysis, consulting or a related field
- Strong background of working with Government, especially current or recent experience of national security or defence issues
- Wide network of contacts in the field
- Excellent analytical and writing skills, with the ability to produce high-quality reports and briefings

Working Arrangements

- Part-time, remote work arrangement (20-30 hours per week)
- Flexible working hours to accomodate different time zones

What We Offer

- US \$500-2000 per report based on contributors' level of seniority and the intrinsic quality of the paper

How to Apply
Please submit your CV and a cover letter outlining your experience and qualities. Emails containing these documents can be sent to intelligence@mVIC.com

WHAT IS OF INTEREST?

- **Your network and connections**
- **Topics, e.g.:**
 - Western military capability
 - UK government policy
 - Geopolitical issues including tensions in the Indo-Pacific region

COMPANY BACKGROUND

- **Limited history, website or online presence**
- **Stock imagery and generic descriptions of services**
- **No link to physical addresses provided**

When applying, look for signs of suspicious recruiter behaviours



YOU INITIATE CONTACT

- You spot and apply for an opportunity you find on an online job platform



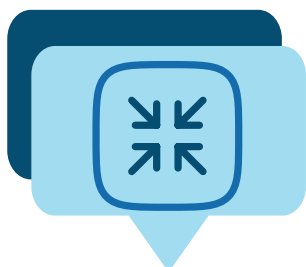
STYLE OF CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT

- They quickly move communications onto an encrypted platform
- They may not use video capability and may claim connectivity issues in interview



INTERVIEW

- They ask questions about your suitability, probing about your access to sensitive information, including through your contacts
- They provide little information about the company or its clients



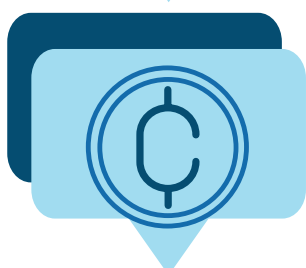
AREAS OF INTEREST

- They set a test report. Further report topics may focus on geopolitical and international matters. These may not relate to the services the company claims to offer



ESCALATION

- The pace develops quickly, with increasing requests for non-public, exclusive and sensitive information in reports
- They ask you to gather information from your networks and connections



UNCONVENTIONAL PAYMENT METHODS

- They pay through unconventional means e.g. online payment platforms and cryptocurrency
- Payments from accounts which do not share the company name or clear links to the company
- Tiered salary, with 'insider' information garnering higher pay



TRAVEL

- They may request in-person meeting in a non-Western country

A laptop is open on a desk. The screen displays a recruitment advertisement with the heading 'JOIN OUR TEAM' and a sub-heading 'We offer a unique opportunity to grow and develop your skills while being part of a dynamic and supportive team.' The background of the advertisement shows a desk with papers and a pen. The overall image has a light blue tint.

R eport

If you recognise signs associated with suspicious adverts and recruiter behaviours, report concerns to the online platform without delay. If you currently hold, or used to hold, a security clearance or have access to sensitive information (which can include academic research or bulk customer data) inform your department's security team.

Include the following details:

- URL of the profile
- A screenshot of the job advert and any messages you have exchanged
- A brief explanation of why you think the approach is suspicious
- Any other relevant details

Remove

and cease engagement

If you start an application process and notice suspicious recruiter behaviours, remove them from your network, and cease engagement immediately. Keeping malicious profiles in your network gives them legitimacy and puts colleagues and other contacts at risk.



General Tips

- Don't advertise your security clearance publicly online – publicising this will mean you are of interest to malicious actors
- Don't reveal details of sensitive job roles and/or projects, either publicly or to unknown contacts
- Don't make your CV and /or social media profile information publicly available
- If absolutely necessary, only include details of your security clearance in direct correspondence with genuine contacts
- If it's necessary to share sensitive details, such as a complete CV, or details of specific projects, do so one-to-one over trusted networks or in person with verified contacts
- Check your organisation's guidance and policy on the management of your digital footprint
- Use account settings to maintain your privacy and control who can view your profile (seek out the guidance on the relevant platforms you use). The more personalised these settings are, the more control users have over their information. NCSC has [guidance on how to use social media safely](#)

Further guidance

Keep up to date with [National Protective Security Authority \(NPSA\)](#) and [National Cyber Security Centre \(NCSC\)](#) guidance. It's especially important to seek advice from your security department about declaring second jobs or consultancy work you may wish to undertake.

For further guidance on how you can help protect yourself and your organisation from this type of threat, download the [Think Before You Link app](#).

Disclaimer

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