May 27th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 27th May 2026** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall, Bangor & via Zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

Attachment: C 2026.05.27 Agenda.pdf *Page 1*

1. Prayer

2. Apologies

3. Declarations of Interest

4 Mayor's Business

5 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month (Copy attached)

Attachment: 5. Mayoral Engagements - May 2026.pdf *Page 5*

6 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 29 April 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: C 2026.04.29 Minutes.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: C 2026.04.29 MinutesPM.pdf *Page 9*

7 Minutes of Committees

7.1 Planning Committee dated 5 May 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: PC 2026.05.05 Minutes PC.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: PC 2026.05.05 Minutes PC PM.pdf *Page 46*

7.2 Environment Committee dated 6 May 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: EC 2026.05.06 Minutes.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: EC 2026.05.06 MinutesPM.pdf *Page 89*

7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 7 May 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: 2026.05.07 PP Minutes.pdf *Page 114*

7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 12 May 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: CS.2026.05.12 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: CS.2026.05.12 Minutes PM.pdf ***Page 136***

7.5 Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 13 May 2026 (Copy attached)

Attachment: AHC 2026.05.13 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: AHC 2026.05.13 MinutesPM.pdf ***Page 146***

7.6. Special Planning Committee dated 14 May 2026 (copy attached)

Attachment: PC 2026.05.14 Minutes.pdf ***Page 196***

7.7 Audit Committee dated 18 May 2026 (copy attached)

Attachment: AC 2026.05.18 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: AC 2026.05.18 Minutes PM.pdf ***Page 210***

8. Deputation Request from Donaghadee Rugby Football Club

Report attached

Attachment: 8. Deputation request from Donaghadee Rugby Club.pdf ***Page 227***

Attachment: 8. Appendix Deputation Request Form.pdf ***Page 229***

9. Sealing Documents

10. Transfer of Rights of Burial

11. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

Attachment: 11. Notice of Motion Status Report.pdf ***Page 233***

Attachment: 11. NoM Tracker.pdf ***Page 235***

12. Notices of Motion

12.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Edmund and Alderman Adair

That this Council task officers to bring forward a costed programme of works to bring slipways and harbours in Council ownership or control up to an appropriate standard in order that they can be utilised by leisure users as part of our wider tourism offering and to investigate appropriate funding streams to deliver this.

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

This Council recognises the service and sacrifice of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), including those from the Borough and surrounding areas who served with dedication during a difficult period in Northern Ireland's history.

Accordingly, tasks officers to bring back a report this Council on providing a memorial bench within Clandeboye Cemetery, Bangor, dedicated to the memory and service of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The proposed bench should provide a dignified place for remembrance and reflection for families, veterans, and members of the wider community.

12.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum

Following the deputation from pupils of Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College, which highlighted the importance of ensuring children and young people are included in decisions that affect them, this Council recognises that political literacy is fundamental to a healthy democracy and to preparing the next generation for active civic participation.

Accordingly, Council requests that Officers bring forward a report setting out options for the development of a children's political literacy project to be delivered in advance of the May 2027 election, including, but not limited to: support available from the Electoral Commission; opportunities for Council to deliver the project alongside identified suitable partners; a workshop explaining how government works in Northern Ireland; and the organisation of a mock election to enable children and young people to express their views on the issues that matter most to them.

12.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor

Newman

That this Council acknowledges increased demand for service experienced by North Down and Ards Women's Aid. Over the last three years referrals for floating support have increased by over 33% and referrals for refuge have increased by over 186%.

This council is committed to the campaign of ending violence against women and girls, and to providing the best possible support service to victims, therefore officers will be tasked to:

- Writes to the Minister for Communities requesting a review into the funding provided to Women's Aid through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Supporting People Grant.

- Writes to the Northern Ireland Executive welcoming the funding provided, but expressing concerns that the (EVAWG) programme is primarily resourced to support prevention activity, rather than provision of services. While investment in prevention is essential, it is already resulting in increased disclosures and referrals, particularly to Women's Aid services. The letter should also highlight the need for multiyear funding, and increased funding allocation for the Tier 3 EVAWG programme, which currently doesn't cover the cost of one additional member of staff.

Secondly to letter should propose the establishment of a dedicated Emergency Fund in Northern Ireland to support women who are fleeing domestic abuse but face immediate financial barriers to accessing safety. Many women, particularly those who are working or have limited access to benefits, are unable to afford refuge accommodation costs or secure private rental housing due to high upfront expenses such as deposits and rent in advance. As a result, they are often forced to remain in unsafe environments or face homelessness. This fund would provide flexible, rapid financial assistance to cover emergency costs, refuge stays, and access to long-term housing, ensuring that no woman is prevented from leaving an abusive situation due to a lack of financial resources.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

19 May 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, 27 May 2026 at 7.00pm.**

Please note the Council photograph will be taken at 6.15pm. Members should arrive sharp for robing.

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer

2. Apologies

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Mayor's Business

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of May 2026 (Copy attached)

6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 29 April 2026 (Copy attached)

7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)

   7.1. Planning Committee dated 5 May 2026

   7.2. Environment Committee dated 6 May 2026

   7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 7 May 2026

   7.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 12 May 2026

   7.5. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 13 May 2026

   7.6. Special Planning Committee dated 14 May 2026

   7.7. Audit Committee dated 18 May 2026

8. Deputation Request from Donaghadee Rugby Club (Report attached)

9. Sealing Documents

10. Transfer of Rights of Burial

11. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

12. Notices of Motion

12.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Edmund and Alderman Adair

That this Council task officers to bring forward a costed programme of works to bring slipways and harbours in Council ownership or control up to an appropriate standard in order that they can be utilised by leisure users as part of our wider tourism offering and to investigate appropriate funding streams to deliver this.

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

This Council recognises the service and sacrifice of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), including those from the Borough and surrounding areas who served with dedication during a difficult period in Northern Ireland's history.

Accordingly, tasks officers to bring back a report this Council on providing a memorial bench within Clandeboye Cemetery, Bangor, dedicated to the memory and service of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The proposed bench should provide a dignified place for remembrance and reflection for families, veterans, and members of the wider community.

12.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McBurney and Councillor McCollum

Following the deputation from pupils of Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College, which highlighted the importance of ensuring children and young people are included in decisions that affect them, this Council recognises that political literacy is fundamental to a healthy democracy and to preparing the next generation for active civic participation.

Accordingly, Council requests that Officers bring forward a report setting out options for the development of a children's political literacy project to be delivered in advance of the May 2027 election, including, but not limited to: support available from the Electoral Commission; opportunities for Council to deliver the project alongside identified suitable partners; a workshop explaining how government works in Northern Ireland; and the organisation of a mock election to enable children and young people to express their views on the issues that matter most to them.

12.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Newman

That this Council acknowledges increased demand for service experienced by North Down and Ards Women's Aid. Over the last three years referrals for floating support have increased by over 33% and referrals for refuge have increased by over 186%.

This council is committed to the campaign of ending violence against women and girls, and to providing the best possible support service to victims, therefore officers will be tasked to:

- Writes to the Minister for Communities requesting a review into the funding provided to Women's Aid through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Supporting People Grant.
- Writes to the Northern Ireland Executive welcoming the funding provided, but expressing concerns that the (EVAWG) programme is primarily resourced to support prevention activity, rather than provision of services. While investment in prevention is essential, it is already resulting in increased disclosures and referrals, particularly to Women's Aid services. The letter should also highlight the need for multiyear funding, and increased funding allocation for the Tier 3 EVAWG programme, which currently doesn't cover the cost of one additional member of staff.
  Secondly to letter should propose the establishment of a dedicated Emergency Fund in Northern Ireland to support women who are fleeing domestic abuse but face immediate financial barriers to accessing safety. Many women, particularly those who are working or have limited access to benefits, are unable to afford refuge accommodation costs or secure private rental housing due to high upfront expenses such as deposits and rent in advance. As a result, they are often forced to remain in unsafe environments or face homelessness. This fund would provide flexible, rapid financial assistance to cover emergency costs, refuge stays, and access to long-term housing, ensuring that no woman is prevented from leaving an abusive situation due to a lack of financial resources.

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	
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 MAY 2026

Saturday 2 May

2.00 pm Charity Bridgerton Themed Afternoon Tea, City Hall, Bangor

Monday 4 May

10.00 am May Day, Holywood

Tuesday 5 May

10.30 am Launch of Council's Equality and Disability Action Plans, City Hall, Bangor

12.00 pm Photo – Freshen Up Grant Launch, Holywood Library

Wednesday 6 May

7.00 pm Launch of 'Holywood Shop Fronts Then and Now', North Down Museum

Thursday 7 May

10.00 am Official Launch of PEACEPLUS Project #ANDepic, Town Hall, Newtownards

12.30 pm Photo – Comber Earlies, Comber Leisure Centre Car Park

1.30 pm Photo – Sea Bangor Passport, Eisenhower Pier, Bangor

2.15 pm Afternoon Tea – Comber u3A, City Hall, Bangor

4.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Shipwrecks & Rescues Exhibition, Donaghadee Heritage Centre

5.00 pm LMP Celebration Event, Council Chamber, City Hall, Bangor

7.00 pm Donaghadee Primary School and Male Voice Choir Concert, Donaghadee Primary School

Friday 8 May

10.00 am Opening of Holywood Seapark Play Area, Holywood

11.30 am Civic Reception Orchardville and Redeeming our communities NI, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

3.00 pm Afternoon Tea – Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company, City Hall, Bangor

Saturday 9 May

9.30 am DEPUTY MAYOR – Gathering Stitches Festival, Castle Espie, Newtownards

11.40 am DEPUTY MAYOR – Sandcastle Competition, Ballyholme Beach

Monday 11 May

3.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Photo at Seawall, Strangford Lough Yacht Club

Tuesday 12 May

10.30 am Photo – Dementia Action Week, LM Hair Studio, Ballywalter

2.30 pm Photo – LEP, City Hall, Bangor

3.00 pm Afternoon Tea – Bangor Junior Park Run, City Hall, Bangor

6.30 pm Mayoral Reception – Soroptimists International Bangor, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 13 May

9.30 am Judging of President's Awards, Holywood

11.00 am Time for Tea Session, Holywood Library

6.30 pm My Ride, Our Right – Women's Cycling Event, City Hall, Bangor

7.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Blair Mayne Bursary Awards, Ards Arts Centre

Thursday 14 May

9.00 am AGM of CAAND, Community Hub, Hamilton Road, Bangor

7.30 pm Visit to Midweek Connection Group, Conlig Presbyterian Church

Friday 15 May

9.30 am 100th Birthday Visit (Betty McCracken), Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre, Newtownards

10.00 am Loughs and Legends Tourism Cluster, City Hall, Bangor

11.30 am Visit to Mount Stewart, Newtownards

Saturday 16 May

2.30 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Cricket Season Opening, North Down Cricket Club, Comber

7.30 pm Bangor Ladies Choir 50th Anniversary Concert, Elim Church, Bangor

Monday 18 May

10.00 am Launch – "The Good Visitor Promise", Ulster Folk Museum

6.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Intergenerational Project, Bramblewood Care Home

Tuesday 19 May

10.30 am Seaside Awards Event, The Stables, Groomsport

1.30 pm PEACEPLUS Project Launch, Orchardville, Bangor

7.30 pm Street Pastors Commissioning Service, Bangor Elim

Wednesday 20 May

2.00 pm Secretary of State Garden Party, Hillsborough Castle

3.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – LEP Meeting, City Hall, Bangor

Friday 22 May

12.30 pm Celebration of Dance and Art, Aurora Leisure Complex

1.45 pm Photo – Bangor Marina Award, Bangor Marina

2.00 pm Welcoming Visiting Ships: Spirit of Falmouth and Pellew, Bangor Marina

6.30 pm St Columbanus Gala Ball, St Columbanus College

Saturday 23 May

9.00 am DEPUTY MAYOR – 40th Anniversary Swimming Gala, Ards Blair Mayne and Leisure Complex

1.00 pm Sea Bangor Festival, Bangor

7.30 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Donaghadee Male Voice Choir Concert, St Comgall's Hall, Bangor

Tuesday 26 May

9.30 am Photo – Smartphone Free School, Donaghadee Primary School

11.00 am Morning Tea with Women's Institute, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 27 May

10.15 am Opening of Greyabbey Islandview Play Area, Greyabbey

12.30 pm Lunch and Information Session with Bangor Churches, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 28 May

11.00 am Walking for All, Seapark, Holywood

4.00 pm Visit from Rory and Megan McBride, City Hall, Bangor

5.15 pm ForM Sculpture Exhibition Launch, Bangor Castle Walled Garden

7.00 pm Mayoral Reception – Beach Cleaners, City Hall, Bangor

Friday 29 May

8.30 am Launch – Local Action Groups, City Hall, Bangor

10.00 am Interview – Belfast Telegraph, Mayor's Parlour

12.00 pm Photo – Portaferry Festival Launch, Portaferry

1.30 pm AGM & Celebration Event, Community Hub, Hamilton Road

Saturday 30 May

10.00 am DEPUTY MAYOR – , Aurora Leisure Complex, Bangor

11.00 am DEPUTY MAYOR – Blooming Great Tea Party, West Church, Rathmore Road

4.00 pm DEPUTY MAYOR – Softball Tournament, Ward Park, Bangor

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 29 April 2026 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor McCollum)

Aldermen:

Adair
Armstrong-Cotter
Brooks
Cummings
Graham
McAlpine
McDowell
McIlveen
McRandal
Smith

Councillors:

Ashe
Blaney
Boyle
Brady
Cathcart
Chambers
Cochrane
Douglas (Zoom)
Edmund (Zoom 8.07pm)
Gilmour
Harbinson
Hennessy
Hollywood
Irvine, S
Irvine, W
Kennedy
Kendall
Kerr (Zoom 7.08pm)
McBurney
McClean
McCracken
McKee
Moore (7.02pm)
Morgan
Newman
Quinn
Smart
Thompson
Wray (7.14pm)

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), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies for lateness had been received from Councillor Wray.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

4a. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor began by offering congratulations to Rory McIlroy who earlier this month had won the Masters title for the second time, making this the first back-to-back win since 2002. On behalf of the Council, she stated that she intended to send Rory a letter of congratulations on this fantastic achievement.

Continuing she stated that Members may be aware of another display of good sportsmanship this week when Aaron Beggs from Bangor received global recognition after coming to the aid of a fellow competitor at the recent Boston Marathon. Aaron stepped in on the final stretch to help carry a fellow runner across the finishing line who had collapsed.

At this stage the Mayor welcomed Councillor Rosaleen Quinn who had recently replaced Councillor Hannah Irwin for the Bangor East and Donaghadee District Electoral Area. She took the opportunity to wish Hannah all the best with her future endeavours.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the Mayor's business be noted.

(Councillor Kerr joined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 7.08pm)

4b. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2026

(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor spoke with enthusiasm on a number of engagements which she had attended and highlighted some of the engagements which had taken place during March/April 2026 ably assisted by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore:-

- Official launch of a new machine by Holywood Men's Shed
- Belonging Concert at Bangor Elim Church in aid of the Mayor's three chosen charities
- Civic Reception to celebrate numerous recent awards won in Donaghadee
- Numerous Afternoon Teas at Bangor Castle
- Visit from Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College – Rights Respecting Borough
- Mayoral Reception – Chai and Chat Group
- Mayoral Reception – Wizards Special Olympic Basketball Club
- Unveiling of RIC Memorial Stone – Dedication Service, Royal British Legion, Newtownards

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

(Councillor Wray entered the Chamber at this stage – 7.14pm)

5. DEPUTATION FROM SHANE MAC GIOLLABHUI AND SHARON FERGUSON (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Deputation request form.

The Mayor stated that in line with Standing Order 12.2, she had received an emergency deputation request on Monday which she had accepted. In line with Standing Orders, this Deputation would be confined to a presentation of a statement and should not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address should not exceed ten minutes followed by a maximum of 15 minutes question and answer session.

The Mayor invited Shane Mac Giollabhui and Sharon Ferguson to come forward and make their Deputation.

Mr Mac Giollabhui thanked the Mayor, for allowing them to address the Council, adding that they were very grateful to have the opportunity to speak before the Members' vote on whether or not to agree to Bangor Marine's (BM) request.

He introduced himself advising that he lived on Queen's Parade and was in attendance on behalf of residents of Queen's Parade, Mount Royal Mount Pleasant, and everyone in the Save Marine Gardens Group which was formed back in February 2026. Since then, their campaign had grown significantly, reflecting the strength of feeling not just locally, but across Bangor and beyond. The Group had:

- Over 1,000 followers on Facebook
- Over three and a half thousand petition signatures – 2,000 of which were local
- It had raised a modest, but significant fund towards possible legal representation

Continuing Mr Mac Giollabhui reported that people had come together out of a sense of shock that BM was, out of the blue, proposing to replace ‘Marine Gardens’ with a car park. He highlighted that:

- This mature green space was in an iconic part of Bangor’s seafront: a space that was well used, valued and central to the character of the city.
- The terraced houses that overlooked Marine Gardens were among the last remaining listed assets on the sea-front
- Marine Gardens was at the heart of this Victorian and Edwardian landscape
- The Department’s ‘Historic Environment Division’ had described this plan for a car park as, and he quoted, ‘detrimental’ to that listing.

As such when BM first proposed this car-park, exactly eight weeks ago, they could not believe their ears. Marine Gardens, he stated, was the one part of Queen’s Parade that did not require regeneration.

Mr Mac Giollabhui advised that this debate was not about the car-park but instead it was about the process that had led them to this point which they believed had been rushed from the beginning:

- BM organized the first public consultation last October, but that discussion had been about a playground.
- The Group was concerned and had been in touch with some of elected Members about it. However, the public conversation, at that point, was exclusively in relation to a larger playground; and
- It was not until 5 February 2026 that the Group first heard about a plan for a 90-space car park.

Mr Mac Giollabhui stated that he was not going to rehearse the arguments for and against a car park as this debate, fundamentally, was not about a car park. BM had been very candid and clear with the Group back at the February 2026 presentation, and their position had not changed in the meantime. Their rationale for the car park was that it opened up a necessary revenue stream, which from their perspective was vital to the long-term viability of the development. Their position, quite simply, was that if they did not get the car park, they would lose the levelling-up funds, and the wider development would stall and collapse.

As such Mr Mac Giollabhui suggested that he did not know when, precisely, this funding problem had become apparent. Whether it was before, or after, or at the time when Oakland replaced Farrans in the consortium last summer. He suggested that at some point, in that period between then and now, someone, somewhere decided that a car park in Marine Gardens was the only solution to this problem. Since then, a kind of tunnel vision had developed, whereby no one in the Council or BM seemed able to see any other solution. And they were now rushing headlong towards a decision on it.

Mr Mac Giollabhui said that the Group was asking the Council, as its representatives, to take a beat or, a ‘tactical pause’, and consider the following:

1. Had you tested the premise that the levelling-up funds could be lost or were you taking the developer's word for it?
2. Were you sure we could not seek, and win, an extension especially given the progress that had been made.
3. If BM had known about this problem since the summer and if the levelling-up funds really were as precarious as they claimed, why did they sign up, and why was everyone only hearing about this problem now?

Mr Mac Giollabhui expressed the view that something was just not right, hence his plea for a pause to be considered to bring a fresh set of eyes to help find a realistic and sensible solution to this problem. There was, otherwise, real legal jeopardy in the current approach:

1. If approved tonight, the Council would be putting a degree of pressure on the Planning Committee that would undermine its capacity to make and be seen to make a full and independent decision.

2. If the Council proceeded without community support, it ran the risk of a judicial review which would cause a delay which would be equally ruinous, and no-one wanted that.

Mr Mac Giollabhui recognised that it was a difficult position and a pressurised one at that. However, he believed that it was vital to get this right, so that long after the diggers, and developers, had gone there would be a city and a sea-front, which residents could be proud of. He thanked Members for listening and handed over to Sharon Ferguson.

Ms Ferguson thanked Mr Mac Giollabhui and introduced herself as a resident of Mount Pleasant since 2017, and a mother. Her background was in design, where for over a decade she had worked on major attractions internationally. Ms Ferguson stated that it was extremely disappointing to be here now, asking the Council to think carefully before it gave the green light for the next stage of the development. She recalled how thrilled everyone had been when it looked like the Queen's Parade regeneration was at last going to happen, and there had been a collective sigh of relief when work began. However, it was only now that work had started on the understanding that BM would be making changes down the line, and it seemed on the assumption there would be no problem. The local community had to accept sculptures instead of an attractive sensory fountain, without community consultation. It was being asked to agree to replacing a valued green space with a paid car park and larger play park. She asked why a car park was considered a higher-value land use than public amenity space in this location.

Ms Ferguson stated that the strength of feeling about this was real with thousands of signatures gathered in a short time, not just from Bangor but from surrounding towns. What was being proposed was not what was promised. Significant changes had been undertaken including the removal of mature trees and key features altered. This she commented created a growing lack of trust and a need for proper scrutiny at this stage. Decisions came with a responsibility to fully understand what was being proposed. For many, this site was abstract, seen on a plan or in a rendered image, but in reality, it was not. It was a recognisable and well-used space in Bangor.

Ms Ferguson encouraged everyone to walk the site and experience it as people did every day. She also asked everyone to consider why this area was so often used in Council communications and photographs. She believed that it was because the historic terraces and the open space in front of them defined Bangor's sense of place. Those listed buildings and their wider setting mattered, and she asked if the impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings under PPS6 had been considered. The impact on the historic setting and key viewpoints needed to be understood, not assumed acceptable. She asked if a Heritage Impact Assessment had been independently verified.

Continuing Ms Ferguson commented that this space existed for a reason. Before the Marina was built, the tide reached the terraced gardens. When the natural beach was lost, this green space was created so people could still experience openness at the water's edge. It reflected the legacy of the Marine Gardens sitting between urban landscape and the coastal path and had become part of the town's identity. Under SPPS, she questioned how the loss of open space was justified. The proposal she suggested risked being presented as progressive while moving in the opposite direction. All at a time when Councils were embedding sustainability into development, however this scheme showed little evidence of that ambition. She asked where the exploration of creative technologies was that could make this waterfront a model for sustainable design. Instead, she noted that more hard surfacing was proposed, more plastic, and increased car dependency on prime waterfront land. That was not forward-looking and instead it was greenwashing, using the language of regeneration without delivering the environmental responsibility that should come with it.

Continuing Ms Ferguson suggested there was also policy contradiction as they were being asked to support increased surface car parking despite commitments in the Climate Change Act and the Eastern Transport Plan. People may want parking, but policy existed to guide decisions beyond short-term convenience. Waterfronts were moving away from cars and towards people and as such this was a genuine opportunity for the Council to lead delivery of Northern Ireland policy, not to repeat mistakes. Accessible and family parking was needed, but not 81 spaces. She suggested that the developer wanted a car park for return on their investment, but in her view, there were serious questions around value. Car parking generated minimal employment, yet it replaced elements of the original vibrant, mixed-use space. It also removed footfall along Main Street and promoted in-and-out visits. Ms Ferguson asked if it would induce additional traffic into a sensitive heritage area.

Turning to the Levelling Up Funding (LUF) Ms Ferugson noted the commentary around the fact that this funding was at risk, yet LUF funding was for public benefit, not to provide a private return. As such she asked if every alternative option had truly been considered to deliver a viable development. Everyone wanted regeneration to succeed in a way that was beneficial to the community it would serve. She added that their perspective went beyond this site to long-term impacts on local businesses, the environment, and trust between Council and residents.

By way of summing up Ms Ferguson urged the Council to work with them as they believed there was an opportunity to make this development distinctive. Bangor had

extraordinary potential and a thoughtful approach along with protecting what made it special, while shaping what came next, was needed. She asked if there were alternative sites for parking that did not involve loss of open space and if BM's revised, changed proposal met what Bangor needed. Ms Ferguson asked the Council not to agree to this proposal.

The Mayor thanked Mr Mac Giollabhui and Ms Ferguson for their comments and sought queries from Members at this stage.

Councillor W Irvine thanked Mr Mac Giollabhui and Ms Ferguson for their presentation and asked them if they would be willing to consider a car park elsewhere.

In response Mr Mac Giollabhui and Ms Ferguson both indicated that was something they would be absolutely willing to consider as they were reasonable people whose priority was to see the development successfully completed. They believed it was a turning point for the city and as such they were open to compromise. It was noted they were also willing to help where necessary, having a great deal of expertise within the Group.

Councillor Kendall asked what they would wish to see instead as an ideal compromise.

Mr Mac Giollabhui commented that it was not for them to propose solutions although they did appreciate the two features in play. Whatever was proposed had to be feasible for Bangor Marina and the other element was that this was about visibility with a collapsing timeframe. An easy solution to this would be something between the red lines of the development where there was ample space. He believed that what was needed was new and fresh sets of eyes on the Development Plan and a pause of two weeks to enable that to take place.

Councillor Boyle asked what the ramifications would be if the matter was to be deferred to get further advice.

The Mayor clarified at this stage that questions were purely for those making the Deputation rather than Council officers.

As there were no further questions the Mayor thanked Mr Mac Giollabhui and Ms Ferguson and asked them to withdraw to the public gallery.

NOTED.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 25 MARCH 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Audit Committee dated 23 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.2 Planning Committee dated 31 March 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.3. Environment Committee dated 8 April 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Alderman McRandal noted that while he had been in attendance at the meeting that had not been recorded in the Minutes.

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

7.4. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 April 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

(Councillor Harbinson left the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.33pm)

7.5. Corporate Committee dated 14 April 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Item 5.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers

Councillor Boyle sought clarity around a timeframe for the proposed report, as it would require a significant piece of work to be undertaken.

(Councillor Morgan left the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.34pm)

In response the Director of Corporate Services noted that the Committee had expressed a desire to consider all options and as such he envisaged the report coming back in June 2026 or September 2026 at the latest.

(Councillors Harbinson and Morgan re-entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.35pm)

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

7.6. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 15 April 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Item 4 – Consultation on the Construction Products White Paper

At this stage the Director of Active and Healthy Communities stated that an amendment had been requested at Appendix 2 to replace the word 'Unsafe' with 'Non-Compliant'.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the amendment was approved.

Item 14a - Update on the efforts to combat anti-social behaviour in Bangor including recent attack

Councillor W Irvine referred to the anti-social behaviour which had occurred in Bangor the previous weekend and sought an update on engagement with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

In the response the Director commented that she was aware of the incident, and a meeting had been held earlier that day with a number of statutory agencies including the PSNI and Translink. It was agreed that interventions were necessary on transport links to act as deterrent to those young people travelling to the city.

Councillor Kendall suggested that Members were invited to be involved in such meetings going forward as many had received calls from concerned residents over the weekend. She clarified that perhaps each Party could nominate a representative to attend a future meeting.

The Director stated that consideration would be given to the correct method for this adding that such meetings were generally operational and tactical.

(Councillor Douglas left the meeting at this stage – 7.43pm)

Expressing his thanks for the update, Councillor Cathcart stated that the behaviour which had taken place at the weekend was unacceptable, adding that many of those involved had travelled to the city on the train. As such he believed that it was crucial

that the PSNI had more of a presence at Bangor PSNI station and a more visible presence on the ground. Continuing he expressed his thanks to the Street Pastors for the invaluable work they carried out adding that it was a very vulnerable situation for everyone involved.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall that this Council writes to the Chief Constable to ask for additional resources for the local District Commander to be able to have the resources to adequately police both the Anti Social Behaviour hotspots and normal policing demands in the Borough.

Councillor Gilmour referred to the recent attack which had taken place in the city involving a volunteer from K9 Rescue Service and his dog. She believed that a collective approach was required to effectively tackle this growing problem.

Councillor Kendall concurred adding that support for local teams in Bangor was crucial.

The Mayor welcomed the proposal particularly as currently when resources were sent to areas to deal with incidents other areas within the Borough where left vulnerable.

Also welcoming the proposal, Councillor Wray acknowledged that multi agency meetings linked all the relevant statutory agencies as well as organisations such as the Street Pastors. He expressed disappointment at the negative headlines particularly as some of those involved in the anti-social behaviour had travelled from outside the Borough on public transport to the city. He expressed his thanks to the PSNI officers who had provided assistance but agreed that a greater officer presence on the ground was required. Councillor Wray also suggested that a greater emphasis needed to be placed on education.

At this stage Councillor McKee noted in the minutes there had been no reference to attendance by the Council's Community Safety Team and as such he asked if they had been excluded from the Minutes.

In response the Director indicated that she would need to check that with the Head of Communities and added that she was aware they had been in attendance at the meeting which had taken place the previous day. She added that she was aware of their involvement with the PSNI as part of a partnership arrangement.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that this Council writes to the Chief Constable to ask for additional resource for the local district commander to be able to have the resources to adequately police both the Anti Social Behaviour hotspots and normal policing demands in the Borough.

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

8. DEPUTATION REQUEST FROM BRYANSBURN RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the the Chief Executive stating that a deputation request had been received from Alan Dempster on behalf of Bryansburn Rangers Football Club.

The attached request form stated, at the outset, that 'Bryansburn Rangers Football Club wished 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 was seeking the opportunity to brief members on progress to date and highlight how the project aligned with Council priorities around health, wellbeing, sports participation, community engagement and local sporting infrastructure.'

The deputation request form was attached as an Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the Deputation be heard by the Active and Healthy Communities Committee.

9. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the the Chief Executvie stating that places on working groups were filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and were thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position became vacant, it reverted back to Council to nominate a Member to fill the place rather than the Party Nominating Officers.

Following the resignation of Hannah Irwin (Bangor East and Donaghadee DEA) from the Council. Nominations were 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 reflected 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 *(No replacement nominated to replace Cllr Gilmour Nov 2024)*
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. Those 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 were 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 were sought from Council to fill the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to nominate a Member(s) to the bodies as outlined in this report.

The Mayor sought nominations at this stage.

- Fair Trade Working Group

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy that no nominations were made.

- Ards and North Down Sports Forum

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that he was nominated.

- North Down Coastal Path Working Group

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that Councillor Quinn be nominated.

- International Relations Working Group

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor Blaney be nominated.

RESOLVED, that the following members were appointed:

- **Fair Trade Working Group – No nominations made.**
- **Ards and North Down Sports Forum – Alderman McRandal**
- **North Down Coastal Path Working Group – Councillor Quinn**
- **International Relations Working Group – Councillor Blaney**

10. SHARED ISLAND CONFERENCE ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities stating that 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 24 and 25 March 2026 in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan.

NILGA had 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. Alderman 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 could 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 could 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 reinforced 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 would continue to work together, strengthen capability, and demonstrate the leadership and accountability needed to support safer, more inclusive communities.

Council had 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 would be brought to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee once a Letter of Offer had been received.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Gilmour thanked officers for the report on what was a very important matter. She welcomed the development of the EVAWG Strategy commenting that it would assist to establish where the most need was and she hoped the resources could be secured to progress it further.

The Mayor commented that the points were well made, adding that this had been under consideration for some time and therefore she too welcomed the development of the Strategy.

Councillor Boyle also thanked officers for the report and paid tribute to NILGA and its Irish counterparts for the Shared Island Civic Society Fund. He stated that it was vital to do all that could be done to end violence against girls and that was why he had been disappointed that no Council members had been able to attend.

At this stage the Mayor expressed her apologies for being unable to attend on that occasion due to other diary commitments.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Council forms a Working Group to ensure the development of an EVAWG Strategy for the Borough.

The proposer, Councillor Kendall commented that many Members had an interest in this and as such she believed that it would be a very worthwhile Working Group.

Rising in support of this Councillor Gilmour agreed that it would be useful to have representation from across the Council Chamber. In response to Councillor Boyle's criticism of lack of representation from the Council she highlighted that the event had taken place on the same date as the March Council meeting and as an elected representative she believed her priority was to be in attendance at that meeting.

At this stage the Mayor agreed that the composition of the Working Group should be open to all in the Council Chamber as Women's Aid frequently commented this was not just a women's issue.

At this stage the Director of Active and Healthy Communities indicated that she would put some thought into how the Working Group could be set up and bring back a report to Members detailing what that might look like.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reiterated that there had been a Council meeting on that date hence her inability to attend. However, she stated that non-attendance should not be judged given the passion that she had for this matter as a woman and indeed a mother. It was something which meant a lot to her and as such she just wanted to provide some clarity around that and agreed that it should be considered by both men and women. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commended Councillor Kendall for bringing forward her proposal.

At this stage Alderman McDowell reported that he had had the privilege to attend the event on behalf of NILGA and to represent the Council. He stated that it had been a very well organised event and had opened his eyes to the many issues and the scale of the problem which could cause grief to so many. An important point which was made was that men had an important role to play in this leading by example and becoming good role models. At this stage he added that he had been able to attend the event in its entirety and make it back in time to attend the Council meeting.

By way of summing up Councillor Kendall welcomed the supportive comments from Members and agreed that it was a problem for all. She added that it was important to be proactive to ensure that there were no more deaths as a result of this.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Council forms a Working Group to ensure the development of an EVAWG Strategy for the Borough.

11. QUEENS PARADE UPDATE (Appendix IIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity stating that as Members would 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. Those 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. Those specifications were agreed.

Following further negotiations amendments to the plans were agreed, with some other technical changes and those 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 was 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 was shown on the plan at Appendix 1. Planning permission for the previously agreed scheme had been granted, and further planning permission would be subject to agreement as outlined later on this report.

Key Issues

BM had now finalised their plans and submitted a letter dated 23 April 2026, which was attached at Appendix 2a, detailing the various aspects of the scheme which they proposed to change or add to and asking the Council to consider the same. Those requests were 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 was confidential and therefore would not be included in the copy of the letter that was made available to the public (appendix 2b).

Requests:

1. The map attached at Appendix 3 now showed the entire area that would be required for the new proposed scheme. The area which was shaded was additional and would be required for the enhanced play park and car park.

   This land was also leased to the Council from the Crown Estate Commissioners (CE). Initial discussions had been instigated to gauge whether the CE would be agreeable for the additional land to be sub-leased to BM with the areas that had been already agreed which were the two pavilions and four kiosks.

   The term of the sub-lease, which was to be issued on completion of the works, was 125 years and this had 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 had as yet not been received and discussions were ongoing. Once confirmation of the CE's position was known Council would 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 had proposed to upgrade the play park to a new unique, area specific, play park. The appointed designers had been working with Council officers [add: to ensure this unique facility meets the Council's play strategy and play values. The indicative layout was shown on Appendix 4.

The cost of this facility was estimated in excess of £1m and once completed would remain under the Council's control. Council officers had also been assured of the high quality of the design and manufacturing of the equipment and with the substantial warranties that were being provided. However, the Council would need to be mindful of the replacement costs of this facility as and when that was needed and a financial provision for this may need to be put in place.

BM's research (detailed in their letter) had suggested that this play park, which would be in the top 1% in the island of Ireland, would attract c200,000 visitors to the area. If this was realised it would 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 1,000sqm of green space would be required. It was important to note that when the scheme was completed 3,500 sqm of green space and shrub planting will be created which is a gain of 2,500 sqm with 100 new trees being planted.

3. Linked to above was the proposal to create an 81-space car park. Following consultations BM had reduced the size from their initial proposal.

   BM would create, manage and maintain this car park and take the income received. As mentioned earlier, negotiations with the CE were ongoing concerning this. It was also proposed, but not finalised, that the Council would also receive an income from net profits. The percentage was still to be agreed but would be c5%. The future use of this income could be determined by the Council in due course.

   BM believed that with the creation of the enhanced play park the small car park in this area was essential for families, elderly visitors and those with accessibility needs. The layout of this was also shown at Appendix four.

   BM also suggested that the dwell time and spend from visitors would be increased. For further information please see appendix B contained within the letter from BM.

   BM had also very clearly set out in Appendix C and G 1 why the creation of the car park was essential for the viability of the scheme. BM had prepared those valuations and believed the additional income from the car park was the only way the scheme became viable. This was made very clear by BM at the workshop on 20 April. They also stated that if this was not agreed they were 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 those no viable alternative was found. BM also considered a number of different configurations on the Marine Gardens site, however none of those were workable.

4. To enable the creation of the enhanced play park the pavilion at the western side of the development needed to be relocated to the new location as shown on Appendix four. As well as creating additional space, it was believed that this fitted well with the creation of the gardens with a pavilion at each end.

   The Council's officers and its Integrated Consultancy Team had discussed this request, and no concerns had been raised.

5. As part of the agreed scheme BM was to create four bespoke kiosks. The location of each was shown on Appendix 1. As detailed in Appendix C.2 and G.4 of BM's letter they believed the construction and management of those were no longer viable. BM was 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 would greatly assist the Council should it in the future decide to develop those areas.

6. BM was also proposing installing additional equipment. Those would include two 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 would be available for use for a number of activities. Council officers and the ICT had assessed those and were content with the proposals.

   The Council would agree the type and size of the bandstand and play equipment and then BM would run a design competition for those.

Planning Implications
If the Council acceded to all the above requests the planning implications were detailed at appendix D in BM's letter. It would be essential that the necessary applications were made immediately.

Timeline
If the above was agreed the handover of the site would be in two phases. This was further detailed in Appendix E of the letter. In simple terms phase 1a included the McKee Clock Arena and 2/3 of Marine Gardens would be completed and handed over this Autum. This would 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 would be finished by March 2027 in line with the LUF funding.

Next Steps
It was now necessary for the Council to consider the requests from Bangor Marine. The Council needed 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 needed to finalise with the Crown Estate whether it would accede to BM's requests and if so the financial implications of those.

If the Council agreed to these new proposals, and the Crown Estate issues were resolved satisfactory, then the Authority (being the Council jointly with the Department for Communities) would confirm acceptance of the proposals which would then be incorporated in the Development Agreement by way of an additional Deed of Variation which would be brought back to Council for approval.

Summary
The development of Queen's Parade had been ongoing since the Development Agreement with Bangor Marine was signed in 2019. Work on phase 1 – Marine Gardens started in August 2025 and was ongoing. It was anticipated that if the new proposals from BM were agreed Phase 1 would be completed by March 2027 with new facilities which would greatly enhance the offering in Bangor and the wider area.

Members also needed 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.

RECOMMENDED after careful consideration 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.

Councillor McCracken proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal that this Council welcomes the progress made by Bangor Marine and looks forward to the handover of the first phase in Autumn 2026. Furthermore, to inform decision making, and enhance public transparency, officers are tasked to produce a report to identify the full range of car parking options that could be used to facilitate Marine Gardens, and to evaluate the pros and cons of each. Officers were also instructed to obtain independent advice, that would be brought before Councillors, to ensure the terms of any potential lease of land to Bangor Marine met best value for the ratepayer.

The proposer, Councillor McCracken, paid tribute to BM for this development which would see the biggest steps to take Bangor City forwards. He also welcomed the proposed play park but was aware the proposal to remove green space for a car park had caused a great deal of concern. He added that he did not agree with some of the commentary there had been on social media about this matter, adding that it had been unhelpful. On being elected in 2023, he had fully committed himself to get Marine Gardens moving while walking hand in hand with residents as far as possible and he believed they deserved to be listened to.

Continuing, Councillor McCracken noted the length of time it had taken from August 2025 to February 2026 for this proposal to come forward and as such appropriate time was needed to give it the consideration it required. Planning Permission could still be submitted for this while a report was drawn up to enable Members to consider all aspects and make an informed decision. Negotiations with the Crown Estate which were ongoing could also continue. The report being asked for would clearly identify the full range of car parking locations and options taking into account factors like cost, accessibility and deliverability. Councillor McCracken added that Members had a duty to ask questions and work in the best interests of everyone concerned in order to be able to make an informed decision. Of equal importance he added was reassurance on the terms of any lease arrangement with BM to ensure best value for

ratepayers. By way of summing up Councillor McCracken believed his proposal worked in everyone's best interests moving forward as far as possible, supporting the developer, listening to residents, and making fully informed decisions.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McRandal noted this was part of the first phase of the Queen's Parade redevelopment and included a proposal for a car park on an existing greenspace. As such he had engaged with many of those who were opposed to this and was mindful that it did not sit within any environmental policies. Continuing, he acknowledged that everyone shared the desire to see the overall project delivered but the challenge was to deliver something that was satisfactory for all. He was not convinced that appropriate consideration had been given to alternatives to what was being proposed and while he was aware of the time constraints involved, he believed it was important for Members to be able to consider all available options.

At this stage the Mayor informed Members that the Director of Place & Prosperity was available to answer any queries and two Directors of BM were also in attendance with Damien Mitchell available to answer questions.

Alderman McIlveen stated that he too felt uncomfortable with how the matter had been dealt with, having been presented with the proposals at last week's Workshop and now being asked to make a decision on that. He asked why Members were now in this situation and being asked to make a decision.

In response the Director of Place & Prosperity clarified a number of matters beginning by confirming that independent advice had been sought from Land and Property Services (LPS), who would then negotiate with the Crown Estate around the value of the lease. Under the Development Agreement BM had the right to make requests for changes at any time. Similarly, the Council along with the Department had to be afforded the time to consider those. Continuing he reminded Members of the presentation made by BM at the Workshop held in August 2025 following which those plans were taken away and worked up before being presented to Members at the Workshop held in February 2026. During that Workshop he reminded Members that he had indicated his intention to bring forward a report for consideration to the April Council meeting.

Alderman McIlveen stated that he had raised that very issue.

At this stage Damian Mitchell, Director BM, thanked Members for the opportunity to be in attendance to answer questions. In respect of BM timelines, he advised that initially it had become involved in June 2025 as part of the Oakland consortium and at that time it had been made clear that it was their intention to look at a number of concepts. During the nine-month period which had elapsed, tender exercises had been undertaken, public consultations held with local youth organisations and residents which had been taken into account when designing options. He was content that they had moved as quickly as they could while protecting the LUF. He added that they had put a shovel into the ground at Queen's Parade for the first time in 40 years and also invested their own money into the project because they believed in it. Continuing, Mr Mitchell indicated that he understood the concerns of residents and following a meeting held the previous evening he believed that it had

provided a greater level of understanding for all. He reiterated that time was an issue as the project was moving at pace.

(Councillor Brady re-entered the Chamber at this stage – 8.24pm)

Alderman McIlveen commented that his concern was with the process and why Members were in the situation where they were being asked to make a decision at this meeting. He asked if it was possible to delay this for another month and why the LUF would be at risk if a decision was not made this evening.

In response the Director of Place & Prosperity advised that if the Council chose to defer the decision for one month that was in the Council's gift to do so and officers would work to whatever timeframe was required to prepare any report which was asked for.

Mr Mitchell commented that any deferral would create a significant risk as his team were live on site making changes at pace, and as such things did need to be preplanned. An example of this was the tender for the Play Area detailed in the report which needed to be met by March 2027, and any deferral would have a detrimental impact as guarantees could no longer be kept. Phase1A was planned to be completed in Autumn 2026 with the unveiling of the Dove structure, and any delay would have a knock-on effect. Mr Mitchell reminded Members that consultation had been undertaken in respect of all aspects of the Marine Gardens project and while changes had been made, the scheme was moving at pace with the developer on site each and every day. He asked Members to bear that in mind.

At this stage Alderman Smith referred to the risk and comments made around submitting a Planning Application which would be done so with risk attached. However, he acknowledged that if Council approved the proposals that risk would then diminish. Continuing he noted the eleven month deadline for the LUF and asked if the proposals were deferred this evening what risk management would be undertaken and what implications there could be as the result of any delays.

Mr Mitchell advised that before they would be able to claim any LUF money back they would need to spend it and if the matter was to be deferred there would be a genuine risk with spending thousands on a Planning application. The developer did not believe that was the correct approach as they had in place a project timeline which they were operating on. Any delay on that would be significant and there would be no guarantee that suppliers would still be in a position to provide what was necessary to continue with the development.

Alderman Smith asked if there was a delay or a knock-on impact on suppliers and the project was unable to be completed by the deadline of March 2027, what the ramifications of that would be.

In response Mr Mitchell expressed the view that a situation such as that would genuinely be a mess. Costs were constantly rising and any delay could see renegotiations taking place around supplier costs. His preference was to move as fast as they could to get the development progressed and completed as any delay would directly impact on the work taking place on site.

Alderman Smith noted the suggestion that BM was effectively holding the Council to ransom and asked if this was a genuine process or a game of poker being played.

Mr Mitchell confirmed that a game of poker was not being played and reminded Members that at the outset they had given an assurance that they would not give out dates if they were not going to be able to stand over them. He added that it would also be foolish not to inform people of risks, particularly as they were all partners in the scheme. Continuing he stated that various options had been considered, adding that he was happy to show people the details of that. To delay the process to prepare a report on something which had already been carried out would undoubtedly be detrimental to the development particularly in respect of things which they had no control over.

At this stage Alderman Graham commented that it would have been useful to have had sight of Councillor McCracken's proposal which had been made in advance of the meeting.

The Mayor read out the proposal for the benefit of all of those at the meeting.

Alderman Graham expressed difficulty with the proposal which was looking for alternative car parking locations but had not included any options for that. Personally, he was at a loss as to where that alternative location could be but agreed that it was essential particularly when you considered other amenities throughout the Borough such as Cairn Wood, Groomsport, Helens Bay and Sea Park, all of which had adjacent car parks. As there was no mention within the proposal as to where the car park could be located, he was concerned that this was essentially a face-saving exercise for members of the public to make them believe there was some magic space for this car park. Alderman Graham urged caution as not everyone had the skillsets required to deliver a scheme such as this and the Council should be wary of creating a 'cold house' for investors in the Borough. He did not believe the matter should be delayed any further and instead the facts and practicalities needed to be acknowledged. Alderman Graham referred to email correspondence he had received alongside every other Member from a disability forum outlining the necessity for accessible areas for all, including car parks. Children and older people also needed to be taken into consideration and Alderman Graham believed the proposal before them was a distraction. He hoped that at this meeting the Council would get the decision made and garner further trust from all of those partners involved with the development.

Councillor Wray stated that he had attended the Workshop which had been held the previous week during which a couple of other options had been suggested. He recalled being advised that every other single viable option had been considered. Continuing he indicated that his question was did BM have a reserve option and if the proposal was agreed tonight and a new idea came to light, how that would fit within the current deadlines.

Mr Mitchell confirmed that if that was the case there would be an impact on timelines and added that at the meeting the previous evening, he had made it clear that BM believed that it had exhausted all other potential sites. If by some chance a new

option was located that would need to be redesigned, a process which would take months. He added that included in the report before Members were a number of proposals which were all linked as it was a private funding match and any delay on that would be detrimental.

At this stage Councillor W Irvine sympathised with the proposal, adding that he believed the Council owed it to the thousands of people who had been in touch about this matter. He commented that there was no doubt BM were valued partners and he recognized the need to work together for this project to succeed. However, he would rather do so by bringing people along with them rather than creating friction. As such he would be supportive of the proposal put forward by Councillor McCracken.

(Councillor McBurney left the Chamber at this stage – 8.42pm)

Councillor Blaney commented that this was without doubt the most difficult decision he had had to make during his six and a half years as an elected representative. He added that he had hoped to come away from this meeting with clarity for all but was disappointed that the proposal put forward by the Alliance had not provided any clarity. Instead, it talked about a completion date of Autumn 2026 and as the developer had already alluded to if the proposal was passed that completion date would not be met. It would put the LUF at risk as well as the entire development and to bring such a proposal forward without any solid ideas or timescales was not reasonable.

Turning to the global economy, Councillor Blaney reminded Members that it was on a knife edge currently with wars across the Middle East, inflation now spiking upwards and debt more expensive than ever. He reminded Members of the impact of the Council taking too long to make decisions risking both investment and development, all of which had previously happened at Queen's Parade. The proposal put forward was a risk and not something that he could support particularly as it had been done so without thought or consultation. He added that it really made him quite angry, particularly as Queen's Parade should be the jewel of the city centre but had been left to go to ruin. He was also not prepared to take a leap into the dark by supporting the proposal which could put the entire development into jeopardy. Councillor Blaney noted the passion behind the residents' concerns about the green space at Marine Gardens but also noted comments by the Deputation speakers that they did not wish for the entire scheme to be jeopardized by that. He reiterated that the way the Alliance Party's proposal had been brought forward meant that he was not in position to support it.

At this stage Councillor Chambers commented that he had attended the recent Workshop where information had been provided about a number of the different options which had been taken into consideration. As such for the benefit of everyone in attendance he asked Mr Mitchell to outline some of those options which had been considered.

Mr Mitchell confirmed that to be the case, advising that one of the options was to situate it below Marine Gardens but because of two existing culverts there that was not going to be feasible. Other options included spaces within the Gardens, within

the new events space and at Bregenz House but for a variety of reasons that again was not going to be feasible. Contractors had then been put on site without a firm plan in place and Mr Mitchell stated that was not something that would usually be done but the decision was taken to protect the LUF. At this stage two options were then considered which were within the red line which he explained to Members in detail. Those plans were discussed with residents and as a result changes were made and the plan now being proposed was the outcome of that.

Thanking Mr Mitchell, Councillor Chambers commented that one of his questions was if consideration had been given to re shaping the car park in an effort to retain some elements of Marine Gardens.

Mr Mitchell stated that the last thing they wished to do was to remove green space if they did not need to do so. However, he believed there were a number of parking spaces required for this and he advised that they had tried to retain a number of the trees in an effort to try to find a balance.

At this stage Councillor Gilmour recalled how at the recent Workshop a number of Members had voiced their frustration about how long the process had taken and the social media storm which had spread much mis information about the development. Continuing she added that she felt uncomfortable that the Council appeared to be being bounced into making a decision. Referring to the proposal which had been put forward by Councillor McCracken she sought clarity from the Director of Place & Prosperity what timeframes may be associated with that if it was agreed.

The Director Place and Prosperity advised that given the amount of work which would be required to be undertaken he would ideally like the report brought back to the May Council meeting but realistically it would be the June Council meeting.

Councillor Gilmour commented that would raise some concerns given the timeframe associated with the development and how that would impact the submission of the planning application. She was also mindful of the impact of any delays as well as the threat of legal action from the Marine Gardens Group both of which left the Council in a very difficult situation.

To provide clarity the Director of Place and Prosperity noted the debate at this meeting had been primarily around the car park and he reminded Members that within the report there were a number of other proposals which needed consideration.

Mr Mitchell reiterated that any delay to the scheme would be extremely concerning and he added that a slight frustration of his was the time and effort which had gone into listening to all of the concerns which had been raised. He stated that they needed certainty.

Councillor Gilmour thanked the Director and Mr Mitchell for their comments, adding that she would have concerns that to have a pause at this stage could cause huge risk to the scheme. She added that many questions and answers around the car park had been heard at the recent Workshop and suggested that perhaps if all Members had been in attendance that could have provided clarity for them.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at this stage at 9.00pm and reconvened at 9.15pm.

Councillor McKee indicated that he was content to support the proposal put forward by the Alliance Party adding that it was regrettable though that Members had not had sight of it in advance of the meeting. Continuing, he expressed the view that everyone wanted to see the regeneration of Queen's Parade proceed however he could not accept the report which had been presented and its contents. He acknowledged that many people felt deep unease with what was being proposed and while they were not anti development of Queen's Parade, they were just asking for a pause to ensure the correct decisions were made. Councillor McKee expressed the view that to accept the report before them would not be good governance or due diligence given there were so many outstanding matters within it. As such he believed it was not their role to accept a model which provided a private return and instead he believed they should be ensuring that the development met the wider public's interests. To get that wrong would be seen as a breach of trust for those he represented.

At this stage Councillor Cathcart took the opportunity to welcome Councillor Quinn to the Council Chamber. He also took the opportunity to apologise for not responding as swiftly to queries as he had been going through a very difficult time with his family. Continuing, he confirmed that he had read and considered everything as well as attended the Workshop and shared the frustration of his colleagues with the process. He added that it had been particularly frustrating as residents had appeared to know about the plans in advance of Members of the Council and to be asked to make a decision now after only been made aware of it was not entirely appropriate. Continuing he stated that if the LUF was lost the entire scheme would be dead in the water, particularly as that funding was associated with BM and no one else. As such the proposal which had been put forward by the Alliance Party would cause a delay without a timescale, and he sought comment from Mr Mitchell on how critical the LUF was to the scheme.

Mr Mitchell confirmed that the LUF was critical to the scheme and if it was lost it could not be funded privately. He added that BM was also funding the works before claiming it back from the LUF. Any delay would create risk and essentially leave the scheme dead in the water.

Councillor Cathcart recalled how at the recent Workshop many questions had been asked about the car park and alternative locations for it. He acknowledged that if an alternative location had been found BM would have brought that forward for consideration and as such that was his concern with the proposal. Councillor Cathcart commented that signing the Development Agreement for Queen's Parade was his proudest moment as Mayor and as such it would simply be unforgiveable to put the funding and the scheme at risk of being lost. It was one of the most difficult decisions he had been asked to make during his time on Council and while he did not like the location of the car park, he could not support the proposal which had been put forward.

Councillor Kendall indicated that she had a number of questions to ask including the timeframe around securing Crown Estate agreement.

The Director of Place and Prosperity confirmed that the original proposal had been sent to the Crown Estate, which was considering it and they had contacted him earlier that week to ask to be made aware of the Council's decision this evening before they would move to finalise the deal.

Councillor Kendall acknowledged that Members were being advised that time was of the essence, but she did have a number of concerns and a lot of questions. As such she asked if a Special Council meeting could be convened in May as she believed the information had been made available hastily and Members had not had enough to digest it in order to make an informed decision. As such she would be in favour of having a small delay to be able to ask further questions.

At this stage the Chief Executive commented that in an ideal world it would have been the preference to bring the matter to the Place and Prosperity Committee prior to the Council meeting. However as alluded to by Mr Mitchell development on site had been running at pace and the information was brought to the Council at the earliest opportunity. The Chief Executive referred Members to Standing Order 3.1. which detailed the procedures around calling a Special Council meeting.

"The Mayor of the Council may call a meeting of the Council at any time giving 5 working days' notice. In the event of an emergency where it would not be pragmatic to await 5 working days before holding the meeting, or in exceptional circumstances, the meeting may be called with 24 hours' notice"

The Chief Executive advised that the Queen's Parade development was a long standing project for Council and that the report under consideration by Council had been undertaken in line with due process, outlining the opportunity for Members to ask any further questions they may have now.

Councillor Kendall thanked the Chief Executive for her comments but stated that the fact remained that Members had only had a number of days to digest the proposals which had been put forward and which were a very contested issue. She believed that it would be beneficial to have more time to ask questions.

Councillor Brady commented that this was a huge decision and one that should not be made under duress. The process which had led to this point had put Members in an impossible position, having been presented with the final plan for the biggest decision they would ever have to make the previous week. A report on it had also not been made available until late last week and now Members were expected to vote on it just a few days later.

Continuing he expressed frustration that he had not been able to read the Development Agreement which had been signed between Council, DfC and BM. He indicated that he had hoped to read it that day but did not have time to do so, thus he could not say that he had been provided with sufficient oversight of the process. With no minutes or contemporaneous slides from the previous workshop Members were being asked to take a lot on faith. Furthermore, he failed to see how

a delay regarding the car park would affect the play park, given that work on it was not due to begin for four months. In fact, he referred to other Levelling Up funded (LUF) schemes such as the Eden Project North which had been granted multiple delays with construction on it expected to run until 2028.

Councillor Brady acknowledged that nobody in the Council Chamber wanted to lose this project, but he was just not convinced that Members could not explore options for the final stage while work on the rest continued. He believed they needed to be given more space to consider this aspect and understand the full details as to how could they be confident they were making the right decision when they effectively had a gun to their head. To respond to some of the points made by his colleagues, Councillor Brady advised that the completion date was March 2027, not autumn 2026.

By way of summing up he believed that Members needed to take a break to provide proper oversight for this, adding that like his colleague Councillor Kendall and he had been working around the clock on this matter and did not feel satisfied with the process. As such he would support the Mayor calling a Special Council meeting in two weeks to allow Members to continue working on this.

At this stage Mr Mitchell took the opportunity to clarify that no one from BM had ever said that if the scheme was not completed by March 2027 that it would not be an issue.

Alderman McRandal asked for a Recorded Vote to be taken at this stage.

By way of summing up Councillor McCracken thanked Councillor Cathcart for reminding everyone that he had not attended the Workshop, adding that by way of context he had caught up subsequently with BM on several occasions. Having worked in city regeneration for over 20 years that was why he had some concerns around the proposals which had been put forward adding that the biggest thing which he had learnt was bringing the community along with you on projects such as this.

Continuing Councillor McCracken stated that he would have real concerns around a community judicial review being undertaken adding that it would not be the first time a project had been derailed in Northern Ireland by such a mechanism. He reminded Members that they were being asked to make a decision in nine days without having full visibility of all options. In respect of the proposal put forward he advised that it had been fully trailed and exposed in the Press and as such it should not have come as a surprise. He added that he had also written to both BM and the Council's Chief Executive about a month ago on car park options. He noted that within the report it indicated that BM had done some work on this, but he suggested that the key point missed was a lack of visibility. Councillor McCracken stated that his proposal was for a report outlining the pros and cons to then enable Members to make a final decision on that and bring as many people as possible along with them. He also recognised that the report outlined that Land and Property Services was Council's agent in relation to the negotiations with Crown Estate and the sub-lease to BM. Councillor McCracken also stated that no one was suggesting diggers would be switched off,

instead work could continue on the ground and ways to manage any risk could be considered.

On being put to the meeting, with 16 voting FOR, 22 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 1 ABSENT, the recommendation was declared LOST.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (16)	AGAINST (22)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (1)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Councillor**	**Councillor**
McAlpine	Adair	McCollum	Douglas
McDowell	Armstrong-Cotter		
McRandal	Brooks		
	Cummings		
	Graham		
	McIlveen		
	Smith		
Councillors	**Councillors**		
Moore	Blaney		
Ashe	Cathcart		
Boyle	Chambers		
Brady	Cochrane		
Harbinson	Edmund		
Hennessy	Gilmour		
W Irvine	Hollywood		
Kendall	S Irvine		
McBurney	Kennedy		
McCracken	Kerr		
McKee	McClean		
Morgan	Newman		
Quinn	Smart		
	Thompson		
	Wray		

Councillor Brady proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the Council take a two week pause to assess alternative proposals for car parking to be returned to a Special Council meeting subject to the Mayor's agreement.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen called a point of order stating that was not correct procedure on how to call a Special Council meeting. He added that Special Council meetings were dealt with by Standing Order 3 which detailed the requirement for a written requisition signed by eight Members.

At this stage the Chief Executive referred to Standing Order 3.1 and 3.2 which detailed the circumstances and procedures around calling a Special Council meeting.

A discussion ensued at this stage around the proposal which had been made and the requirements around calling a Special Council meeting. Following which the Mayor indicated that she could not acceded to Councillor Brady's request as it did not comply with Standing Orders.

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

The proposer Alderman Smith acknowledged that the matter had been discussed at length both at this meeting and at previous Workshops held. He understood that many residents were opposed to the car park and acknowledged the campaign which they had subsequently undertaken and respected their views on it. He believed that what was being proposed was a strategic development for the city of Bangor and the rest of the Borough. He acknowledged the concerns there were around it but ultimately recognised that a decision had to be taken on it and to do so was only fair on the Council, the developer and the residents. Alderman Smith stated that for him this was about risk and ensuring that the project went ahead as it had been 40 years in the waiting. He noted the suggestion that the Council was being bounced into making a decision but believed there was too much at stake for that to be the case. He reiterated the importance of making a decision on this however he was mindful that would not be the end of the road with the Planning process still to be negotiated. Strategically he believed the Council was at a point where it needed to move forward in order to provide people with reassurance and ensure the risk associated with the project was removed.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Graham indicated that he was happy to support the proposal stating that he did have confidence in the Council's partners and officers that every option for car parking had been explored. He noted that Councillor Brady's proposal lacked any ideas on where a car park may be located and similarly while respecting Councillor McCracken's professionalism, he too had made no suggestions as to where a car park could be located. Alderman Graham referred to the other proposals which had been included in the report and noted that they had yet to be mentioned. The Workshop had been held and all Members invited to attend and this evening Council officers along with representatives from BM were in attendance and as such he believed there was no better opportunity than that tonight to ask any remaining questions which Members may have. Continuing Alderman Graham acknowledged the concerns there were around Marine Gardens which was effectively a patch of grass with a tarmac path through it and some shrubs along the wall. He noted that those shrubs and trees would all be replaced and as such in his opinion it was not a huge loss of green space.

Alderman Graham also reminded Members that significant planting had been included in the development proposals with upwards of 100 new trees being planted. He also reiterated that every destination locally had car parking and to suggest that it should be situated at a location further away would only serve to create issues for those with young children, the elderly and those with disabilities and would also be considered irresponsible. Alderman Graham commented that on some occasions in life you would be asked to share and to give and while nothing was ever perfect, what was before them this evening was in his view a reasonable compromise. What did cause him concern was that those who were seeking delays knew full well there

were no further options in respect of a car park and therefore the proposals which had been put forward were nothing more than a way of placating those opposed to the scheme. In summing up Alderman Graham stated that he was content to second the proposal put forward by Alderman Smith.

Rising in support Councillor Thompson indicated that he had listened intently to all of the comments which had been made as well as read all of the online commentary. He believed that what was before them was a great scheme which he wished to see proceed as soon as possible. The scheme included a future proof play area with trees and many family friendly facilities also planned for the area. Provision for young people had also been included which he welcomed. As one of the Council's Age Friendly Champions he was fully supportive of the access which would be provided to older people. Councillor Thompson added that as a regular attendee of the Disability Forum, he had been contacted by many members welcoming the proposed car park. As such he encouraged Members to support the proposal to enable the development to proceed forward.

Councillor Blaney stated that it was not an ideal situation to be in and in an ideal world the car park would not need to be built, a proposal could have been made which would have garnered the support of those opposed to this. However, he acknowledged that we did not live in an ideal world and despite all of the hard work which had been undertaken by local residents, he personally undertook to make them a promise to hold the developer to account going forwards. Councillor Blaney added that if the proposal was passed this evening, he would encourage everyone involved to get positive about it as it was the biggest project to happen in Bangor during his entire lifetime. It would also be a transformational project for Bangor, for the people, the economy and local businesses.

Councillor McCracken stated that his proposal was to bring greater visibility to the issues which were being looked at as he did not believe all of the information had been made available. He also wanted to bring the local community along with them as far as possible adding that residents deserved to have their voices heard and they had not believed that had been allowed to happen. As such it was believed that a short period of time to enable that to take place would have been useful as nine days to carry out due diligence was not considered enough time. Councillor McCracken stated that as such he could not support the recommendation which was before them and instead he along with colleagues would continue to engage with BM and local residents to work in the best interests of Bangor and the wider Borough.

Councillor Cathcart sympathised with all of those who had made the case to delay and relook at the proposals. He was however unsure what such a delay would have achieved particularly as no viable alternative options had been put forward. To delay would add risk to this transformational project for Bangor which just needed to get over the line and be completed. He added that he could not sit and look at another vacant site for another generation and so this he believed was a decision for the best interests of Bangor.

By way of summing up Alderman Smith reiterated the importance of positivity and getting behind this Borough changing project. He believed that it was a tremendous project which would add massive value to Bangor and the wider Borough. He took

the opportunity to reiterate his respect to those who had been opposing the car park commenting that he understood their concerns and particularly those residents who were adjacent to the proposed development. Ultimately however this was about looking at the bigger picture and managing the risk. As such he believed that this was the right decision for the Council and the people of the Borough, and he hoped Members would support it.

As there was dissent in the Council Chamber a vote was taken by a show of hands.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman P Smith, seconded by Alderman Graham, with 22 voting FOR, 15 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 1 ABSENT, that 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.

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

(a) Grants of Rights of Burials: D41310 – 41348
(b) Error - Jacqueline Hill – Kirkistown 41/101
(c) Duplicate - Rosemary Waugh – Clandeboye PX 6825
(d) Lease (in triplicate) of foreshore at Strangford Lough at Kircubbin – His Majesty the King (1) The Crown Estate Commissioners (2) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (3)
(e) Easement at The Square, Ballywalter.
(f) Lease of Foreshore at Millisle – His Majesty the King (1) The Crown Estate Commissioners (2) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (3)

(Councillor W Irvine left the meeting at this stage – 10.12pm)

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

Jacqueline Gillespie – Pamela Rice
Movilla 60 179

Jean Williams – Ann Niblock
Whitechurch M 190

Roberta McFarland – John Broadley
Movilla 54 267

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the transfers be noted.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

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 should be noted that as each Motion was dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

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.

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

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 Holywood screen industries innovation hub has the potential to remove an important community asset from Holywood. Council therefore resolves to undertake an exercise to assess the need for community space in Holywood, with a report assessing need to be brought back to the relevant Committee.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Active & Healthy Communities 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

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

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Planning Committee.

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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

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.

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

Circulated for Information

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:-

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the correspondence be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

(Councillor Brady left the meeting at this stage – 10.16pm)

16. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF PRINTING SERVICES

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

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

Council was asked to approve the contract with the firms detailed below for all Lots within the Provision of Print Services.

The Contract would initially be awarded for a period of two years with an option to extend for a further three twelve month periods, subject to review and by written agreement of both parties.

LOT		Supplier
1.	Lithographic Print	GPS Colour Graphics
2.	48 Sheet Production Billboards, Adshel and Solus Rears	Northside Graphics
3.	Pull Up Stands and A1 Posters (on paper, corrugated plastic, and PVC foam board) and PVC banners.	Northside Graphics

The recommendation was that the contracts for the provision of printing services were awarded to the top scoring companies.

17. RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME 2026-27

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

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

SUMMARY
This report contained information relating a proposal which was subject to approval of the Business Case and Ministerial approval and therefore this matter must be considered by Council as a confidential item. Any publicity in advance would have negative consequences.

18. ITEM WITHDRAWN

The Mayor advised that Item 18 had been withdrawn.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.18pm

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 5 May 2026 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McClean

Aldermen: Graham (6.58pm)
McAlpine
McIlveen

Councillors: Hennessy, Kendall, Kerr, McKee, Morgan, Smart, Wray

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

Other Elected Members in attendance: Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore

Other Officers in attendance: Dr Steve Blockwell and Mr Roy Mooney (NI Water)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from The Mayor, Councillor McCollum, Alderman McDowell, Alderman Smith, Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Harbinson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. PRESENTATION FROM NORTHERN IRELAND WATER

(Appendix I)

(Dr Steve Blockwell and Mr Roy Mooney joined the meeting via Zoom – 6.05pm)

Dr Blockwell delivered a presentation outlining NI Water's key areas of responsibility, including its investment programme, the significant challenges facing the organisation - particularly wastewater capacity constraints - its role in supporting growth and development, environmental compliance requirements, the condition of ageing assets and the ongoing impact of underfunding.

NI Water operated under the UK Companies Act with standard corporate governance arrangements. Funding was provided by the Department for Infrastructure through CDIL (capital) and ARDIL (resource) allocations, and he noted that the current annual funding cycle was not suited to long term utility planning.

In terms of daily operations, NI Water supplied approximately 605 million litres of clean water per day to over 970,000 homes and businesses, supported by 27,000 km of water mains. It also processed around 365 million litres of wastewater per day through a network comprising 18,500 km of sewers, over 1,400 pumping stations and around 1,000 treatment works. Much of this infrastructure was legacy in nature and operating above capacity, creating pressure across the system and a need for modernisation.

Dr Blockwell provided an overview of the infrastructure within the Ards and North Down area, which included 23 water reservoirs and 13 wastewater treatment works serving populations above 250. Properties below that threshold generally relied on septic tanks, with desludging services available annually.

At a regional level, he noted the scale of the storm overflow challenge, with over 2,500 overflows across Northern Ireland, of which approximately 950 were classified as unsatisfactory intermittent discharges (UIDs) requiring urgent investment. Within the Council area, there were 244 overflows, including 124 UIDs. He explained that the regulator had granted a temporary dispensation (SORPI) allowing lower standards pending upgrades, but progress towards removing this dispensation depended on long term planning and funding certainty.

He advised that the wastewater system was currently overextended, resulting in restrictions on new housing and business connections to avoid further environmental harm. Developer led and developer funded solutions were encouraged where feasible, and he highlighted several areas affected by network constraints, including Comber, Donaghadee, Millisle, Newtownards, Portaferry and Seahill. He added that the Cloughey and Killinchy wastewater treatment works were operating at capacity.

Dr Blockwell referred to a social housing connection assessment table which categorised sites as green (straightforward connection), amber (developer engagement required, potentially including stormwater offsetting) and red, where 11 units would require full capital upgrades.

He referred to the Ards and North Down Local Development Plan, which he believed aimed to deliver over 8,000 new homes and 7,500 jobs by 2032. He noted that several schemes underpinning this growth, planned under PC21, had been delayed due to inadequate funding.

Referring to PC21 (2021 - 2027), he explained that the plan had intended to deliver over £2 billion of upgrades, with years 4 - 6 (2024 - 2027) being critical. However, funding since 2024 had reduced to around £321 million per year, compared with the £500 - 600 million required, creating a £650 million shortfall. As a result, NI Water had been forced to prioritise essential operations and active asset maintenance, leaving limited scope for upgrades.

He outlined the impact on the Council area, noting that while some key investments were progressing, others - such as Living with Water Programme and the Kinnegar WWTW upgrade - had been mothballed. Examples of ongoing or completed schemes included:

- £5.8m Ballyrickard Drainage
- £5m Killinchy area works
- £1.1m Seahill storm overflow screening
- £4.1m Ballyreagh Road/Rivenwood (supporting 2,000+ homes)
- £5m White Spots, Greyabbey (completed April 2024)
- £4.3m Drumaroad Strangford water main rehabilitation

Looking ahead to PC28 (2028–2033), he advised that the outline capital submission had been made on 9 April 2026, with the full plan due on 12 November 2026. NI Water had identified a £7 billion investment need for Northern Ireland, but within affordable tariffs only £3.5 billion could be delivered. Based on current annual funding patterns, only £1.61 billion was predictable for NI Water over the PC28 period. Without sustainable funding, base maintenance costs would continue to rise, further reducing the organisation's ability to deliver upgrades.

He referred to recent reports from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the NI Fiscal Council, and the Federation of Housing and Construction, all of which supported the need for governance and funding reform. In closing, he stated that a permanent solution was required to avoid persistent and worsening pollution, severe housing restrictions and reduced business and investor attractiveness, and he encouraged elected representatives to play a role in shaping future policy and funding arrangements.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee to the delegation.

Alderman McIlveen felt that the term "constraint" was a euphemism and asked how many connection requests had been refused outright in the red areas. He also referred to a commercial property in North Street, Newtownards, and asked if a solution had been identified to enable its reuse despite the catchment being closed.

Mr Mooney advised that NI Water had completed 172 wastewater impact assessments in the past year, with 11 unable to be accommodated. He confirmed that 37 like for like discharges had been processed, most resolved through early engagement. Vacant properties could reconnect where the proposed discharge did not exceed the previous maximum within the past five years, and he encouraged early engagement. He added that NI Water remained in contact with the Council's planning team regarding vacant property initiatives and would provide further information.

Councillor Smart referred to high commercial vacancy levels in some areas. He asked whether developer funded solutions were viable or whether the scale of infrastructural deficit prevented this.

Mr Mooney responded that in closed catchments there was no developer workaround, as the assets were too constrained. Like for like remained the only viable option at present. Developer engagement continued, but the underlying issue was long term underfunding.

Dr Blockwell added that developer funded schemes could not address large strategic assets, which required NI Water led upgrades. He referred to independent reports calling for a sustainable funding model.

Councillor Smart asked whether high growth areas would be prioritised once funding became available and whether NI Water had sufficient staff to manage developer schemes.

Mr Mooney explained that NI Water had doubled its predevelopment teams, although challenges increased as options declined. Staffing was adequate, though additional resources would be helpful.

Dr Blockwell explained that NI Water prioritised essential operations first, followed by wastewater investment where possible. Environmental compliance often aligned with development needs, but statutory duties were prioritised. NI Water continued to work with planners to phase development in line with future investment cycles.

In relation to the financial challenges, the Chair asked what operational efficiencies NI Water had introduced.

Dr Blockwell advised that NI Water had established a Capital Programme Management Office, improved asset management processes, and adopted smarter network monitoring to prevent spills. He noted that NI Water was close to UK frontier efficiency, but further innovation required additional funding.

The Chair sought NI Water's view on voluntary versus enforced water charges and Dr Blockwell responded that NI Water was agnostic on the funding model, which was a political matter.

Councillor Morgan praised the works undertaken in the Killinchy area and asked how the regulator determined essential investment, expressing concern that NI Water's priorities might not align with the Council's focus on housing and economic growth.

Dr Blockwell explained that price controls were set through guidance from the Department for Infrastructure and the Utility Regulator, incorporating statutory environmental obligations. He stated that addressing the backlog would require several fully funded price control cycles, and the funding uncertainties impacted long term projects.

Councillor Wray asked whether future works at Cloughey and Killinchy would mirror current schemes and how the local proportion of UIDs compared with other boroughs.

Dr Blockwell undertook to seek further detail on Cloughey and report back. He confirmed that the Borough's UID proportion was slightly above the NI average, though not the highest.

Alderman McAlpine sought clarification on whether the five-year rule for vacant property reconnection was statutory and whether it could be amended to support town centre regeneration.

Mr Mooney confirmed that the rule was NI Water policy, linked to SORPI, and not a legal requirement. It was designed to encourage reuse. The policy was under review, although environmental regulators favoured tightening it.

Councillor Kendall asked whether major works at Kinnegar and Sydenham were possible under current funding arrangements and what a viable long term funding model might look like.

Dr Blockwell stated that upgrades would cost over £100 million and were not deliverable under the current annual funding cycle. He confirmed that the Living with Water programme had been cancelled following the November 2024 DfI review. NI Water required stable, multi-year funding, and only full funding would enable upgrades.

Councillor Kendall asked if NI Water would perform any differently from privatised English utilities that she understood had not benefited from a tariff-based model.

Dr Blockwell felt that outcomes depended on the regulatory model, not solely on the funding source, and he reaffirmed that NI Water would continue to operate efficiently within its existing constraints.

The Chair thanked the delegation, and Dr Blockwell and Mr Mooney left the meeting.

(Alderman Graham entered the Council Chamber – 6.58pm)

RECESS: The meeting went into recess at 6.58pm and resumed at 7.06pm.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 31 MARCH 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

5.1 LA06/2025/0716/F - DWELLING AND GARAGE, 35M SOUTH OF 31 BALLYGOWAN ROAD, COMBER

(Appendix II – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Comber
Committee Interest:
Proposal: Dwelling and garage
Site Location: 35m South of 31 Ballygowan Road, Comber
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

At the outset, the Principal Planner (G Kerr) advised that further to the application having been circulated to Planning Committee Members on 23 March 2026 with the recommendation of refusal, the application had been requested for call-in by Alderman McIlveen.

The application had then been included on the schedule for that evening's Planning Committee meeting, as the schedule for April's Committee (which had taken place on 31 March) had already been published.

A planning agent had requested an urgent meeting by email on 23 April (one calendar month later) to discuss the recommendation to refuse, in the context of an assertion that the Council was not adhering to the Planning Appeals Commission decision of 2019 (A0024), which had determined that there was a cluster of development at that location.

Further to a telephone conversation between the Planning Agent with the Principal Planner, in which it had been clearly set out that the Planning Service was not disregarding the PAC decision but was assessing the policy requirements for a cluster as set out in Policy CTY 2a, a further request for a meeting had been received from Jim Shannon MP on 29 April. This request had suggested that the Council was not fulfilling its obligations with regard to the 'binding decision' of the PAC and had asked for detail of what the proposed refusal reasons were.

The Head of Planning and Building Control had responded comprehensively, declining a meeting, and had subsequently received a further request that the application be removed from the schedule for that evening's meeting on the basis that the preferred agent was unable to attend (and had not submitted a request for speaking rights), and that the applicant did not understand the refusal reasons and had not had time to address concerns, despite the application's Case Officer Report having been published on 23 March.

In refusing to remove the application from that evening's schedule, the Head of Planning and Building Control had set out that the applicant's appointed agent had been aware from 23 March of the recommendation to refuse, which had referred him to the Case Officer Report on the Planning Portal explaining the assessment and rationale. It had also been outlined that, if the application were postponed to the meeting of 9 June (which would have gone against the Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee), a period of 11 weeks would have elapsed between the application being recommended for refusal and its potential determination.

The matter had been discussed with the Chair, and it had been agreed that the request would be denied.

At lunchtime today, the appointed agent had then submitted 'Supporting Information' to the Case Officer who was on leave, copying it to the Head of Planning and Building Control, who had not had sight of it until later in the afternoon. This had been contrary to the Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee, which stated that, in the interest of efficient and timely decision-making on those applications being presented to Planning Committee, it was imperative that all relevant and appropriate information had been received by planning officers, and that no additional information would be accepted by the Council after 5pm on the Tuesday prior to the Planning Committee meeting scheduled to hear that application (one full week prior).

Regardless, the information submitted had been assessed and had been circulated to Members later in the afternoon, and this had been addressed at the end of the presentation as part of the overall assessment and officer recommendation.

The officer went on to present the Case Officer's report, explaining that it was for a dwelling and garage 35m south of 31 Ballygowan Road, Comber.

The application had been brought before Members due to a call-in by Alderman McIlveen to consider whether the application met the criteria of CTY2a of PPS 21, given that it was located within an established and recognised cluster as identified in the PAC decision referred to in the Case Officer's Report.

There had been no third-party representations in respect of the application and consultees had raised no objections. Members had also been advised that a submission had been received late that afternoon, which had been considered and circulated to Members in the form of an addendum to the report.

The recommendation had been to refuse planning permission.

For context, the site was located partially within the outer edge of a cluster identified by the PAC under appeal reference 2019/A0024, and this had been a material consideration in the assessment of the application. It had been accepted that the site was located within a cluster. Members had also been advised that a number of planning permissions had since been approved following the PAC decision in 2019, as detailed within the Case Officer's Report.

The site itself, as identified within the presentation, had been located approximately 35m south of 31 Ballygowan Road, outside the settlement limit of Comber and within the countryside. The presentation had provided wider context of the site and surrounding area, illustrating that the site was set within open fields, with land levels rising to the west.

The proposed development had comprised a one-and-a-half storey dwelling of rural design, as shown within the submitted floorplans and elevations, with excavation of the site required to accommodate the dwelling and garage due to the change in land levels.

In policy terms, the site lay within the countryside, the main policy consideration was PPS 21, and specifically Policy CTY2a given the recognition of a cluster at this location. The policy required six criteria to be met in order to grant permission for a dwelling within a cluster. The proposal had been considered to comply with four of the six criteria but failed to satisfy Criterion 4 and Criteria 5.
In respect of Criterion 4, the site was required to have a suitable degree of enclosure and be bounded on at least two sides by development within the cluster. The presentation had demonstrated that the only existing boundary was along the northern edge, which would be removed to facilitate site access, and that the site otherwise lacked enclosure due to its position within open land. Reference had been made to the “Building on Tradition” guidance, which emphasised the requirement for enclosure and bounding by development on at least two sides.

In respect of Criterion 5, which related to the ability of the development to be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation without significantly altering its character or visually intruding into the open countryside, the proposal failed to meet this requirement. The development had been located only partially within the outer edge of the cluster and projected into an adjoining field to the south.

It had therefore not been capable of being absorbed into the cluster and would visually intrude into the open countryside. The dwelling had been considered to appear as a visual anomaly, significantly altering the character of the area and encroaching into undeveloped land. It had also been noted that the proposal relied heavily on landscaping for integration, which was not considered sufficient to overcome its detached and isolated siting relative to the cluster.

Additional concerns had been identified in relation to integration within the countryside under Policy CTY14 of PPS 21. While the site sloped gently from north to south and a degree of backdrop existed when viewed from the south, it had been considered that the prominence of the dwelling would prevent it from integrating satisfactorily.

In views from the east, the dwelling would appear isolated and detached from the cluster, with characteristics more akin to a suburban form of development, particularly given its position beyond the outer edge of the cluster. The proposal had not been considered to round off the existing pattern of development and would instead encroach into surrounding fields.

It had further been considered that the proposal would contribute to ribbon development, contrary to Policy CTY8. When viewed from the east, the dwelling would appear as an extension of an existing line of development along the road, forming a ribbon of four buildings. It had been noted that buildings set back, staggered or angled could still constitute ribbon development where they shared a common frontage or were visually linked.

In relation to the late submission earlier in the day, it had been acknowledged that a dwelling highlighted within the submission formed part of the recognised cluster in line with the PAC findings; however, it had not been considered to bound the

application site due to the presence of intervening open land, an access road and a builder's yard.

Further elements of the cluster had also been acknowledged; however, a sketch provided within the submission illustrating the line of development had not been considered to be an accurate reflection from a professional planning perspective. The Officer referred to earlier material demonstrating that the site lay only partially within the cluster and that permitting development in this location could set a precedent for further encroachment into the surrounding area.

In summary, while the PAC had accepted the presence of a cluster at this location and development had occurred as a result, each application must be assessed on its own merits against relevant planning policy, particularly CTY2a of PPS 21. The policy was clear in requiring compliance with all six criteria, and more recent PAC decisions had supported this interpretation.

It had been concluded that failure to fully comply with the policy would lead to further erosion of the rural character of the area, and that it was important that all six criteria were satisfied.

Accordingly, refusal of planning permission had been recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Alderman McIlveen sought clarity on the map that had been presented, suggesting that it could be unintentionally misleading as he did not believe it showed an up to date picture of what was currently 'on the ground' in terms of the surrounding development.

The Officer explained that the map had been submitted with the application and she pointed to markings that showed where a dwelling had since been constructed and she pointed out that the proposal site lay below the established line of development. She referred to Policy CTY8.

Alderman McIlveen was unable to tell from the images if the site was bounded on the eastern side, he felt that the images presented were unreliable in that regard. The Officer responded that Members had access to a detailed Officer's Report which had provided full context including the approval sites in that area which were outlined in red.

Alderman McIlveen referred to varying iterations within the report, in terms of building locations, and felt it would be useful to have a site visit before the Committee made a decision.

Councillor Kendall queried the layout and position of the proposed site and the officer referred to aerial images on page 11 of the report to clarify the location. More recent Google Earth images showed a dwelling under construction which showed the proposed site was only partially inside a defined cluster. Councillor Kendall further queried development and the boundaries towards the A21 and it was advised that this area was clear of development.

Councillor Wray sought clarification on the current and potentially removed site boundaries, noting access issues to the north of the site and the Officer confirmed that the removal of the vegetation for access on the northern side would open up the site further and reduce enclosure.

Councillor Smart was concerned about setting a precedent in terms of spacing between dwellings and the Officer warned that approval of this application could lead to a domino effect and increase the likelihood of an infill development.

Councillor Hennessy noted that the cluster policy was just one criterion that the proposal failed to meet, so even if the site complied with the cluster policy, it would still have failed on other criteria. The Officer confirmed this.

Alderman McIlveen proposed that the application be deferred to allow for a site meeting to take place. This was seconded by Alderman Graham.

Alderman McIlveen appreciated the Officer's efforts to provide updated images but proposed the site visit to help Members make a more informed decision. He believed that there were inconsistencies within the report, and he noted that the site straddled two different clusters – an inner cluster and an outer cluster. This was unique and he felt it would be beneficial to investigate further.

Councillor Morgan was unable to support the proposal and felt that the aerial images presented had been clear and would be more useful than visiting the site on foot. She also noted previous site visits, possibly due to being arranged during office hours, were generally poorly attended. She therefore felt that the Committee was in a position to proceed with a decision without further delay.

On being put to the meeting with 3 voting FOR, 7 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal FELL.

The voting was as follows:

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

Councillor Hennessy proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, and that Council refuses planning permission.

Councillor Hennessy accepted what he believed to be clear reasons set out by the Officer and commended the Planning Department for accepting the late submission earlier in the day when it was not obligated to do so.

Councillor Morgan agreed and found it clear that the proposed site failed to meet the cluster policy.

Alderman McIlveen was unsupportive, explaining that while he did not necessarily support approval of planning permission, he was concerned that a decision was being taken without enough information.

On being put to the meeting, with 7 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Hennessy, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, and that Council refuses Planning Permission.

5.2 LA06/2025/0935/F POLE MOUNTED CCTV CAMERAS FOR DOMESTIC USE (RETROSPECTIVE)

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula
Committee Interest: Called in by a Member of the Planning Committee
Proposal: Pole-mounted CCTV cameras for domestic use (retrospective)
Site Location: 18 Ballyblack Road, Loughries, Newtownards, BT22 2AP
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Principal Planner (G Kerr) outlined the Case Officer Report, explaining that the application had been brought before Members due to a call-in by Alderman McIlveen for consideration by the Planning Committee in relation to its compliance with Policy

EXT1 of the Addendum to PPS7, in particular whether the erection of CCTV at the site would unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents.

There had been one objection to the application from the neighbouring property at 16a Ballyblack Road, raising concerns regarding potential overlooking into the dwelling and its private amenity space.

The recommendation had been to approve (retrospective) planning permission.

The site was located outside the designated settlement limit of Newtownards, within the countryside, and was not subject to any landscape, environmental or heritage designations.

The application site at 18 Ballyblack Road comprised a residential farm dwelling with associated yard areas, a stable block, paddock and surrounding agricultural fields.

The wider area was characterised by dispersed farmsteads, small clusters of rural dwellings and open agricultural land, as illustrated within the contextual imagery presented.

Members were shown the position of the CCTV installation, with the pole location identified, and the relationship to the neighbouring property at 16a Ballyblack Road explained, including its position relative to the application site. The development comprised pole-mounted CCTV cameras for domestic use.

Two CCTV cameras were mounted on an existing floodlight pole with an overall height of approximately 8.5 metres, with the cameras fixed at around six metres. The cameras had been installed to monitor activity across the stable block, yard areas and surrounding agricultural fields within the applicant's ownership, ensuring the security of the farmstead and observing the movement and welfare of animals on the premises.

The proposal had been assessed against criterion (a) of Policy EXT1, which required the scale, massing, design and external materials to be sympathetic with the existing property and not detract from the character of the area, and criterion (b), which required that the proposal did not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents.

Given the minor and unobtrusive nature of the cameras, they were sympathetic in terms of scale and massing and did not detract from the appearance of the existing property or the surrounding area. Accordingly, the proposal was not considered to have an adverse impact on the character of the area or visual amenity and was compliant with criterion (a).

In respect of criterion (b), the cameras were intended to provide coverage of two fields within the applicant's ownership, one located between the applicant's property and No. 16a, and the other situated to the rear (east) of the stable block. The cameras were positioned on an existing pole and, given their limited scale and massing, were not considered to result in undue dominance or overshadowing of the neighbouring property.

It was explained that there was a separation distance of approximately 40 metres between the cameras and the rear boundary fence of the neighbouring property. This distance, along with the presence of an existing timber fence of approximately 1.8 metres in height along the boundary, was considered sufficient to mitigate any unacceptable level of overlooking.

It was considered that the combination of distance and boundary treatment would minimise any potential impact on privacy, including the limited area of amenity space closest to the boundary.

The coverage range of the cameras was shown to the Committee, confirming that they were static and did not rotate. The cameras did not capture any views beyond the boundary of the land within the ownership of No. 18 Ballyblack Road.

An image captured from the CCTV cameras was also displayed to Members, with the applicant's consent, showing views across the sand school area and fields beyond.

This had confirmed the limited extent of coverage, and, in professional planning terms, it had been considered that the cameras were neither overbearing nor intrusive. It had also been noted that elements of the image had been digitally screened to ensure the privacy of the neighbouring property.

In conclusion, following full assessment of the application against Policy EXT1, it had been found to be acceptable, and approval of planning permission had been recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer from Members and Alderman McIlveen asked how it could be assured that the digital screening could not be removed by the applicant. He sought clarity on who had applied the digital screening and whether the camera could be repositioned to avoid the neighbour's house entirely.

The Officer confirmed that the camera's view included a small section of the neighbour's rear garden, but the applicant had digitally screened that area, and the image had been provided voluntarily by the applicant. It was also confirmed that the application met the policy even without the digital screening in place.

The Officer advised that the camera was non rotational and the 40m distance was not considered intrusive under the policy. The grey shaded area shown in an earlier image did not cover the neighbour's dwelling and it was the outbuilding that was blocked out. The Officer was not aware of any zoom capability and noted that even if there was a zoom function it would only capture a very small portion of the neighbour's garden.

Councillor Hennessy noted that the digital screening was not a planning condition and asked whether the application would still be acceptable without the digital screening and the Officer confirmed it would still meet the policy criteria. She confirmed that the digital screening was voluntarily provided by the applicant.

Despite the camera being compliant with the policy, Councillor Hennessy could understand why the neighbouring resident would find it intrusive.

Councillor Morgan found it unusual to require CCTV coverage of a field and noted that if the camera was capable of observing animals over 40 metres, it was capable of capturing the residents of the neighbouring house.

She queried the possibility of poles moving in the wind, shifting camera angles, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and she wondered how the Planning Department could realistically enforce compliance.

The Officer confirmed that the camera's position would be an enforceable condition, and a further condition could be added to ensure that the screening remained in place all the time.

Councillor Wray queried if the camera, at a future point, could be replaced with a different model that could rotate, zoom or perhaps lacked the capability to digitally screen. He queried that process and if this was a recommendation to not just approve the camera's position but also the specific type of camera.

The Officer advised that additional conditions could be added under delegated powers and those could relate to the removal of an existing camera and require a new application if a different type of camera was installed.

Councillor Kendall queried information in the report detailing that the camera sight lines did not extend beyond the boundary of No. 18. She noted that the photograph in the submission contradicted that, given that the digital screening had been applied to outbuildings beyond that boundary. She suggested a further condition for the camera angle to be adjusted slightly to so that the neighbour's property was no longer captured at all. This would remove the need for digital screening. She put this to the Officer who advised that Members had to assess the application as submitted, including the drawings showing the grey shaded area. The assessment was based on the existing camera position.

The Chair made a similar point and wondered if the line of sight could be conditioned but accepted that the assessment had to be on what was before the Committee. The Officer explained that the Planning Department would only condition compliance with the submitted drawings. She reiterated that that screening was voluntary and the view from the camera did not encroach on the neighbour's dwelling, only slightly into the garden.

Alderman Graham questioned how conditions in relation to zoom, movement or camera type could realistically be monitored or enforced in practice.

He recalled an incident on his own property where a photographer was legally entitled to take photos of his land from the public road, and he questioned what the objector's legal rights were in this case.

The Officer advised that conditions had to meet six tests, and the Planning Department would only enforce conditions that it believed were enforceable. She

noted that the application was for fixed camera so any rotation or zooming would be a breach of planning control. She was unable to comment on the legalities that were unconnected to Planning matters.

The Chair invited Mr John McNaught forward who was in attendance to speak in opposition to the application. His address to the Committee was summarised as follows:

- Mr McNaught and his wife had bought their property three years ago and initially had a good relationship with their neighbour (the applicant).
- After Mr McNaught had removed an old greenhouse and removed shrubs to improve his garden, the applicant installed CCTV cameras.
- He stated that the cameras were active every day and visible at night because the lights were on.
- He and his family felt constantly watched as a result.
- They kept their blinds tilted all week.
- They avoided using the back toilet.
- They did not hang washing outside.
- They avoided spending time in their back garden.
- He spoke of the impacts it was having on his extended family life.
- A grandchild was due soon and the family felt they could not live normally.
- He felt embarrassed to bring visitors or family into the back garden.
- He stressed that he was not asking for the camera to be removed entirely, only so it no longer pointed at his property.
- His house had never previously had a camera pointed at it and there was nothing in the neighbour's field except grass. He could not understand why a camera was needed there.

The Chair invited questions to Mr McNaught and Councillor Morgan referred to the speaker's claims that the lights were active at night on the cameras and asked for further detail. Mr McNaught advised that this was an operational light which he had observed.

Alderman McIlveen asked if there were ever any animals kept in the field and Mr McNaught recalled that previously there had been horses but stated the field had been unused for the last two years.

Councillor Smart referred the speaker to the images that had displayed the camera's coverage and the speaker advised that he had not seen these before. He stated that he was unhappy with the cameras pointing to his property and would be happy for the applicant to install CCTV if the cameras were positioned elsewhere and not facing his home.

Councillor Hennessy understood the speaker's apprehension of having a camera 40 metres away, he asked Mr McNaught for his thoughts on the digital screening, noting that there was a permanent blacking out of the camera.

Mr McNaught felt that the camera could still be repositioned, and he alleged that they were being positioned to harass his family.

The Chair asked the speaker what he felt about the images of the sight lines and Mr McNaught reiterated his views that he would be happy if the cameras were not facing his property. He referred to the difficulties it was having on his home life and the thought of being watched.

There were no further questions and Mr McNaught returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification.

Alderman McIlveen sought clarity on whether the proposal had been correctly assessed under domestic policy given its stated purpose for monitoring horses and whether necessity of the CCTV was a relevant consideration when there were claims of impacts on privacy.

The Officer advised that the proposal fell under domestic use and was assessed against PPS21 Policy EXT1. The policy focused on amenity rather than security justification and Officers relied on the applicant's rationale for the CCTV system.

Councillor Kendall queried the authenticity of the images which showed the digital screening, noting that the blacked-out areas could have been manually added. The Officer advised that the applicant had visited the Planning offices and demonstrated the camera feed to the case officer, which included the digital blacked out area which was applied through the CCTV software.

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council refuses Planning Permission.

Councillor Morgan did not believe that it would be possible to ensure the privacy and amenity of the neighbouring residents and did not believe that digital screening could be reliably enforced.

Alderman McIlveen, as seconder, believed that the application failed Policy EXT1(b) as it would unduly affect the privacy and amenity of the neighbouring property. He also pointed to uncertainties around the zoom capabilities, the consistency of digital screening, lack of necessity and the amenity impacts on the neighbour's use of their rear garden.

Alderman Graham was supportive of the proposal to refuse planning permission, believing that overlooking with the use of technology had the same amenity impacts as physical overlooking. He expressed doubt that the conditions discussed would be practical to enforce.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council refuses Planning Permission.

5.3 LA06/2026/0137/S54 - PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 95NO. DWELLINGS

(Appendix V - VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards
Committee Interest: Major development – Section 54 application (variation of condition)
Proposal: Variation of Condition 5 relating to landscaping for a residential development of 95 dwellings (reduction in density from 108; revised landscaping and phasing).
Site Location: Lands south of nos. 37–77 Court Street and nos. 1–11 Canal Row, Newtownards
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (A Todd) advised that this item sought planning permission for the variation of Condition 5 relating to the landscaping of planning permission LA06/2019/0603/F for the erection of 95 dwellings on lands south of 37–77 Court Street and 1–11 Canal Row, Newtownards. The application had been recommended for approval and had been presented to Committee as it fell within the category of major development.

The site was located within the settlement limit of Newtownards, just outside the town centre, to the south of Court Street and north of Castlebawn Retail Park, with access provided from the south via Castlebawn Drive. The presentation had confirmed that construction of the development was already well advanced, with a number of houses nearing completion in accordance with the extant planning permission.

As the site benefited from an existing permission for 95 dwellings, it had been explained that the principle of development had already been established and that the only matter for consideration under the current application was the proposed variation to the wording of Condition 5. The variation sought to allow for an amended landscaping scheme together with the approval of a phasing plan for the implementation of landscaping works.

The proposed amendment to the approved landscaping scheme involved the removal of 36 trees originally proposed for planting, primarily located around the site boundaries. The Planning Agent had advised that the removal of these trees was necessary to meet the long-term management requirements of Radius Housing Association, as their proximity to buildings and the historic Bawn Wall would have impeded effective maintenance.

It had been considered that this reduction in tree provision would not result in any adverse impact on the character of the area or the loss of an effective landscaped buffer for screening purposes. The scheme would continue to provide for the planting of over 100 new trees, in addition to hedgerows and shrubs throughout the site, and it had therefore been concluded that sufficient landscaping would be retained.

Condition 5 of the original permission required details of the phased implementation of hard and soft landscaping works to be submitted for approval prior to the occupation of any dwelling. These details had now been provided under the current application.

The submitted phasing plan identified seven phases for the implementation of planting and confirmed that planting would be carried out during the first available planting season following the occupation of the first dwelling within each phase.

Condition 5 had been amended accordingly to secure the implementation of landscaping in accordance with this phasing plan.

In summary, no objections had been received in respect of the proposal, and it had been concluded that the development would continue to meet the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments.

Accordingly, approval of planning permission for the proposed variation of condition was recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer and Alderman McIlveen queried the reasoning for the reduced number of trees. The Officer explained that no reason had been provided by the applicant, but it was assumed that it related to the long-term maintenance requirements of the trees.

Alderman McIlveen proposed that the Council refuses planning permission, this was seconded by Councillor Kendall.

Alderman McIlveen did not believe that the application provided sufficient reasoning for the change of condition, and he felt that the long-term maintenance concerns were unacceptable and went against urban environment priorities. He felt that the condition with regards to planting and landscaping had been appropriate at the time when the application had been approved.

The Chair queried the Officer on the relevant policy, and she advised that the reduced number of trees would still be more than enough to meet PPS7.

Given that the application still satisfied the relevant policy, the Chair asked Alderman McIlveen if he would consider amending his proposal to ‘minded to refuse’ to allow for further information.

Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kendall indicated they would be content with that approach and agreed to amend the proposal to ‘minded to refuse’.

Speaking as seconder, Councillor Kendall could not agree with the Officer’s view that the removal of trees from the application would not have any impact. She also expressed concerns around changes to phasing of the planting, but the Officer explained that phasing elements of the proposed development were unchanged.

Unable to support the proposal, Councillor Hennessy noted that planting had not yet started and he argued that this was not really the removal of trees because no trees had been planted yet. It would be a development that would see 100 new trees planted, and that was still significant.

Councillor Smart wondered if the 'minded to refuse' approach would allow the applicant to provide further information around their reasoning. He was sympathetic to the Borough's tree strategy and long-term aspirations to increase the number of trees. However he was aware of ongoing reports of antisocial behaviour in the area and wondered if the removal of trees was a measure that the applicant was taking in order to open up the area.

On being put to the meeting with 8 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the Council is minded to refuse Planning Permission (and awaits submission of further information).

5.4 LA06/2024/0771/F - CHANGE OF USE FROM AGRICULTURAL BUILDING, COMMERCIAL STORE AND WORKSHOP (DEFERRED FROM FEBRUARY MEETING)

(Appendix VII – IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula
Committee Interest: Called-in to Planning Committee and previously deferred for further information.
Proposal: Change of use from agricultural building, commercial store and workshop to dwelling, with extension and relocation of access.
Site Location: 60m south-east of 31A Loughries Road, Newtownards, BT23 8RW
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (A Todd) outlined the Case Officer Report, explaining that the application sought full planning permission for the change of use from an agricultural building to a dwelling with extension and relocation of access at lands approximately 60 metres south-east of 31a Loughries Road, Newtownards.

The application had been recommended for refusal and had previously been presented to the Planning Committee in February following a call-in by Alderman McIlveen. At the meeting of 3 February 2026, Members had agreed to defer the application to allow the applicant the opportunity to submit a structural survey to determine the suitability of the building for conversion. A structural survey had subsequently been carried out on 21 February, and the findings had been submitted for consideration.

The site was located within the countryside at the junction of Loughries Road and Drumawhey Road. Images of the existing building were shown, illustrating that the original stone structure had been heavily altered over time, including the addition of a substantial rear extension, alterations to the gable and rear walls, and replacement of the original roof with a corrugated metal structure.

The Officer advised that Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) required buildings proposed for conversion to be of local importance, providing examples including former schoolhouses, churches and traditional barns or outbuildings.

While the SPPS did not define “locally important,” it was noted that such buildings would typically possess architectural merit or historic interest, and that not all older buildings would meet this threshold.

Examples of Planning Appeals Commission decisions demonstrated that buildings of similar age and construction had been dismissed on appeal where they did not exhibit noteworthy architectural features or merit and were therefore not considered to be of local importance.

In this case, while the building contained partial remains dating back to the 1800s, it was considered to display no noteworthy architectural or vernacular features of merit. Mapping evidence and overlay drawings were used to show that the original L-shaped form of the building had been significantly altered and that its vernacular character had largely been lost.

Only limited original stonework remained, which was not considered sufficient to constitute a building of local importance. No evidence had been provided to demonstrate any specific historic interest or former use associated with the building.

The report referenced previous approval at 170 Moneyreagh Road, Ballygowan (2017); however, it was clarified that this case was not directly comparable, as the building in that instance was of modern construction and in active commercial use, which had been a material consideration. A refusal from 2019 for the conversion of an outbuilding to a holiday cottage had also been referenced as a more comparable example, where the building had similarly not been considered to be of local importance.

The findings of the structural survey were outlined, confirming that the building was in generally good condition for its age. The load-bearing walls were found to be suitable for reuse; however, localised defects caused by failed timber lintels had resulted in cracking and bulging, requiring sections of wall to be removed and rebuilt.

These findings had been reviewed by the Council's Building Control section, which was in agreement. Should Members be minded to approve the application, a condition could be applied specifying the extent of the existing walls to be retained.

The proposed development was shown, indicating that it would involve removal of the rear section of the building, retention and alteration of the front portion, and the addition of a new roof and rear return.
In conclusion, while the structural survey demonstrated that the building was structurally capable of conversion, it was considered that the building was not of local importance and did not comply with paragraph 6.73 of the SPPS.

Refusal of planning permission had been recommended.

The Chair invited questions from Members and Alderman McIlveen queried the difference between the current application and the Finlay Fuels case that was referenced in the presentation. The Officer explained that the Finlay Fuels case had involved existing commercial use, a factor considered significant by the Committee in that particular decision.

Alderman McIlveen noted the prominence and local knowledge of the Finlay Fuels building due to its roadside location and recalled that was a key consideration. He felt that also applied in this case.

The Officer pointed to another case where the building was among a cluster up a laneway and not visible from the road. She explained that under SPPS, visibility from the public road was not required for a building to be considered locally important.

Alderman McIlveen argued that the roadside prominence of Finlay Fuels made it more comparable with this case and the Officer referred to her earlier comment that visibility was not a criterion for local importance.

In terms of the heritage and retention concerns raised at the previous hearing, Alderman McIlveen pointed to the recent report's conclusion that the majority of what remained of the building could be retained, a finding that was also agreed by Building Control.

The Chair advised that Mr Stephen Dickson was in attendance to speak in support of the application.

Mr Dickson stated that the assessment of whether the building qualified for conversion was contingent upon its designation as a "locally important building".

He argued that there was no strict policy test of "local importance" in the wording of all possibly relevant planning policy documents. If there had been such a policy test, there was no doubt that this building was of "local importance" due to:

- Its age - over 184 years old
- Its "vernacular architecture" and "traditional" building characteristics.
- Its importance in the local landscape

- Its importance in the context of concerns by policy makers over the last few decades at the increasing loss of small rural vernacular buildings across the island of Ireland

The building dated to the early 19th century and was documented on the OSNI map dated 1833–1834. Further records indicated that a house and small garden, occupied by Isabella Rankin, existed on the site as listed in the Griffiths Valuation during the 1840s.

Mr Dickson added that relevant policies stipulated that sympathetic conversion and adaptation might be permitted for locally important buildings, such as former schoolhouses, churches, and traditional barns and outbuildings, provided this secured their ongoing upkeep and retention.

While policy did not require public visibility, the term “locally important” suggested that such buildings served as focal points or landmarks within the community. It was highlighted that an 86-year-old local resident and others had affirmed that the barn was commonly referred to as ‘The Barn End’.

The recently exposed stonework had emphasised the outstanding aesthetic quality of the stone walls, supporting the building’s historical significance. The essential features of formal vernacular architecture remained visible, including exposed stonework, an internal fireplace and flue, and original sills, windows, and door openings.

Mr Dickson stated that the proposed scheme would secure the retention and enhancement of a rural building of merit, with the removal of less significant portions of the structure contributing to the improvement of the property.

He argued that the Council having previously approved the change of use for many vernacular barns, even where not visible from public viewpoints, often relying on age as the principal criterion for ‘locally important’ status.

The Structural Survey confirmed the building remained in sound condition, with the maintained barn roof preventing deterioration of the stone walls. He added that the planned conversion, including buttressing, would further stabilise and respectfully renovate the barn.

This was considered to represent an ecological and environmental gain for the area.

Considering its historical value and prominent location, Mr Dickson stated that it was a material consideration that “The Barn End” was ‘locally important’.

In closing, he believed that Members should have been in agreement that this was a “locally important building” and that the proposed development was appropriate for the site and locality, and therefore that approval should be granted.

The Chair invited questions to the speaker and Councillor Hennessy asked Mr Dickson what features gave the building architectural merit.

Mr Dickson pointed to the remaining structure of what was a traditional cottage with uniform stonework and historical value. He compared this to other converted barns which had random stonework and argued that the uniform stone gave this structure more architectural merit than those previously approved examples.

There were no further questions and Mr Dickson returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Councillor Hennessy asked the Officer why they did not view the stonework in this case to have architectural merit.

The Officer responded that they had to assess the building as a whole and she noted that very little of the original building remained including the roof. She explained that Policy did not state that all older buildings were significant – there had to be architectural, historical or special character of worth which was a judgement call. In the officer's professional opinion, the criteria had not been met in this application.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council grants planning permission.

Councillor Wray recalled a consensus at the last meeting that the building was locally important and that approving the plan would improve the site. He pointed to the report which confirmed the building was structurally sound and he proposed that the Council grants planning permission.

The seconder, Alderman McIlveen concurred with the proposer, and he recalled supporting approval previously, before awaiting the outcome of the structural survey. He believed that the report confirmed that the building could be retained and added to. He was supportive of reusing existing buildings and retaining the area's built heritage and gave his support to this proposal.

Councillor Morgan was unable to support the proposal noting the extent of rebuilding work required which she felt would detract from the building's historical value. She argued that following this rebuilding work, the building would not be considered locally important or memorable.

Alderman Graham felt that the building was a landmark in that locality and retaining it was a better alternative than being left with an unattractive building.

Councillor Smart was sympathetic to the plans to retain the traditional structure and queried how tightly permission could be conditioned to ensure those existing structures would be retained.

The Officer responded that standard practice was to shade retained areas on the approved plans and condition that they be retained. The Officer confirmed that the condition was enforceable and significant changes would require new planning approval.

A vote was put to the meeting, with 7 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

FOR (7)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (5)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
Graham	McAlpine		McDowell
McIlveen			Smith
Councillors	**Councillor**	**Councillors**	**Councillor**
Hennessy	Morgan	McClean	Cathcart
Kendall		McKee	Harbinson
Kerr			McCollum
Smart			
Wray			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council grants Planning Permission.

5.5 LA06/2025/0403/F - 4NO. GLAMPING PODS, BIKE STORE, BIN STORE, RECEPTION HUT, ACCESS, PARKING, AND LANDSCAPING

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Comber
Committee Interest: Called in to Committee due to six or more objections.
Proposal: Erection of four glamping pods, bike store, bin store, reception hut, access, parking and associated landscaping.
Site Location: Approximately 120 metres south of No. 40 Tullynagee Road, Comber.
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission.

The Principal Planner (G Kerr) outlined the Case Officer Report, explaining that the application sought full planning permission for four glamping pods, bike storage, bin store, reception hut, access, parking and landscaping on lands approximately 120 metres south of 40 Tullynagee Road, Comber.

The application had been presented to the Planning Committee as six or more objections had been received, contrary to the officer's recommendation to approve.

The site was located in the countryside and accessed via an agricultural gate off Tullynagee Road. The surrounding area was characterised by agricultural land interspersed with dwellings and farm holdings. The site occupied the far corner of a larger agricultural field, which was generally flat adjacent to the road before sloping downwards towards the rear, with the site set back approximately 90 metres from the road.

Photographs of the site and its surroundings illustrated the relatively flat topography and the presence of mature roadside boundaries to the north and south of the access.

A woodland was located to the east of the site, and a hedgerow with mature trees defined the southern boundary of both the larger field and the application site. The proposal comprised four individual glamping pods along with associated bike storage, bin storage, a reception hut, access, parking and landscaping. The layout showed that the pods would be positioned in the far corner of the site, with a wildflower meadow to the rear and a landscaped area to the front. Each pod would benefit from its own private amenity space.

The Officer explained that Policy CTY1 of PPS21 identified tourism proposals as acceptable in principle in the countryside, subject to compliance with the relevant policies of PPS16. In this instance, Policy TSM6, relating to new and extended holiday parks in the countryside, was applicable. It had been confirmed by Environmental Health that the glamping pods fell within the definition of a caravan under the Caravans Act (NI), and that a caravan site licence would therefore be required.

The principle of a small-scale holiday park was considered acceptable, subject to demonstrating that it would provide a high-quality and sustainable form of tourism development and that its siting and design respected the surrounding landscape and rural character.

In terms of impact on the character of the area, it was noted that the site was set back approximately 90 metres from the road and that, given this separation and the modest scale of the pods, the development would integrate effectively into the surrounding landscape.

The pods would be of timber construction, modest in size, and approximately 2.6 metres in height. Two pod sizes were proposed, measuring approximately 7.6 metres and 8.6 metres in length. Each unit would be self-contained, including shower and WC facilities, and would be constructed off-site and transported to the location, thereby limiting on-site construction activity. The pods would not include kitchen facilities, with the intention of supporting local food and beverage businesses. The design incorporated an arched roof form with timber cladding and decking, reflecting traditional and locally appropriate materials and finishes.

A landscaping scheme had been proposed, including native hedgerows, trees and shrubs, together with a wildflower meadow, to further integrate the development into its rural setting.

Consideration had also been given to Policy TSM7 of PPS16, which required that tourism development should not harm the amenity of nearby residents. A number of representations had raised concerns regarding potential noise and disturbance arising from the use of the site and associated traffic. It was considered that the pods would be located at sufficient distances from the nearest residential properties to ensure that there would be no unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance. The existing separation distances and intervening mature hedgerows were considered adequate to mitigate any potential impacts. It was also noted that the anticipated level of activity would not exceed that typically associated with existing rural dwellings and farm holdings.

Proposed lighting associated with the development included low-level bollard lighting around the car park and in front of each pod, together with lights positioned above pod entrances. All lighting would be hooded and directed to minimise light spillage and would comply with relevant guidance in respect of bat conservation. Given the scale and nature of the lighting and the separation distances involved, it was considered that there would be no unacceptable level of light pollution.

Concerns had also been raised regarding increased traffic. While some increase in vehicle movements was acknowledged, it was not considered that this would be significant or give rise to unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance. The site would be accessed from an existing public road which already served a number of dwellings and farm buildings, and separation distances from nearby properties were considered sufficient to mitigate any potential impacts. Environmental Health had been consulted and had raised no objections.

Images were displayed of the existing access onto Tullynagee Road, along with the required visibility splays. DFI Roads had been consulted and had raised no objection to the proposal on road safety grounds, subject to the provision of the required sightlines.

In summary, it had been concluded that the proposed development complied with Policies TSM6 and TSM7 of PPS16. Policy TSM6 provided a presumption in favour of this type of tourism development in the countryside, and the site was considered capable of accommodating the proposal without adverse impact on the character of the area. Adequate landscaping, amenity space and parking had been provided, and it was considered that the development would not result in any unacceptable impact on residential amenity.

All statutory consultees had raised no objections, and accordingly, approval of full planning permission had been recommended.

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

Councillor Morgan welcomed the plans, particularly the landscaping and meadow elements and she was content with conditions that would ensure that those remained in place.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted and that Council grants Planning Permission.

5.6 LA06/2023/2108/F TWO AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS (RETROSPECTIVE) AND ERECTION OF ONE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING (PROPOSED), 50M WEST AND 88M NORTH WEST OF 17 ABBACY ROAD, PORTAFERRY

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula
Committee Interest: Call-in due to more than six objections.
Proposal: Retention of two agricultural buildings (retrospective) and erection of one agricultural building.
Site Location: Approximately 50 metres west and 88 metres north-west of No. 17 Abbacy Road, Portaferry.
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission.

The Senior Planning Officer (J Hanna) outlined the Case Officer Report, explaining that application LA06/2023/2108/F sought full planning permission for two agricultural buildings (retrospective) and the erection of one agricultural building.

The application had been brought before the Committee as more than six objections had been received, with a total of 20 representations relating primarily to the impact on an adjacent property. No objections had been received from statutory consultees.

The site was located at 17 Abbacy Road, a few miles north of Portaferry, within the open countryside. Access to the site was provided via an existing laneway serving the applicant's farm complex and farmhouse, as well as a third-party dwelling at 15B Abbacy Road, which was identified for reference within the presentation. The proposed new agricultural building was located alongside the main group of existing farm buildings.

The proposed development was illustrated by way of a block plan, showing that it was sited within the established farm grouping. Two sheds to the south were subject to retrospective permission, while a further shed was proposed as a replacement building.

Floor plans and elevations of the retrospective buildings were presented, alongside images of the building to be replaced and photographs of existing sheds on the site which were currently in use for cattle housing. It was noted that there had been recent development on the site in respect of additional agricultural buildings, which were fully operational at the time of inspection.

The proposal had been assessed against Policy CTY12 of PPS21. An active farm business ID had been provided and had been in place for more than six years. It had been considered that the buildings were of an appropriate scale, would integrate satisfactorily with the existing farm complex and would not adversely impact on natural heritage. Given that the proposed new building was intended for storage purposes, it was considered that there would be no detrimental impact on nearby receptors.

In respect of the new building, additional policy criteria applied. Details had been provided outlining the extent of equipment requiring storage, along with evidence of expanded land holdings, which provided further justification for the additional storage provision. On this basis, it had been concluded that the proposal met the requirements of Policy CTY12.

Significant objection had been received in relation to the neighbouring property at 15B Abbacy Road, with concerns raised including overdominance, loss of light, increased noise and pollution, alleged commercial activities and increased traffic movements. These issues had been fully considered as part of the assessment. It had been concluded that the proposal would not give rise to any detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring property in terms of noise, smell or pollution, given that the buildings were for storage purposes only and would not house livestock. This restriction would be secured by condition.

The separation distance between the nearest part of the development and the front elevation of 15B Abbacy Road was approximately 36 metres, which was considered sufficient to ensure that the buildings would not adversely affect light levels or result in overdominance.

In conclusion, it had been determined that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts and complied with the relevant planning policy requirements.

Accordingly, approval of planning permission had been recommended.

The Chair sought clarity on the objectors that had not provided postal addresses and the Officer confirmed that three of seven objections received by email had not included a postal address, so they had been treated as separate objections in the interests of a fair hearing.

The Chair advised that Mr Paul Bradley (planning agent) was in attendance, in support of the application to answer any questions that the Committee had. He was connected to the meeting via Zoom but as there were no questions raised, Mr Bradley was returned to the virtual public gallery.

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

Councillor Wray felt that the officer's report had clearly demonstrated the necessity of the proposed buildings for agricultural use. He was sympathetic to the objectors but felt that all objections had been addressed in the report and was therefore content to propose the granting of planning permission.

The seconder, Councillor Kerr, praised the in-depth officer's report and was content to support the proposal.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted and Council grants planning permission.

RECESS: (The meeting went into recess at 9.08pm and resumed at 9.25pm)

5.7 LA06/2025/0090/F ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING 3G TRAINING PITCH TO FORM NEW FULL-SIZE PITCH WITH ASSOCIATED FLOODLIGHTS, FENCING AND 3G SURFACE AND DUG OUTS, ABBEY VILLA FOOTBALL CLUB HOUSE, 91 ABBEY ROAD, MILLISLE

(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula
Committee Interest:
Proposal: Alterations and extensions to existing 3G training pitch to form new full-size pitch with associated floodlights, fencing and 3G surface and dug outs
Site Location: Abbey Villa Football Club House, 91 Abbey Road, Millisle
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning Officer (J Hanna) outlined the Case Officer Report, explaining that application LA06/2025/0090/F sought full planning permission for alterations and extensions to an existing 3G training pitch to provide a new full-size pitch with associated floodlighting, fencing, 3G surface and dugouts.

The application had been presented to Committee as the Council had an interest in the land. No objections had been received, and statutory consultees had raised no concerns.

The site was located to the south of, and accessed directly from, Abbey Road. It contained an existing parking area and changing room block, with a clubhouse and full grass pitch located along the western boundary. The site was bounded by playing fields to the east. The site lay within the countryside on the edge of the settlement of Millisle, with a residential area located to the north-east.

The site was identified as Open Space, and Policy within PPS 8 – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation had been applied in the assessment. As the proposal related to the enlargement of an existing pitch, it had been considered that the use remained consistent with the established use of the site and complied with the provisions of PPS 8.

The proposed layout was presented, showing the extension of the training pitch along with associated floodlighting, dugouts, fencing and an increase in parking provision.

The proposal included six floodlights, approximately 15 metres in height, compared to the four currently serving the pitch. From a visual perspective, it had been considered that these would not have a significant impact during daylight hours due to their setback from key viewpoints. In terms of nighttime impact, it had been concluded that there would be no significant adverse effect on residential amenity given the separation distances, and a condition to restrict hours of use had been recommended in line with Environmental Health advice.

The proposed dugouts were of a standard design. Elevations of the fencing demonstrated that the new fencing would be comparable to the existing arrangement and would not result in any additional visual impact.

The Officer presented images of the area of the pitch to be replaced alongside the existing changing facilities and surrounding land. Images taken from the extent of the proposed pitch had demonstrated the relationship to nearby residential properties, confirming that these were located at sufficient distance from the development. Given that the proposal represented an extension of an existing use, it had been considered that there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity.

Additional parking provision was proposed, with 21 new spaces to be provided. This was considered to meet the required parking standards, and access arrangements would remain unchanged. The proposal was therefore considered to comply with the provisions of PPS 3 in respect of access and parking.

In conclusion, it had been determined that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts and complied with the relevant planning policy requirements.

Accordingly, approval of planning permission had been recommended.

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

Both proposer and seconder spoke briefly to welcome the development and the benefits it would have for Millisle and the football club.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted and the Council grants planning permission.

6. APPEALS UPDATE

(Appendix XIII – XVI)

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

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal decision against refusal of planning permission was issued on 23 March 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0095
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0326/O
Appellant	Hugh Torney
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of Outline planning permission for 2no. infill dwellings and garages, access, and associated site works
Location	Between 18 & 22 Upper Ballygelagh Road, Kirkistown

The Council refused planning permission on 13 November 2025 for the following reasons:

i. The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there were no overriding reasons why this development was essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.

ii. The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the proposal did not constitute a small gap sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage, and would, if permitted, have resulted in the extension of ribbon development along Upper Ballygelagh Road.

iii. The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and policy CTY13 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the site lacked long established natural boundaries or was unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the building to integrate into the landscape, the site relied primarily on the use of new landscaping for integration and the proposal failed to blend with the landform, existing trees, buildings, slopes and other natural features which provide a backdrop.

iv. The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and policy CTY14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the dwellings would, if permitted have resulted in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing and approved buildings and added to an existing ribbon of development which would therefore have resulted in a detrimental change to further erode the rural character of the countryside.

Commissioner Consideration
There was no dispute that there was a substantial and continuously built-up frontage in this case.

With regard to the second part of the policy in relation to a small gap site the policy was clear with regard to the gap being between buildings. When Policy CTY8 was read as a whole, it was the full physical extent of the gap between buildings that had to be assessed.

This gap included not only the appeal site but also the existing access to No.20 and a proposed agricultural access to the north, which in the Commissioner's opinion materially increased the width of the gap beyond the width and frontage of the appeal site. The proposal site did not respect the existing pattern of development and failed to meet the policy test.

Although the measurements of the proposed plots were broadly comparable with the established pattern of development, the Commissioner considered it was not simply a mathematical exercise but a matter of planning judgement of the scale of the gap in its entirety. The relevant policy test was the scale that could accommodate more than two dwellings and the appeal proposal therefore failed the exceptional test under Policy CTY8 and therefore could not benefit from the infill provision given the extent of the gap site.

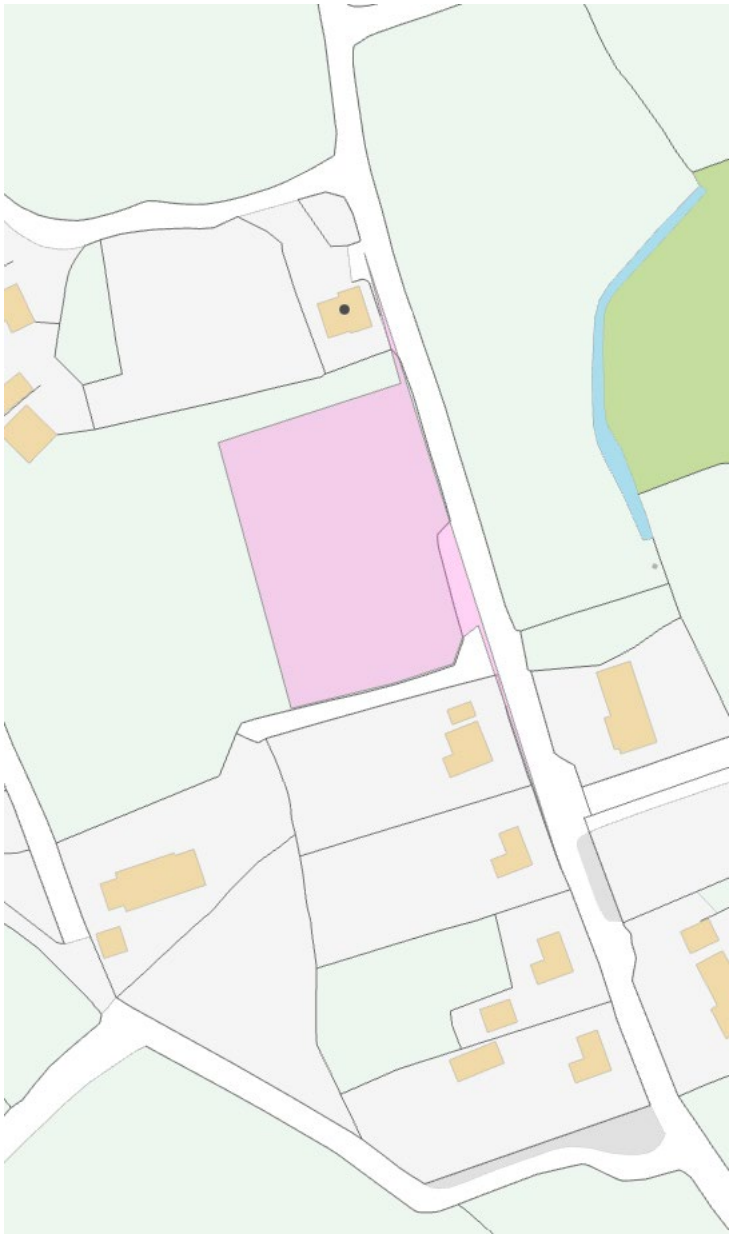
The Commissioner did not accept the appellant's argument presented in guidance documents in relation to Building on Tradition and examples of other appeal sites with different scenarios presented to that of the subject site of the appeal. Irrespective of the evidence presented, the Council was not bound by decisions made in other Council areas.

The Commissioner found that the proposed development would add to the established ribbon of development along this section road in a linear manner. The Commissioner was of the opinion that the appeal site provided a visual relief and formed an important visual break between existing buildings to the south of the appeal site and No.22 to the north.

The Commissioner agreed that there would be a suburban build-up of development but was not persuaded that the absence of long-established vegetated boundaries prevented the appeal site from providing a suitable degree of enclosure for integration into the landscape or would have to rely on new landscaping to blend in with the landform.

Third party concerns were not sustained in relation to undue noise or light impacts given the indicative separation distances between the buildings.

The Commissioner agreed with Council that it had not been demonstrated that there were overriding reasons why the development was essential and could not be located in a settlement in accordance with CTY1, and in light of the findings the appeal was dismissed.



2. The following appeal decision against refusal of planning permission was issued on 21 April 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0103
Council Ref	LA06/2023/2012/F
Appellant	Peter Thompson
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of full planning permission for a Dwelling (change of house type to approval W/2011/0015/RM) - retrospective
Location	Land between 3 and 4 Sheridan Grove, Helen's Bay

This application was presented to Planning Committee at its meeting of 05 August 2025 with a recommendation of approval. The application was deferred with a 'Minded to Refuse' motion, and was returned to the Committee meeting of 04

November 2025, at which the recommendation to approve was overturned and the Council refused planning permission for the following reasons:

i. The proposed development was contrary to Policy QD1 criterion (a) of PPS 7 – Quality Residential Environments, in that it did not respect the surrounding context, was inappropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance

ii. The proposed development was contrary to Policy QD 1 of PPS 7 - Quality Residential Environments, criterion (h), in that there was an unacceptable adverse effect on No 2 Sheridan Grove in terms of overlooking and loss of light.

iii. The proposal was contrary to Policy QD 1 of PPS 7 - Quality Residential Environments, criterion (f), in that inadequate and inappropriate provision was made for parking.

Commissioner's Consideration
The Commissioner acknowledged the planning history in the context of there being no dispute that there was a lawful and realistic ability to undertake the development approved under the extant planning permission for the site as an alternative to the appeal development under consideration.

In relation to the increase in internal floorspace, the Commissioner noted that the revised footprint did not materially reduce the property's private amenity space. The Commissioner also considered that the revised ridge height and alterations to the front façade did not materially increase the building's overall scale or massing when compared to the extant approval. As such it was found that the dwelling, as constructed, did not result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, therefore the Council's first reason for refusal was not sustained.

In relation to the Council's second reason for refusal, the Commissioner observed that the distance between the front of the appeal building and that of No. 2 Sheridan Grove was more than 20m. He stated that, given the distance and the elevated position of No.2, which sits at a greater height than that of the road, there were no direct views into either its main living area or front bedroom from the balcony of the appeal building. It was noted that a large shrub positioned along the roadside of No.2 helped screen views into the ground floor windows. The balcony as constructed was also not found to permit direct views into the patio area of No.4.

As such, concerns regarding significant overlooking from the balcony were unfounded.

In respect of windows in the building, the Commissioner was satisfied that the appeal development would not result in unacceptable loss of privacy through actual or perceived overlooking.

In respect of alleged overshadowing or loss of light to No.4 it was recognised that the extant approval also failed the 25-degree light test. The Commissioner

acknowledged that there were other matters also relevant in determining whether any loss of light would be unacceptable, including the availability of alternative natural light sources.

He referenced the fact that there were a number of prominent trees which already contributed to a significant reduction in light from the south west to No.4, and that taken account of the established mature vegetation, he was not persuaded that No.4 had benefitted from uninterrupted natural light for over 30 years as asserted.

The Commissioner did not find that the appeal building impinged on No.4's immediate aspect of outlook.

In respect of the Council's third reason for refusal, he found that three vehicles could be accommodated to the front of the dwelling and therefore exceeded the relevant parking standard.

In respect of third-party concerns regarding loss of visual screening, it was considered the fencing as erected could be conditioned to be retained and that planting within the garden of the appeal site would further strengthen boundary vegetation over time.

The Commissioner dismissed the reasons for refusal and granted full planning permission with six conditions set out below:

- Obscure glazed privacy screens referenced as opaque fronted glass and installed in line with drawing PAC 4 shall be retained in perpetuity.
- Obscure glazing installed in the windows referenced in drawing PAC 4 shall be retained in perpetuity.
- No part of any flat roofed area of the building hereby approved and shown on drawings PAC 2, PAC 3 and PAC 4 shall be used as a balcony or roof terrace at any time.
- The timber fence along the northern and southern boundaries of the site, as shown on drawing PAC 2 shall be retained in perpetuity, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.
- All landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with drawings Nos. PAC 2 and PAC 6. All works and new planting shall be completed during the first available planting season after the occupation of the dwelling hereby approved and shall be retained thereafter.
- Within a period of 5 years from the date of this decision, any tree shrub or hedge which is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies or becomes in the opinion of the planning authority, seriously damaged of defective, another tree, shrub or hedge of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the planning authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Award of Costs
In parallel with this appeal, an application for an award of costs against the Council was submitted, and partially upheld, insofar as the Council acted in an unreasonable

manner pertaining to a distinct issue relating to parking provisions. The Planning Service would await submission of costs from the appellant.

New Appeals

3. The following appeal was lodged on 16 March 2026:

PAC Ref	2025/A0137
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0945/F
Appellant	Kenneth Black
Subject of Appeal	Single storey detached dwelling and associated entrance
Location	Site immediately SE of No. 1 Craigantlet Road, Newtownards

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

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report and attachments.

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

7. LETTER FROM DFC – HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DIVISION REGARDS HERITAGE VALUE OF WALL IN PORTAFERRY

(Appendix XVII – XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Council had received a letter from the Department for Communities – Historic Environment Division, dated 23 March 2026 in respect of the Walled Garden adjacent to Exploris, The Rope Walk, Castle Street, Portaferry.

It advised that the Department was engaged in a survey of all Northern Ireland's buildings (including structures) for the purpose of updating and improving the list of buildings of special or architectural interest.

It concluded that the wall referred to above, whilst of some heritage value, it was not of sufficient interest to merit statutory listing.

Attached were the letter and the accompanying report for Members' information.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report and attachments.

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

8. CORRESPONDENCE FROM MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE RE: NI WATER – CLOSED CATCHMENTS

(Appendix XIX – XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Minister for Infrastructure had acceded to the Council's request to host a delegation of cross-party Members to discuss ongoing concerns regarding the Report presented on NI Water Closed Catchments at 03 March Planning Committee (copy attached).

The Minister's Office had confirmed date and time of 09 June 2026 at 2pm in Parliament Buildings, with attendees to be confirmed with the Chief Executive's Office in due course. A briefing paper would be drafted for Members ahead of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes this report and attachments.

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

(Councillor McKee withdrew from the meeting – 9.34pm)

9. 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.

(The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moore, was invited from the public gallery to propose her Notice of Motion)

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Speaking to her Notice of Motion, Councillor Moore was grateful to officers for their recent report on wastewater capacity, which clarified something that had been known for some time - that wastewater capacity was now a binding constraint on development in parts of the Borough.

It was important to recognise that this was not just a development issue but crucially an environmental one. Capacity constraints existed because the system was already under pressure, and when that system was stretched beyond its limits, the result was an increased risk of out-of-sewer flooding, unsatisfactory discharges, and damage to waterways and the local environment. The restrictions being seen were, in many cases, there to prevent that harm.

Councillor Moore outlined that the motion had two main aims. Firstly, to quantify the scale of the problem - economically for the borough, environmentally, and in terms of the historical wastewater issues that had led Northern Ireland Water to designate significant sections of the borough as closed catchments. Secondly, to consider how action could be taken at Council level.

The issue was affecting both housing and business development and, speaking as a Newtownards councillor, she emphasised how acute the situation was. The impact was not theoretical - it was already affecting planning applications and, in some cases, closing businesses.

She noted that Members were already aware of the issue and that the Officer report had highlighted its seriousness. Closed catchments meant developments could not proceed and businesses could not open or relocate, regardless of economic or community benefit.

There was a clear contradiction, she added, noting that efforts were being made to bring vacant units back into use, grow the non-domestic rate base, and support town centres, yet core infrastructure was preventing that. This was not a one-off issue but a structural barrier.

Councillor Moore believed that there was no resolution in the short to medium term, noting that Newtownards had not been included in the current PC21 funding period

and was not currently prioritised for the next round. This pointed to the likelihood of years of constraint, by which time it might be too late, and she stressed that it was better to preserve opportunity than attempt to recover it.

It was clear that reliance could not be placed solely on NI Water or the Department for Infrastructure to address the issue in time to prevent damage to the Borough. The officer's report did not yet provide the full picture, as there was no Borough-wide map of constraints, no quantified economic impact, and no clear environmental track record showing how often systems had failed, where, and with what local impact. It was noted that having this information would place the Council in a much stronger position to advocate effectively and make informed decisions.

Councillor Moore explained that the motion was about moving from anecdote to evidence and using that evidence to inform the Council's response, noting that while there was general awareness of the problem, the full supporting data was not yet available.

Addressing capacity constraints could not come at the expense of environmental responsibilities and Council, as environmental custodians, could not support development which increased the risk of out-of-sewer flooding or unsatisfactory discharges, as this would create further long-term problems affecting waterways, communities, and sustainability.

Understanding environmental impact was as important as understanding economic impact, and the need for accurate information on the frequency, scale and location of system failures.

Councillor Moore added that a request had been made for officers to write to the Minister to clarify planned investment for Ards and North Down, particularly in advance of the scheduled delegation on 9th June.

The motion also proposed writing to SOLACE to understand how other councils were responding to the issue. Belfast City Council, Newry, Mourne and Down, and Mid and East Antrim had adopted different policy approaches, and it was important to understand the implications - both the benefits and the risks - environmentally and economically. Policy decisions should be evidence-based and considered on the merits of each application.

Councillor Moore advised of a small, well-established takeaway business in Newtownards that had been forced to relocate following the termination of its lease.

Despite investing in new premises nearby, NI Water had refused a connection because the unit had been vacant for more than five years. At the same time, a larger nearby hospitality unit remained empty but retained its connection.

This resulted in a situation where an active, viable business was prevented from operating while capacity remained tied up in an unused premises. These were already challenging times for the hospitality sector and consideration was given to whether such circumstances were unintentionally exacerbating those challenges.

Councillor Moore expressed significant concern regarding this issue, noting Newtownards as home and recognising its reputation as a vibrant town with independent businesses. However, more than 15 retail and hospitality businesses had closed in the past year.

While the causes were complex and often outside Council control, this was identified as an area where there was an opportunity for the Council to be more proactive - by gathering evidence, engaging constructively, and advocating for solutions.

In closing, Councillor Moore expressed strong concern for the future of the Borough, alongside a desire to ensure that everything possible was being done to protect it in a way that supported both sustainable economic growth and environmental responsibilities.

The seconder, Councillor Morgan, described wastewater capacity constraints as a huge issue in the Borough. She welcomed NI Water's comprehensive engagement and noted the DfI Minister's visit in June, though she remained sceptical regarding any immediate change. It was important to gain a full, detailed understanding of wastewater constraints, including their effects on planning and environmental quality. She questioned the feasibility of delivering the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) under the current constraints and called for informed political action and for the Council to be proactive in influencing change.

The Chair queried whether, given the new information from NI Water, the existing proposal required any amendment. He noted that the motion included four action points such as a detailed location assessment and writing to other councils. He put this to the proposer and asked if all points in the motion still remained relevant given those updates.

Councillor Moore argued that the recent NI Water information was broad and lacked detail on individual applications. She felt there was a need for more granular data from NI Water, especially to support the Council's decisions and provide evidence for appeals.

Councillor Moore pointed to a lack of evidence for refusals on an application-by-application basis and the need to understand implications for different scale proposals such as hotels versus a small business. She therefore confirmed that motion should proceed as presented.

Alderman McIlveen supported the intent behind the motion but felt there was a misunderstanding of the planning process and distinctions between officer, applicant and NI Water interactions. He warned against conflating issues, such as the takeaway example, which was under discussion with NI Water and a determination was pending.

He went on to express concern about losing employment potential at sites with live connections, such as the Bull and Claw, if connections were reassigned. He felt that the main challenge was not just about identifying closed catchment areas but finding solutions. He queried the ultimate 'end-game' for the work proposed of officers and sought further clarity on the motion's intended outcomes.

Councillor Smart acknowledged the struggles that small businesses faced with additional taxes and energy costs and the prevalence of closures and retirements. He spoke of the frustration caused by a statutory service and how it undermined the Council's revitalisation efforts for vacant and derelict commercial properties. Councillor Smart stressed the need for a more strategic approach to compiling data on constraints and suggested engagement with Solace and learning from other local councils. He felt that this should be the initial priority to ensure alignment and consistency and prevent central government from dismissing disparate findings.

He also felt that the Council needed to review if it had the resources and capacity to compile and analyse the data in this way or whether it needed external support. He expressed a need for urgency but also warned that the Council needed to be realistic in terms of its resources.

Alderman Graham raised concerns about the significant workload required for a detailed Borough-wide assessment and questioned whether the Council's existing officers could handle this, or whether external resources would be required. He put this to the officers.

The Head of Planning and Building Control explained that a lot of relevant information was readily available on NI Water's website – she referred to maps, constrained works and network limitations and she noted that it had been summarised in the earlier presentation by representatives of NI Water.

The Officer was able to provide a narrative around priorities for growth aspirations in the Council's draft plan strategy – she clarified that the aspiration was for over 14,000 dwellings and not the target of 8,150 stated by NI Water in its presentation.

She noted the limited availability of NIEA information relating to environmental/ecological impacts with regard to location and failure frequency. Applications were assessed on a case-by-case basis but gaps in information remained in terms of timing of last use for vacant shops. This impacted on eligibility for programs such as Empty to Energised.

Applicants were encouraged but not required to complete wastewater impact assessments and she gave an example where this assessment led to a refused connection.

She advised that regular meetings were held with NI Water and an upcoming training session had been arranged in order to clarify implications for planning staff.

The officer provided examples of other Council areas (Lisburn and Belfast City), with some Councils approving applications irrespective of constraint and she warned this could potentially lead to unlawful connections and further issues.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that some of the requested evidence might be possible to assemble, but not to the depth that the motion was requesting.

The Director of Place and Prosperity added that 17 applications were under the Empty to Energise scheme, with identified addresses to check for catchment area issues. It was intended to prevent issuing letters of offers to businesses at high risk of connection refusal. He referred to the ongoing and prospective major projects at the old NIE site and similar site at Comber Road. He highlighted the priorities of local economic development and supporting business retention and growth within the Borough. This involved close monitoring of wastewater constraint impacts.

He added that while the work would be time-consuming it would be manageable.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the question had been whether or not the Council would require external resources to complete the work and the Head of Planning and Building Control responded that a lot of information was available but it needed to be compiled but her service did not have the capacity or knowledge to evaluate the budget or environmental impacts over the past ten years.

In summing up, Councillor Moore responded to previous points, advising that gaining an understanding of processes and differences within other Councils was included in the motion. The priorities within the motion could be restructured, if necessary, particularly areas such as engagement with other Councils, in line with feedback.

While she had referred to the Chinese takeaway business as an example, she pointed out that it illustrated much wider concerns. She argued that workload difficulties should not affect gathering of information as this was fundamental in terms of shaping the policy.

The proposer highlighted that the motion sought clear information on planned investment and cross-Council engagement ahead of the 9th June delegation, and she felt that not having all of the information was in itself informative. She stressed that the motion was not about prejudging or lowering standards, but about ensuring evidence-based, proportionate and responsible decision making.

Councillor Moore welcomed the officer comments that the Council assessed every application but was sceptical that NI Water provided the same level of scrutiny, particularly in relation to the examples in Newtownards.

For clarity, the Director explained that completion of the work would take time, but it was not unmanageable.

On being put to the meeting, with 5 voting FOR, 0 AGAINST, 4 ABSTAINING and 7 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

10. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN - INTERIM CONSULTATION REPORT

(Appendix XXI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6 – Exemption 6b Order Or Direction Under Any 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 6b as it relates to the status of the current and ongoing consultation on the draft Plan Strategy and decisions that Council may take.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.02pm.

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 6 May 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Kendall

Aldermen: Adair McAlpine
Cummings

Councillors: Ashe (7.15 pm Zoom) Douglas
Boyle Edmund
Blaney Harbinson
Brady (Zoom) Newman
Wray

In Attendance: Alderman Graham, Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson

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

INTRODUCTION

Councillor Kendall welcomed everyone to her last meeting as Chair and expressed her gratitude to the Committee for what had been quite a pleasant term and she had enjoyed the agreement and disagreement expressed in the scrutiny of decision making. She also thanked Council officers for their support and the work provided by the Democratic Services team. She also thanked the public for listening and the constructive feedback provided by them. In closing she welcomed again the new Head of Waste and Cleansing and hoped that he had had a good introduction to the work of the Council.

Speaking on behalf of his Party Alderman Adair praised the Chair believing her to have been fair and that she had conducted business well and should be proud of her record.

NOTED.

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies and those were noted from Alderman McRandal, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and Councillor Cathcart. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and none were noted.

NOTED.

3. NOTICE OF MOTION 655 ADDITIONAL NAMES FOR COMBER WAR MEMORIAL

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

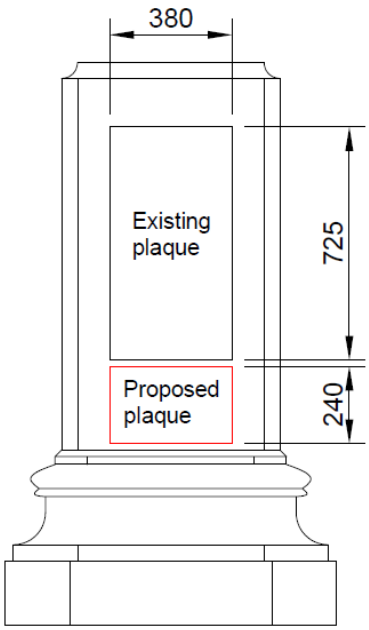
That this Council brings back a report outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber, to accommodate a list of historically researched names, currently being collated as per War Memorial Trust guidelines, of the fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, which were previously not included.

At the meeting, it was pointed out that the Comber Branch of the Royal British Legion had been provided with a historically researched and compiled list of individuals believed to have been omitted from the town's War Memorial. The list related to casualties from the First World War, covering the period 1914–1918.

Upon receipt of this information, the Branch agreed to initiate a process in accordance with War Memorial Trust Guidelines. That included the establishment of a working group to undertake detailed scrutiny of the names and to commence a formal verification process.

Key Issues
Officers had since been collaborating with the working group and all missing names were now believed to have been collated and verified.

In total, 123 names have been collected and verified by the working group. It was proposed that those names would be distributed over three plaques, situated on the existing war memorial as shown below.



Side Elevation

Notes:
1. 3 plaques to be installed on 3 sides of the monument.
2. 123 names in total. Roughly 41 per plaque.
3. Font type and size to match existing plaque.

Photo of Exisiting

Next Steps
Officers had approached a local foundry for the production of the plaques. Initial budget costs indicated an approximate total cost of £5,000 for the three plaques and could be procured.

Summary
A list of individuals believed to have been omitted from the town's War Memorial had been identified. The list related to casualties from the First World War, and could be added to the Comber War Memorial as described in this report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to progress with the production of the three plaques as outlined above, utilising existing maintenance budgets.

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

Alderman Cummings thanked officers for the report and its recommendations and also asked for thanks to be recorded for Dr Stange who had been very diligent with his work behind the scenes in compiling the detailed record. He believed that the work was coming at a good time and the appeal from local families was that the list should be comprehensive and complete.

He had a question in relation to the positioning of the plaques on the memorial and if the overall cost would include the casting of names. The Committee was informed that the cost did include that and the intention was that the plaque be set on the surface memorial rather than recessed in to the existing stone which could lead to damage. Alderman Cummings expressed his satisfaction with that. Members were

also informed that if the recommendation was agreed this evening officers would move as soon as possible back to the working group which could engage with the Council to mark the addition in advance of the Somme Commemoration at the start of July, if that was at all possible.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Douglas stressed that it was incredibly important to keep the memory alive of those who had lost their lives during the First World War and she made a special mention for the work of the Comber Branch of the Royal British Legion which had assisted in the compilation of the additional names.

Councillor Boyle rose to speak and after thanking and praising the Chair for her time in that role he said he welcomed the report and thanked Alderman Cummings for bringing the Notice of Motion originally. He thought that the report had been sensible and meaningful and referred to the names that had been missing and forgotten but would now be on display and rightfully remembered by their families and the communities they had represented. He thought this had been a tremendous piece of work and offered his congratulations to the working group and hoped that the numbers were now complete and that every life sacrificed would be given the respect and honour that was deserved.

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

4. HRC EXTENDED OPENING HOURS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) extended opening hours trial was a response to a proposal by the Council to revert to pre-Covid seasonal opening times with the aim to increase accessibility for residents.

Key Issues
Scope of the trial:
It was agreed that the trial would run over the brighter months of June, July, August and September. The trial involved alternating additional evening opening hours across the nine HRCs from Monday to Friday.

Extended Opening Hours were agreed as followed for 1 June to 30 September, 8am to 8pm.

- **Monday** - Donaghadee and Holywood HRCs
- **Tuesday** - Comber and Kircubbin HRCs
- **Wednesday** - Portaferry and Newtownards HRCs
- **Thursday** - Balloo, Bangor HRC
- **Friday -** Millisle and Ballygowan HRCs

The last bookable appointment was 7:40pm.

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

Figure 1.0 HRC extended opening hours social media post

Results of the trial:

The trial measured the number of booked slots as a percentage of the total additional number of slots made available. The table below was a summary of site usage during the extended opening hours between 1 June to 30 September 2025.

Total - Extended Opening							
1 June to 30 September 2025	Extra slots available	Bookings created	% of extra slots booked per site	No shows	% of no shows per site	Bookings completed	% of extra slots used per site
Balloo	3,060	1,163	38%	111	4%	1,052	34%
Newtownards	3,060	381	12%	16	1%	339	11%
Comber	2,448	215	9%	15	1%	185	8%
Holywood	800	112	14%	8	1%	100	13%
Ballygowan	1,530	117	8%	5	0%	106	7%
Millisle	1,836	121	7%	5	0%	109	6%
Kircubbin	1,224	106	9%	4	0%	90	7%
Portaferry	1,224	103	8%	3	0%	97	8%
Donaghadee	864	65	8%	1	0%	62	7%
Total	**16,046**	**2,383**	**Avg. 12%**	**168**	**Avg. 1%**	**2,140**	**Avg. 11%**

Summary

The trial of extended opening hours at nine Household Recycling Centres demonstrated a lack of significant demand for the additional operating times.

Only one of the nine sites managed to utilise over 15% of its extended booking slot availability, while the remaining eight experienced notably low attendance.

That outcome suggested that while extended hours might cater to a specific localised need, without increased public engagement a broader service implementation could result in an inefficient resource allocation with minimal public benefit. In order to inform the next steps, Members were advised that budget existed for any of the three possible options as set out below.

Next Steps
Recommended options:
Officers would suggest consideration of the following three potential options:

1. As in the 2025 trial, extend HRC opening hours to provide one late opening evening per week at each site from 1 June to 30 September. Resourcing that option would cost an estimated additional £45,000
2. As in the 2025 trial, extend HRC opening hours to provide one late opening evening per week, but only at five sites - Balloo, Newtownards, Comber, Millisle, and Portaferry in order to balance demand and geographical access. Resourcing that option would cost an estimated additional £38,500.
3. Do not extend HRC opening hours, retaining consistent opening hours. That option would have no additional staffing or budgetary implications.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves Option 2.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Option 1 be adopted.

Alderman Adair proposed Option 1 believing that the additional resource was well worth the spend to ensure equal treatment of extended opening hours across the Borough over the summer months; including the Ards Peninsula. He thought that having Kircubbin excluded was unacceptable and therefore Option 1 was a sensible alternative. He argued that people led busy lives and should not be expected to travel long distances to their nearest recycling site. He urged Members to support the proposal, stating that the Council existed to serve the public and that the additional investment would be worthwhile.

Councillor Douglas was happy to second that proposal noting that while Option 2 covered her area she saw the merit in having the service extended so that it was convenient to all residents of the Borough. Councillor Boyle agreed with the amended proposal to adopt Option 1 believing that the service should be spread as widely as possible.

Also rising to support was Councillor Wray who began by thanking Councillor Kendall for her time in the role of Chair of the Environment Committee. He thought he could give Option 1 his support provided it proved to be value for money. He referred to the mathematics of the service in terms of the percentage of slots used in

the evenings and compared that to the cost and usage of daytime slots provided following a question to the Head of Service. He recognised the additional cost of the extension but also saw the point of view of providing a balance for people who worked 9-5 pm and who would benefit most from the access that the extended hours would provide.

(Councillor Ashe entered the meeting at 7.15 pm)

Councillor Edmund thanked the team for their work and agreed that many residents could not visit HRCs during standard working hours. He felt extended hours could have the benefit of reducing fly-tipping and increase recycling of items such as small electricals as an example and believed that all centres should remain open rather than a selected few.

Councillor Brady thanked the outgoing Chair for her contribution and also supported Option 1, noting that residents who lived in Holywood would have been very unhappy had the centre there been closed over summer in the evenings. He queried the higher 'no-show' rates at Balloo. The Head of Service said that no clear explanation for that could be ascertained

Councillor Newman also supported Option 1, believing that residents would be unhappy if their local centre was to be closed while other centres were open. She expected an annual review of the service and believed the additional investment was fair to ratepayers.

Councillor Blaney noted that some percentages were lower than anticipated and recognised that withdrawing a service once it had been introduced was difficult. He viewed Option 1 as the only realistic option and supported it for a further year, while stressing the need to ensure ratepayers received value for money.

Councillor Harbinson thanked Councillor Kendall for her fairness as Chair of the Committee and supported Option 1 as a balance between utility and cost. He felt evening opening would help those doing garden work throughout the summer and expected usage to rise as awareness of the service increased.

The Chair agreed that the points in relation to Holywood were well made. She thought the trial that had been previously established must run long enough to be properly assessed and that the service should suit those working the traditional working day.

Summing up Alderman Adair noted that ratepayers had just received their bills for the year ahead and stressed the need to ensure everyone had fair access to Council services, including their local recycling centre.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Option 1 be adopted.

5. NOTICE OF MOTION 330 DONAGHADEE SWIM SHELTER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in March 2019 a decision was taken on a Notice of Motion as followed:

That 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. It is important that we recognise the many benefits that such activity brings to those that take part - enhancing peoples physical and mental wellbeing. The fact is that a significant number of our residents are swimming in the waters around our coast - we as a Council should not be seeking to deter them in any way, instead we should be looking how we can assist them and in doing so encourage others to improve their lifestyles. As part of the report, the Council will engage with the community in Donaghadee to hear views and ideas on possible solutions.

Key Issues
Previously Assets and Property Services (now Estates) had been progressing this and officers had met with Donaghadee Sailing Club and the local open water swimming group, the Chunky Dunkers, shortly after the Notice of Motion was submitted to inform the design and preferred location. Below was a design concept that was drawn up based on those discussions.

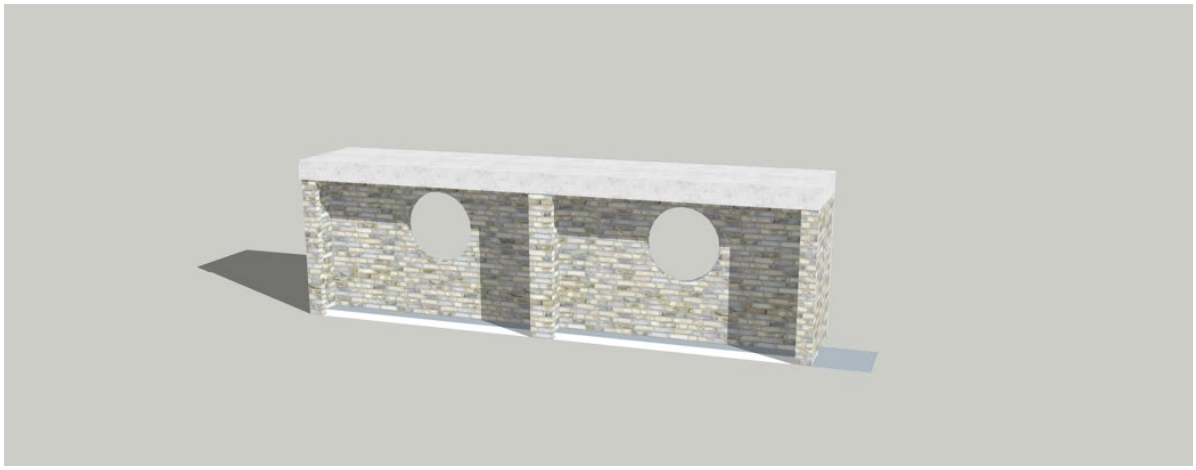
The Parks and Cemeteries Service was now progressing the project and it was proposed to submit a planning application for the shelter and as part of that, full detailed designs would be prepared with associated costs estimated. In addition, a business case would be required to progress the installation of the proposal.

Proposed swimming shelter

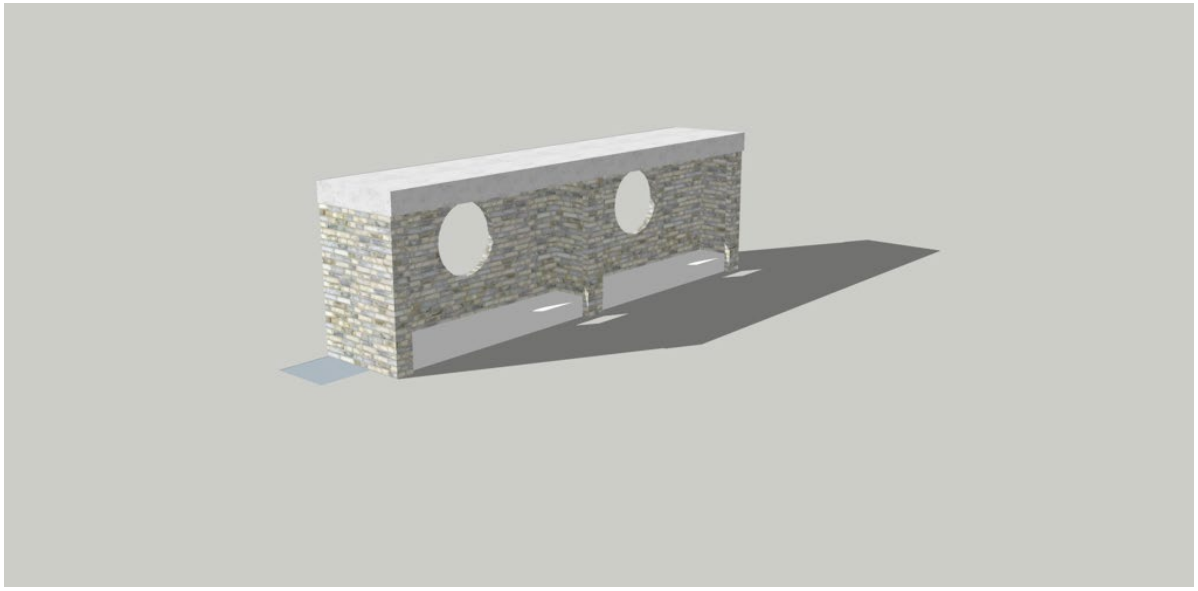
In 2025 Donaghadee was designated as a Designated Bathing Water Site by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The provision of a modest shelter would respond directly to the Notice of Motion and would support an established and growing open water swimming community in Donaghadee. It would provide a practical facility for swimmers using the area, improve comfort and amenity at the site, and demonstrate the Council's support for

healthy outdoor recreation. The proposal would also align with the increased profile of Donaghadee as a recognised bathing water location.



Rear view which will face the road



Seating will face towards the sea

Next Steps

The next stage would be to develop the proposal to a level suitable for submission of a planning application. As part of that work, detailed design drawings would be prepared and more accurate capital cost estimates would be established. In parallel, a business case would be required to assess the justification, affordability, deliverability and ongoing implications of the proposal before any decision was taken on installation.

Summary

The Donaghadee swimming shelter proposal had its origin in a Council Notice of Motion and had already been informed by engagement with local stakeholders. Given the continued popularity of open water swimming and Donaghadee's formal designation as a bathing water site in 2025, there was a clear basis for progressing the scheme to the next stage through detailed design, planning and business case development.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to submit a planning application for the proposed swimming shelter.

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

Councillor Wray had been very impressed by the report and the proposed design and thought that it would be the envy of a lot of other coastal villages. He praised the design and the colour scheme and knew it would be a welcome addition to Donaghadee and he expressed his pleasure for the town. Alderman McAlpine referred to her colleague, Councillor Hennessey, who was also delighted with the plans and knew that the Dee Dunkers particularly would also be.

Alderman Adair gave the proposal his support but was unhappy that ones provided in the peninsula were not as good and not similar since, and that he had been calling for that for some time. He stressed that all ratepayers needed to be treated equally and he would continue to press for this to be extended on the Ards Peninsula.

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

6. NOTICE OF MOTION 616 DONAGHADEE HARBOUR AND PARADE

(Appendices I – III)

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

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

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

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

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

As Members were aware a number of reports had been returned to the Committee, most recently in March 2026, when officers recommended that the report be noted given the costs involved compared to outcomes that may be achieved. In March 2026, the Council agreed as followed.

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 the Council recognised that it did 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.

Key Issues
A letter was issued under point two of this decision and a response had now been received, attached at appendix 3. Previous responses were also attached for context and Members' information.

In relation to point one that referred to the RPS Harbour Study (2020) which 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, a further report was commissioned by the Council and presented to Members in 2025 to test that possibility. Members would recall that this confirmed that in relation to the potential of a break water reducing wave impacts along the adjacent shoreline, that was not the case. That would require as pointed out in the report instead, other means of enhancing costal protection schemes, other than a breakwater.

Members were also reminded that it was the Council's responsibility only to ensure protection of the property it owned, and that DFI was responsible for the integrity of its assets, including public highways that would benefit from such works.

Next Steps
From the work done to date, continuing to pursue a breakwater project would be very difficult to justify financially and so officers recommended initially that no further activity should be embarked upon in relation to the matter. However, further research would be undertaken in relation to sourcing possible funding in relation to point 1 of the decision taken in March 2026.

Summary
The latest response from the Department was brought to Members' attention through the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Edmund thanked officers for the comprehensive report and the work undertaken and Councillor Wray had been disappointed in the response from the Minister which had not been helpful nor welcomed. He believed it was what the Council had come to expect from that Department but knew this was not the end of the matter since a solution needed to be brought to combat the coastal erosion at the harbour. He stressed the need for the Northern Ireland Assembly to get moving on the work required. Alderman Adair agreed with Councillor Wray's comments believing that the Department for Infrastructure should be rebranded the Department for Inaction which he felt the Borough was bearing the brunt of.

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

7. PORTAVOGIE AND PORTAFERRY 3G PITCH PROJECTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in February 2024, the Council agreed to the following:

"That Council notes the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns, recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks Officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term. As a matter of urgency Council tasks Officers to bring forward a bimonthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry Sports Centre and Portaferry 3G Pitch to this committee."

The last report of this nature was reported to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in September 2025, and since then, in relation to the two 3G pitch projects, Members and primary stakeholders had only been updated by other means of communication including email and telephone calls. Whereas the pitches would continue to be reported to the Environment Committee, the update on the Portaferry Sports Centre was now a matter for the Active and Health Communities Directorate.

Formal bi-monthly reporting was temporarily paused to allow time to deal with some sensitive issues pertaining to land, access, property and confidential matters, which had now largely been resolved. The pattern of reporting using the RAG status would recommence from September 2026, and information updates on the two projects would be provided as required.

Key Issues
Portaferry Pitch Project

An application for planning approval was submitted in February 2026 following a period of design that took account of, amongst many other things, an extensive period of consultation and stakeholder and partner collaboration. An updated business case would be developed should planning permission be granted in due course to allow Members to make decisions in relation to next steps regarding the project.

Portavogie Pitch Project
Planning approval was granted on 31 March 2026 therefore all matters pertaining to planning had now been either agreed by that service and its statutory consultees, or conditions had been attached that must be discharged before development could begin.

In order for the Council to proceed to the next stage, which was the appointment of an Integrated Supply Team (IST) completion of final design packages, discharge of any planning conditions, and construction, the Council would need to consider an updated business case which included all elements required by HM Treasury's Green Book Five Case Model. An update to costs was being formalised by the Council's consultants and QS and a partner was currently being procured to develop the business case which would be brought to Members when completed.

Next Steps
Both project teams would continue to develop the projects in accordance with the Council's capital project governance requirements. In the short term, the priority was to complete the business case for the Portavogie 3G project to allow that to be presented to the Council at the earliest opportunity, and to work on any necessary liaison with planning colleagues as the Portaferry project passed through the Planning application process.

Summary
Both projects continued to be developed as required by Council processes.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this update.

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

Alderman Adair thanked officers and looked forward to the delivery of the 3G pitch at Portavogie which in his view was long overdue. He noted that Members were frustrated by the long delays, especially since the project had been previously lapsed and ground to a halt. He asked about the business case and how it was being delivered. The Director advised work on the group would be expected to begin once quotations had been received. With a further question about land acquisition the Director confirmed it was underway and also subject to the business case, with the Chief Executive having written to the Department of Education to push for progress in relation to a legal agreement concerning the drainage solution.

Alderman Adair sought assurance that he could speak to his constituents explaining the progress but he stressed that he would accept nothing less than the project being delivered. He emphasised that there was a clear need on the Ards Peninsula

and residents there paid the same rates as everyone else in the Borough and the Council should now proceed in earnest.

Councillor Boyle was in full agreement with Alderman Adair's comments and thought that the whole journey had been extremely frustrating. He remembered the ideas being initiated and would never have guessed that he would still be speaking about the same ideas in 2026. He went on to say that Portaferry welcomed the fact that that one was now in the planning system and hoped that lessons could have been learnt from the experiences at Portavogie. In response the Director explained that lessons had been learnt and the Council was more aware of what to anticipate as the application continued through the planning system and information requested for Portavogie had been front loaded for Portaferry. Councillor Boyle thought that the Ards Peninsula had been starved of sports resources for many years and he thanked the Director and his team for the work that had been done to date and hoped the Council would be able to progress swiftly with both projects.

Councillor Wray expressed disbelief that the initiative had now taken fifteen years and there had been so many false dawns but the Council needed to be honest with the public and he believed firmly that both projects must progress. While the geography was important both resources were for all the people of the Ards Peninsula and the Borough as a whole and should be delivered as soon as possible.

Councillor Edmund gave his support and welcomed the process of the applications through the planning system. He pointed to the facility at Londonderry Park which was bouncing and used to capacity so he believed that the investment would be beneficial to the Peninsula.

In summing up Alderman Adair thanked Members for their comments and reminded the committee that the pitch in Portaferry was a multiuse facility and not just for one sport.

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

8. GREENWAYS UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the new Whitespots Line of the Comber Greenway was nearing completion with an expected opening at the end of May/start of June 2026. That would be a transformative 5.4-kilometre active travel route linking Newtownards and Bangor.

The Department for Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmons visited the project in March 2026 and was given a further update of the progress to date. A group of pupils from West Winds Primary School came along on their bikes assisted by the PSNI and some Elected Members, the acting Chief Executive, Director, officers and Deputy Mayor were also in attendance.

Key Issues
The Greenway contractor Charles Brand Ltd had almost completed the following sections:

- The Floodgates Park section
- The section from Bangor Road to SERC
- The section from Green Road through Breezemount
- The section through Londonderry Park

The above sections were still under the control/responsibility of the contractor until such times as the outstanding snags had been addressed and it was formally handed over to the Council.

The remaining sections were still being finished:

- The boundary at Breezemount to Drumhirk Way
- Drumhirk Way down towards Ark Farm/The Somme/Whitespots
- Ark Farm along the rear of Belvedere back down to the Bangor Road
- The Floodwall over to Ballyrickard Waste Water Treatment Works.

Next Steps
Welcome signage and wayfinding signage was currently being produced and would be installed in due course. The branding followed the design of existing sections of the Comber Greenway in Comber, Dundonald and Belfast. A map was also being produced for installation at key entry points and would be added to the website also when finalised. The planting, fencing and addition of bins and benches was also being finalised.

Welcome Signage

The Comber to Newtownards section of the Greenway that would connect the existing Comber Greenway, was granted planning approval in January 2025.

The discussions to connect the Greenway from the section at Ballyrickard Waste Water Treatment Works through Comber to connect with the existing Comber Greenway were ongoing. A planning application to deliver the section along the A21 was still required. Draft drawings were currently with DFI for its input prior to the submission of the planning application for that one missing section.

A feasibility study for the proposed Green Road to Donaghadee Greenway would be instigated later this year.

Summary
The new Whitespots Line of the Comber Greenway was nearing completion with an expected opening at the end of May/start of June 2026.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the progress in the delivery of the Greenway network.

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

Alderman Cummings was pleased to read about the progress on the Greenway and thought it was becoming a very encouraging development. He referred to the name Comber Greenway and asked if the name would be reconsidered as the Greenway was extended to other parts of the Borough. The Director explained that a decision had been taken by the Council to call the facility the Comber Greenway as this was a well known brand and that it was all linked together, but the decision was also to name the new sections as lines, i.e. The Scrabo Line from Comber to Newtownards, and the Whitespots Line from Newtownards to Bangor with emphasis on the locality of them for clarity. Seconding the proposal Councillor Douglas was pleased to note the progress.

Councillor Brady echoed those comments and believed this was a very good news story. He had walked the length of it with a Council officer and noted some flooding concerns and wondered if the rivers would be dredged where required. It was reported that snags were noted and the contractor tasked to rectify them before handover. Council officers were satisfied that all that work required to date was being carried out by the contractor.

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

9. NOTICE OF MOTION 707 REMOVAL OF PLANTING AT THE COMMONS, DONAGHADEE

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in March 2026, the Council agreed to the following Motion:

"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."

Key Issues
The main concern that was discussed was the unapproved removal of a wide range of grasses and bushes from The Commons by a local resident, leaving the Council land in an unacceptable state. The Council had since been working alongside natural processes to restore the lands as quickly as possible. A complaint was made by the Council to the PSNI in relation to that, and depending on that outcome, a civil case may then also be considered for damages and compensation for losses that occurred. A letter was also sent to the Minister for DEARA asking that the area be designated for future protection. A response to that letter was received on 21st April 2026 and was appended to this report.

Next Steps
Members were being asked to consider the contents of the letter and decide if any further actions were appropriate at this time.

Summary
A letter in response to the Council's request to DEARA to consider an environmental designation of The Commons had been received for Members consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Proposing Councillor Harbinson was pleased that the Council could use the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Act to take its own action and he was also encouraged that the Council would be engaging with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to combat the environmental damage. As seconder Alderman Adair was in agreement and he commended Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks for bringing the Notice of Motion forward and he looked forward to a further report.

At this point Alderman Adair suggested an alternative proposal and after discussion with the proposer on withdrawing his proposal, Councillor Harbinson stated that he did not wish to withdraw and instead to have his proposal debated in the normal manner.

The Chair (Councillor Kendall) asked about the future of the area in question knowing that the area would in some ways regenerate itself but wondered if the Council would take the opportunity to improve the biodiversity now that there was an opportunity to.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that the Council would bring forward the Tree and Woodland Strategy Update Report in June and one of the items was about improving that area and that would be in the report and that he had asked the Biodviersity Officer to identify opportunities in the Biodiversity Action Plan for local nature reserves which could include The Commons. The Chair thought that was encouraging and expressed keenness to see that progressed.

The Chair was aware that Members were not in agreement and the recommendation was voted on with a show of hands. Nine Members voted for the recommendation, four voted against and it was carried.

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

10. REUSABLE NAPPY TRIAL UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that disposable nappies comprised 4.9% of Northern Ireland's kerbside collected waste (NI Kerbside Waste Composition, DAERA 2018). That material was not currently recyclable and was sent for pre-treatment and incineration.

Modern reusable cloth nappies provided a zero-waste alternative to disposables and could work out cheaper in the long run. However, washing cloth nappies required water and energy and some users could find them less convenient than disposables. The cost of investing in a 'cloth nappy kit' was a barrier to parents and carers trying reusable nappies.

The Cloth Nappy Library
Ards and North Down Borough Council officers introduced a modest incentive scheme whereby cloth nappy 'trial kits' would be purchased and administered from The Library Group (a cloth nappy 'library'). The Library Group provided information

and support to parents and carers wishing to use cloth nappies and slings with their children. Those kits would allow up to 30 people/year to be loaned a nappy trial kit from The Library Group and that would in turn give insight into which cloth nappy style would suit the user before making their own personal financial commitment to buying cloth nappies for use as an alternative to disposable nappies.

The Library Group offered trial packs which were supplied on a two-week basis so parents could “try before they buy” and see what was on offer in terms of styles and materials. Trial kits were mailed out to participating families and The Library Group supplied all instructions (both written and video) via email. The kit was then returned at the end of the trial period and sanitised before being loaned to the next family. The participants could watch the videos back at any time during the trial and if they had questions, they could contact The Library Group for further advice and information.

It was agreed that a budget of £1,080 would be allocated to the scheme, from within existing revenue budgets. The kits would only be available to loan to Ards and North Down residents. The administration of the kits would be the responsibility of The Library Group.

Key Issues

The scheme was promoted via the following methods:

- Five heavily shared Facebook posts spread out over the financial year
- Bin-ovation Push Notification
- Bin-ovation News/Info
- ANDBC website
- Recycling and Waste Minimisation educational presentations
- Recycling information stalls

Figure 1.0 Reusable cloth nappy trial social media post

A total of 42 expressions of interest were completed via the online application process, the breakdown was as followed:

- 17 applicants engaged with the scheme
- 25 applicants did not respond to reach outs
- 14 applicants completed trials

At the end of the financial year officers were informed that due to increased charges with Companies House, increases in insurance, postal, electricity and heating costs impacting running costs, The Library Group Ltd did not consider it viable to offer a renewal quote.

Summary
Officers had engaged with the Northern Ireland Resource Network and would continue to research suitable alternative suppliers or methods of supporting householders to test reusable cloth nappies.

Next Steps
The Council was asked to note the content of this update and that alternative suppliers were being investigated.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Harbinson thought this was a great initiative and hoped that an alternative supplier could be identified. Alderman McAlpine noted that disposable nappies made up 5% of the household waste collected in the Borough and thought that anyone making the effort to use cloth nappies should be supported.

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

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

11.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Graham and Councillor Gimour

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.

Proposed by Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Graham began by stating that his Motion was a simple request and it was asking for toilet facilities at the Helen's Bay station to help accommodate the needs of the large number of people who came to the seaside there in warm, sunny weather. It was unfortunate that some people were using private property to urinate

in and that was also occurring in the underpass close to the platform which made for a very unpleasant experience for visitors to the station and surrounding area. Alderman Graham felt that Translink benefitted from additional revenue at those peak times and therefore felt that it would be a positive move if that one simple facility could be provided and supplied to mitigate a nuisance for the residents of Helen's Bay.

Seconding the Motion on behalf of Councillor Gilmour, Alderman Adair stated that the recent extension had been a welcome step to improve public safety and it underlined how popular the area had become. He recognised that the popularity had brought challenges. People from across the area visited so the Council must work towards finding a solution in his view. Often that influx of people was leading to antisocial behaviour so toilet facilities would help to address that in part.

The Chair explained that she too had been contacted by some residents who had additional health or accessibility needs and needed frequent toilet stops. Councillor Blaney asked if there had been a consultation with residents since the Council would not want to be in a position of lobbying Translink only to find that residents did not want toilet facilities at the station.

Councillor Edmund believed that the majority of people would rather have public toilets than public urination which was unacceptable. He said he would happily support the Motion and in doing so was supporting the residents of Helen's Bay. He felt that it made sense to get the ball rolling in advance of the summer months.

In summing up Alderman Graham thought that a public consultation would fall to Translink and he agreed with his Council colleague that most people would likely prefer portaloos than urination in the under tunnel of the station and therefore it was difficult to imagine too much objection. He felt that the request was reasonable.

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

11.2 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 Donaghdee Harbour.

Council further acknowledges the continued work and contribution of Donaghadee Sailing Club and Donaghdee 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 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to explore the potential for shared Island Funding as a means of supporting the delivery of necessary coastal defence infrastructure.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cochrane was pleased to bring his Motion in respect of one of the most recognised coastal towns in Northern Ireland which was facing very real and growing pressures on its harbour infrastructure. Predictably the response from the Department had fallen short and Donaghadee had been let down. He called for the Department to step up as a full partner to the Council to work constructively on creating a solution. He particularly recognised the work of Peter Martin MLA and shared the sense of urgency which was being felt in the local community hoping that the Council could explore the potential for shared island funding. Donaghadee and Dun Laoghaire harbours were both built with real maritime need and historically were key links between Great Britain and Ireland.

Therefore, in his view, there was a strong foundation for co-operation between Donaghadee and Dun Laoghaire and he encouraged officers to follow that up with a report. He referred to the Shared Island Fund which was designed for cross border cooperation. He described his Motion as a call for action and it was not about rhetoric. Donaghadee Harbour could not be allowed to deteriorate further because the Council had failed to engage.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Thompson said he had brought it to explore the potential for funding since despite much engagement the Council had not been able to engage sufficiently with the Department and this deterioration was beginning to affect homes and businesses close to the Shore Road. The Council had been assured by the Department that the wall was safe and there was no evidence to suggest strengthening was needed but he thought this was a trust issue and the people of Donaghadee did not believe what the Department for Infrastructure was saying. He said there were clear signs of deterioration – including at the children's play areas and an escalating threat to the infrastructure. It was as a result of those ongoing concerns that the sailing club and other community groups did not want to see any more delays and they were supporting the exploration of shared island funding which it was hoped would lead to a successful bid. He added that this was a fantastic proposal to bring forward important development and it was important to use the relationships that the Council had built up.

Alderman McAlpine was very pleased to see that there was support across parties along with a lot of goodwill to address the issue. She referred to her Council colleague, Councillor Hennessey, who had been working to make links. People living on the Peninsula were very frustrated about forty-eight areas where work needed to be done to repair the roads close to the coast. She thought that something catastrophic could occur if something was not done.

Councillor Boyle welcomed the Motion and it was good to see a willingness to work, on something he fully supported, towards obtaining shared island funding, from the Republic of Ireland, for what was clearly a major and ongoing problem in Donaghadee.

It was however unfortunate to him that, as a Council, there was a tendency to either avoid or withdraw from representation on outside bodies and that, in his mind, put

the Council at a distinct disadvantage. He thought that the Council needed to try to inject a level of vision and broaden its thinking similar to other councils. Meetings with Southern counterparts, Minister's, TD's and Councillors should take place and continue, particularly on the shared island funding. He said, unfortunately, at this stage, due to not being members, the Council would not be at the table or represented like the other 10 Councils at this forum as currently it had withdrawn from the body dealing with such issues.

He said he would clarify how the Shared Island Fund actually worked in practice, particularly in relation to coastal defence proposals in areas like Donaghadee. There was a perception that if funding was available through the Shared Island Fund initiative, then projects could simply move forward on that basis. However, the reality was a bit more complex, and he thought it was important to understand that.

First of all, the Shared Island Fund was not a delivery body, it did not directly build infrastructure, and it did not operate independently within Northern Ireland. It was a funding mechanism used by the Irish Government to support projects that were jointly developed and delivered on a North–South basis.

That meant that any project in Northern Ireland still depended on the relevant government department, in this case of Coastal Defence and that responsibility sat with the Department for Infrastructure. So, for any scheme, in Donaghadee or elsewhere, the Department would need to; agree the project was a priority, take responsibility for design and delivery, manage planning and environmental approvals and ultimately own and maintain the infrastructure long-term. Even where external funding was available, those responsibilities did not change.

Shared Island funding could support a project, but it could not create a priority where one did not already exist. If a scheme was not currently prioritised by the Department for Infrastructure then the presence of Shared Island funding did not, in itself, move that project up the list. The Department would still need to commit staff, expertise, and resources. It would still need to take on long-term liability and it would still need to fit the project within its wider programme of work.

There was also the cross-border requirement, he added, and for a project to qualify, it must demonstrate clear North-South collaboration working with partners in Ireland, such as the Office of Public Works or relevant local authorities. That usually meant that projects were framed not as standalone local repairs, but as part of a wider programme looking at shared challenges like coastal erosion, flood risk, and climate adaptation across multiple locations. Even then, the same principle applied; without active participation and commitment from the Department for Infrastructure, the project would not proceed beyond the early stages.

The Shared Island Fund was a supporting mechanism, it did not replace local decision-making, and it did not remove the need for Departmental prioritisation, capacity, or responsibility. He added that if the Council was serious about progressing any coastal defence scheme in Donaghadee, the starting point remained the same; engagement with, and prioritisation by, the Department for Infrastructure. Without that, the likelihood of a project moving forward, regardless of potential funding streams was very limited.

Councillor Edmund stated that no single Department in Northern Ireland seemed to be responsible for coastal erosion and that saddened him in the hope to have Donaghadee protected. However he fully supported the Motion and wished it every success.

Alderman Adair stated that for once he and Councillor Boyle were in agreement, but could not agree with his comments on the Council's lack of involvement with shared island funding. He said that this Council did work in a cross border capacity and he was happy to do that as long as Northern Ireland's constitutional position was respected. He said that the Council had harnessed agreement for funding for Ballyhalbert, it had met representatives and had worked to get Shared Island Funding in that area so he thought it was nonsense to say that the Council was not engaged. Much funding had been brought to the Borough and the Council was happy to work with others and that was what it was about.

Councillor Cochrane thanked Members for the support expressed and hoped that the Department for Infrastructure would change its tune. He was asking for extended collaboration to try to come to a solution.

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

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

13. CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SUPPORT SERVICES

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

Background.
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the contract for the Provision of Grounds Maintenance Support Services was awarded on 1 July 2024 for an initial period of 1 year, with an option to extend for a further 3 x one-year periods.

Key Issues
All companies had been contacted to confirm their agreement to extend their contract for a second time.

All companies agreed, some with a percentage rise in their rates.

Next Steps
Following a satisfactory service review, officers now recommended to extend the contract for all Lots as outlined above, for a further 12-month period (1 July 2026 – 30 June 2027) as detailed in the original tender documents.

Summary
The Council was asked to approve the extension.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the extensions as proposed.

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

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.49 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 7 May 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor McCracken	
Aldermen:	Adair	
	McDowell	
Councillors:	Blaney	Hollywood
	Brady (Zoom)	Morgan
	Edmund	Newman
	Gilmour	Smart
	Hennessy	Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Strategic Development Manager (S McMaster), Regeneration Manager (C McMullan) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster).

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies had been received from the Mayor who was on Mayoral business and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were declared.

NOTED.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

At this stage the Director informed members that two additional members of staff were in attendance those being the Strategic Development Manager and the Regeneration Manager. He stated that they were both available for any queries which may arise during the meeting.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to welcome the officers to the meeting.

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

3. NOTICE OF MOTION 638 – MAP OF PUBLIC SECTOR LAND

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that this report was prepared by Council officers in response to Notice of Motion (638). The Notice of Motion requested a review of the extent and potential future use of public sector land within Bangor City Centre and Newtownards Town Centre. The Motion requested visual mapping of public landholdings, identification of under-utilised or unproductive public sector sites, and an assessment of how such land could be repurposed within existing planning and disposal frameworks.

The Interim Report represented Stage One of a two-stage approach, focusing on land owned by the Council and other known public bodies, and distinguishing between sites already committed to strategic regeneration projects and those with potential development or re-use value.

Key Issues

The Interim Report presented the following key issues:

- High levels of vacancy and under-utilisation persist in both Bangor and Newtownards, with around one-fifth of commercial and non-domestic properties vacant, reinforcing the need for targeted regeneration intervention.
- Many strategically significant public sector sites were already committed to major regeneration schemes, including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade and the Newtownards Citizen's Hub, limiting the availability of large, unallocated sites for development.
- The remaining portfolio of public land was largely made up of operational car parks, essential public buildings and open spaces, many of which were constrained by functional requirements, planning considerations or parking sensitivities.
- Planning advice strongly supported a focus on reactivating vacant and derelict buildings ahead of redeveloping surface car parks, given the importance of maintaining adequate parking provision to support town and city centre vitality.
- Where surplus or under-utilised land existed, it was often small, fragmented or constrained, meaning that redevelopment opportunities would require a highly selective and strategic approach.

Next Steps

- Maintain and update the Council's GIS mapping to ensure an accurate and up-to-date evidence base on public sector land data.
- Use the findings of this report to progress to Stage Two, engaging with other public sector bodies to identify any additional land that may be surplus or capable of being brought to market.
- Continue to address vacancy and dereliction through initiatives such as Empty to Energised, supporting the reactivation of existing buildings and increasing town centre footfall.

- Explore partnership, meanwhile use or pilot projects for sites that were not suitable for immediate development or disposal.
- Ensure that any future consideration of redevelopment carefully balanced regeneration opportunities with parking, operational and community needs.

Summary
The Interim Report provided an evidence base on the availability and status of public sector land in Bangor and Newtownards. It confirmed that while significant regeneration was already underway, opportunities for further development from public land were limited and constrained. The findings supported a strategic focus on repurposing vacant and derelict properties, strengthening asset management, and improving collaboration with other public bodies.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees the findings of the report and further agrees to move to Stage Two of the process. A follow up report will then be brought to the Committee once completed.

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Morgan, welcomed the reports and the options contained therein. She did however express some concern about the vacancy rates and asked if the amount of vacant and underutilised land could be attributed to more people now working from home. Continuing she asked if this could be an opportunity to look at this in greater detail in an attempt to reuse the land and promote enhanced private sector investment.

The Strategic Development Manager stated that in respect of those underutilised sites, their research indicated there were very little sites available to develop or progress. If agreed Stage 2 of the report would look at those sites not in Council ownership to see if there would be any opportunities to take those forward. As part of the Empty to Energised Grant Scheme an extensive piece of engagement was carried out with private property owners to ascertain what their needs were. She advised that the team would continue to look at private investment opportunities adding that would take some time.

At this stage the Director added that some of the underutilised land had been designated by Planning policy which meant that its use could not be changed. Members were advised that this matter was being considered by the Local Development Plan.

Councillor Morgan commented that during a recent conversation about Open Space it was noted that while it was usually easy to identify it was not always usable.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Hennessy welcomed the report and asked if the multi storey car park at the Flagship Centre in Bangor became available for use would that allow for the release of other surface areas used as car parks for redevelopment such as Church Street and Central Avenue, Bangor.

In response the Director confirmed that if that were to happen that could release up to 400 car parking spaces in Bangor meaning the Council could reconsider the use of those areas currently being used as car parks. However, he advised that it was likely the designation of those pieces of land was likely for car parks. Equally he commented if that were to happen consideration would need to be given to the long-term impact of any such decision.

Councillor Newman asked if the Central Avene car park in Bangor was ever considered for disposal to the developer as part of Queen's Parade particularly as it was within walking distance of Marine Gardens.

The Director advised that a number of other areas were considered over the last few months. However, he stated that the red line was put out for the development of that site in 2017 and that was the land to be redeveloped. Bangor Marine had then been awarded the Development Brief for the land within the red line and any requests for land outside that red line, but adjacent to it, could be considered by the Authority (Council and Department for Communities). Other areas would have to be considered on their own merits and would probably involve the Council having to undertake a proper procurement process.

Councillor Smart stated that the report was extremely positive and acknowledged the radical changes that were taking place within town centres. He also noted the degree of responsibility there was on private property owners to make sure their properties were suitably maintained. Councillor Smart suggested there could be value in maintaining a public list of derelict properties and sought officer opinion on that.

The Strategic Development Manager confirmed that as part of the Vacancy and Dereliction Study a list of those properties which were vacant in both Ards and Bangor had been drawn up. However, the issue with that was that it would be forever changing and as such could be updated. It was noted that currently that list was not available in the public domain.

Councillor Smart acknowledged the officer's comments noting that there were many properties in Ards which had been vacant for many years.

Councillor Smart proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Council agrees the findings of the report and further agrees to move to Stage Two of the process. A follow up report will then be brought to the Committee once completed**.** Furthermore, that Council consider the merits of a Council created and managed list - identifying long term vacant or derelict property. The list would be made publicly available, indicating whether an owner is known or contactable. This has the potential to allow the public to help fill in the gaps in knowledge and contacts. Expressions of interest in long term vacant property or land could potentially be forwarded to Council.

The proposer Councillor Smart acknowledged that such matters were complex and not everyone would wish to be involved. He hoped that it would provide opportunities for those private businesses or individuals who may wish to change the use of their buildings.

The seconder Councillor Hollywood indicated that he had nothing further to add at this stage.

Councillor Gilmour indicated that she had no issue with the amendment but asked how often such a report would need to be updated and reviewed. She also asked that consideration was given to the amount of officer time required to carry out that task.

The Director commented that officers would not be against the idea however he advised that the Dereliction Report referred to had been commissioned. He also suggested that the planning designation was added into any future report for each site. If no funding was available, it was suggested that the report was made available for six months and then removed.

Councillor Gilmour thanked the Director for his comments adding that she believed it would be useful to keep that in mind given the costs attached to it.

Alderman McDowell asked if there were any plans to have similar surveys carried out in other towns such as Donaghadee or Comber. The reason for him asking this question was that the public toilets in Donaghadee used to be the old Technical College and he believed a building such as this would provide the ideal site for a Business Hub. His second question was around a blue marking on the roundabout at the Kempe Stones Road which had been marked as sold. Alderman McDowell stated that he would like further details on that sale as it had previously been a contested piece of land.

In response the Strategic Development Manager confirmed that Vacancy and Dereliction studies were currently underway for the three remaining towns and all villages in the Borough and that would be reported back to the Committee in June 2026. The Director added that while those studies would show dereliction, Council properties could be added in.

At this stage Councillor Brady welcomed Councillor Smart's amendment but added that he did not believe that it should be overly resource intensive. Referring to Councillor Newman's earlier comments he stated that he was confused by the answer which she had been given. In the original planning application he noted that Marine Gardens West would also have been outside the red line and as such based on that logic either site was applicable. He sought some further clarification on that matter.

The Director advised that as far as he was aware the land abutted the red line and a request had been made for an additional 1,000 square metres of ground at Marine Gardens which it had the right to do under the Development Agreement. He added that he did not believe the land at Central Avenue abutted the red line of the proposed development.

The Chairman empathised with Councillor Brady's point but agreed that it would be best to be considered at a different forum.

Councillor Blaney indicated that he was happy to support the amendment noting that it was to consider the merits of keeping such a list. As part of the work of the LEP Subgroups it would appear to be heading in that general direction regardless whereby a master list would be kept in order to attract inward investment. Councillor Blaney acknowledged the large amount of market research which would need to be undertaken as part of this.

By way of information for officers, the Chairman commented he was aware that Invest Northern Ireland used to maintain property lists and suggested that it could be worthwhile investigating that further.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Council agrees the findings of the report and further agrees to move to Stage Two of the process. A follow up report will then be brought to The Committee once completed. Furthermore, that Council consider the merits of a Council created and managed list - identifying long term vacant or derelict property. The list would be made publicly available, indicating whether an owner is known or contactable. This has the potential to allow the public to help fill in the gaps in knowledge and contacts. Expressions of interest in long term vacant property or land could potentially be forwarded to via Council.

REPORTS FOR NOTING

4. PEACE PLUS DONAGHADEE PUMP TRACK
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity providing a background to the Peace Plus Donaghadee Pump Track including details of public engagement undertaken and programme outcomes. Details were also included around the proposed Programme to progress the project, financial matters and next steps.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor Hennessy proposed, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Hennessy thanked officers for the report noting that the Play Strategy had identified the need for this facility. He added that he was aware a number of different locations had been considered for this including Hunts Park and sought some further information around that.

In response the Regeneration Manager advised that the various locations had been identified through the Masterplan. She confirmed that Hunts Park had been considered however because it did not have a car park and had subsequently been designated as part of the overall Greenway plans it was not deemed suitable for the Pump Track.

Also welcoming the report the seconder Councillor Thompson referred to the public consultation exercise which had taken place on 29 April 2026 and sought information on the comments which had been made and how many people had attended.

The Regeneration Manager confirmed that approximately 15 people had attended with the majority of responses received favourable aside from some concerns raised by local residents in the area.

Councillor Thompson noted that currently there were no cycling facilities in Donaghadee and he believed the proposed Pump Track would open up opportunities for young people. He referred to a similar facility in Killinchy which had proved very popular with people travelling from far and wide to use it. Continuing he welcomed the proposed location at the Commons, Donaghadee adding that he looked forward to seeing it up and running.

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

5. SUPPORTING THRIVING HIGH STREETS PROGRAMME

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that as Members would be aware the 'Supporting Thriving High Streets' programme was launched in summer 2025. This programme of support was designed to revitalise city and town centre high streets through targeted grant schemes and regeneration initiatives. The programme aimed to create safer, more attractive streetscapes, increase footfall, and attract new businesses.

Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme
The initial strand of support to be made available, the 'Glow Up' Grant Scheme was launched in June 2025, this was followed by the 'Empty to Energised' Pilot Grant Scheme in January 2026, and most recently the 'Freshen Up' Grant Scheme on the 01st May 2026.

In addition to the support provided through the various grant schemes, an application was currently being prepared for submitting to the Department for Communities for funding to deliver the 'Clean City and Tidy Towns' public realm improvement/upgrade scheme which would further enhance high street regeneration efforts.

Next Steps
Regeneration Officers had been working with McGarry Consultants to undertake Vacancy and Dereliction Studies in Holywood, Comber, Donaghadee, and each of the rural villages. The outcomes of which would inform the development of future strands of support and facilitate expanding the programme to rural areas.

The Vacancy and Dereliction Studies would be presented to Members at the Committee in June 2026.

It should be noted that a Vacancy and Dereliction Study was completed for Bangor and Newtownards in 2025, the reports could be accessed via the following link Tackling Vacancy and Dereliction - Ards and North Down Borough Council

Summary
Officers would be presenting the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme to the City and Town Local Action Groups in June 2026, therefore an appendix detailing the status of the active schemes had been provided to ensure members were fully briefed in advance.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Smart stated that he was very happy to propose the recommendation and took the opportunity to express his thanks to the officer team for their work in relation to these Grant Schemes. He believed the Glow Up Grant Scheme had really supported the High Streets as had the Freshen Up Grant Scheme. Councillor Smart noted that in relation to the Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme five letters of offer had gone out to businesses in Newtownards with seven also sent out to Bangor businesses. Continuing he asked if there was a timeline for the Empty to Energised Grant Scheme and if consideration could be given to a 'rolling' scheme.

To respond the Strategic Development Manager indicated that officers could look at this as a 'rolling' scheme adding that while there was a deadline attached to the application process, extra time was allocated for the submission of additional information.

Also welcoming the report, Councillor Edmund added that it would be great to see more inward investment secured while also supporting those businesses already in place and trading. The current cost of living crisis had meant that people generally had less to spend on the High Street. Continuing Councillor Edmund noted the great uptake for the shop front scheme adding that it made the Borough's High Streets more attractive for both residents and tourists alike. As such he stated that he would like to see such Schemes rolled out to the many villages throughout the Borough and the application process simplified.

At this stage Councillor Blaney praised officers on the success of the Freshen Up Grant Scheme adding that many businesses had been grateful for it. He recognised there were certain buildings throughout the Borough which were beyond repair and were now considered a blight. As such he asked if there were any Schemes which would be suitable for demolition costs as he believed that it would be more economical to demolish such buildings.

The Director confirmed that all avenues for funding would be considered adding that the LEP was also looking at such matters. He did however urge some caution around obtaining grants for the demolition of derelict buildings especially with the involvement of developers. The Director added that every effort had been made to make the application process for Grants as easy as possible.

Councillor Brady commended officers for their encouraging report and asked if there would be any opportunities to expand the boundaries.

In response the Strategic Development Manager advised that the Grant Schemes were slightly different as they were DfC funded and specifically for town centre regeneration. She did add however that Council Grant Schemes had a degree of flexibility to widen boundaries.

At this stage Councillor Gilmour commented that the boundaries for Grant Schemes had always been an issue for her particularly as areas of Bangor West frequently missed out. In respect of the Refresh Grant Scheme she stated that she had been contacted by a number of people about this seeking further information on the following:

- Confirmation sought around Contractors insurance requirements i.e. was Public Liability insurance only required.
- Were the Grant Schemes applicable to the rear of property.

In response the Regeneration Manager confirmed that both Public Liability and Employer Liability insurance was required by any contractor participating in the Schemes. In respect of the rear of property, she advised that was included as long as the property itself was situated within the red line of the Scheme boundary.

Councillor Gilmour welcomed the officer's comments adding that it made sense.

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

6. AND TOURISM EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 25/26 UPDATE AND GRANTS AWARDED 2026/27 (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in September 2024, the Place and Prosperity Committee agreed the AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund (TEFF) application form and guidance notes in line with the corporate Grants Policy. The AND TEFF 2025/26 opened on 31 October 2024, and was promoted via TEEF email mailing lists and Council social media. It closed on 25 November 2024. Two information sessions were held on 30 October 2024 for those interested in applying to the TEFF.

As previously reported to the Council in June 2025, there were 21 applications received by the closing date. Further to an assessment conducted in line with the Grants Policy, a total of £106,701.15 was awarded to 14 events in 2025/26. All events were successfully delivered and a total of £104,522.39 was drawn down by applicants. 68,310 attendees and participants were recorded over the 14 events with an average cost per visitor of £1.53.

The following events did not draw down their full grant award:

Event	Award	Drawn Down	Reason
Holywood May Day, Holywood & District Community Council	£4,973.25	£3,981.99	Not enough eligible invoices
Portaferry Plein Air, Portaferry Art Society	£1,187.50	£0	Event made a profit more than the amount of the grant awarded

Objectives of the Tourism Events and Festivals Fund and outputs

1. To enhance the visitor experience of the Borough

Out of the 14 successful events, three took place in Bangor, three in Portaferry, three in Newtownards, two in Holywood, two in Comber and the remaining event was delivered in Millisle. This produced a range of varying types of events throughout the Borough and spread throughout the year.

2. To support events/festivals that increase local tourism spend by attracting attendees and participants, especially those from outside the Borough

The 14 events welcomed a total of 59,463 attendees and 8,847 participants to their events throughout the year. Of these, 29,297 (49%) attendees and 3,456 (39%) participants came from Out of the Borough.

3. To support events/festivals that have the potential to encourage attendees and participants to stay overnight within the Borough

There were 3,137 bednights generated from participants and attendees to the 14 successful events in 2025/26. Of this total, 2,671 (85%) were in commercial accommodation (Hotels, B&B's Guesthouses) and the remainder were between registered camping/caravan sites and with family and friends.

It was important to note that the bednight figures were derived from information supplied directly by event organisers. There was no formal or independently verified evidence to substantiate these figures. Bednight data should therefore regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

4. To support the development and capacity of the local events sectors

The Event Organisers who were successful in receiving support through the TEFF were invited to participate in the Council Festival's Forum where they would hear from guest speakers who covered various event related topics. The successful applicants also had a dedicated Case Officer who assisted with Event Management Plans and Risk Assessments, developing the knowledge and capacity of the local events sector.

A summary of the 14 successful events was attached at Appendix 1.

TEFF Survey Feedback
A survey was sent out to the successful and unsuccessful applicants (2025/26) to gain information on how they heard about the TEEF, seek their opinion on the Council grant information sessions and seek their views on the TEEF application and guidance notes. Overall, the feedback was positive. Respondents to the survey indicated they found the application form straightforward to complete and the guidance notes were useful. One comment received was on the timeline of the notification of the award, especially if the event took place early in the year. This had since been improved with the introduction of the new corporate Grants Policy which delegated decisions on grant panel awards to Officers, therefore shortening the required timeline of the process.

Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 2026/27

The Application Process
The AND TEFF 2026/27 opened on 14 November 2025 and closed on 15 December 2025. It was promoted via the TEEF mailing list, on Council social media and through the Council Grant information sessions which took place in April and October 2025. There were 14 applications received by the closing date, applying for a total of £132,281.

The Assessment Panel
A minimum pass mark of 60% was agreed prior to the opening of the Fund which was included in guidance notes for the fund. The applications were assessed in January 2026 by a panel of three officers comprising the Events Manager, Sports and Recreation Development Officer and Transformation Officer, using an agreed scoring matrix as per application guidance issued.

One application, Bangor International Choral Festival, was not scored as the guidance notes and application form stated that other Council funding could not be used in conjunction with an application to the TEFF. The applicant had also applied for a grant through the Council's Arts and Heritage Service. The amount requested through the Multi-Annual Arts Fund 2026-2028 was larger than the request through the TEFF, therefore the panel did not score the application as it determined the larger amount of financial support would be more beneficial for the successful delivery of the event. This group had since received a grant from the Multi-Annual Arts Fund.

Three applications out of the 14 submitted were unsuccessful as the standard of the application was not sufficient to meet the agreed pass mark.

Each unsuccessful applicant received an email notifying them of the result on 26 February 2026. This included reasons why the application did not meet the pass mark and referenced Council's Appeal Procedure. The unsuccessful applicants were offered further feedback. One applicant took up the offer (Bangor Regatta) and was given further verbal feedback. See Appendix 2 for pass marks and awards.

The remaining 10 events were successful in receiving an award. Those were detailed in Appendix 2.

Budget
The allocation of budget available to the AND TEFF was £80,000 per annum, however, the successful application grant requests exceeded this by £27,526. To enable support of all events that met or exceeded the pass mark, the assessment panel agreed that by applying a 7% reduction on each eligible requested grant, the TEFF would utilise part of an underspend from the Growth Events Fund (GEF) in 26/27 - £19,998 bringing the total award fund to £99,998. As reported to the Council in January 2025, no applications were received to the GEF last advertised in November 2024, which presented some underspend in years 2025/26 and 2026/27 across the total events grants budget. The GEF reopened later this year for a further three years subject to the rates setting process.

Evaluation of AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund
Officers within the Tourism Events Team were preparing the annual survey to go out to successful and unsuccessful applicants in 2026/27 to gauge opinion on this year's TEFF. Feedback obtained through this survey would inform Officers understanding of applicant satisfaction and provide evidence to support evaluation of what worked well and where improvements may be considered for future funding rounds.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and appendices.

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

Commenting as proposer, Alderman Adair welcomed the report and the award of over £100,000 of funding. He particularly welcomed within the report mention of events in the Ards Peninsula including the Kite Festival, Trucks at the Track and the Portaferry Plein Air Festival. Continuing he noted a new event to the Borough that being the Northern Ireland Science Festival and sought information around where it would be held and when.

The Head of Tourism confirmed that the Northern Ireland Science Festival was a new event which had commenced the previous year and been held at Mount Stewart. She added that she would clarify where this year's event would be held and let the Member know in due course.

Thanking the officer Alderman Adair expressed delight that the event would be held again this particularly as it had brought many visitors to the Borough.

Also welcoming the report Councillor Hollywood referred to the recent May Day event held in Holywood which had been attended by approximately 15,000 people, and congratulated everyone who had been involved. Continuing he noted the recorded 3,137 bednights generated from participants and attendees and asked if spot checks had been used to provide that data.

The Head of Tourism confirmed that some spot checks had previously been carried out however they had not been successful. She agreed that it would be worth exploring again and undertook to take that back to the team for consideration.

At this stage Councillor Gilmour referred to the ineligible applicants one of those being Bangor Choral Festival which had applied for a different grant despite it previously being legible for both. In cases such as this she asked if officers were aware of any other events which had previously been legible for both grants but due to the changes were now not. She added that she would have some concerns around the negative impact that could have on those events.

In response the Head of Tourism indicated that there was no information to confirm that to be the case, adding that the Bangor Choral Festival had been directed to another funding route on this occasion and were successful. She added that while it was not something that she was aware of she would go back and ask the question.

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

7. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME 2025/26 EVALUATION (FILE TO/EV121) (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity providing a background and overview of the Tourism Events which were delivered between May and November in 2025/26. An overall summary was also provided looking at the delivery of such events going forwards.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attached appendices.

At this stage the Director provided an update stating that as Members would be aware the Council had agreed to undertake a review of its Tourism Events Strategy and he now wished to highlight a number of matters. He reminded the Committee that the Tourism Events Strategy had been developed approximately two and a half years ago and one of its key measures had been about attracting out of Borough visitors and attendees. Referring to Appendix I he drew attention to the fact that it did not bode well for his Team which was trying to hit the targets set. By way of example he referred to the following events:

- Sea Bangor – out of Borough attendees just over 13%
- Portavogie Tide and Turf – out of Borough attendees 20%
- Two Christmas events in Ards and Bangor which had only brought in 8% to 9% of out of Borough events
- Pipe Band Championship – 47% of out of Borough attendees

As such he stated that the majority of those events were community events for the Borough and as such that flew in the face of what the Council was trying to achieve as part of its Tourism Events Strategy. When the Review came back he informed Members that they needed to very mindful of this and questions needed to considered by all in order to meet those targets which had been set.

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

The proposer Councillor Hennessy welcomed the report and referring specifically to the Sea Bangor event he sought clarity around visitor numbers for that event.

In response the Head of Tourism advised that the past three years of data collected had shown an overall downward trend. Given the inclement weather conditions last year attendance figures for Sea Bangor had been well below what was normal. This year's event however would see a different footprint and return to authenticity at the event with a visit from Tall Ships.

Councillor Hennessy acknowledged that there had to be a draw for people to come into the Borough and he asked if in recent years the event had lacked those big draws such as Tall Ships and major boats attending the event.

The Head of Tourism confirmed that the Council had submitted an Expression of Interest for Tall Ships which had proven difficult and as luck would have it this opportunity had arisen through a Full Circle event. She further advised that the Belfast Maritime Festival was considering a change of date and as such there could be some areas where economies of scale could be considered to ensure the two events were complimentary to one and other.

At this stage Councillor Smart thanked officers for the update acknowledging that while the figures were not as the Council wanted them to be. He continued that the events that were put on were in his opinion second to none. He agreed that the Council needed to do everything that it could to encourage people to visit the Borough. Referring to Christmas Councillor Smart expressed the view that it was an incredibly important time of the year in both the civic and religious calendar. In respect of the events held in both Ards and Bangor it was the case that the budget allocated no longer adequately covered the events. He stated that those two flagship events should be the exception and should not be tied down by bednights particularly as they were both significant civic events which should be adequately funded. As such he asked what flexibility there was within the budgets which had been set for this year's Christmas events.

In response the Director advised that it was a difficult situation as this year's budget had already been set as part of the rates setting process. He also reminded Members that an animation budget had also been set up for Marine Gardens but indicated that could be looked at with a view to making more funds available for both Christmas events. At this stage he reminded Members that those events were both community events and as such targets set as part of the rates setting process around footfall would not be met. He indicated that officers would see what could be done bearing in mind this year would be the first year to make an impression at the new Marine Gardens/McKee Clock Arena in Bangor.

Councillor Smart indicated that he would appreciate anything which could be done within the current budgets. He added that at Christmas people were generally willing to spend more at these Christmas events which also added a certain amount of warmth to Ards and Bangor.

At this stage Alderman Adair thanked officers for the report and referring to the Director's comments around bednights he asked if the figure included in the report included Air Bed and Breakfast (BnB) accommodation.

The Head of Tourism commented that further work needed to be undertaken in respect of bednights with varying ranges on the returns in respect of market research undertaken.

Continuing Alderman Adair commented on the increase in Air BnB's throughout the Ards Peninsula. The Shoreline Celebration event which was a new event had been greatly hampered by inclement weather and he suggested that officers looked at it to consider whether or not it remained viable or could be moved to a new Summer date.

The Head of Tourism advised that the event had been successfully held for one year with the second year being cancelled. This year she advised that the team were working very hard with Council partners involved and it was hoped it would successfully go ahead.

Concurring with Councillor Smart's comments, Alderman Adair paid tribute to the Events Team adding that Ards and North Down was the premier Borough for events. He stated that the Portavogie Sea Food Festival had the highest number of out of Borough participants despite three other major events being held in Northern Ireland the same day. 2026 would see the tenth anniversary of the Festival and asked if any consideration was being given to move it to an August date.

In response the Head of Tourism advised that work had been undertaken to compare dates in August and September for the Festival and September was considered a good month for it to take place. It was noted the event was taking place on the second weekend of September this year.

By way of summing up Alderman Adair noted that both Dine at the Dock and Stargazing at Burr Point were both sell out events last year. As such he believed that displayed a level of confidence for holding events of that nature in the Ards Peninsula.

Thanking officers for their comments around the out of Borough attendance figures Councillor Gilmour also noted that targets set had not been met. She acknowledged that weather had a huge impact on events noting that Sea Bangor had been greatly impacted in 2025. The Pipe Band Championship attendance had also been disappointing and she welcomed the review which was to be undertaken. She suggested that could provide an opportunity to consider splitting Council events in two into either Tourism or Community events.

The Director commented that all suggestions were welcome however the community side of the Council did not deliver events and had no expertise to do so. He did however state that may be something for the Director and new Head of Community Services to consider going forwards. Continuing he agreed that the Christmas events were community events with a feel good factor and once the review of the Strategy

had been agreed everyone should approach it with an open mind to consider how events should be run within set budgets.

Councillor Morgan thanked the Director for his comments adding that in her opinion the cost per attendee seemed high and suggested that was something which was taken into consideration as part of the review. Referring to the Christmas events she commented that Comber successfully put on its Christmas events with community grant funding and as such proved that could be done in other ways.

At this stage Alderman McDowell acknowledged the difficulties around running events and noted that many of the events referred to in the report had been taking place year on year. As such those events were likely in need of a refresh in order to attract additional visitors and he added that he believed the Council struggled with letting go of those events which many people had got attached to. He asked if there was any scope for any of those long running events to drop off to make way for new events. Alderman McDowell also believed that the Council needed to adopt a different mindset to ensure that it did not miss out on new innovative and novel events.

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

8. GROWTH EVENTS FUND YEAR 2 UPDATE (FILE TO/EG69)

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in September 2023, the Council approved the introduction of a multi-year events fund - The Growth Event Fund (GEF) and a budget of £150,000 per year subject to the annual rates setting process.

In January 2024, the Committee approved the Growth Event Fund award to Open House Festival for 2024/25 to the value of £105,000, subject to rates setting, and awards of £105,000 for 25/26 and £105,000 for 26/27 subject to annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and adherence to terms and conditions within the Letter of Offer (LoO).

In March 2025, the Council received an update report on year one of the GEF and in June 2025 Open House received a LoO with KPIs aligned to targets agreed after the evaluation process of year one was complete.

There were three objectives within the Growth Events Fund:

- Grow our Local Economy
- Grow our Visitor Experience and Destination and
- Grow the potential of our local Community and Place.

Each of the above had a series of KPIs which Open House Festival was required to meet annually. Should a KPI not be met, a rationale as to why this was the case was required. Further detail on the individual KPIs relating to Open House Festival was provided in Appendix 1.

The Event
The Open House Festival was delivered between 4 July to 31 August 2025 as per the LoO description. There were several key elements to the festival, delivering 144 events in total. Although there were 147 events planned, three were cancelled (Celtic Soul, Pickie to Pier Swim and Boom Art Walk) therefore 144 events were delivered.

1. Picnic in the Park - free concerts at Ward Park every Sunday in July and August – 27,100 attendees.
2. Jazz and Blues 23 and 24 August to replace the Seaside Revival Vintage Festival – across eight venues, 44 events and 4,897 attendees.
3. Pickie to Pier Swim – cancelled
4. The Walled Garden series of events - ticketed events ranging from music to comedy*
5. Court House programme of events ticketed events ranging from music to comedy*
6. Folk on a Boat*
7. Additional fringe events*

NB. *total attendees 9,762 for those events. Other free event activities e.g. music sessions made up the total attendee figure.

Performance against Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMY
This objective included participant and attendee numbers, where they were from, bednights generated and local business partnerships.

	Number	**Out of Borough**	**Bednights**
Participants	848	53.1%	30
Attendees	41,759	27.8%	585
Total	**42,607**		**615**

Market research carried out by the organiser indicated 585 bednights (from attendees to ticketed events only). 2.8% of the visitors surveyed indicated they booked accommodation and a further 2.5% stayed with family and friends. The participant bednights were booked directly by the event organisers. Those figures did not take into consideration any of the free events.

The organisers booked 30 bednights for the participants which made the total bednights generated by the event (using ticketed events only) as 615.

A new element to this year's Festival was the Bangor Blues and Jazz Weekend. This element of the event started with paid concerts on 18, 19 and 20 August, and continued with free events from 21 to 24 August. 44 events were held in eight

venues over the seven-day event and feedback from bar owners was positive with many indicating they would wish to participate again. There were over 40 artists and bands from throughout the UK and Ireland who took part in the Bangor Blues and Jazz Weekend.

Other local businesses were engaged throughout the festival. Those included a number of tasting events where The Guillemot worked alongside Bullhouse Brewery and Neill Wines, French food events with local chef Joery Castel, and the Court House Vintage Market that attracted 15 stalls including local craft makers.
There were two partnerships created for the 2025 Festival. United Wines/Beamish sponsored the Blues and Jazz Music weekend, also providing bunting for all bars involved and t-shirts for staff on top of the monetary support. The second partnership was with Waterstones, Bloomfield Shopping Centre. They carried all books that were involved in the literary events and offered a 10% discount to people who bought those books to attend the festival.

The total expenditure had been reported as £334,641. Total raised income, from ticket sales, sponsorship, stalls and traders, was £216,546, therefore 64.7% of total expenditure.

The organiser of the event had indicated a return on Council investment as £12.81. This had been calculated by:

- £32.20 average spend per person (as per market research carried out by the organiser)
- multiplied by 41,759 attendees
- equals £1,344,640 total economic benefit
- divided by £105,000 award

OBJECTIVE 2: GROW OUR VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND DESTINATION
This objective sought to understand how the organiser had delivered a stand out and sustainable event that increases awareness of AND.

Recycling at events
The Festival worked with The Peppery Cat to devise additional innovative recycling plans. They provided additional recycling stations for cans, crisp packets and disposable gloves. Over the period of nine weeks at the Ward Park events, there were over four x 1100 litre sized bins of cans collected that were donated for recycling and raised money for a cancer charity.

Initiatives at the Venue
The Court House now used hard plastic reusable glasses for events. This had been trialled and had been a success. After the initial cost of purchasing the glasses, the organisers report a decrease in waste, spillages and general cleaning costs in comparison to glass or soft plastic glasses. Hard plastic reusable wine glasses had now been purchased as a result of the successful trial.

Marketing
The marketing plan was delivered successfully showing growth overall from the 2024 event. The engagement evidenced within the marketing plan overview showed

growth in increased user engagement by 4.7% and increased subscriptions to the mailing list by 3.6% in comparison to 2024.

The overall media reach was 48.8 million (including social media) with an advertising value of c£880,000. *Note: Meta now use ‘views’ instead of ‘reach”

Council support was acknowledged via logos on banners at Ward Park for Picnic in the Park and at the entrance of Walled Garden. The Council was tagged on social media posts and mentioned in press releases, including quotes from the Mayor.

Disability Audits
Following audits, a number of positive actions had been taken at the Court House including signage at the entrance, shelving in accessible toilets for people who needed to change a stoma bag and a stoma bin contract was now in place. Staff training sessions had drawn attention to small but important issues such as ensuring the alarm pull cord in the disabled toilets were touching the floor, and encouraging customers not to congregate at exits to allow easy access for disabled customers.

At the Walled Garden tracking was put down on grass if it became soft, to ensure wheelchairs had easy access, a quieter area with extra room was created for use by disabled customers, the website's accessibility section was made clearer so that people who needed to get in touch could do so easier and carer tickets were available at all shows.

The organisers had continued to make improvements as they came up throughout the Festival, such as making the booking system online more accessible for those with impaired eyesight.

OBJECTIVE 3: GROW THE POTENTIAL OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND PLACE
The final objective included volunteer recruitment and training, strategic partnership development and utilising unusual event spaces.

Volunteer recruitment and training
A total of 83 volunteers were involved in this year’s Festival, their ages ranging from 18 to 84 years old. There was a total of 1,596 volunteering hours throughout Ward Park and Walled Garden events and a 99.3% satisfaction rating from the volunteer survey after the Festival. Every volunteer attended a one hour induction session covering safety and event information along with new elements of the recycling of cans and crisp packets, managing the disabled area at Ward Park and how to use the ticket scanners at the Walled Garden

Strategic Partnerships
There were a number of strategic partnerships that continued from previous years alongside a number of new partnerships. Those included continuing with media partner County Down Spectator, along with specific partners for Pickie to Pier Swim - Bangor Marina, RNLI, and Safer Waters. New partnerships were made with The Nines and Guillemot Deli as well as the eight bars on Main Street and High Street to enable the Bangor Blues and Jazz trail to take place.

Event spaces included Ward Park – Picnic in the Park at the bandstand, Skippingstone Beach – start and finish of Pickie to Pier swim, as well as the Court House and the Walled Garden.

Budget
The organiser reports the cost to deliver the event was £334,641. £216,546 of the income total was from raised income (box office, traders, bar sales) £13,901 from the Arts Council National Lottery Fund and the remainder from the Council contribution.

Support Services
In addition to financial support from Council via the Growth Event Fund, the Tourism Events Team offered the following additional support:

A dedicated Case Officer who offered advice on completion of risk assessments and Event Management Plan when needed.

Event Management Toolkit to ensure all event organisers were equipped with skills/knowledge to run their event safely, the Council has established an online toolkit, which was a valuable resource for all event organisers, irrespective of the size of the event.

Festivals Forum – This Forum was an opportunity for Festival organisers in the Borough to network and share experiences. High profile speakers delivered quality training on key subjects – this year the subjects had included social media, Counter terrorism and Disability and Inclusion. Open House Festival staff had contributed by delivering a case study of the theory put into practice using Ward Park as an example.

Closing Year 2 and progression to Year 3
Officers had validated the claim against the LoO for year two and had progressed the payment of the remainder of the award in line with the Council approved Scheme of Delegation. The organiser had satisfactorily evidenced or had supplied evidence as to how they endeavoured to meet the objectives to a sufficient level, meeting the terms and conditions associated with the LoO.

The organisers had submitted an initial budget and plan for the 2026 event. At the time of writing this report, the Letter of Offer for Year 3 was in draft and a meeting had been scheduled with the organisers to agree the Key Performance Indicators, as required by Council, for 2026.

Future of Growth Events Fund
In September 2023, the Council approved the Growth Events Fund which stated that ‘the number and size of grants approved in Year 1 of the Fund (2024) would determine whether the GEF would reopen in Years 2 or 3. There were no eligible applicants to the Growth Events Fund in 25/26. Suitable applicants were not in the position to meet the criteria aligned to this Fund for one year only i.e. Year 3 of the Fund. The primary aim being that the Council could support events to grow from year to year, therefore, with that in mind, the Growth Events Fund did not reopen for year 26/27. A new three-year fund would be planned for opening for years 27/28, 28/29 and 29/30. The application form and guidance would be reported to the Place

and Prosperity Committee for approval prior to release as per Corporate Grants Policy.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

The proposer Councillor Smart welcomed the report and the reinstatement of the fund but did however note the lack of applicants previously and sought clarity on why that may have been. Referring to the TT Motorsport event he asked if that event would eligible for this funding.

In response the Head of Tourism commented that more applicants had been anticipated for the Fund which had been running now for three years. She confirmed that some of those who had applied had not met the criteria and following a review of the current arrangements a report would be brought back to the Committee for further consideration. In respect of the TT Motorsport event she confirmed that was work in progress and all potential sources of income would be taken into consideration.

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

9. ARTS AND HERITAGE PANEL MINUTES – 2 FEBRUARY 2026 (FILE ART 01 02/02 26) (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Arts and Heritage Panel continued to meet five times per annum in February, April, June (familiarisation visit), September (AGM) and November. Officers presented reports on recent activity that had taken place across the Arts and Heritage Service and discuss topics relevant to the service.

Minutes of the meeting that took place on Monday 2 February 2026 could be found at the attached Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the February minutes of the Arts and Heritage Panel meeting.

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

10. NOTICES OF MOTION REFRRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL

The Chairman advised that no Notices of Motion had been referred to the Committee by Council.

NOTED.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

11a. Update on the Comber Hoarding Project

Councillor Morgan sought an update on the Comber Hoarding Project.

The Regeneration Manager reported that a signed agreement was now in place, as was funding and a start date was awaited from the contractor to proceed onto the site.

Councillor Morgan welcomed the news adding that she looked forward to work commencing at the site. She thanked the Committee and officers for their support in this matter.

NOTED.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

At this stage the Chairman commented that this was his last meeting before the Council's Annual Meeting and he took the opportunity to thank the Committee for its support throughout the year.

Councillor Hennessy thanked the Chairman for his hard work throughout the year and for ably keeping the Committee in line.

NOTED.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.30 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held at Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor Cochrane	
Aldermen:	Graham	McRandal
	McIlveen	
Councillors:	Chambers	McCracken
	Gilmour	Moore
	S Irvine	Quinn
	W Irvine	Thompson
	McBurney (Zoom)	

Other Elected Members: Alderman McAlpine and Councillor Morgan

Officers in Attendance: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Corporate Governance (A Curtis) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Brooks and Alderman Smith.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought declarations of interest and the following was declared:

Alderman McIlveen – Item 8 – Land at Whitespots.

NOTED.

3. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION - BALLYWALTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that a formal request had been received from Alderman Smith and Councillors Wray and Smart proposing that a Civic Reception be held in honour of Ballywalter Presbyterian Church.

The proposed reception would commemorate the Church's 400th anniversary. Ballywalter Presbyterian Church was one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in Ireland and had marked this significant milestone on 6 March 2026, reflecting the installation of the Rev. James Hamilton, the first Presbyterian minister in Ballywalter. The congregation was recognised as the oldest Presbyterian community in the Ards Peninsula.

Given the historical importance of Ballywalter Presbyterian Church and the significance of its 400 years of ministry and service, it was considered appropriate that a Civic Reception be held in 2026 to mark this notable anniversary.

Key Issues

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

The Council's Policy for Civic Receptions required requests to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive and signed by at least three Elected Members. The request, once received, was assessed against set criteria and an officer's report, with an appropriate recommendation, was prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception

The criterion against which each request would be assessed were as follows: -

1. Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary

   The exceptional service should have been in the areas of Voluntary or Charitable work AND the anniversary should have been a milestone of 25-year increment anniversaries.

OR

2. A Very Significant or Unique Achievement

   An achievement which would have been recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient had a strong association with the Borough.

Next Steps

This request had been submitted in line with agreed procedures and met the criteria for a civic reception as stated in point 1 above - Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary. The cost could be met from the 2026/27 civic budget.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to offer Ballywalter Presbyterian Church a Civic Reception to acknowledge 400 years since its formation and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

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

4. NOTICE OF MOTION

4.1 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.

(Councillor Morgan and Alderman McAlpine entered the meeting – 7.05pm)

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Morgan outlined her Notice of Motion which called for the establishment of an Independent Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) for Northern Ireland. Minister Muir had sought support from the NI Executive and Assembly and she expressed strong disappointment that this had been rejected by the DUP.

She noted that, despite previous commitments including the New Decade, New Approach agreement and support expressed at Assembly level, the proposal had not advanced, despite wider support, and she described this as a minority position blocking the development of improved environmental governance arrangements.

The proposer argued that without any change in either the DUPs attitude to such matters, or a change in constitutional arrangements, Northern Ireland would remain without effective governance arrangements for its Environment for the foreseeable future

Councillor Morgan referred to key environmental issues including the condition of Lough Neagh, illegal dumping at Mobuoy, and findings within the State of Nature Report (2023) which identified Northern Ireland as one of the most nature-depleted regions globally. She questioned how severe the situation must become before robust and fully functioning environmental governance arrangements were introduced.

She highlighted that Alliance had long supported the creation of an IEPA, recognising that thriving nature, clean water and access to landscapes were essential to social and economic wellbeing. She added that, following an independent expert report recommending its establishment, the Minister had sought Executive support in

principle in November 2025 to allow further policy development and business case work to proceed.

She rejected the objections raised by the DUP regarding cost and the creation of a ‘quango’, noting that an IEPA would consolidate existing functions rather than duplicate them and would provide a more effective and accountable model. She added that arm’s length bodies were widely used across government and often delivered services successfully.

Councillor Morgan acknowledged that there would be costs associated with establishing an IEPA but stressed that failing to prioritise environmental protection was a false economy, particularly in light of the costs associated with environmental damage such as that seen at Lough Neagh and Mobuoy. She also noted that environmental decline had developed over many years.

She added that, while an IEPA would not resolve all environmental issues, it would form an essential part of wider work already underway, including peatland restoration, the Nutrients Action Programme and changes to water infrastructure arrangements.

In conclusion, Councillor Morgan emphasised that environmental protection was critical for current and future generations, expressed concern at continued environmental decline, and urged Members to support the Motion.

The seconder, Alderman McAlpine, referred to a recent Belfast Telegraph article reporting over 300 illegal waste sites in Northern Ireland in a single year at a cost of around £34 million per annum. She pointed to a recent University College London report regarding governance in Northern Ireland, highlighting growing environmental problems, conspicuous gaps in infrastructure and failures to deal with skills shortage in NI economy, and noted that both Scotland and Wales already had their own environmental agencies.

She highlighted a further section noting proposals for reform of the operation of the Assembly. The first of these concerned the office of Speaker. Other concerns related to the Assembly’s voting procedures, the role of the official opposition within the Assembly and how Assembly members themselves were chosen.

Alderman McAlpine argued that food production and environmental needs were intertwined and that farmers were the custodians of the environment for present and future generations. In closing, she argued that blocking sensible proposals in government was not an appropriate way forward.

The Chair opened the debate to the Committee and Alderman McIlveen indicated that he would not be supporting the motion, describing it as a ‘cut and paste job’ of an Assembly motion distributed by the Alliance Party to councils across Northern Ireland.

He argued that there were no powers which could be granted to an independent environment agency that the relevant Minister did not already have or could not be legislated for, and that an independent body would not, in itself, make Lough Neagh any cleaner – a point he felt the proposer had acknowledged.

He stated that a Minister and his Department were directly accountable to elected Members of the Assembly in a way that an arm's-length body was not, and that for a party which championed openness and transparency it was contradictory to seek to create a quango-shaped buffer for the failings of an Alliance-led Ministry. He believed that the motion represented a long-standing approach to shift the blame on to others and this was an attempt to shift blame on to the DUP, so another expensive body could be created to lay the blame on that as well.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Office for Environmental Protection already existed to safeguard the environment, enforce regulations and hold Departments to account, and any collective failure to do so rested with the Minister. Northern Ireland, he said, was not short on oversight but on results.

Alderman McIlveen further stated that the only reference to an IEPA in New Decade, New Approach related to oversight of a proposed Climate Change Act rather than the body now envisaged.

He noted that the infrastructure changes that were being called for by the seconder were being blocked by the Climate Change Act which her party had championed.

From a Unionist perspective, he found it particularly objectionable that the motion called on Council to write to the Secretary of State seeking institutional reform in consultation with the Irish Government, which he viewed as inviting the Irish Government to involve itself in Strand 1 of the Belfast Agreement which he understood to be a breach.

He also referenced a written response from the Infrastructure Minister indicating that a particular environmental proposal previously put forward by Minister Muir could halt some 80% of development.

He concluded that Northern Ireland needed accountability and delivery rather than another quango or arm's-length body, and that the Minister should focus on delivering through his existing powers.

Alderman Graham also opposed the motion. While appreciating the concerns about the Environment, he did not believe a further quango would solve the issues highlighted, noting that an independent agency would not have prevented the illegal dump at Mobuoy, which had been a matter of criminal activity.

As a resident in a semi-urban/rural part of the Borough, Alderman Graham shared some of his personal observations of local birdlife and cautioned against exaggerating the state of nature in Northern Ireland.

He took issue with any suggestion that the DUP was indifferent to the environment, stating that his party, his family and his grandchildren had as much of a stake in preservation of nature in Northern Ireland as anyone else.

The focus, he felt, should instead be on adequate infrastructure, in particular the impact on Lough Neagh of septic tank discharges from the significant increase in rural housing in recent years.

While content for Council to act responsibly on environmental matters, he was not prepared to support the use of the environment as a political lever, given that the motion sought to bring the Irish Government into the internal affairs of Northern Ireland – in his view aimed at reform of the institutions in a manner that would isolate Unionism.

Councillor McCracken spoke in support of the motion. It was not about creating a quango for its own sake, but about bringing professional expertise to provide solutions to recognised problems and replicating arrangements that existed elsewhere in these islands. He referred to the concerns of professional agencies and charities regarding Northern Ireland's nature depletion – ranked as the 12th worst in the world – with sharp declines in bird, fish and animal populations.

Engagement with neighbours in the south made sense, he said, as the environment did not recognise borders, and an all-island approach to issues such as waterways and illegal dumping was sensible. He regretted the characterisation of the motion as a political plot, considering it a sensible proposal to replicate arrangements already in place across the rest of the United Kingdom.

Councillor Gilmour found the suggestion that the motion was not in any way political difficult to accept, highlighting that the request for the involvement of the Irish Government related to reform of the Assembly and the institutions, not only to the introduction of the IEPA itself – a distinction she felt had been dismissed by the previous speakers in support.

While her party had not signed up to the Belfast Agreement at the time, the protections it contained were nonetheless important, and she was concerned that, now the political make-up of the Assembly had changed, there appeared to be an appetite from some quarters to rewrite the rulebook because of political party interests. She considered an IEPA to be a duplication of services that should be managed by the Minister, and felt that it was a dereliction of duty by the Minister who she believed should spend more time delivering – she pointed to other areas of his remit that she felt needed attention including slow consultation responses from the NIEA which was causing delays within the planning system.

In conclusion, she felt that the motion was a duplication of the Assembly motion, aimed at targeting the DUP. She therefore refused to support it.

In summing up, Councillor Morgan acknowledged that the matter had been debated by the Assembly but was not embarrassed to bring it to this Council Chamber and she highlighted its importance to local residents.

She felt that the decline of water quality in Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough was disgraceful and pointed to a series of past reports that all recommended an independent agency. She argued that the current arrangements dated back years and were failing long before Minister Muir's time in office. She added that it was a necessity, not an option, to show 'we care' by constructing new governance mechanisms.

The proposer felt that Alderman Graham's anecdotal sightings of 'a few birds' was not enough to assume the issue was being overstated. In closing, she called for action and reform of institutions to remove the ability for a single party to block progress and urged the Committee to support her Notice of Motion.

On being put to the meeting, with 5 voting FOR, 8 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 3 ABSENT, the proposal FELL.

(Councillor Morgan and Alderman McAlpine withdrew from the meeting – 7.30pm)

5. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

6. EXTENSION OF CONTRACT FOR PROVISION OF VALUATION SERVICES

*****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 the extension of the contract for valuation services for 12 months from 1st October 2026 to the named companies in the report.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

7. OPEN SPACE LAND AT OLD HOLYWOOD ROAD, HOLYWOOD

(Appendix I)

*****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 agree to an approach being made to the NI Housing Executive regarding Open Space Land at Old Holywood Road, Holywood.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

(Alderman McIlveen withdrew from the meeting due to a declaration of interest in Item 8 – 7.34pm)

8. LAND AT WHITESPOTS

(Appendix II – III)

*****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 agree the means by which lands should be acquired to enable the Project at Whitespots to progress.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to proceed with option 3 as detailed in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

(Alderman McIlveen returned to the meeting – 7.37pm)

9. RENEWAL OF LICENCES TO HOLYWOOD CRICKET CLUB AT SEAPARK FOR NETS AND CONTAINER

(Appendix 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 consider a request from Holywood Cricket Club to renew the licences for the nets and container at Seapark.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

10. REQUEST FOR A BOUNDARY RECTIFICATION AND EASEMENT AT BALLYGOWAN ROAD, COMBER

(Appendix VI – VIII)

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

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

The Council was asked to consider a request from a private landowner for a boundary amendment and easement on Council Land at Ballygowan Road, Comber.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

11. LICENCE TO HOLYWOOD SHARED TOWN - LAND AT REDBURN

(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 Holywood Shared Town in relation to a licence for land at Redburn.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

12. LEASE TO ARDS AND DONAGHADEE CRICKET CLUB

(Appendix X – XI)

*****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 in accordance with section 9.3.2 of the Land and Property Policy and make an application to the Department for Communities (DfC).

The recommendation was that Council agreed to proceed with the application to DfC.

The recommendation was adopted.

13. LAND AT BANGOR ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS - PROPOSED EXCHANGE

(Appendix XII)

*****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 agree to dispose of an area of land in exchange for the amount paid to the Third Party for land acquired from that person last year.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to proceed.

The recommendation was adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman, Councillor Cochrane, thanked Members for their work and engagement over the course of the year and extended his best wishes to the incoming Chairman.

Alderman McIlveen congratulated the Chairman on his efficiency and conduct of business throughout his term. Alderman McRandal, Councillor Chambers and Councillor W Irvine rose to echo those comments, acknowledging the fairness and efficiency in which the meetings had been chaired.

The Chairman thanked Members for their kind remarks.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.47pm.

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 13 May 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Ashe

Alderman: Brooks
Cummings

Councillors:

Boyle	W Irvine
Chambers	McBurney
Cochrane	McClean (7.15 pm
Douglas	McKee (Zoom)
Hollywood (Zoom)	Quinn
S Irvine	

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 (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillor Moore and apologies for lateness were received from Councillor McClean and Councillor Kerr.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and the following were notified:

Councillor Chambers – Item 19.1 – Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McRandal and Councillor McCollum.

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATION FROM RATHMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL/STRANGFORD COLLEGE

The Chair invited the deputation forward who introduced themselves as Bruce, a Primary 5 pupil from Rathmore Primary School and Poppy, a pupil at Strangford Integrated College. Their address to the Committee was summarised as follows:

- The purpose of their deputation was to encourage Ards and North Down to become a more Child-Friendly community.
- They explained that a Child-Friendly community included listening to the voices and views of children, respecting their rights and considering their needs in decision making. They referenced the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The deputation called for Council collaboration with children to improve areas such as public spaces, education, health services and safety.
- Key areas for their input in decision-making included:
    - Council strategies, parks and services.
    - Safety and environment, with a focus on safe, clean and welcoming public spaces.
    - Policy approach by embedding children's views in local policy related to safety, health and education.
- Being Child-Friendly benefited the children, families, schools and the entire community, creating spaces where children felt they belonged and could grow.
- While it was important to acknowledge the strengths, the deputation outlined that children did not always feel included in decision-making, particularly those with additional needs, those from rural areas or those less confident to speak up.
- Seeing the community through children's eyes could lead to better planning and stronger relationships.
- Benefits for children included feeling listened to, increased confidence and value, improvements in school performance, learning, respect, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, responsibility, positive behaviour, and wellbeing.
- A child-friendly community would provide a framework for Councillors in working with young people regularly, not just occasionally, and help build trust and inclusivity.
- The pupils had engaged with Council officers, and recalled a recent visit to the school to hear ideas of children for a new playpark at Bangor Sportsplex. This had given them the opportunity of valuable contribution to a real-life community project.
- This request to the Council was not asking for immediate commitment but starting a journey and conversation about inclusion for young people.
- Every child in Ards and North Down deserved to be safe, valued and listened to.
- It was an opportunity to show that young people and children were important , not just in the future but right now.
- The deputation urged the Council to consider making the area a Child-Friendly Community.

Before inviting questions, the Chair praised the children for their deputation and initiated a round of applause from the Committee.

Councillor McBurney commended Bruce and Poppy for their presentation along with the preparation work from their teachers, noting the importance of children's rights. Referring to the engagement with Council's playpark refurbishment plans at Bangor Sportsplex, she asked what it had meant to the pupils to have had that opportunity.

Bruce said it was good to know that someone cared about their ideas and valued their contribution to the community and Poppy felt being asked for children's opinions made them feel included in the community.
Councillor S Irvine explained he did not have a question but wished to praise the deputation for their outstanding presentation, noting that they exemplified the importance of young people's involvement in society. He referred to the Council's Youth Voice initiative and gave his support for more engagement with younger children as they were the future.

Councillor Chambers congratulated Bruce and Poppy on their presentation which had been delivered with confidence. He believed that while the Borough was a great place for young people, it could be better and that required contribution from children and young people. He asked how Councillors and adults could enable better opportunities for young voices to be heard, suggesting school visits and surveys. Bruce suggested more advertisements in places where children spent time, such as parks, schools and play areas, to keep them informed of developments, and suggested more engagement with schools and youth groups. Poppy agreed, suggesting that Councillors should engage directly with children, informing them of their right to be heard and encouraging participation in decisions such as new play parks for example.

Councillor W Irvine asked for the deputation's views on what the Council did well and what it could improve on. Poppy pointed to the opportunities provided by her youth group and Youth Voice and the encouragement given by her youth leader who encouraged them to participate, making young people realise they could have a say.

Councillor Douglas thanked Bruce and Poppy for their excellent presentation and said that their schools and teachers should be extremely proud.

Councillor Boyle echoed that view, and felt that children had important insight and should always be listened to. Decision makers should not make assumptions about children's wants and needs and in his view children should be allowed to vote at 16. He felt that young people were capable and should have that opportunity.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McBurney, seconded by Councillor Chambers, to note the deputation.

(Councillor McClean entered the meeting)

4. DEPUTATION FROM BRYANSBURN RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

The Chair welcomed Alan Dempster and Chris Armstrong from Bryansburn Rangers Football Club. Their address to the Committee was summarised as follows:

- The Club was based in Bangor West and founded in 1974, with over 50 years of history.
- The club membership was made up of 130 in the senior section, 190 juniors and with parents, that totalled a club membership of around 700.

- Bryansburn Rangers operated as a volunteer-led, inclusive, not-for-profit organisation.
- Four senior teams were active, two competed in the Amateur league and two in the Down area league.
- The Club ran a youth academy covering 13 age groups (ranging from Tiny Tots 2022 to 2009 birth years).
- The Club had been registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) since July 10, 2017. It had evolved from a 'pub team' to developing its own ground at Ballywooley.
- The CASC route was adopted for greater community focus and eligibility for certain grants.
- The Club leased its facilities from the Council – a 25 year lease commenced in 1991 and a second lease was signed in 2019, running to 2044.
- An in-principle agreement was in place to extend to 2053 in order to meet the terms of the Northern Ireland Football grant.
- The Club had led many initiatives and community engagement including a VE celebration, MacMillan Coffee Morning and built a play park. It organised community days, barbecues, and attracted increasing number of families to non football events.
- The Club had once focused on entering intermediate football which was achieved 1999-2000, and was now re-integrating youth football and aiming for greater community integration.
- The Club relaunched its youth section two years ago, enrolling 80 children in the first year.
- 190 children currently enrolled, including two all-girls teams starting this summer (2014 & 2020 age groups).
- The Club's main challenges were a lack of facilities, especially during autumn/winter due to darkness, leading to reliance on alternative sites in unsociable hours from September onwards through to April.
- Mr Dempster referred to a DCMS Grassroots Football Needs Assessment which had highlighted shortfall of 15 grass pitches and 6 floodlit 3G pitches in Ards and North Down Borough.
- The Club's vision included an extension to clubhouse to include larger changing rooms and enhanced toilets, which was especially important for female and disabled members.
- Planning permission for new extended clubhouse obtained.
- Planning in process for proposed 3G floodlit pitch and spectator stand.
- The facility would be a resource for the local community and schools, filling an acknowledged shortfall.
- The challenge was this was estimated at £1.3 million.
- Noted reliance on voluntary fundraising and club initiatives, alongside offer from Community Finance Ireland for a €100,000 loan over 10 years, which the club felt confident it could repay.
- Application submitted to the Northern Ireland Football Fund - only 6 pitches awarded in NI: 4 to clubs, 2 to local councils - with a strong prospect based on preliminary scoring matrix received from fund administrators.
- Letters of support had been received from Alex Easton MP, Peter Martin MLA, Councillor Wesley Irvine, Stephen Dunn MLA, Councillor Carl McClean, as well as Andrew Muir MLA, Connie Egan MLA, and support from the Mayor.

- The Club was seeking a general letter of support from the Council at this stage.

The Chair invited questions from Committee Members and Councillor W Irvine asked what difference the planned facilities would make to the area, particularly in terms of community outreach and engagement.

Mr Dempster described the condition of the current facilities with only two of the four changing rooms having showers, all would be upgraded as part of the extension. The new facility would also include separate purpose-built facilities for ladies/girls, gents and people with disabilities. A spectator stand would have capacity for 100 people including five disabled bays providing enhanced accessibility and inclusivity.

Mr Dempster explained that the original building design pre-dated accessibility standards. He referred to plans to increase its ladies teams offering and reach out to all community sectors including diverse nationalities. The community engaged in club events and fundraisers, which were not necessarily football related.

Councillor McKee noted the impressive voluntary effort from the Club and asked what the Council could do to support it besides the letters of support.
Mr Dempster referred to the letter of support being the priority, and advised of future uncertainties with regard to funding streams and match funding requirements. He hoped that should a shortfall arise, the Council might consider further assistance, particularly given the wider community benefits that the Club would offer. He added that local primary schools had also expressed an interest in accessing the improved facilities.

Councillor Boyle felt the Club's ambitions should not be seen as a pipe dream and offered encouragement and optimism. He sought clarity on what the £1.3M would cover if it was for the entire vision or specific items. Mr Dempster confirmed that it would cover the full vision – the clubhouse extension, stand, 3G pitch and floodlights. The costings were based on the Northern Ireland Football Fund application to meet strict IFA criteria for Conference League football, in relation to changing room sizes. This affected the cost of the project and the timetable. Central government funding had been delayed but being ready was essential and the Club would apply for further funding as opportunities became available.

Councillor Boyle asked where the Club was with current planning applications and approvals and Mr Dempster advised that planning approval was secured for the clubhouse extension and renovation. There was an ongoing planning application for the 3G pitch, floodlights and stand. He referred to delays caused by bat surveys and noise abatement . The Club anticipated planning approval to be confirmed during the summer. The NI Football Fund outcome would be known in September and he explained that further funding tranches might continue in to next year. The Club had also secured £10,000 in building materials through McBlair and IFA, though labour costs were still to be covered.

In response to a further query relating to cost estimate date, Mr Dempster advised that the costs had been submitted in April 2026 with cost and pricing structure provided by the Club's quantity surveyor and other professional advisors.

Councillor S Irvine recognised the effort invested, reflecting on his own experience in amateur club football. He asked what the Club's projected turnover was following development along with expected timelines for the funding award and project completion. Mr Dempster advised that the Club's pricing model would be competitive and undercut existing rental rates ensuring strong income. He was confident in the Club's ability to repay the loan to Community Finance Ireland. He referred to IFA compliance deadlines adding that the floodlights were required by 2033 and the stand by 2031.

The compliance was phased but the Club could participate in the Conference League from August 2027 if it committed to completing the necessary works. The Club's business plan was robust and identified the local demand. The work was not a reaction to the Conference football criteria, though it did influence its scale, but it was part of a longer term vision for CASC registration and beyond.

Councillor McClean believed that the challenges faced by Bryansburn Rangers would be shared by eight other intermediate level clubs in the Borough. Therefore Bryansburn would be trailblazers for these issues in relation to funding, planning and compliance. The solutions would serve as templates for those others. He praised the impact that volunteers had on sports development with the local expertise leading to superior outcomes.

Mr Dempster recognised the main hurdle for clubs seeking similar grant funding was that they needed to own their own ground or have a lease agreement to at least 2052. Few clubs were therefore in a position to apply and the Council's agreement to extend Bryansburn's lease was vital. He noted there was uncertainty regarding how the additional pitches would be allocated and whether that would be one per county for example. That would affect competition between local clubs such as Ards Rangers. He believed that the awards should be based on application merit and not locations.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, to note the deputation.

5. CONSULTATION – SIGNIFICANT WATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

(Appendices I – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that Northern Ireland's water resources were managed and protected using a catchment-based approach which included rivers, lakes and groundwater as well as coastal and transitional water bodies. Under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, the Department of Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA) must produce and implement a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) in six-year cycles. The third cycle RBMP covered the period 2022-2027. It was finalised and published on 13 June 2025. The fourth cycle RBMP period would run from 2028-2033.

As part of the development of the fourth cycle RBMP, DAERA was required to publish a report on 'Significant Water Management Issues' (SWMI) in Northern Ireland for public consultation by 22 December 2025. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) published the SWMI report which was open for public consultation for the statutory six-month period. The report was attached as Appendix 1, and its accompanying Annex as Appendix 2. The SWMI Report identified the principal pressures impacting water quality across Northern Ireland and sought feedback to ensure appropriate measures were developed in the next RBMP cycle.

Key Issues
The Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) Report 2025 had been produced by NIEA as part of the statutory process for preparing the fourth River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) covering 2028–2033. The report identified the main pressures currently affecting rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters, and explained why many water bodies were failing to meet required environmental standards. It was intended to guide the development of future actions and measures.

The report was subject to public consultation and councils were recognised as key stakeholders and delivery partners in addressing the identified issues.

Current position on water quality
Overall, the condition of Northern Ireland's water environment was seen to be deteriorating rather than improving. Fewer than one third of surface water bodies (rivers and lakes) were currently classed as being in good ecological condition. Chemical pollution remained widespread, including from long lasting legacy chemicals that persisted in the environment. Groundwater levels were generally stable, but chemical contamination of groundwater remained a concern.

High profile events such as blue green algae blooms, including at Lough Neagh, had highlighted the environmental, public health and economic consequences of declining water quality. Maintaining and improving water quality and access to coastal and inland waters was also vital to developing the outdoor water tourism product, helping to attract more visitors to Northern Ireland and supporting the wider economy. The report concluded that existing measures had not been sufficient to reverse negative trends**.**

Main pressures affecting water quality
The report grouped pressures into a number of broad categories, many of which were interrelated.

a) Agricultural impacts - Agriculture remained the single most widespread pressure on water quality. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen entered watercourses through runoff and land drainage, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

Sediment from soil erosion and livestock access to streams further degraded habitats. Those impacts were closely linked to eutrophication and algal growth in rivers and lakes. The report noted that addressing agricultural pollution was essential if water quality targets were to be met.

b) Wastewater and septic tanks - Wastewater was identified as a major contributor to pollution:

- Some wastewater treatment works were operating at or beyond capacity, increasing the risk of nutrient and bacterial discharges.
- Septic tanks, particularly where poorly maintained or located in unsuitable areas, were a significant source of ongoing pollution to rivers and groundwater.
- Substances such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products and microplastics were not always effectively removed under current treatment processes.
- This area had clear links to Council responsibilities through Environmental Health and Regulatory Services, and Planning (Development Management and Enforcement).

c) Physical changes to rivers (hydromorphology) - Many watercourses had been altered over time due to development, drainage, flood management and land use changes. Straightening, dredging, culverts and barriers reduced habitat quality and restricted fish movement.

Removal of vegetation along riverbanks increased water temperatures, erosion and sediment pollution. Those changes reduced the natural ability of rivers to cope with pollution and climate pressures.

d) Urban and industrial pressures - Pollution also arose from towns, cities and industrial activity:

- Runoff from roads and hard surfaces transported pollutants into watercourses.
- Some industrial activities, although regulated, still presented risks where controls were inadequate or non-compliance occurred.
- Councils played an important role through local regulation, permitting and inspection regimes.

e) Invasive non-native species - The spread of invasive species was a growing concern:

- Species such as zebra mussels and Japanese knotweed disrupted ecosystems and were costly to manage.
- Once established, eradication was often difficult or impossible.
- Climate change was expected to increase the spread and impact of invasive species.

f) Climate change was an overarching issue - Climate change was recognised as cutting across all other pressures. Wetter winters and more intense rainfall increased runoff from land, overloading drainage and sewer systems. Hotter, drier summers increased the likelihood of algal blooms and low river flows. Rising sea levels posed risks to coastal waters and groundwater supplies.

The report stressed that future actions must be climate resilient and make better use of natural solutions.

Implications for councils

The report stated that improving water quality could not be delivered by central government alone. It said that councils had a significant role through:

- Environmental Health and pollution control functions
- Planning and development management
- Regulation and enforcement of septic tanks and industrial activities
- Urban drainage, green infrastructure and climate adaptation
- Public engagement and education

Future measures would focus on a combination of:

- Education and awareness raising
- Incentives and innovation
- Regulation
- Enforcement

Next Steps

A draft consultation response had been prepared and was attached as Appendix 3. The Consultation would close on 18th June 2026.

Summary

The Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) Report highlighted a continued decline in water quality across Northern Ireland, with many rivers, lakes and groundwater bodies failing to meet required environmental standards. Key pressures included nutrient pollution from agriculture, wastewater and septic tanks, physical modification of watercourses, urban and industrial pollution, invasive non-native species and the increasing impacts of climate change. The report concluded that current measures had not been sufficient to reverse those trends, and that a more coordinated, outcome-focused approach would be required in the next River Basin Management Plan cycle.

The report emphasised that improving water quality could not be achieved by central government alone and identified councils as important delivery partners. Through their statutory roles in environmental health, planning and local engagement, councils would have a critical role in shaping and implementing future measures. The findings of the SWMI Report would therefore directly inform the development of the Programme of Measures for the fourth RBMP (2028–2033) and subsequent actions at both regional and local level.

A draft response to the consultation was attached as Appendix 3. Officers broadly agreed that the SWMI Report correctly identified the principal pressures affecting water quality in Northern Ireland. However, a number of important issues were under-represented or insufficiently developed.

In particular, the draft response highlighted gaps relating to drinking water supply resilience, wastewater infrastructure capacity and investment constraints, legacy nutrient loading, stormwater misconnections, private water supplies and the particular sensitivities of coastal and shellfish waters within the Strangford Lough Local Management Area. The response emphasised that clearer recognition of those issues was necessary to ensure that measures developed under the fourth River Basin Management Plan were proportionate, effective and deliverable, and set out a range of suggested interventions under the four pillars of education, incentivisation

and innovation, regulation and enforcement, reflecting the Council's role as a key delivery partner.

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

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine referred to the water management and the infrastructure related to that and asked if there was anything the Council could do to improve the situation or was it simply the role of central government. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services explained that the Council had limited power and was in a position of reacting to prevent more serious problems and he agreed that a shortage of financial resources was the greatest problem being faced.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McBurney, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. CONSULTATION – PRODUCT SAFETY FRAMEWORK AND PRODUCT REGULATION: MARKET SURVEILLANCE AND ENFORCEMENT FRAMEWORK

(Appendices IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the UK Government started to carry out a Product Safety Review in 2019, the outcome of which was endorsed by Parliament in passing the Product Regulation and Metrology Act in July 2025.

The product safety regulatory framework was highly complex and technical, spanning a large number of products with 150 pieces of legislation, covering a huge variety of requirements. The current framework had been around since 1987 with the Consumer Protection Act containing officer powers and the General Product Safety Regulations in 2005, which had recently been updated for Northern Ireland under Regulation (EU) 2023/988 on General Product Safety, covering safety requirements for products on sale and responsibilities of those in the supply chain.

Given the age of the UK regulatory framework, it had not kept up to date with technology, in particular how consumers bought products. In March 2024, 25.4% of all UK retail sales occurred online, compared with just 10.8% ten years previously. That posed a challenge to enforcement authorities when taking action against unsafe goods for sale to local consumers.

Key Issues
To address those issues, the UK government had launched 2 consultations:

Product Regulation: The UK's New Product Safety Framework
This consultation sets out the UK Governments proposals for the new framework, grouped into the following themes:

- Getting the basics right: proposals for the new framework to cover a wider scope of products, updating how a safe product would be defined, and how the safety of a product could be assessed.
- Accountability throughout the supply chain: proposals for the definitions of businesses in scope of the new framework – producers, onward suppliers and online marketplaces – and their core obligations to proactively protect consumers from dangerous products.
- A new approach to product information: proposals to allow product information to be provided more flexibly – both physically and digitally – and to move towards a 'digital by default' approach to product information.
- Supporting enforcement activity: proposals for a consolidated set of duties to cooperate effectively with enforcement action.
- Building on the new foundations: proposals for additional tools to manage products posing greater risk of harm and paving the way for further reform of sector and product-specific regulations.

Product Regulation: Market Surveillance and Enforcement Framework
Through the proposals in this consultation, the UK Government aimed to:

- Simplify and consolidate enforcement powers to create a comprehensive, coherent, and effective regulatory environment.
- Widen the available options for civil sanctions by introducing monetary penalties, reducing reliance on criminal prosecution.
- Address enforcement challenges posed by online and international supply chains.
- Explore whether cost recovery should form part of the enforcement toolkit and if so, for what types of activities.
- Allow enhanced information sharing between relevant authorities, establishing clear statutory powers to facilitate the secure and effective exchange of data for the purposes of product regulation, safety, and compliance.

Next Steps
Council officers had drafted responses to both Consultations, attached as Appendices to this report for Members to consider.

Summary
The UK Government had launched two consultations to review the current Product Safety, Market Surveillance and Enforcement frameworks, which were widely recognised as outdated. Draft responses to both consultations had been prepared for Members' consideration and were attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

Officers agreed that the existing frameworks required comprehensive review to ensure they remained fit for purpose in light of advances in technology, changing consumer behaviour, and evolving purchasing patterns, particularly the growth of online and cross-border trade.

At present, the enforcement landscape was fragmented and inconsistent, with multiple pieces of legislation providing differing powers depending on the product type and the point at which it entered the supply chain. That complexity could be confusing and difficult to navigate for both enforcing authorities and businesses. Officers therefore supported the development of a single, coherent set of

enforcement powers, which would improve consistency, transparency and regulatory clarity.

However, officers considered it essential that any new framework reflected the unique legal and regulatory position of Northern Ireland. In particular, the framework should preserve the additional powers currently available to Northern Ireland enforcement officers and avoid introducing further uncertainty.

While the potential introduction of civil monetary penalties was welcomed in principle, careful consideration was required, as such penalties were not currently available within Northern Ireland.

Given Northern Ireland's currently distinct position within the UK regulatory landscape, it was important that the Government gave due consideration to promoting a consistent and aligned approach between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, while recognising existing legal differences. In particular, any new framework should seek to minimise unnecessary regulatory divergence, providing greater clarity for businesses and enforcement authorities operating across jurisdictions. Through those consultations, officers sought to emphasise the importance of that approach to the UK Government.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the draft consultation responses, attached as appendices 1 and 2.

Councillor Cochrane asked to make an amendment in relation to the appendices which was seconded by Councillor W Irvine.

Appendix 1 - Consultation on the UK's new product safety framework

"Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product safety, Council expresses concern that the UK Government's proposals for a new framework in this regard seem to remain predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

Council would raise specific concern that rather than address the direct application of EU law in Northern Ireland, the Government's intention is to introduce new provisions in Great Britain which take account of the Windsor Framework and operate in a complementary - rather than uniform - way. For example, the consultation document accepts that in terms of local presence requirements, it is not the Government's intention to replicate the full scope of products for which this is currently compulsory in NI in GB, but merely for high-risk products. Moreover, the current difference in the legal definition of distributors in each of these jurisdictions is to be retained and there is an acknowledgement that duties placed upon (and protections for) businesses and other organisations who purchase products for their own use in GB will still differ in some respects from the rules in NI.

Council does not believe this divergence should be sustained. A permanent solution can only be found in ending the undemocratic application of EU law on businesses and enforcement authorities in one part of the UK but not another."

Appendix 2 - The UK's new core product regulation market surveillance and enforcement framework

"Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product regulation, Council expresses concern that the UK Government's proposals relating to market surveillance and enforcement seem to remain predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

Certain elements of the current regime locally derive from EU law that is directly applicable in Northern Ireland because of the Windsor Framework, including the EU General Product Safety Regulation and Market Surveillance (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021. It is not our view that Councils should be required to enforce directives and regulations made in another jurisdiction, but rather be part of a UK regulatory regime that treats businesses and consumers in all parts of the UK on the same basis.

Although the Government's stated intention is to deliver a uniform and unified enforcement framework between GB and NI, it has also said that this would involve considering how current and future EU requirements 'can be accommodated.' Council does not believe this represents a sustainable solution or indeed provide long-term certainty for businesses, traders and Councils. The threat of regulatory divergence within the UK internal market because of undemocratic imposition of EU regulations should not simply be managed; it ought to be removed."

Speaking as seconder to the amendment Councillor W Irvine said it should not be a surprise that he believed Northern Ireland should be treated similarly to other parts of the United Kingdom and it should have its laws governed internally rather than from the European Union in Brussels.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and 9 voted in FAVOUR of the amendment, 2 voted AGAINST, and 3 ABSTAINED so the amendment was CARRIED.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the amendment be adopted and that;

Appendix 1 - Consultation on the UK's new product safety framework

"Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product safety, Council expresses concern that the UK Government's proposals for a new framework in this regard seem to remain predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

Council would raise specific concern that rather than address the direct application of EU law in Northern Ireland, the Government's intention is to introduce new provisions in Great Britain which take account of the Windsor Framework and operate in a complementary - rather than uniform - way. For example, the consultation document accepts that in terms of local presence

requirements, it is not the Government's intention to replicate the full scope of products for which this is currently compulsory in NI in GB, but merely for high-risk products. Moreover, the current difference in the legal definition of distributors in each of these jurisdictions is to be retained and there is an acknowledgement that duties placed upon (and protections for) businesses and other organisations who purchase products for their own use in GB will still differ in some respects from the rules in NI.

Council does not believe this divergence should be sustained. A permanent solution can only be found in ending the undemocratic application of EU law on businesses and enforcement authorities in one part of the UK but not another."

Appendix 2 - The UK's new core product regulation market surveillance and enforcement framework

"Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product regulation, Council expresses concern that the UK Government's proposals relating to market surveillance and enforcement seem to remain predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

Certain elements of the current regime locally derive from EU law that is directly applicable in Northern Ireland because of the Windsor Framework, including the EU General Product Safety Regulation and Market Surveillance (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021. It is not our view that Councils should be required to enforce directives and regulations made in another jurisdiction, but rather be part of a UK regulatory regime that treats businesses and consumers in all parts of the UK on the same basis.

Although the Government's stated intention is to deliver a uniform and unified enforcement framework between GB and NI, it has also said that this would involve considering how current and future EU requirements 'can be accommodated.' Council does not believe this represents a sustainable solution or indeed provide long-term certainty for businesses, traders and Councils. The threat of regulatory divergence within the UK internal market because of undemocratic imposition of EU regulations should not simply be managed; it ought to be removed."

7. CONSULTATION – PRODUCT REGULATION: THE FIRE SAFETY OF DOMESTIC UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 were introduced in response to a sharp rise in fatal domestic fires involving upholstered furniture during the 1960s–1980s. At that time, smoking materials, particularly cigarettes, were a major cause of ignition. The regulations introduced

mandatory ignition resistance tests, including open-flame testing, and strict labelling requirements. Those measures were widely recognised as having contributed to a significant reduction in fire-related deaths over subsequent decades.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), within the Department for Business and Trade, had launched a public consultation on reforms to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (FFRs). The aim was to modernise fire-safety rules so they reflected current domestic fire risks, modern furniture design, and scientific evidence about chemical flame retardants, while maintaining high levels of consumer safety. The consultation built on the earlier *"Smarter Regulation"* review and a Government policy paper published on 22 January 2025, which set out the intended direction of reform.

Key Findings
The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 had helped reduce fire-related deaths, but stakeholders considered parts of the framework outdated in the context of modern homes, products and manufacturing. In particular, the consultation highlighted that smoulder ignition (for example, from smoking materials) was viewed as the more representative real-world hazard for upholstered furniture than open-flame exposure, and that current open-flame testing may be disproportionate. That had prompted consideration of a more outcomes-based approach that maintained high fire-safety standards while reducing unnecessary burden and reliance on chemical flame retardants.

- Open-flame testing requirements had driven the use of chemical flame retardants, raising concerns about potential health and environmental impacts.
- Stakeholders supported maintaining high fire-safety standards while enabling a reduction in chemical flame retardant use.
- An outcomes-based regulatory approach, supported by essential safety requirements, was favoured over prescriptive testing rules.
- Flexibility in demonstrating compliance (including component or final-product testing) was considered necessary for modern and bespoke manufacturing.
- Applying sector-specific rules to re-upholstered, repaired and second-hand furniture was seen as impractical; continued regulation under general product-safety law was supported.
- Simplified labelling and documentation could reduce burdens on businesses without undermining consumer safety.

Next Steps
A draft response to the consultation had been prepared by Environmental Health and Regulatory Services and was attached as Appendix 1.

Summary
The Government had opened a consultation which sought opinions on reforming the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, in order to modernise fire-safety requirements for domestic upholstered furniture. The proposals sought to maintain high standards of fire safety while reducing reliance on chemical flame retardants. That would be achieved primarily through a shift towards smoulder-resistance based testing, the introduction of more flexible and

proportionate testing arrangements, and targeted amendments to the scope of the regulations. The consultation also examined the potential impacts on businesses, consumers, and enforcement authorities, and invited evidence and stakeholder views to inform final policy decisions. A draft response had been prepared for Members consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the draft response to the fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture consultation.

Councillor Cochrane asked to make an amendment which was seconded by Councillor W Irvine in respect of the Council's response.

Appendix 1 - Consultation: The Fire Safety of Domestic Upholstered Furniture

Whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product safety, Council believes that the UK Government's proposals should not be predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

Councillor Cochrane stated that he was making the amendment because he was opposed to the regulatory divergence and Councillor W Irvine was in agreement that it was now being seen how wide the impacts were of this legislation.

A vote was taken with a show of hands on the amendment and 9 were in FAVOUR, 2 were AGAINST and 3 ABSTAINED so the proposal was CARRIED.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the amendment be adopted and that; whilst strongly supportive of the principle of ensuring high standards of product safety, Council believes that the UK Government's proposals should not be predicated on maintaining compliance with the Windsor Framework, which unacceptably places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime than Great Britain.

8. CONSULTATION – RACE RELATIONS

(Appendices VII – IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that in 2023, the Executive Office (TEO) committed to commission an independent review of progress on the implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.

While it remained a key priority to continue to deliver on the commitments in the Racial Equality Strategy, it was felt important that post-2025, there was a clear mechanism and overarching Framework for achieving racial equality in our society that would go beyond the standard approaches tried before.

Focusing on and exploring the principles of the public health approach utilised by various Executive strategies, a Framework (Appendix 1) had been developed for

Race Relations which aimed to tackle complex issues that sustained racial disparities. That new Framework built upon the foundation laid by the 2015–2025 Strategy and introduced four key outcomes that would guide future efforts:

1. Elimination of Racial Inequality
2. Combatting Racism and Race Hate Crime
3. Equality of Service Provision
4. Community Cohesion

Those outcomes reflected the evolving priorities and challenges identified through engagement and research. They provided a strategic focus for interventions and monitoring, ensuring that the vision of a fair and inclusive society was realised and everyone's rights were upheld. To support the achievement of outcomes, targeted interventions had been identified with priorities for the first two years of implementation set out in an accompanying Delivery Plan (Appendix 2).

Key Issues
Racism and hate were increasing at a concerning rate and if not tackled would have a negative impact within communities and on society as a whole. Everyone had a part to play and the Framework for Race Relations set out our vision and the associated outcomes the Council sought to achieve collectively.

Achieving that required a sustained and coordinated effort across all sectors of society. It demanded not only a commitment to eliminating racial inequality and combating racism, but also a proactive approach to fostering community cohesion and ensuring that everyone felt a sense of belonging. That was reflected in the proposed outcomes.

The Framework had identified the key issues and a range of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions to help address those issues. It was however flexible to adapt to new or emerging challenges and to allow for approaches and interventions to be adjusted to meet needs as they arose. It also recognised that not all could be progressed at once and meaningful change would take time.

Next Steps
Consultation on the Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028 was open for views and would close on Wednesday 3 June 2026.

The proposals for the Framework were subject to the views of the Executive which would be responsible for final approval.

Summary
Consultation questions relevant to an organisation and possible responses were attached for discussion (Appendix 3).

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the responses and responds to the Consultation.

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

Councillor Hollywood generally supported the Consultation considering it to be sensible and balanced but referred to question 35 of the Consultation response which referred to bureaucracy in local government. He asked if there was anything recommended to make it more efficient and it was noted that the Council hoped to speed the reporting process but there were no specific recommendations.

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

9. ANDBC CARAVAN LICENCE CONDITIONS UPDATE

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that there were currently 26 Holiday Caravan Sites and 2 Residential Sites in the Ards and North Down Borough. As required by The Caravan Act (NI) 1963, the Council had issued a Caravan Site Licence for each site along with a set of Licence Conditions. Those conditions were uniform for most of the sites, with minor differences in conditions for the two residential parks.

The Council's current licence conditions were based on previous model licence conditions for caravan sites and residential caravan sites which were issued in 1992 and 1994 respectively by the Department of the Environment. The Department for Infrastructure (DFI) commenced a review of those in 2019 with a consultation to which the Council responded. Caravan site operators were also consulted directly by DFI and given an opportunity to respond. There was a significant delay in issuing the new conditions; the 'Model Licence Conditions 2025 Residential and Holiday Sites' published by the Department for Infrastructure in July 2025.

Key Issues

Following publication of the Model Licence Conditions 2025, the Service was reviewing and updating local caravan site licence conditions to ensure they remained current, enforceable and consistent across Northern Ireland.

Under section 5 of the Act the Council must have regard to the new Model Licence Conditions. While the accompanying guidance stated that where current licence conditions were adequate in serving their purpose the Council did not need to apply new conditions, there were several reasons why the Service felt the current licence conditions needed to be reviewed.

- The previous model licence conditions were published in 1992 and 1994, caravan sites had evolved over the last thirty years, and new conditions would reflect that.
- The update would allow the Council to combine the residential and holiday conditions.
- The update offered an opportunity for consistency across Northern Ireland. The new licence conditions had been drafted in consultation with the other member Councils of the Caravan Licensing Group Northern Ireland following their review of the Model Licence Conditions 2025. The Group had taken

account of the need for the conditions to be; Reasonable, clear and precise, practical to enforce and future proofed re. legislation & guidance.

Key differences between the Model Licence Conditions 2025 Residential and Holiday Sites and the Draft ANDBC Licence Conditions for Residential and Holiday Sites: -

- Electrical installation – due to the coastal location of the majority of sites and the potential for corrosion of electrical equipment, this Service proposed to retain the requirement for the electrical installation to be inspected every 3 years.
- Telephones – the 1992 Model Conditions required that an immediately accessible telephone be available on site. That condition had been removed as the 2025 conditions only requires an emergency telephone where mobile reception was poor.
- Fencing – The current ANDBC licence conditions included a condition that fencing was not to be erected around a caravan unless of a non-combustible material. It was proposed to clarify the condition for holiday parks to state that fencing was not permitted between or around individual caravans. In the case of the two residential parks, fences and hedges were permitted where allowed by the site owner and formed the boundary between individual caravan pitches providing they are not higher than 1m. A higher fence was permitted provided it was made from non-combustible material, in line with the NIFRS Caravan Site Operators Fire Safety Guide 2026. That would permit segregation of homes while preventing the spread of fire between units.
- Paddling Pools and similar – While those were not conditioned previously, the observation by inspecting officers that those were left filled with water and unattended presented a serious risk of drowning. It was proposed to prohibit the provision of those on the park.
- Tents and Gazebos – tents were not covered in the new model licence conditions, however, were not previously permitted without consent from ANDBC due to their flammability. It was proposed to prohibit the provision of tents and gazebos due to the risk of spread of fire, with the exception of tents erected in a dedicated campsite/touring area of the site.
- BBQs, Fire pits and Chiminea's - this was not previously conditioned by ANDBC; however their prevalent use around caravans increased the risk of fire due to the open fire and creation of ash and embers. It was proposed to prohibit the provision of those on sites in line with the NIFRS Caravan Site Operators Fire Safety Guide 2026.
- Storage Boxes – ANDBC required storage boxes to be of a non-combustible construction, not exceed 1.3m height and be maintained in a state of good repair. It was proposed to retain the condition and additionally include the prohibition of laundry appliances also being housed in such storage boxes, unless connected to an electrical supply suitable for outdoor use.
- Trampolines and Play Equipment – inspecting officers had witnessed large trampolines, slides and swings in the separation space between caravans. That presented a health and safety risk to other site users; equipment was often not adequately secured, took up the separation space, reduced car parking space and potentially caused a nuisance to surrounding residents.
- Pets -That was previously conditioned by ANDBC and it was proposed this was retained. If allowed on site, domestic pets should not be allowed to roam

at will and must be kept under control on a leash or other suitable means and shall not be allowed to trespass or cause annoyance in any way.

Next Steps
Section 8 of the Act which gave the Council power to alter the conditions attached to site licences stated that before doing so it shall afford licence holders an opportunity of making representations. That Service therefore intended to write to licence holders, advising them of the proposed new licence conditions and giving them the opportunity to respond. All responses would be considered before a final draft was made and the new licence conditions issued. Section 8 of the Act also allowed the holder of a site licence to appeal any alteration of the conditions attached to the licence to the Magistrate's Court.

Summary
The report sought Council approval to update the caravan site licence conditions for all holiday and residential caravan sites in Ards and North Down Borough Council following the publication of the Department for Infrastructure's Model Licence Conditions 2025. The current Council conditions were based on outdated 1992 and 1994 models and no longer fully reflected modern caravan site or safety standards. The proposed updated conditions consolidated residential and holiday site requirements, improved consistency across Northern Ireland, and introduced or clarified measures to address fire safety, electrical safety, and general health and safety. The conditions had been developed collaboratively with other councils through the Caravan Licensing Group Northern Ireland and were intended to be reasonable, enforceable and future-proofed. Licence holders would be formally consulted in line with Section 8 of the Act before the conditions were finalised and issued.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to adopt the ANDBC proposed Caravan Licence Conditions 2026 (copy attached in Appendix 1).

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

Alderman Cummings had one question in relation to the recommendation under disposal of waste and asked if recycling was being covered. He asked was this not an area the Council would have governance on or at least be advising on. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services believed there was recycling on sites but was not sure that the Council could dictate that under licensing regulations.

Councillor McClean asked how far the Council was straying from the previous model of licensing in 2025 by removing barbecues and firepits, and wondered if that had been in the model conditions or did the Council diverge upon that in terms of restrictions. It was explained that this was the officers' interpretation of it and it was considered appropriate under fire safety and fire service recommendations.

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

10. ANIMAL WELFARE 2024

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that in Northern Ireland, animal welfare was governed by the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act). The 2011 Act placed a duty on any person who had permanent or temporary responsibility for an animal to ensure its welfare. It applied equally to farmed and non-farmed animals and set out five welfare needs that must be met. While the majority of owners and carers complied with these requirements, failures could occur. In such cases, the Act provided for a range of animal welfare offences, including failing to take reasonable steps to meet an animal's welfare needs and causing, or allowing, unnecessary suffering through an act or omission.

Enforcement of the legislation was carried out by DAERA in relation to farmed animals, while non-farmed animals were dealt with by councils. PSNI also had duties relating to wildlife, animals on roads and arranged animal fighting.

In Northern Ireland, councils had adopted a collaborative regional shared services model for the delivery of animal welfare enforcement functions in respect of non-farmed animals. That in turn was broken down into smaller council groups for the employment of Animal Welfare Officers, and at present the Council worked in partnership with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in that regard.

The publication of an annual Animal Welfare Report was recommended following a review of the implementation of the 2011 Act, which concluded in 2016. That was the ninth report published by the DAERA and it set out the scope and level of animal welfare enforcement activity undertaken during 2024 (reporting period: 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024).

Key Issues – Animal Welfare Report 2024

Demand for Council Animal Welfare Services
Local councils continued to have responsibility for the enforcement of animal welfare legislation in respect of non-farmed animals, including domestic pets and equines. During 2024, councils received a substantial number of animal welfare complaints, resulting in a high volume of officer visits. A proportion of cases required more than one visit, reflecting the nature of investigations and the need to monitor compliance over time. That level of activity confirmed that animal welfare enforcement remained a significant area of council regulatory work.

Use of Enforcement Measures
Council Animal Welfare Officers applied a range of enforcement actions during 2024 in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Act. Those included the issuing of improvement notices to secure compliance and, where necessary, the seizure of animals to prevent further suffering. While many cases were resolved through advice and voluntary action, the data indicated that formal enforcement action continued to be required in a number of cases in order to protect animal welfare.

Animal Seizures and Associated Implications

Cases involving the seizure of animals could present particular operational and resource challenges for councils. Those cases may involve urgent decision-making, veterinary assessment, temporary accommodation and ongoing care arrangements, as well as follow-up enforcement and legal processes. The number of seizure cases recorded during 2024 highlighted the importance of effective procedures and inter-departmental coordination to manage such cases in a proportionate and consistent manner.

Councils as the Primary Point of Contact
Councils remained the main point of contact for members of the public wishing to report concerns regarding the welfare of non-farmed animals. That role includes receiving and assessing complaints, prioritising responses based on risk, and carrying out appropriate follow-up action. Councils wwre also responsible for managing communication with complainants, within the constraints of confidentiality and legal requirements.

Inter-Agency Working
The delivery of animal welfare enforcement continues to rely on cooperation between councils, DAERA and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Effective referral arrangements and information sharing were required where cases involved overlapping responsibilities, such as incidents involving equines, animals on roads, wildlife or suspected criminal activity. Ongoing multi-agency working remained an important aspect of ensuring that animal welfare concerns were dealt with appropriately and efficiently.

Legal Outcomes
While the majority of council animal welfare cases did not result in prosecution, court proceedings continued to be taken in more serious cases where evidential and public interest tests were met. Convictions secured during 2024, including the use of custodial sentences and disqualification orders, demonstrated the application of the full range of enforcement measures available under the legislation.

Key Issues – Animal Welfare Service
Following a decision by DAERA to withdraw financial support for council-led enforcement of non-farmed animal welfare legislation, a number of councils initiated judicial review proceedings challenging the decision, while continuing to deliver the statutory service in order to meet their duties under the 2011 Act.

The High Court considered the statutory framework, the historical funding arrangements that had supported the regional shared services model, and the circumstances in which the decision was taken, including the absence of normal ministerial and Assembly scrutiny at the time.

The judgment clarified that while councils retained the statutory responsibility for the delivery of non-farmed animal welfare services, there was no corresponding statutory obligation on DAERA to provide funding. The provision of financial support therefore remained a matter for ministerial discretion within the wider budgetary and public expenditure framework, notwithstanding the expectation that such decisions would ordinarily be subject to Assembly consideration and scrutiny by the AERA

Committee. At this stage, a final decision on DAERA's budget allocations had not yet been confirmed.

Next Steps
In the absence of a dedicated or recurring funding stream, the animal welfare service had continued to be delivered by councils on an at-risk funding basis, and current indications were that this position was likely to continue into 2026/27. A further report would be brought to a future meeting to update Members on the funding position and any implications for service sustainability and delivery.

Summary
Animal welfare in Northern Ireland was governed by the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011, with councils responsible for the enforcement of non-farmed animal welfare through a regional shared services delivery model. The 2024 Animal Welfare Report highlighted the continued high demand on council animal welfare services, the ongoing use of a range of enforcement measures to secure compliance, and the importance of effective inter-agency working to protect animal welfare.

Alongside those operational pressures, recent changes to funding arrangements and the outcome of judicial review proceedings had confirmed that, while councils remain legally responsible for service delivery, funding remained a matter for ministerial discretion. As a result, the service continued to be delivered on an at-risk funding basis, with further updates on funding and service sustainability to be brought to Members in due course.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor W Irvine thought this was a very important item and that animal welfare was something that should be taken very seriously and in terms of enforcement even more so. The Council had a Service Level Agreement with Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council and he asked how that was having an impact on the Council's service delivery.

The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services reported that since that had been introduced the service had been operating even though there was no budget provided for it and a legal case was ongoing from DAERA. Once clarification was given it was something that would be brought back in terms of the future of the service.

Alderman Cummings reiterated that in order to sustain the service the Council needed to receive funding and noted that the capacity to deliver was necessary if animal welfare was to be taken seriously.

Councillor McKee echoed the last two comments and thought it was disappointing that the Council was in the position of uncertainty but he hoped that the Department and the Minister would do the right thing about this and provide the funding that was clearly needed.

Councillor Kendall thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and thanking officers for the report took the opportunity to ask questions. She referred to the Service Level Agreement with Lisburn and Castlereagh and asked how that was being operated in terms of compliance. She had sought information from them under Freedom of Information and had only received scant documents on how compliance was being met. She thanked the Director for the information provided and asked if she had been able to secure any further information on operating procedures and if this Council had had a review to assure itself that the work was being carried out effectively.

Responding the Director and the Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services were reviewing that Agreement and assurance with Lisburn and Castlereagh.

The Member went on to say that financial support for the services had also been raised and it was noted that the DAERA Minister had announced Northern Ireland would implement legislation about puppy breeding and registration and that was to be welcomed from an animal welfare point of view. Given this was coming down the line assurances of funding were vital and if they were not she thought that the Council should write to the Minister about the matter. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services stated that there had been no indication of funding at this time.

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

11. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 671 – RESPONSIBLE DOG WALKING (MAY 2026)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that a Notice of Motion relating to Responsible Dog Walking in Public Spaces was adopted at the Environment Committee Meeting in September 2025. It stated that the Council, as a Dog Friendly Borough, recognised the need to balance animal welfare, public safety, and shared use of parks and footpaths. It raised concerns about individuals walking multiple dogs, the rise of unlicensed professional dog walkers without insurance, and the associated risks to people and pets. It noted that other councils, including Belfast City Council, had introduced limits on the number of dogs walked at one time and suggested similar measures be considered. More specifically, the Notice of Motion proposed that the Council resolved to:

> 1. Produce a report outlining the costs and steps required to introduce a local restriction under the relevant provisions of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act (Northern Ireland) 2011: Limiting the number of dogs that any one person may be in charge of to a maximum of four at any given time in public spaces.
>
> 2. Mandating that professional dog walkers must have dogs on leads at all times to ensure dog control and accountability for dog behaviours.

3. Include in the report, the provision and cost of a complementary public education campaign, to inform residents, recreational and professional dog walkers about the new limit, about what it 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.

4. To write to the DAERA Minister to ask him to introduce, and provide funding support to Councils to enforce, mandatory registration of professional dog walkers to help to ensure suitable animal welfare standards, the provision of suitable training, experience, insurance, and public safety.

Subsequently, reports were brought to the January and March meetings of this Committee. Following the March meeting, it was agreed to proceed with carrying out a consultation to assess public opinion, with a range of options on what a future Dog Control Order (DCO) may look like. Additionally, it was agreed that officers bring a report on options for a responsible dog ownership and dog control education campaign.

Key Issues
It was not possible at this point to provide Members with a comprehensive proposal on what the education campaign would consist of, due to the fact that the public consultation had not yet commenced. Officers were currently carrying out work to build the online survey, and it was hoped that the consultation would go live on 1st June 2026, and remain open for one month.

Once the survey had closed, officers would analyse and present the results to Members at a future meeting. Following that process, there would be a more accurate indication as to the details of any future DCO, and therefore what would be required in an accompanying education campaign.

However, at this stage, the following options had been discussed as possible educational mediums or ways of engaging with dog owners/walkers:

- Making use of existing campaigns and promotional material, such as DAERA's "Responsible Dog Ownership" initiative.
- A revised website section on responsible dog ownership.
- Regular messaging on the Council's social media pages.
- Pop-up clinics at popular dog walking areas.
- Information sent with new licence applications and renewal letters.
- Direct engagement with professional dog walkers
- Media advertisement (will require funding).
- Commission the creation of visual media, possibly animated, to promote the broad message of responsible dog ownership (will require funding).

Next Steps
The public consultation was planned to open on 1st June and remain open for one month. Once that had been completed, the results would be collated and analysed over the summer before being presented to this Committee in September. Officers

would request direction on how to proceed, and as part of that process, would devise a tailored education campaign in relation to responsible dog walking.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor McKee was happy to note the information and thought it was hugely important that the Council take the opportunity brought by this Motion. In terms of the educational aspect he said it was important to reach dog owners through sharing information with new licence holders. He referred to the recently published framework from Dogs Trust which was comprehensive and it would be a useful guide to implementing that in providing education. The report had demonstrated that a considerable amount of time was spent on dealing with the outcomes of dog owners not taking their responsibilities seriously so it was helpful to remove those more harmful and resource intensive issues and it would be money well spent.

Alderman Cummings had nothing further to add but asked the Council to be mindful of ways to inform the public such as through veterinary practices for example and other interest groups.

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

12. BATHING WATERS AMENDMENT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that at the January Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting, a report was noted in relation to the possible nomination of additional Designated Bathing Waters in the Borough. At the subsequent Council Meeting, an amendment to the recommendation was approved as follows: -

“That the recommendation be adopted, and given the tragic news of the death at Helen's Bay at the weekend, that Council continues to work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to explore best practice with regards to supporting bathers' safety, bringing back a report to the Committee to outline what else Council can do to promote safety at our beaches and harbours, and any potential safety measures that could be implemented.”

Key Issues
In the Council’s role as land owner and beach operator for Designated Bathing Waters, the Council carried out risk assessments at each of its approved beaches. As part of the risk assessment process, site-specific hazards were identified and attention was drawn to them on signage at the beach. The Council also provided safety equipment such as lifebuoy rings where appropriate. Risk assessments carried out at Council beaches were subject to review and would take account of new information. NIEA carried out the same duties at the two beaches under their management in the Borough, at Helen’s Bay and Crawfordsburn.

The Council also endeavoured to promote open water swimming safety for bathers in the Borough. As such, the Council partnered in the 'Get Wet Stay Safe' programme, and hosted safety sessions at several of its designated beaches. The Get Wet Stay Safe (GWSS) programme was a joint initiative between Sport NI, RNLI, Royal Life Saving Society, ROSPA, HM Coastguard the National Trust and Local Authorities. Now in its third year of delivery by Swim Ulster, the programme provided the tools and expertise needed to ensure both novice and experienced swimmers enjoyed open water spaces safely.

Even with comprehensive planning and the implementation of appropriate control measures, sea swimming remained an inherently unpredictable activity. Risk assessments and safety provisions could reduce many foreseeable hazards, but they could not fully control the dynamic and changeable nature of the sea. Factors such as changing tides, the sudden development of rip currents, and rapid decreases in water temperature could occur with little warning and may place swimmers at risk, including those with significant experience. As a result, a residual level of risk was unavoidable once individuals entered the sea.

Next Steps
The following GWSS sessions would take place at Council operated Designated Bathing Waters in 2026:

Saturday 2nd May - Groomsport 11:30-12:30
Saturday 13th June - Cloughey 10-11
Saturday 27th June - Brompton Bay 10-11
Saturday 26th September - Groomsport 11-12

Sea swimming and microbiological water safety were key considerations for the Council, with a number of departments contributing to ensuring good practice at its beaches. It would continue to engage with other agencies, such as at the Better Beaches Forum, to share and identify methods that improved the safety of site users.

Summary
While the benefits of open water swimming were evident in relation to both physical and mental health, there were inherent risks in the activity due to the unpredictable nature of the sea. The Council carried out risk assessments at Designated Bathing Waters for which it acted as operator, and would promote safe swimming initiatives when possible. Officers would also continue to engage with other agencies to ensure there was awareness of emerging safety measures and guidance.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Brooks welcomed the report and questioned now that Donaghadee was a designated bathing area why was it not having a session particularly since there were many swimmers based there. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services understood that the facilities on beaches were being considered

as well as having a good geographical spread. He reminded the Committee that the Council did not have input into that and was simply a partner and not a decision maker. Councillor Cochrane suggested that winter swimming also be given consideration given how popular it was becoming.

Councillor McKee wondered if the Council had met with representatives from DAERA or NIEA in respect of sea swimming since Councillor Kendall's amendment had been brought in January and if there had been any consideration on providing information on safety on the Council's website for the swimming community. He noticed that there was information about other sports but no mention made of sea swimming and it would be simple to provide that information. Officers said that was something that could be considered and agreed that the focus was more on water quality for sea swimmers. Engagement should be taking place with local open water swimming groups following the tragedy in Helen's Bay. The Director explained that a wider piece of work was being done by Leisure to engage with swimming groups and that report would be coming back to the Committee. Councillor McKee appreciated the work of officers and in the Get Wet Stay Safe programme however he was disappointed and did not believe that the Motion was being covered completely and that the Council owed that to the people affected by the tragedy.

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

13. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 370 – REVIEW OF COUNCIL BYLAWS (MAY 2026)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that a Notice of Motion was adopted at the Environment Committee Meeting in October 2019, asking for a review to be carried out in relation to the Council's Byelaws. The NoM read as follows:

"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 the Council byelaws to create a modern system to assist the Council in meeting the outcomes identified within the Community Plan."

A report was brought to the Environment Committee Meeting in September 2020 to provide Members with an update. At the Council Meeting in April 2025, it was proposed that:

"further to NOM 370, that an officer's report is brought back on the possible strengthening of No Alcohol consumption byelaws on Council land and at our Borough's beaches and parks. Furthermore, the report will also explore options on possible restrictions of open fires and the use of disposable BBQs at our beaches and parks."

Key Issues
Progress in relation to Notice of Motion (NoM) 370 had been slower than anticipated, largely due to the complexity and scale of the work required. It has also become

increasingly evident that the existing suite of byelaws had a number of limitations, highlighting that a comprehensive review was now more necessary than at the time the NoM was originally adopted.

To provide momentum and support progress, a proposal was brought forward as part of the 2026/27 budget-setting process. The proposal sought approval to appoint a specialist officer on a one-year fixed-term contract to carry out a comprehensive review and update of all Council byelaws. Funding for the post was approved through the Council's Transformation Fund. The creation of that dedicated fixed-term role was intended to provide the focused resource required to deliver the objectives of NoM 370, and would play a key role in ensuring that the Council's byelaws were fit for purpose, legally robust, and reflective of the needs of a modern Borough.

Next Steps
Work was ongoing to create the specification and job description for the new specialist officer. When those steps had been completed, a recruitment exercise would immediately follow. It was hoped that the Council may be in a position to make an appointment to the post by late summer.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Chambers noted that the original Motion from Councillor Cathcart had been adopted by the Committee some time ago, and he asked how confident officers were that the Motion would support delivery of a comprehensive, updated framework within the one-year timescale. He sought assurances on whether the timeframe could be extended if the work was not completed within that period.

The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services acknowledged that there had been some slippage in the timetable. He explained that the work covered a broad and complex area that would benefit from strong legal expertise and a well-defined person specification, and he was confident that good progress could still be made. If an extension proved necessary, this would be brought back to the Committee, but he emphasised that the current plan represented a solid starting point.

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

14. PORTAFERRY FC PITCH
(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that Members may recall a previous report brought to this Committee on 11th February 2026 regarding the Portaferry Town FC (PTFC) High Street pitch.

In 2005, PTFC entered into a 21-year lease with the former Ards Borough Council for Council-owned lands at High Street, Portaferry. With support from Peace II and Sport NI funding (£150,000), the site was developed to include a 45m x 30m 3G synthetic pitch, associated changing accommodation, floodlighting and perimeter fencing. The synthetic surface was installed in 2007 and, at almost 19 years old, had exceeded the typical life expectancy of a 3G carpet (circa 12–15 years). It was noted within February's report that Leisure officers would proceed to initiate a technical assessment of the pitch to be completed by a qualified contractor specialising in artificial sports surfaces. The assessment was completed on the 25th March 2026 and the subsequent Site Condition Report was attached as Appendix 1.

Key Issues

Summary of Sports Labs Findings

The Sports Labs Site Condition Report (Appendix 1) concluded that the playing surface was at the end of its service life. Key findings included:

- Severe fibre wear and degradation across the pitch, with the carpet yarn heavily fibrillated and flattened
- Visible and weakened seams, presenting an increased risk of failure and potential trip hazards
- Failure of key playing quality tests, including shock absorption and energy restitution, indicating a hard surface with reduced player protection
- Overall performance scores of approximately 28–29%, placing the surface firmly within the "end of life" category
- Engineered base confirmed to be structurally sound, with no significant defects identified in the underlying formation
- The report confirmed that remedial maintenance or rejuvenation works would not restore the pitch to an acceptable performance standard for sustained use. Full replacement of the carpet system was required to address safety and playability concerns.

The existing Lease

The existing lease for the pitch expired in August 2026. However, that agreement could move into an 'overhold' period, during which time the Club may continue to operate and utilise the facility under the terms of the existing lease.

The Council gave permission to the Club to change the playing surface from natural grass (at the time of lease agreement) to 3G.

A new Lease

PTFC had previously indicated that they wished to secure a new lease agreement to continue to use the pitch and assist with potential future external funding applications. Compliance had been engaging with the PTFC for approximately 3 years to finalise a new lease and most recently a draft new lease agreement had been shared with PTFC for their consideration.

However, recently PTFC had expressed concern about renewing the lease without certainty regarding the future of the playing surface. Under the terms of the existing lease agreement the responsibility for the maintenance of the facility and pitch was on PTFC.

Members may be aware that this pitch was not on the synthetic pitch replacement schedule 2025 – 2032.

If PTFC's wish to progress with a new lease, Compliance and Leisure officers would continue to engage with the Club to ensuring appropriate lease terms were established to:

- Allow the Club to maximise potential access to external funding sources for the pitch replacement
- clarify long-term responsibilities for maintenance and investment

Summary
A site condition report confirmed that the existing playing surface was at the end of its service life. Rejuvenation or minor remedial works would not be effective or cost-efficient therefore a full replacement of the 3G carpet system was required. Considering the relatively short timeframe to the end of the existing lease, an overhold arrangement could be agreed between PTFC and the Council to enable PTFC to have more time to consider the next steps.

If PTFC did wish to enter into a new lease agreement, officers would work collaboratively with PTFC to ensure appropriate lease terms were agreed to serve both parties operational and strategic requirements.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Boyle thanked the Committee and officers for producing such a detailed report, which clearly set out what was working well and what was not. The facility was expected to last 12–15 years and was now in its 19th year. This position gave the Council a vital window to explore what could be done realistically, whether resurfacing or planning for a new facility. It was accepted that the condition would continue to decline, even though the surrounding structures remained sound, and measures like replacing the carpet and adding a cushion layer would only extend its life temporarily.

There were questions for the Club about what they could contribute, but no one wanted to see them walk away or lose access to the facility. Keeping the gates open and the lights on was essential and the loss of the asset would be a major blow to the community. He accepted it was difficult for the Club without a long term commitment and believed this was an important stopgap and it was welcomed. He was happy to propose that the Council carry this forward and expected the Council to stay closely engaged with the Club.

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

15. NET ACTIVITY (OCTOBER 2025 – MARCH 2026

(Appendix XIII – XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the information provided in this report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1st October 2025 to 31st March 2026. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Team, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance.

Key Issues

Applications to the Neighbourhood Environment Team

Dog Licences - The Dogs (NI) Order 1983

It should be noted that these figures included block licences where one licence could be issued for multiple dogs in specific circumstances.

	Period of Report October 2025 – March 2026
Dog licences issued during the six months	**9470**

Concessionary licences remained at **81%** of dog licences issued over the period. That includes the categories of neutering (£5) / over 65 (Free – 1st dog) / over 65 subsequent dog (£5) and income related benefits (£5). Standard dog licence £12.50 and block licence £32. The application fees were set by statute.

DOG CONTROL – Dog Licences	**October 2025 – March 2026**
Full Cost	**1747**
Reduced - Neutered	**4726**
Reduced - Benefits	**969**
Free – Over 65	**1777**
Reduced – Over 65 Subsequent Dogs	**225**
Block Licence	**26**
TOTAL	**9470**

Investigations
The Neighbourhood Environment Team responded to a range of service requests. In terms of time spent, some types of service requests would be completed immediately whilst others required a longer-term strategy to find a resolution.
The breakdown within the categories for the types of service requests received had been detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.

SERVICE REQUESTS	
	Period of Report October 2025 – March 2026
DOG CONTROL	**394**
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	**728**

Fixed Penalty Notices
The Neighbourhood Environment Team issued **122** Fixed Penalty Notices for various environmental offences in the Borough. The breakdown had been detailed in Appendix 3.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES	
	Period of Report October 2025 – March 2026
DOG CONTROL	**73**
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	**49**

Prosecutions
Breakdown of cases resulting in prosecution. The breakdown is provided in Appendix 4.

PROSECUTIONS	
	Period of Report October 2025 – March 2026
DOG CONTROL	**14**
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	**9**

Educational Programme
Project ELLA (Environment, Learning, Lifestyle, Action) continued with the following community-based elements delivered. For the reporting period the following initiatives were delivered:-

1. The Plastic Ocean – this talk that highlighted the issue with plastic pollution in our seas was presented to,
   - P4 Clandeboye PS Class 1 (30 pupils in attendance)
   - P4 Clandeboye PS Class 2 (30 pupils in attendance)

2. Art and Craft Project – this innovative initiative that highlighted the importance of using sustainable materials to highlight the impacts of litter on the natural environment was given to,
   - Clandeboye PS Class 1 (30 pupils in attendance)
   - Clandeboye PS Class 2 (30 pupils in attendance)
   - STRIDES Adult Learning Group (8 in attendance)
   - Donaghadee PS P4 Class 1 (30)
   - Donaghadee PS P4 Class 2 (30)

3. Rock Pooling/ Beach Cleans/ Beach Art - Beach Bioblitz events were delivered to the following groups,
   - STRIDES x3 activities (8 in attendance)

- Donaghadee PS, P4 Class 1 x 3 activities
- Donaghadee PS, P4 Class 2 x 3 activities

4. Atlantic Salmon Conservation Project – hands-on project where pupils would learn about biological life cycles and why the conservation of many species is so important.

   Bloomfield Primary School – P 5 (Classes 2 = 60 pupils)
   Andrews Memorial Primary School – P5 (Classes x 2 = 60 pupils)

Summary
This report covered the period from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026 and provided Members with an overview of the key activities undertaken by the Neighbourhood Environment Team, the range of services delivered, and performance levels during the reporting period, with detailed information contained in Appendices 1–4.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the report and noted that a later Motion this evening would address the minimal return from court proceedings. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services explained that low fines were typical across enforcement work and often fell below fixed-penalty levels despite the significant effort involved in taking the offences to Court.

Councillor Chambers was content to defer wider debate but highlighted errors in an attached appendix 3, stressing the need for greater accuracy of reporting.

Councillor McKee welcomed the spread of locations where dog-fouling penalties had been issued but noted the absence significant figures in suburban areas and expressed disappointment that year-on-year comparisons had been removed. The Head of Service said those could be reinstated if Members wished.

Councillor Boyle remarked on the high number of dog attacks and asked for more detail. The Head of Service said he believed the figure was not unusual and that incidents varied widely, and that enforcement decisions were based on the severity of each case, noting one recent example involving a particularly serious attack.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

16. LICENSING ACTIVITY (OCTOBER 2025 – MARCH 2026)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the information provided in this report referred to, unless otherwise stated, the period from 1 October 2025 – 31 March 2026. The aim of the report was to provide Members with further details on some of the key activities of the licensing service unit.

Applications Received
The Service dealt with a wide range of licensing functions which required the officers to consult with licensees, PSNI, NIFRS and other Council Services in making their assessment of an application. The table below showed the number of applications received during this period:

	Period of Report 1 October 2025 - 31 March 2026	Same period last year 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025
Entertainments Licence	121	112
Cinema Licence	1	1
Amusement Permits	3	4
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	3	3
Pavement Café Licence	15	2
Street Trading Licence	2	0
Lottery Permits	10	13

Regulatory Approvals
The table below shoes the number of licences, approvals and permits that have been issued during this period:

	Period of Report 1 October 2025 - 31 March 2026	Same period last year 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025
Entertainment Licence	69	95
Cinema Licence	1	2
Amusement Permits	5	3
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	3	2
Pavement Café Licence	6	2
Street Trading Licence	2	0
Lottery Permits	9	13

#

Inspections

The Service carried out a range of inspections in connection with the granting and renewal of licences to establish if the premises are suitable. In some cases, this will involve a joint inspection with NIFRS.

'During performance' inspections were an important element in ensuring that licensees are abiding by their licence terms and conditions and that premises are safe for patrons.

The Service was unable to complete its annual planned programme of 'during performance' inspections in 24/25 due to resourcing issues.

	Period of Report 1 October 2025 - 31 March 2026	**Same period last year 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025**
Initial/ renewal Entertainment Licence Inspections	**90**	**34**
During performance Inspections	**73**	**6**
Initial Inspections of Pavement Cafes	**0**	**0**
Initial Inspections of Places of Marriage and Civil partnerships	**3**	**0**

High Hedges

High Hedge legislation required complainants to attempt to resolve their complaint informally prior to lodging a formal complaint with the fee of £360.

That generated a large volume of queries for officers in an advisory role, which were not reflected in these statistics, however would be reported from 1st April 2026 onwards.

	Period of Report 1 October 2025 - 31 March 2026	**Same period last year 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025**
Formal Complaints	**0**	**0**

CCTV incidents

Period of Report: 1 October 2025 - 31 March 2026

Date	**Location**	**Incident**	**Action**

02-10-25	Main Street Bangor	Fight	None
10-10-25	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
25-10-25	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
06-11-25	Main Street Bangor	Pedestrian hit by car	Requested by and provided to PSNI
06-11-25	High Steet Bangor	Fight	None
14-11-25	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
16-11-25	High Street Bangor	Alleged assault	Requested by member of the public
05-12-25	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
02-01-26	Bridge Street Bangor	Fight	None
11-01-26	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
01-02-26	Bridge Street Bangor	Fight	None
13-02-26	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
19-02-26	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
01-03-26	High Street Bangor	Fight	None
07-03-26	Bridge Street Bangor	Fight	None

Officers were continuing to liaise with key stakeholders to review the current city/town centre CCTV system. A further report would be brought to Council in the coming months with a full progress update on the review of the Public Spaces CCTV system to enable Members to decide the next steps.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the information provided in this report.

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

Councillor W Irvine had raised concerns about the list of CCTV incidents on High Street, Bangor, noting that no action had yet been taken. He highlighted that antisocial behaviour in the area had increased in recent weeks and referred to ongoing discussions at PCSP. He asked for an update on the current position and when the matter would be brought back to the Council. The Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services responded that discussions were still ongoing with partner organisations, including the PSNI and DAERA, and confirmed that an update would be brought to the next Committee meeting in June.

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

17. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (EVAWG) CHANGE FUND AWARDS 2026-2027

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework 2024-31 was launched by the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister on the 16th September 2024. The Strategy would support those organisations working to prevent and challenge the attitudes, behaviours and culture that could lead to violence against women and girls.

Following on from successful delivery of EVAWG funding in 2025-26 the Council applied for EVAWG funding for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The funding consisted of 3 elements;

1. **Management Resources £50,000** to be used to implement a full-time employee with no cost to Council.

2. **Momentum funding £60,000**, specifically to be used by Council to:
   - Facilitate opportunities for collaboration between expert organisations, tier 3 award recipients and local community groups to provide the support and confidence for communities to realise their role and take action.
   - Include showcase and shared learning event(s) for projects funded under the Local Change Fund, to raise awareness of examples of projects and how everyone can get involved, as well as providing feedback to the Department to inform further investment.
   - Provide awareness raising and capacity building activities for 2026/27 and future years call for Local Change Fund.
   - Engage with local expert organisations to facilitate training for staff, Councillors and community workers on EVAWG.
   - Support regional awareness campaigns.

3. **Local Change Fund £190,000**, specifically to be used for project applications from community and voluntary sector organisations to mobilise grassroots action, support innovative delivery and maximise the impact of community-led initiatives in the area under 3 levels of support:

- **Tier 1**: grants between £1,000 and £5,000 - awareness-raising events or small projects
- **Tier 2**: grants between £5,001 and £15,000 - more extensive and longer running projects and educational courses/workshops
- **Tier 3**: grants between £15,001 and up to £25,000 - significant programmes of activity which include collaboration with and/or mentoring/support to other community-based organisations.

All projects must include a focus on Outcome 1. Applicants could choose to also demonstrate how their project proposals contributed to Outcomes 2 and/or 3.

Outcome 1 - **Changed Attitudes, Behaviours & Culture**
Everyone in society understood what violence against women and girls was, including its root causes, and played an active role in preventing it.

Outcome 2 - **Healthy, Respectful Relationships**
Everyone in society was equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.

Outcome 3 - **Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere**
Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do so that women and girls feel safe everywhere.

Key Issues
Applications for EVAWG grants were advertised on the ANDBC website, social media and sent out to the community database on 19th February 2026 closing on 20th March 2026.

19 Applications were received, totalling £260,624.60, 5 for Tier 1, 9 for Tier 2 and 5 for Tier 3.

Applications were scored against set criteria and the panel agreed to a 60% pass mark. A maximum of £190,000 was available across all 3 tiers.

Next Steps
The following organisations were successful in their grant applications:

Organisation Name	Project Name	Synopsis	Amount Requested
Active Youth NI	Active Together	4 x 8 week sessions for different groups (based on age and locations) to create non-sport specific programmes to increase awareness on EVAWG. Providing mixed gender sessions to engage in physical activities, learning respect etc through shared experiences.	£4,503.10

Bowtown Community Development Group	It Takes a Village	7 week project focusing on a series of workshops and activities aimed at challenging norms, attitudes, behaviour and culture, delivered in a grassroots setting. Activities include basketball, tennis, gardening, paddleboarding.	£4,050.00
Donaghadee YFC	Future without Fear	7 workshops delivered by Women's Aid - 1 for staff and volunteers, 6 for up to 30 young people. Creation to an awareness raising project to develop a leaflet/poster and podcast to promote EVAWG. A Celebration event at the end of the project to reflect upon the learning.	£4,570.00
Beam Creative Network	RISE (Respect, Inspire, Support, Empower)	Delivery of an age-appropriate, prevent-and-deter programme of workshops targeting KS3 pupils in post-primary schools in ANDBC. Project will address the root causes of VAWG and empower young people to play an active role in prevention. Delivery of 40 workshops on Changing Attitudes, Behaviours, and Healthy Relationships, reaching approx. 1200 pupils. 2 facilitators to lead each workshop including interactive learning such as role pay & group discussions.	£13,312.00
Bangor Foodbank	Safe Steps	Delivery of two-weekly one-to-one Early Intervention Sessions to 45-60 women, and 6 Healthy Relationships & Financial Autonomy Workshops, 10-12 participants per session (total reach 80-96 women), 2 DA Awareness Training sessions for BFCS staff & volunteers (20-25 frontline personnel)	£13,600.00
Holywood Family Trust	EVAWG Programme	Facilitation of 3 x 10 workshops within the existing youth provision to raise awareness. creation of a podcast series to enable young women to use their voice. design and creation of posters and social media posts to promote safety, respect, and signposting. 2 community events to raise awareness in the local community.	£15,000.00
Kilcooley Women's Centre	Creative Conversations	Restorative Storytelling project to explore how attitudes towards domestic violence, safety & women's rights have evolved across generations. Will include a textile installation, and a digital gallery and printed exhibition	£15,000.00
North Down YMCA	Flip the Script	Programme targeting young people in early adolescences and engage them in a youth work methodology in a transformative sustained programme over 6 months. Addressing issues that contribute to VAWG and creating a safe space for young people to challenge societal attitudes and behaviours, through interactive workshops, peer discussions, and experiential learning. Use of art, drama and digital media to explore and communicate their learning.	£15,000.00

Irish FA Foundation	NI Football Ending Violence Against Women & Girls	Delivery of workshops, campaigns and interactive sessions for players, coaches, volunteers and fans to develop understanding of EVAWG. Educational workshops and awareness campaigns with Women's Aid, PSNI, Irish FA, and PSNI.	£24,980.00
Lisburn YMCA	(DIS)Respect	Education programme aimed at post-primary schools, education centres and community groups. Exploring and challenging attitudes, behaviours and culture that contributes to women and girls feeling safe.	£24,950.00
North Down & Ards Women's Aid	NDAWA Safe Relationship Awareness Project	Empowering service users, post-primary aged young people. community/youth groups and professionals through educational workshops. Interactive education and awareness raising sessions with people discussing WA services, domestic and sexual abuse, healthy/unhealthy relationships and relationship breakdowns.	£24,965.00
The Change Trust	The Change Programme	Pilot of a bespoke domestic abuse perpetrator programme delivered within the community, targeting individuals before their behaviour escalates to a level requiring criminal justice intervention. 24-30 sessions to 8-12 participants combing group work and 1-2-1 support. 61- briefing sessions to increase awareness to stakeholders and professionals. Engaging with key partner organisations. DA awareness sessions to community groups, businesses and other organisations.	£25,000.00
Total			£184,930.10.

Summary
Projects would be monitored and evaluated using Outcomes-Based Accountability (OBA), with OBA scorecards required for each successful application.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the successful application for EVAWG for 2026-27.

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

Councillor McKee thanked the Director and said he was curious whether officers had had time to consider Councillor Kendall's request to establish a working group. The Director replied that they did not yet have a firm proposal, but that it be agreed at the Council meeting that a report be brought back on the matter. The terms of reference had not yet been drafted, but she was keen to speak with Members informally before a formal report was presented.

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

18. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 599 – GRANTS UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that in January 2024 Council 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 provided 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 do not 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 and celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers were 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 were doing different work (‘essential needs’ and ’non-essential’) yet often funding was 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 was adequate to actually host events and activities. Funding was offered dependent upon the terms and conditions set by the funder, which may not be the Council.

- Up front funding was uniform, that groups got the same up front funding percentage (e.g.,80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.
- Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups were not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and could apply for all they were eligible for.
- Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.

4. Efficiency

- Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure the Council could allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds were returned to Departments.
- 'Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided more quickly.
- Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants were delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.

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 and in particular consider the equity element of the original Notice of Motion.

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 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.

It was reported to the Committee in March 2026 that that process would be completed and reported to the Council in April 2026, however the Community development team had been working on the changes requested but it had become clear that creation of the two tiers and associated eligibility criteria was more complex than initially thought. It was also clear that engagement with community organisations through a workshop comprising a small group of community representatives to test the proposed changes would be beneficial.

That would mean the current process would have to be used in order to award community development running costs for 2026/2027. To date no Letter of Offer for funding had been received from DfC and only the Council portion of funding would be awarded to successful applicants in the meantime.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the approach outlined above for 2026-2027, with further updates to be brought in in autumn 2026.

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

Councillor Boyle recognised that there was not much that the Council could do at this stage and it was limited due to the fact that the Department for Communities had not issued information about its funding as yet. The Head of Community Development reported that it had been mid-July last year before indication of funding was given formally from the Department.

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

(Having declared an Interest in Item 19.1 Councillor Chambers left the meeting at 8.30 pm)

19. NOTICES OF MOTION

19.1. 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 Holywood screen industries innovation hub has the potential to remove an important community asset from Holywood. Council therefore resolves to undertake an exercise to assess the need for community space in Holywood, with a report assessing need to be brought back to the relevant Committee.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Quinn, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Proposing, Alderman McRandal stated that, in October 2022, the Council had approved a cross-party Notice of Motion requiring engagement with the community in Holywood to ascertain needs and desires in respect of community use of Queens Hall. He advised that the Hall had been built as a community centre in the 1950s, with a leisure centre annex added in 2000, and although officers regarded it as a leisure asset, the old part of the Queens Leisure Complex was still used predominantly as a community centre. He noted that, after the facility came under the management of SERCO in 2010, the non-leisure part had been allowed to deteriorate, with sound and lighting equipment removed, the stage unsafe to use, floors in need of repair, and the working kitchen dilapidated.

The management of Queens Hall, Holywood stood in stark contrast to Queens Hall, Newtownards, which had been animated over the years by Council putting on a programme of events. With regard to the 2022 Notice of Motion, he said that very little had been done, and that in the following three years there had been only one poorly attended community engagement session, which represented the full extent of the engagement sought by the Motion.

He further advised that, under the Belfast Region City Deal, the Council had been awarded sizable funding to establish an innovation hub, and it had been decided that a specialist hub serving the digital and creative industries be established in Holywood. In late 2025, Holywood and Clandeboye councillors had been informed that negotiations on a preferred site had broken down, that time was running out to identify a site and secure the funding, and that the only viable option remaining in Holywood was the Queens Hall site. He commented that councillors had effectively been presented with a “Sophie’s Choice” scenario: on one hand, a secured pot of funding offering an economic boost to the town, and on the other, a community need

for which the case still needed to be properly made, followed by the identification of funding to regenerate the building.

He noted that the Council had therefore taken the decision in January 2026 to proceed with Queens Hall as the preferred site for the innovation hub, although nothing was set in stone and this was only the start of a process that would take time to work through. He emphasised that the decision had the potential to remove a sizable and well-loved community asset from the heart of Holywood. He added that Holywood had only one other community hall at Redburn, away from the town centre, and that it had been interesting to note at a recent community strategy workshop that Redburn Community Centre was the most intensively used of all the Council's community centres. He expressed concern that the potential loss of Queens Hall would leave Holywood under-provisioned for community space.

He therefore called for a report assessing the need for community space in Holywood, and asked that officers carry out further engagement with community stakeholders and compare provision in Holywood with that of other towns of similar size, both within and outside the Borough. He hoped Members could support the Motion.

The seconder, Councillor McCollum stated that she had been very pleased to second the Motion. She said that, at its heart, the Motion was about balance and about ensuring that the Council made decisions that were both ambitious and responsible, that built prosperity but also created trust. She acknowledged that the proposed Screen Industries Innovation Hub represented a significant opportunity for Holywood, noting that the prospect of substantial inward investment into the local economy spoke to the importance of supporting economic growth, supporting the business base, and creating opportunities for residents.

However, she stressed that recognising those opportunities did not mean proceeding without caution, nor overlooking the very real concerns about what might be lost in the process. She stated that Queen's Hall had been one of Holywood's key community assets for decades and that its loss would not be a minor consequence but a significant one. For that reason, she said, the Motion calling for an assessment of community need was necessary.

She noted that, for many years, the message from the Holywood community had been consistent: Queen's Hall was needed and should be retained as a dedicated community venue. She referred to its history as a much-loved venue for music and dance festivals, tea dances, and many birthday parties, and as the home of Holywood U3A's large and vibrant community. She emphasised that this was not a matter of opinion but was reflected in Council documentation, the town's master plan, and priorities previously identified by the former Town Action Group, and had been reinforced through consultation and community engagement.

Councillor McCollum acknowledged that other community facilities existed in Holywood, including Redburn Community Centre, which was one of the Council's most used community halls, but she noted that it lacked the space Queen's Hall offered and that its availability was particularly limited at night. Other halls in the town, she said, were mainly smaller and tied to churches. She accepted that current

usage of Queen's Hall was limited but stated that the reasons were well known: the building had deteriorated, fittings had been removed, and its suitability had been undermined over time. She argued that reduced usage was not evidence of reduced need, but rather evidence of what happened when a valuable asset was allowed to decline.

She highlighted that groups such as Holywood Shared Town and others had invested significant time engaging with the Council, working with consultants, and articulating what the town needed and wanted, and that they had done so on the understanding that their contributions would inform decision-making. She said that the Council must honour that trust.

Councillor McCollum stressed that the Motion was not saying that economic development should not happen or that investment should be turned away. She stated that the potential for job creation and growth in the screen industries was welcome and must be encouraged. The Motion, she said, did not reject inward investment but asked the Council to do the responsible thing: to properly assess the need for community space in Holywood, and to do so urgently. If a valued asset was to be removed or repurposed, the Council had to be certain that adequate provision existed elsewhere and had to understand what was needed, what was missing, and what the long-term impact would be. She described this as simply good governance.

She concluded that the people of Holywood deserved transparency, deserved to see the evidence behind decisions, and deserved to know that their voices were not only listened to but reflected in outcomes. Supporting the Motion, she said, was about getting the balance right between economic opportunity and community need, between ambition and accountability. Queen's Hall had long been part of the town's social and community fabric, and its future needed to be considered carefully, openly, and based on evidence. She therefore urged Members to support the Motion and to support a proper assessment of need so that the Council could move forward in a way that strengthened rather than diminished the community it served.

Councillor Kendall stated that Members would be aware that she and Councillor McKee had opposed the decision for the innovation hub in January this year. She said that Alderman McRandal had outlined that the case needed to be made in terms of community use but she disagrees arguing that the case had been made already and was reiterated constantly in Consultations with the Holywood community who had already made the Council aware of their desires for Queens Hall. She indicated that the review should include not just current need but also the future aspirations and desires of the community.

She thought that this Notice of Motion raised the potential loss of this facility in the community and she therefore invited Members to be honest and open about how they had voted in January when the decision about Queens Hall was taken. Residents opposed the blatant lack of respect and transparency to their community. Members would be aware of the issues raised around Queens Hall and the need for community space and it was the Council and NCLT's assertion that the community was not using the facility. That was incorrect they were simply prevented from using it as they would have liked. Therefore she thought the Council should evaluate the use, not simply currently but the use need over the coming years. She stressed it

was critical to maintain the trust of the Holywood community who had long requested large scale events and she remembered local comedian Shane Todd making a request to use the facility among many others so if the Motion was agreed assessment should take a broad view and involve the community for their desires now and in the future.

Councillor Hollywood agreed with the Motion stating that it was imperative that accessible and adequate community space was included in the project here or elsewhere in the town. He looked forward to a report coming back.

In summing up Alderman McRandal appreciated the feedback and comments from his Holywood and Clandeboye colleagues. Referring to Councillor Kendall's comments he fully appreciated what she said and shared the same concerns about what was happening even if they took a slightly different view on how that was played out. He said he was happy to incorporate the desires and aspirations of the people of Holywood in to his Motion and he hoped Members would support.

AGREED.

(Councillor Chambers returned to the meeting at 8.45 pm)

19.2 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.

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

Councillor McClean began by explaining that this matter had been something of a crusade for him in his time as an elected representative and it was something that he, as well as other Councillors, heard repeatedly when meeting with constituents. The matter was not confined to Ards and North Down but it was clear that the fines were not proving to be a deterrent and had not been increased for several years.

He explained that he had spoken with the then DAERA Minister, Mr Edwin Poots, asking him to consider giving the Council powers to tackle litter and dog fouling and the Minister had been gracious in expediting that but the problem persisted.

He referred to reports issued by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful which analysed data from across the country and in 2019 Ards and North Down issued the most Fixed Penalty Notices and were leading in enforcement, significantly ahead of any other Council area in Northern Ireland. However, disappointingly, that had recently fallen to a much lower number, although it remained higher than the Northern Ireland average.

His Motion therefore sought to understand what was happening behind the figures. The point had been made earlier in the meeting about the cost of enforcement against the recovery in fines which was frustrating and he wondered if there was an opportunity to have reduced fines for prompt payment which would be a good incentive to avoid court. He was interested in what the Council could do to improve and he thought that the deterrent signs currently were passive aggressive and ineffective since people were aware that littering and dog fouling were anti-social and harmful to communities. He asked for the Council to learn from initiatives and best practice elsewhere to put an end to it.

Happy to second the Motion Councillor Cathcart explained that the issue had be considered over many years by the Environment Committee. He informed Members that the enforcement had, in the past, been outsourced and that had proved to be very effective but since the service was taken inhouse the issuing of fines had fallen sharply. He questioned why the Council would mess with something that had been delivering and he believed that the Council should be doing better. He also asked for reports to be brought forward on a more regular basis since the issue was important to residents and he wanted to be in a position to report back positive news.

RECESS 9.00 pm
RECOMMENCED 9.16 pm.

Councillor McBurney said she was more than happy to support and she thanked the Members for bringing their Motion. She agreed that all forms of littering were disgusting and the passive aggressive messages being put out by the Council were not working. She asked why there had been a reduction in Fixed Penalty Notices and it was noted that there were 4.9 Enforcement Officers who covered the hours between 6 am to 10 pm daily, some improvement had been noted recently and it was hoped that that would continue.

Councillor Chambers remembered hearing that a fall in Fixed Penalty Notices could mean two things and he hoped that was reducing incidents of activity but it was clear that the problem still persisted and he would support the Motion. He did not want to be critical of the Council's Enforcement service since he recognised that it was impossible to be everywhere at once. He hoped the report would give evidence and best practice which would ultimately be of benefit to residents of the Borough.

Councillor McClean closed the discussion thanking Members for their support.

AGREED.

20. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

21. CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council reinstated the Cycle to Work Scheme for employees in May 2024, using a call of contract negotiated by ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation). The scheme had been very popular with staff.

Next Steps
Environmental Health and Regulatory Services were seeking approval to set up a new contract with the preferred supplier for the continuation of the Cycle to Work Scheme.

Summary
The Cycle to Work Scheme was reinstated by the Council in May 2024 under an ESPO framework contract and had proven highly popular with employees. The scheme delivered significant benefits by promoting staff health and wellbeing, improving attendance and productivity, supporting the Council's environmental objectives, and enhancing its overall employee benefits offer. It was also cost-neutral to the Council, with bikes and equipment fully recovered through salary sacrifice and delivering savings through reduced National Insurance contributions.

The current contract expired in April 2026. Approval was therefore sought to establish a new call-off contract with the preferred supplier under the ESPO 391_23 Staff Benefits Framework to allow the continuation of the scheme. That would ensure ongoing financial savings, continued accessibility for staff, and sustained benefits for both employees and the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the setting up of a new contract with the preferred supplier to ensure the continuation of The Cycle to Work Scheme.

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

Alderman Cummings welcomed the extension of the initiative which he had noted was very popular with staff and had known physical and mental health benefits. Councillor W Irvine asked how many staff had availed of the opportunity during the past year and that information was not readily to hand. Councillor McKee believed that the more staff who used the scheme the

better helping to lower carbon dioxide emissions and improving personal fitness. He was conscious that there was a barrier to cycling to work since many places of employment did not have a secure place to lock up bikes and the welfare facilities around the activity such as the ability to shower and change were not available. He asked if the Council was attempting to take steps to address that and it was noted that the Council was aware of that barrier and was looking at various sites in the hope of addressing the matter.

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

22. PEACEPLUS MINUTES

(Appendix XVII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes from PEACEPLUS meetings dated 2 October 2025.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes be noted.

CLOSE

At the close of the meeting Councillor Chambers reminded everyone that this was the last meeting of the term and also the last one that would be Chaired by Councillor Ashe. On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party he thanked her for taking on that role and performing it well, keeping the meetings relaxed and managed fairly. As Vice Chair of the Active and Healthy Communities Councillor W Irvine agreed and thanked Councillor Ashe for the cordial way she had conducted the meetings.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.23 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (special) meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor McClean	
Aldermen:	Graham	McDowell
	McAlpine	McIlveen (Zoom)
		Smith
Councillors:	Cathcart (Zoom)	McKee (Zoom)
	Harbinson	Wray
	Hennessey	

Officers: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning and Building Control (A McCullough), Principal Planner (G Kerr), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers), Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services (G Kinnear), Senior Environmental Health Officer (C Devine) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Smart. Apologies were also received from Councillor Morgan who had previously made a declaration of interest.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Morgan had made a Declaration of Interest on Item 3.1 prior to the meeting. No further declarations of interest were made but Members were reminded of their ability to declare at any time throughout the meeting.

3. PLANNING APPLICATION

3.1 LA06/2022/0310/F – PROPOSED EXTENSION OF BALLYSTOCKART QUARRY, COMBER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Comber
Committee Interest:
Proposal: Proposed north westerly lateral extension of Ballystockart Quarry, with associated deepening of the existing northern operational area, to include a phased operational plan, screening bunds with advanced tree planting and holistic restoration.

Site Location: Ballystockart Quarry, 63 Ballystockart Road, Comber and agricultural lands to the NW of the quarry to include 61 Ballystockart Road, Comber.
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer stated that the application was before the Committee as it fell within the Major category of development. Planning permission was sought for an extension to Ballystockart
Quarry to secure continuation of mineral extraction over a period of approximately 23 years.

The proposal included the construction of screening bunds, advanced landscaping, phased mineral extraction and the restoration of the wider quarry site at the end of the extraction period.

The Officer recommendation was to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and the execution of a legal agreement.

Site Context

The site comprised an established mineral quarry located approximately
3 kilometres north-west of Comber. It was around 10 kilometres south-east of Belfast Harbour and approximately 0.9 kilometres southwest of the A 22 route between Comber and Belfast.

The site location plan showed the application site outlined in red with the lateral extension area indicated.

There was a long history of mineral extraction and processing at Ballystockart Quarry, with the earliest permission on record dating back over 50 years to 1974.

Operations currently took place at both sides of Ballystockart Road. The active extraction area referred to as the northern quarry, was located to the north of the road, whilst the historic quarry void lay to the south and was referred to as
the southern quarry.

Existing ancillary facilities were located adjacent to the southern quarry void. Those included the site office, parking, a weighbridge, wheel wash, concrete batching plant, and fixed crushing and screening plant.

Overhead electricity infrastructure operated by NIE crossed the northern part of the site.

Vehicular access to the quarry was obtained via a single established entrance onto Ballystockart Road. A tunnel beneath the road allowed material to be transported internally from the northern extraction area to the processing facilities, avoiding the need for a secondary access.

Proposal

The application sought a lateral extension to the north-west of the existing northern operational area, together with deepening of the quarry floor. The purpose was to secure the continuation of mineral extraction at the quarry.

The application did not seek any additional processing plant or machinery.

Extraction would take place over three phases

In advance of mineral extraction, overburden would be removed and used to construct bunds. Those bunds would then be planted with native woodland and would provide visual screening and noise attenuation.

Mineral extraction would then progress through the phased sequence shown on the slides. (quarry floor level of 37metres above ordnance datum).

Restoration

Final restoration would include the removal of structures and processing facilities, and the creation of waterbodies, woodland, scrub and species-rich grassland. It was recommended that any approval be subject to appropriate conditions securing restoration, long-term habitat management and monitoring.

Planning policy recognised that the minerals industry made an essential contribution to the economy by providing primary minerals for construction and as a valuable provider of employment. Policy also recognised that minerals could only be worked where they were found.

The quarry produced a high specification aggregate, with a Polished Stone Value of +68. That material provided high skid resistance and was used in road surfacing.

The 2023 Environmental Statement highlighted that the quarry made a significant contribution to the local and wider economy, with an annual turnover of approximately £7.5million. Updated figures provided in August 2025 indicated that revenue continued to rise and that the quarry sustained 27 full-time equivalent jobs.

Those economic benefits weighed in favour of the proposal but must be balanced against the environmental and amenity impacts.

Natural Environment

Shared Environmental Services had completed a Habitats Regulations Assessment and concluded that the proposal would have no adverse effect on site integrity, either alone or in-combination, subject to mitigation secured by condition.

NIEA Natural Environment Division had reviewed the environmental information and raised no objection, subject to

conditions. Those included approval and implementation of a protected and priority species management plan and habitat monitoring linked to restoration.

Historic Environment

Historic Monuments Unit raised no objection, subject to archaeological mitigation.

Historic Buildings Unit also raised no objection, with listed buildings considered to be adequately screened by distance and topography.

The Officer then turned to landscape and visual impact.

The Environmental Statement included a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which had been reviewed by Officers and verified through site inspections.

The main mitigation included screening bunds, woodland planting, retention of existing boundary planting and phased extraction to allow new planting to establish.

The proposed extension area would be visible from some elevated locations along Ballyrussell Road to the west and south-west of the site. The photomontages showed the proposed mitigation and woodland planting at various stages of maturity.

Further north, views would be restricted by dense woodland planting.

Existing mature landscaping already provided significant screening of the existing quarry along Ballystockart Road.

Overall, views of the existing quarry were generally well contained within the surrounding landscape setting. It was considered that, once established, the proposed landscape mitigation would provide significant screening of the extended quarry.

The Officer then turned to impacts on amenity, including noise, dust and blasting.

Those matters were central to the assessment and were addressed in detail in the Officer report. Given the site's proximity to the Council boundary, Environmental Health Officers from both this Council and from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council had reviewed the application.

The Environmental Statement identified the closest sensitive receptors and assessed potential impacts from operational noise, dust and blasting.

In relation to noise, week-long baseline surveys were undertaken during the proposed working hours, predicted operational noise levels were calculated using measured plant and machinery noise from the site. The assessment concluded that noise levels would remain within the applicable limits set out within minerals noise guidance for normal daytime working hours.

Controls would include operational noise limits, noise monitoring and the implementation of a Noise Management Plan. In addition, a noise management plan must be submitted and approved by the Council before operations commence. The plan must include the management of reversing alarms so the Council maintained control over the detail. However, to address the recent objector concerns the Officer was content for the condition to specifically require broadband, white noise reversing alarms and to prohibit tonal reversing beepers and was satisfied that that could be enforced.

In relation to blasting, controls included limits on ground vibration and air overpressure at third-party sensitive receptors blasting would be limited to between 10:00 hours and 16:00 hours and to a maximum of two occasions per calendar month.

Environmental Health raised no objection in relation to noise and blasting subject to the recommended mitigation.

Environmental Health also reviewed the Dust Impact Assessment and recommended that the implementation of a Dust Management Plan was secured by condition.

The report also recognised that some pollution-control matters were regulated separately through a Pollution Prevention and Control permit regulated by NIEA.

Health and Safey matters were regulated separately under the Quarries Regulations 2006 and enforced by HSENI, which raised no objection subject to blasting safeguards.

In terms of Flood risk, drainage and the water environment, DFI Rivers raised no objection.

NIEA Water Management Unit and Land and Groundwater Team had reviewed the environmental information and raised no objection subject to conditions. Those included ongoing groundwater monitoring and pollution prevention measures.

Turning to traffic and road safety

The proposed development would continue to use the existing established quarry access onto the public road network.

The Environmental Statement concluded that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on road safety or on the operation of the surrounding road network. It identified no material intensification of traffic movements relative to the existing lawful quarrying activities currently served by the access. DFI Roads reviewed the Environmental Statement and carried out detailed site visits and no objection was received about traffic and road safety.

Significant operational controls were also proposed.

Those included annual extraction limits, removal of permitted development rights for any additional mobile or fixed processing plant or machinery, extinguishment of historic extraction rights within the southern quarry, and future control of operating hours for the wider site through a Section 76 Planning Agreement.

Having regard to the evidence-based assessment in the Environmental Statement, the response from DFI Roads, the proposed planning conditions and Section 76 obligations, Officers w*ere satisfied* that continued use of the existing access would not result in unacceptable prejudice to road safety or the convenience of road users.

Turning to representations

Letters of support had been received, with key themes including the need for materials and the economic and employment contribution of the quarry.

Approximately 250 letters of objection had been received to date. The figure reflected the total number of submissions rather than the number of separate addresses.

The key issues raised included traffic and road safety, noise, dust and blasting impacts, effects on health, natural heritage and designated sites, landscape impacts, and impacts on the water environment.

Those issues were addressed *in detail* in the Case Officer Report under the relevant topic headings, informed by the Environmental Statement and consultee responses. Where necessary, mitigation was recommended through conditions and legal agreement obligations.

A Section 76 Planning Agreement was proposed to provide a coordinated framework of controls across the wider quarry site. The site was subject to a number of separate existing planning permissions, and the agreement would sit alongside the recommended conditions. The agreement would secure consistent controls over operating hours, blasting and plant replacement. It would also extinguish extant extraction rights in the southern quarry and remove permitted development rights for processing across the wider site.

Those obligations would manage operational, amenity and environmental impacts across the quarry as a whole.

Planning balance and recommendation

In the planning balance, weight was given to the established nature of the quarry, the continuity of mineral supply and the economic and employment benefits.

The proposal had been assessed against prevailing planning policy and the environmental information including consultation responses. The potential environmental and amenity impacts had all been considered.

Officers were satisfied that the impacts of the development could be appropriately mitigated and controlled through the recommended conditions and the Section 76 Planning Agreement.

The recommendation was therefore to GRANT planning permission, subject to conditions and the execution of the Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Alderman Smith asked for further explanation on the noise condition referred to in the report.

The Officer provided a breakdown, referring to noise limits, monitoring, and a Noise Management Plan. Those would provide tighter control over day-to-day operations and minimise noise impacts.

In terms of noise and blasting dust, Alderman Smith asked whether the current operator's performance had been assessed against those key issues and the Officer explained that a baseline survey would have been carried out as standard practice in relation to dust and noise and factored into the overall assessment.

In a final query, Alderman Smith asked how SPSS 2 had been interpretated and it was explained that in terms of sustainable development which considered economic, environmental and social impacts – economic benefits had been recognised but those were balanced against environmental and amenity impacts. Through statutory consultation and assessments, the Planning Service was satisfied that the impacts could be successfully managed through planning conditions and a robust Section 76 planning agreement.

Alderman Graham asked why permitted development rights were being removed for certain structures and he queried the rationale behind that recommendation.
The Officer advised that the intention was to prevent intensification and the recommendation for removal of permitted development rights related specifically to the processing of mineral at the southern quarry and to prevent the operator from using any mobile processing plant in the northern quarry which could lead to environmental impacts.

Michael Robinson and Deborah Robinson were introduced and invited to speak against the application. Their address to the Committee was detailed as follows:

Mr Robinson said he spoke for Ballystockart Residents, who had submitted over 200 objections to the application. While some had been addressed, many still remained unresolved.

The main concern was Policy MIN 6, which required the Council to protect the safety and amenity of those living near mineral workings. He stated that had not been met. The planning report failed to assess the cumulative, long-term effects on residents' health and wellbeing, focusing only on isolated technical issues and in most cases without critical assessment.

One key example was the lack of a proper buffering zone. Northern Ireland lagged behind places such as Wales' MTAN1 with planning guidance of 200 metres - the

most recognised planning guideline in the UK; but instead, here the responsibility was on Planning to assess it on a case by case basis. Yet, the question remained unresolved, with only a 100 metre buffer between buildings and blasts being considered rather than what was the boundary of all impacts to residents' health and amenity.

Residents, from young to old, had already spent decades exposed to silica dust, noise, and traffic and if approved that would continue for another generation. Indeed, this report explicitly accepted that as an acceptable baseline without full critical assessment. If approved, that would continue for another 23 years, the report even acknowledged that extending the quarry would lead to loss of amenity for nearby residents due to noise and dust.

He did not believe the Planning Committee had the necessary data and evidence to approve an application for hard rock mineral extraction and processing where:

There was no reference in the application report to studies or monitoring of long-term exposure anywhere close to the similarities of this application.

Homes with gardens were just 50 metres from quarry operations, including blasting.

A preschool with four-year-old children playing 75 metres from hard rock crushing.

A business and home was sitting just 50 metres from the planned dumping site for waste.

Seven homes and multiple businesses were within 100 metres of quarrying operations.

The (previous) planning authority had already stated the need to cease quarrying activities by 2030 in the interests of local residential amenity and only provided evidence that this extension would make that worse.

Mrs Robinson then began by stating that the applicant had not demonstrated that the proposal protected residential amenity, health, vulnerable receptors, and the environment over the extended period.

Given the proximity of homes and vulnerable receptors, the report should have clearly addressed Section 75 equality implications under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, particularly in respect of age, disability, and persons with dependants.

The Officer Report's framing was not sufficiently balanced. It repeatedly presented the proposal as a "lateral extension" of an existing quarry, but the planning context was more significant than that wording suggested.

The planning balance gave substantial weight to economic benefits, including mineral supply, employment, and export markets but she said that economic benefit did not remove the need to properly assess harm. There was insufficient scrutiny of whether other available suppliers of high-PSV gritstone could meet the identified need. The report had not shown that the economic benefit decisively outweighed the

risks to residents, health, amenity, and the environment. It risked implying that the quarry output was required mainly for Ards and North Down.

The report also relied heavily on a Section 76 agreement, but its key terms were not set out with enough clarity. Members and the public needed to know exactly what was being controlled by condition, what was being secured by legal agreement, and how those measures would mitigate the identified impacts.

The decision-maker must be satisfied at the time of decision that mitigation would be effective. That certainty was not here. Too much was left to post-consent stages, monitoring, complaints, and reactive enforcement, including in relation to groundwater, boreholes, and noise.

Residents had limited confidence in future compliance because of concerns about past non-adherence and unauthorised quarry use detailed in the report.

Condition 8 was a clear example of the problem. It was not sufficiently preventative, precise, or effective. It relied on action after a complaint was made, rather than clear, enforceable limits to prevent harm occurring in the first place. She also referred to operating hours which were not in the interests of residents.

The existing permission already required quarrying to cease by 2030 in the interests of residential amenity, and the report had not clearly explained what had changed to justify a further long extension.

The Chair invited questions and Alderman Smith asked the speakers to elaborate on the Section 75 implications. Mrs Robinson claimed that the community had not been consulted at any point, particularly in relation to vulnerable residents and their needs. She argued that the dust and noise impacts had varying affects with each receptor experiencing the impacts differently. She pointed to impacts on neurodiverse residents or those with other health conditions.

Mr Robinson referred to long term exposure not just in relation to health but also dust impacts on people's property and he advised that this had been acknowledged by the quarry which had historically paid for window and garden cleaning of properties in the area. He argued that it was the dust that was not visible however that was the most harmful and people would not become aware of the impacts until after the quarry was gone.

There were no further questions and Mr and Mrs Robsinson returned to the public gallery.

Mark Walsh (Director, Breedon) and Claire George (Environmental and Estates Manager, Breedon) were in attendance and addressed the Committee as follows:

Mr Walsh explained the purpose of his business was to make a material difference to the lives of colleagues, customers and communities and had a vision to be the leading vertically-integrated international construction materials group. The business was an Independent Company operating in excess of 110 quarries, 200 Concrete Batching Plans and 60 Asphalt plants throughout Great Britain and Ireland.

Ballystockart produced a High Specification Aggregate a designation attributed by the British Geological Survey by their same titled MINERAL PLANNING FACTSHEET recently updated in Dec 2025. The resource was nationally scarce in Great Britain and Ireland and was essential for roads that demanded the highest level of safety performance (grip). Ballystockart was the only source in Ireland which removed the requirement for imports.

Minerals could only be worked where they naturally occurred and planning policy favours extensions as opposed to new sites as per Policy MIN 1, as referenced by the Case Officer. The approach was borne out by the 11th Annual Mineral Planning Survey Report which confirmed that in the last 25 years that of some 150 planning applications involving hard rock quarries resources only 3 had related to Greenfield applications, one of those in Northern Ireland which was refused.

The application had been through an exhaustive examination over the last 4 year period and subject to Clarification Requests by Expert Consultees and addressing points raised by objectors. The Consultees had consistently responded with No Objection subject to conditions, as the synopsis at the front of the Case Officer's Report. No objection confirmed that those Experts concurred that there would be no likely significant environmental impacts from the proposal.

But what that did not explain was the number of times each consultee was asked to confirm their position. NIEA for instance had confirmed their position of No Objection – Subject to Conditions on 10 separate occasions. In addition, as an Applicant had agreed to work with the Council to standardise operating procedures moving forward and had agreed to enter into a Section 76 agreement controlling hours of operations, sterilising resources in the historical operation, providing uniformity for the blasting activity and commitment to demonstrate continued journey to Net Zero. Providing new levels of control to the Council and transparency to the site's neighbours.

In relation to the Council's draft Plan Strategy, whilst not a critical mineral as referenced in modern terminology, it was an Essential Mineral to enable the Council to deliver its outlined strategy, the extension would release 23 years of resource at the assessed rates.

Ballystockart was one of four fully active quarries in the Borough, whilst provided HSA further afield, the quarry consistently delivered between 60 and 70% annually of its production into the local construction market. An extension of the operation would help to deliver the Borough's proposed Spatial Growth Strategy and the proposed delivery of 15,600 housing allocation over the Plan Period, with the nearby Principle Settlement of Newtownards and Small Town Comber requiring almost 50% of the target allocation.

In relation to this Scarce Resource providing Economic Prosperity as he had outlined, Ballystockart Quarry was the Sole Operational resource of +68PSV HSA in Ireland and was only one of nine throughout the whole of Great Britain and Ireland. With the inclusion of the proposed extension the quarry footprint would extend to 51.4Ha which was similar to a medium sized Northern Irish farm and approximately

0.1% of the Borough's land mass, but that generated a turnover of £11.5M annually, which was something not many farms could do.

Ballystockart Quarry employed 27 full time employees and had a direct wage bill in excess of £1.25M and using Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) employment multiplier for the mining and quarrying sector of 2.6, a further 70 indirect jobs could be predicted to be supported in the Ards and North Down Borough area. Tax Contribution, Aggregate Tax, VAT, National Insurance and Rates were around £3.5M annually.

In respect of Breedon's Values, Ms George stated that Breedon took a long-term approach to sustainability, balancing economic, social and environmental impacts to deliver value today and for future generations. Its strategy was built around three pillars – Planet, People and Places – and was supported by clear sustainability policies. Across Ireland, it operated certified ISO 14001 Environmental and ISO 50001 Energy Management Systems, and all products had achieved BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing certification at *Very Good* level.

It had set ambitious carbon targets: a 20% reduction in carbon intensity by 2030 and net zero by 2050, aligned with the Science Based Targets 1.5°C pathway. In 2025, it achieved a 19% reduction against its baseline, including a further 7% year-on-year reduction. At Ballystockart Quarry, operations ran on 100% renewable electricity, reducing Scope 2 emissions to zero. All emissions were reported in line with recognised standards and independently verified by Bureau Veritas.

To support delivery of those commitments, managers had completed carbon and net zero training, including Carbon Literacy accreditation and IEMA Introduction to Net Zero.

Biodiversity protection and enhancement were key priorities. It held Platinum BITCNI Biodiversity Charter accreditation and was implementing Biodiversity Action Plans at over 25 sites. It also operated a comprehensive bird survey programme, which in 2025 covered 17 sites across Ireland, with one site participating in the British Trust for Ornithology Constant Effort Site Scheme.

It actively supported wider landscape-scale conservation and he explained that he was a Director on the board of the Belfast Hills Partnership, contributing to long-term management plans and nature recovery across the Belfast Hills.

At Ballystockart Quarry, future restoration would deliver nearly 28 hectares of priority habitat, including woodland, hedgerows, open mosaic habitats, in addition to two significant waterbodies.

Effective resource management underpinned that approach, with 94% of water recycled at Ballystockart and a 94% landfill diversion rate achieved over the last year.

Strong community relationships were important to the business. 14 fixed sites operated Good Neighbour Plans, and as a Group it had delivered £130 million of social value towards its 2030 target of £500 million.

Its sustainability performance had been recognised through national awards, including Best Energy Achievement in Construction, Platinum BITCNI Environmental Benchmarking Awards, an Aisling Award – Guardian of the Environment, Sustainability Team of the Year, and being named one of Ireland's Best Employers.

Alderman Smith sought clarity on the 'three pillars' ethos – planet, people and places, that the speakers had referred to. In terms of the 'people' element, he asked for the applicant's response to the objectors' concerns of long-term dust harm.

Ms George responded that dust was controlled under an NIEA PPC permit and that stipulated using the best available operational techniques to control the dust. This was complied with at present and the operator would continue to do so.

In terms of social value, Ms George explained that there was a focus on health, safety and wellbeing for all, and she referred to a company target to provide £500M of social value to communities by 2030. That figure currently sat at £130M. She referred to regular engagement with local schools.

To respond to specific queries, Mervyn Keegan was introduced as the applicant's air quality and acoustics consultant. He explained that his company undertook six to ten quarry dust impact assessments per annum in the UK and Ireland. The approach was in line with Institute of Air Quality Management Guidance which was specifically referred to as mineral dust impacts for planning. The approach taken was through baseline monitoring, impact assessment, recommendations of appropriate mitigation measures depending on the level of impact. Everything was undertaken with industry standard and best practice and during the course of the application process his company had consulted with Ards and North Down Borough Council Environmental Health Officers along with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. Their methodology approach, findings and relevant mitigations had been approved and had resulted in the form of the recommended planning conditions.

Alderman Smith noted that the quarry had been at the site since 1974 and asked if there had been any evidence of impacts in that time. Mr Keegan advised that history of complaints of noise and dust had been discussed at the outset of the process and that was to ensure that the assessment would eliminate any future impacts from further development. He was not aware of any extensive complaints received by the quarry up to the point of the application.

Alderman McApline asked when the nearby houses had been given planning permission and it was estimated that immediately adjacent there was older housing, possibly farmsteads, and then there was a cluster of housing which he estimated were built in the 1970s and 1980s.

Alderman McAlpine asked why the applicant wished to extend the hours of operation and Mr Walsh advised that the operating hours were being standardised with 24/7 operating hours already permitted at the southern quarry. He explained that there were restricted operating hours at the northern quarry and complaints received by planning Enforcement Officers had actually related to operations at the southern quarry so no enforcement action could be taken.

Alderman McAlpine queried if any work was ongoing in the quarry void and it was advised that the void was used for the fresh water source for cleaning purposes. The speaker added that high specification aggregate resulted in mudstone waste which was being used to backfill the southern void.

Councillor Wray noted the applicant's claims that dust cleaning took place at their properties which acknowledged an impact. He asked if this was common for quarries and asked for the expert's view on the anticipated level of impact, if that was higher, lower or the same. Mr Keegan explained that the level of extraction would remain the same but would be updated with improved modern mitigation measures. It was explained that the cleaning of properties was common, and viewed as good practice and not a reflection of the level of pollution.

Those speaking in support of the application then returned to the public gallery and Members were invited to ask further questions from Officers.

Alderman Smith asked to tease out some matters in relation to the distances of residential properties to the quarry and the measurement of harm that might be present from the operations being carried on. He was aware that this fell under Northern Ireland legislation but he wondered how that compared to other locations in Great Britain. In response it was noted that the objectors had not submitted any supporting evidence for the claim that planning was 'stricter' around quarries in Great Britain. What had been given approval here was deemed to be suitable and the legislation was applied consistently across the region. In terms of the closest residential property that was number 63 Ballystockart Road and blasting could not occur within that distance since noise limits were applied. Planning Service was satisfied that the quarry was capable of operating within those limits.

Alderman McAlpine asked about the operational time changes and how that had come about. It was explained that the baseline survey related to normal working hours 07.00 hours – 19.00 hours, the impact of that was assessed and raised with Environmental Health Department and it was satisfied that was in accordance with guidance. The northern quarry lacked the conditions that were now being applied in terms of blasting so it was felt that there were sufficient robust controls being imposed along with guidance from Environmental Health Department and that should be acceptable. When blasting was taking place neighbours would be advised in advance. Landscape restoration was also being incorporated into the decision for approval.

Alderman Graham raised the matter of dust and wondered how dust would be carried, giving consideration to varying wind strengths and directions and wondered was it really possible to monitor where dust travelled. Environmental Health Officer (C Devine) advised that officers had assessed from looking at meteorological systems and the south westerly wind direction that was prominent at this site.

Councillor Hennessey referred to the objectors remarks about the work needing to cease in 2030 in the interests of residential amenity. The Committee was informed that residential amenity had been considered at length and Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal did have the robust conditions in place to protect that.

Every application was considered within the current context of a site and there had been extensive technical assessments carried out to protect residential amenity.

Proposed by Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the application be approved.

In proposing Alderman Graham stated that he would have preferred not to have been in this position but he felt that the Case Officer had made a comprehensive report and he understood the tension between a quarry and local residents. However, that considered, and on balance taking in to account the issues presented, he was content to support the Officer's recommendation.

Seconding, Councillor Cathcart pointed to the extensive testing and detailed reporting and noted that all statutory consultees had approved the application and strong conditions and a legal agreement had been put in place along with a timeframe to cease operations so he was content to approve the application.

Alderman Smith agreed with the proposer acknowledging that this was a challenging decision to be taken on planning balance. He referred to the detailed report which looked at the environmental, economic, visual impact and road impact and that was well covered. However, to him, there was one question that still remained and it concerned residential impact. He thought it was unclear if everything that could be done would be done particularly around the long term health implications but ultimately he accepted that this was about planning balance.

Members were asked if they were in agreement and there was dissent so a vote was taken by a show of hands.

FOR (5)	**AGAINST (4)**	**ABSTAINED (2)**
Alderman Graham	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McAlpine
Alderman McDowell	Alderman Smith	Councillor McClean
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Harbinson	
Councillor Hennessy	Councillor McKee	
Councillor Wray		

With five voting FOR, four voting AGAINST, and two ABSTAINING, the planning permission was GRANTED.

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.12 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, 18 May 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor Thompson

Aldermen: Graham
McAlpine

Councillors: McKee (Zoom) Newman
Morgan Wray

In Attendance: Mr Paul Cummings – Independent Member

Deloitte – Camille McDermott
Prachi Jain

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Strategic Change (S Denny) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from the Vice Chair (Councillor Hollywood) and Councillor Harbinson.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and welcomed Deloitte representatives as well as Independent Member Mr Paul Cummings.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

NOTED.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM 23 MARCH 2026

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

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

(b) FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the register of follow-up actions from previous meetings of the Committee.

Item	Title	Action	Officer	Status
Dec 2023 6b	Audit and Assessment Report	Drafting of formal consultation strategy	Head of Comms and Marketing	In draft Sep 2025
Dec 2025 4b	Follow-up actions	Review ToR to reduce change in membership	Head of Finance	Item 9 & Annual Meeting Jun 2026
6c	Community Plan Review	Report on success factors for outcomes based accountability	Community Planning and Climate Manager	Item 4c
7a	Interim Assurance Statements	Review section 3 regarding inclusion of outstanding IA rec's	Head of Corporate Governance	Item 7a
Mar 2026 6a	Internal Audit progress report	Report on cumulative effect of so many outstanding recommendations	Heads of Corporate Governance & Finance	Included in Item 7a
	Internal Audit progress report	Outstanding recommendations to feature in Governance Statement	Head of Finance	Jun 2026

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

(c) COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive detailing that Community Planning had been a statutory duty for councils since 2015, with Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community Plan (*The Big Plan*) first agreed in 2016. The Plan was intentionally long-term (15 years) and outcome-focused, recognising that many of the complex social, economic and environmental challenges facing communities could not be resolved by a single organisation or within a short timeframe.

The recent Internal Audit provided satisfactory assurance, while identifying a finding relating to the absence of clearly defined action plans and measures of success across some workstreams.

This report provided the additional information requested by Members at the December 2025 Audit Committee meeting, following consideration of the Internal Audit review of Community Plan monitoring and reporting arrangements.

What Community Planning Had Achieved to Date
While the audit did not assess delivery against outcomes, significant progress had been achieved through the community planning framework over the past ten years. This progress had been independently recognised and was formally reflected at the Big Community Planning 10-Year Summit, held in May 2025, which brought together over 100 partners, community organisations and residents to reflect on impact and future direction.

1. Establishing and Sustaining Partnership Infrastructure
Community planning had established a stable governance and collaboration framework that did not previously exist. This included the ongoing operation of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership, bringing together senior representatives from statutory, voluntary and community sectors, and the development of outcome-aligned workstreams to coordinate activity and reduce duplication. The establishment of these partnerships, and the relationships within them, proved integral during the Covid-19 pandemic and enabled a rapid and coordinated response to emerging community need.

2. Tangible Partnership-Led Initiatives
Community planning in Ards and North Down had increasingly focused on practical, partnership-led initiatives that deliver visible benefits for residents, while also influencing how wider systems operated across health, wellbeing and place-making.

Key examples included dementia safeguarding initiatives progressed through community planning structures, supporting a more coordinated approach between the Council, health partners, community organisations and carers, with a focus on prevention, awareness and safer community environments. Community planning had also supported inclusive access to public spaces, including securing external funding for inclusive beach facilities at Groomsport, ensuring people with mobility needs could safely enjoy the coastline alongside other residents and visitors.

Through community planning, there had been a deliberate shift towards co-design approaches, with residents, community groups and partners increasingly involved in shaping initiatives from the outset rather than being consulted at the end. This approach underpinned initiatives such as the forthcoming Considerate Parking campaign, which responded directly to community-identified concerns around accessibility, safety and the shared use of public space.

Similarly, work currently being developed through the Sustainable Tourism workstream would demonstrate how community planning had brought together tourism bodies, local businesses, residents and environmental interests to agree shared principles for responsible and sustainable visitor behaviour.

Community planning had also enabled pilot activity that connected wellbeing, environment and access, including external funding support for open-water swimming masterclasses, helping residents safely engage with natural assets while promoting physical and mental health. Initiatives such as this align with a broader emphasis on preventative health and place-based wellbeing, delivered collaboratively rather than through single-agency programmes.

The Big Digital Guide to Wellbeing provided a further example of how community planning had moved towards shared ownership and shared delivery. Rather than being solely maintained by the Council, responsibility for content, promotion and rollout was increasingly shared with partners across the health, community and voluntary sectors. This approach improves sustainability, helps ensure information remained current and relevant, and reinforced the principle that community planning was a collective endeavour rather than a Council-only function.

Age-Friendly initiatives, the Labour Market Partnership, the Community Resuscitation Group, and the Reading Borough Project were all delivered through community planning structures. These examples demonstrated that, while not always branded as “community planning projects”, the framework added value by connecting activity, aligning priorities and supporting collective impact.

While the Council often undertook a greater coordination and facilitation role, this reflected the breadth of our responsibilities, the range of services provided, and the capacity and capability we could bring to partnership working.

Beyond individual projects, community planning had strengthened the Council’s strategic influence within wider partnership structures, ensuring that local insight and community priorities inform decision-making beyond the Council’s direct remit. This included active engagement within the Ards and North Down Locality Planning Group and the South Eastern Outcomes Group led by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, helping to align local community priorities with regional health and wellbeing planning. Community planning also maintained ongoing involvement in the Protect Life Implementation Group, supporting a coordinated, partnership-based approach to suicide prevention across the borough.

Next Steps
Members expressed concern about the absence of clearly defined action plans and measures of success for some workstreams.

In response, at its meeting in February 2026, the Strategic Community Planning Partnership agreed to adopt a standardised progress tracker to be used consistently across all workstreams. This tracker would:

- clearly set out agreed actions, responsible partners, timescales and expected outcomes for each workstream.
- include measures of success and progress updates, enabling proportionate scrutiny without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.
- provide a transparent mechanism for identifying where progress was being made and where further intervention or partner commitment is required; and
- support more structured reporting and ensure audit recommendations were fully embedded.

This approach reflected the point raised by Members regarding the importance of applying the same principles of accountability and evidence to partnership activity as would be expected of organisations receiving Council funding.

Summary
Community planning had delivered clear value over the past decade by establishing durable partnerships, enabling collaborative action and providing a shared long-term vision for improving wellbeing across Ards and North Down. While the Internal Audit rightly identified areas for improvement in monitoring and reporting, these findings did not negate the significant progress achieved.

The adoption of a strengthened progress-tracking approach, alongside the refreshed Big Plan, revised governance arrangements and the introduction of workplans across each workstream, will ensure that future activity is more clearly articulated, measurable and accountable, addressing Members' concerns and strengthening assurance going forward.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

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

Councillor Wray welcomed the progress tracker and thanked Officers for implementing it, stressing the importance of measuring Council targets. He asked when the tracker would become available to Members.

The Chief Executive advised that the Community Planning partners had agreed to trial the tracker at their February meeting. The full annual report would be brought to the Corporate Services Committee, which was typically at the end of the year or early in the new year.

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

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT

(a) CODE OF AUDIT PRACTICE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Code of Audit Practice from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

(b) STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF LGA AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Statement of Responsibilities of LGA and Local Government Bodies from the NIAO.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Councillor Wray queried the costs charged to the Council by the Local Government Auditor and he was referred to the minutes of the previous meeting which recorded that Audit fees for the year would be £82,600 for the Financial Audit and £17,400 for the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment.

(c) RAISING CONCERNS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SECTOR

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Councillor Wray raised a further query, noting that good practice guidance recommended moving away from the term ‘whistleblowing’ because of its negative connotations. The Director was aware of this and advised that a range of policies would be affected and those would be reviewed against the Self-Assessment Checklist. The Whistleblowing policy review would likely progress through the Corporate Services Committee in due course.

(d) RAISING CONCERNS SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Raising Concerns Self-Assessment Checklist.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the Council notes Items 5a to 5d.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

(a) ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Annual Assurance Statement 2025/26 from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Mrs McDermott (Deloitte) presented the report as the final version which had been brought to the Committee in draft at the last meeting. The only change was the completion of the final two audits being reported at this meeting. The assurance rating was unchanged.

(b) PROGRESS REPORT

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Ms McDermott (Deloitte) advised that the report closed out the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan and commenced with the 2026/27 plan which had been approved at the last meeting. Two remaining reports were being presented this evening (Items 6c and 6d). Planning for the 2026/27 review for Performance Improvement had commenced and further audits were scheduled for August.

Referring to the Outstanding Recommendations Tracker, 38 recommendations were open at the last meeting, with four added and four closed since then. Therefore the number of open recommendations was unchanged. Work was ongoing with the Director of Corporate Services and senior management to progress those outstanding items.

(c) DIGITAL SERVICES GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Ms Jain (Deloitte) outlined the report, explaining that governance processes and controls had received a ‘Satisfactory’ level of assurance, with two Priority 2 findings and one Priority 3 finding. She explained the recommendations which were detailed within the report.

The Priority 2 issues related to:

- The draft Information Security and ICT Management Policy.
- Gaps in the Digital Services risk management framework.

There was one Priority 3 finding identified during the review. This was in relation to:

- Finalisation of a digital skills training offering

(d) CYBER SECURITY FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

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

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Ms Jain (Deloitte) explained that in 2019, a Cyber Maturity Assessment of the Council's corporate network and systems across 14 security domains had produced 57 recommendations (17 High, 29 Medium and 11 Low). In February 2026, management advised that 43 of the 57 recommendations had been implemented.

This follow-up reviewed a sample of 17 – all 12 High Priority and sample of five Medium priority reported as implemented. It was reported that 11 of the 17 were fully implemented and three High and three Medium were partially implemented with updated target dates provided by management for completion.

Councillor Morgan welcomed the progress and timeframe for implementation. She asked how confident Officers were of meeting those timelines.

The Head of Strategic Change advised that much of what had been flagged was about formal documentation and the underlying processes were already happening. Where they were not, there were drafts in place. She believed that the July to September completion dates were realistic with documents moving through the policy sign off process. When the ICT policy review came back with significant feedback, the team chose to use the opportunity to consolidate related strategies into a single comprehensive umbrella policy. This made the exercise larger but more comprehensive.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Wray, that items 6a to 6d be noted.

7. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

(a) SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS OF ASSURANCE – APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

Background
In accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, Heads of Service were required to provide Statements of Assurance. Assurance Statements comprised four main sections to be completed by each Head of Service following consultation with each of their Service Units. The reporting periods for the assurance statements and the structure of the statements had changed, and the Heads of Service completed an interim statement in December, and a full report in April. This report was on the full year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Due to the corporate restructure some of the services had been amalgamated into others or into different directorates. As this had occurred throughout the period, the

interim assurance statements in some cases had referred to now non-existent services. The annual statements completed reflected the new corporate structure.

Findings and Key Issues
General – Identification of Risk, Monitoring and Control measures
No key issues had been declared as not having appropriate internal controls in place. All Services had confirmed that any risks identified had appropriate internal controls and any further actions taken, or to be taken, to adequately mitigate or resolve the risk had been identified.

Corporate Governance had been investigating a software solution to aid in the management of risks corporately and support the implementation of the Risk Strategy.

Section 1 – Strategic and Operational Risk Management
Services reported appropriate controls were currently in place and had identified satisfactory actions to review, monitor, control, mitigate and resolve issues, where appropriate.

The Parks and Cemeteries Service had reported that the increased frequency and intensity of storms was having a significant impact on their operating budget, unplanned tree works had reduced the budget available for proactive maintenance and risk mitigation programmes identified in the Tree and Woodland strategy. As they also indicated that the frequency of these storms would only increase with climate change they anticipated this trend to continue. They furthermore reported that the impact of the war in Iran on fuel prices was impacting both the cost of their fuel but also the price of fertiliser which was impacting on their supply chain and potentially the level of service they would be able to provide.

The Finance service had reported that the new finance software solution would improve financial controls in a number of key areas, particularly around compliance with the new procurement policy and expenditure approvals process.

Section 2 – Internal Control
Generally, there were no key issues arising to cause significant concern or requiring immediate action.

Planning and Building Control Service had reported that they were failing to meet statutory performance indicators in respect of processing of planning applications. They advised that they were recruiting and training staff to mitigate this and building relationships with other statutory consultees to assist in prioritising key cases.

Community Planning and Climate Control had reported that they had received limited assurance on the audit of the Climate Change Strategy review. The Climate Action Board had had its remit expanded to include both adaptation and mitigation and update the risk register accordingly.

Human Resources had detailed that they had appointed a Systems Officer to further develop the absence management software the Council used and aid managers with setting targets and deadlines.

Waste and Cleansing had reported that Officers were proceeding to develop a new ANDBC Waste Strategy, this work had been on hold until a NI Waste Strategy document could be published. Delays in that process appeared to be ongoing so Officers were proceeding without it.

All services had reported that internal audit recommendations had all been reported via the existing channels and reported to committees.

Section 3 – Governance
Environmental Health and Regulatory Services had reported that the funding for Animal Welfare provision in Northern Ireland had been pulled by DAERA for the year 2025/26 onward. This decision had been challenged by judicial review and partly upheld in favour of councils, but this had been from a procedural perspective and that funding could be lawfully withdrawn in future if the correct process was followed. At present the service which was delivered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council on ANDBC's behalf had been operated at risk in 2025/26 and there were no guarantees of funding moving forward.

Finance had reported that both the number of outstanding audit recommendations and the length of time that they had been outstanding had been raised as a concern. Greater attention would be given to this in the review of internal control section of the governance statement. They had also reported that there had been an email hack resulting in £340 being paid to the wrong account, in addition a change of bank details had been attempted on a fraudulent invoice. The latter had been caught by the current controls.

Economic Growth had reported that Bangor Marina had been brought back into Council control from the 1st of April, with Corporate Governance handling the transition and HR implications.

Tourism had reported that a complaint which had escalated to stage 2 had prompted a review of governance arrangements and identified the need to maintain more detailed records of applications for grant aid that were deemed ineligible in the assessment process, which had now been put in place.

Leisure had reported an issue paying for new carpets in advance of delivery which was being reviewed by Internal Audit. In addition they had reported that they were currently in mediation with NCLT/Serco regarding long standing loss of income claims. The Council was taking legal advice on these.

A number of services had reported deviations from Procurement Policy, but in each case the correct procedure had been followed for notification.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Wray wished to raise a query in relation to mediation between the Council and NCLT/Serco regarding loss of income claims. He acknowledged that an active legal case may prevent details being shared, but asked for any information that could be made available.

The Director offered to provide an update once the meeting had gone into Committee due to those ongoing legal matters.

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

(b) CORPORATE RISK REGISTER – MAY 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

Background
The Corporate Risk Register had last been reported to Committee in September 2025. This report had focused on the subsequent period ending 31 March 2026.

The Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service had reviewed the Corporate Risk Register in January which had led to individual directorate reviews facilitated by the Risk Service. Updates to the both the Corporate Risk Register were summarised below. This summary would not have included Corporate Risks or associated Actions without specific updates (reflecting no change). Appendix 1 showed the Corporate Risk Register at May 2026.

Key Issues

CR1 – Inability to meet targets set out within *The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development*.
The Corporate Risk Register noted that the Borough Events Strategy had completed a mid-point review and Council approval had been given for extension until 2028, activity to develop 2 year action plans for events had been underway. Some of the key performance indicators relating to visitor spend and overnight NI trips were to be analysed once 2025 season data was available.

CR2 - Lack of adequate staff resources to deliver Services. The Action Plan noted that the Council had retained its silver accreditation under Investors in People in December 2025. Work had been ongoing on the Workforce Plan and New People plan with the latter to be in place by September 2026. In addition a Digital Skills survey had been undertaken in 2025 and the gap analysis had informed a new digital skills programme for Council staff.

CR3 – Inability to achieve Council corporate objectives within the Corporate Plan timeframe. The Action Plan had been updated to reflect that the actions on

this Risk had been completed. The Head of Strategic Change had suggested that this Risk could be removed from the Corporate Risk Register and reflected in Service Risk Registers only, but no decision had been made regarding this as yet.

CR4 – risk of **Failure to adequately plan for the impact of climate change.** The Action Plan had noted the appointment of a Climate Adaptation Officer in addition to the Climate Change and Sustainability Manager already appointed. A public survey had been undertaken to gather information of impacts of climate change on the borough and to understand the support required from Council. This survey would have informed work going forward on establishing a Climate Resilient Communities Focus Group and assisted with identification of funding opportunities.

CR5 – risk of **Not achieving the Council's Net Zero targets.** A Strategic Net Zero Borad chaired by the Director of Environmental Services had been established to have an oversight of carbon reduction achievement and progress towards targets. An annual report on all Climate Action would have been published in June.

CR6 – risk of **Failure to work in effective partnerships to meet Council Objectives.** The mapping exercise of strategic partnerships across multiple partners had been completed. In addition a workstream progress tracker had been developed and would be agreed by the Strategic Community Planning Partnership to review each body's progress against agreed action plans.

CR8 – Risk of **death or injury to the public as a result of Council actions or omissions.** Parks and Cemeteries had introduced a new GPS linked monitoring software which would enable operational officers to complete inspections and flag issues for speedy resolution. The Council's insurers had continued to raise concerns regarding inspection regime and record keeping of same, across all Council facilities.

CR13 – Risk that the Council cannot respond to a business continuity event. An annual review of the Business Impact Analysis had been completed by all services.

CR14 – risk of **Failure to deliver Capital and high impact / cross cutting projects.** For the period of report, the business case for Bangor Castle had been nearing completion and an Outline Business Case for North Down Museum had been in progress.

CR15 – risk of **Failure to fulfil the Council's statutory obligations under the Burial Grounds Regulations.** A report on progress of the extension of the Movilla cemetery site had gone to the March 2026 Environment committee.

CR17 – risk that **Council's land assets are taken without permission**. Officers from relevant departments had met in January 2026 and outworkings from this had been included in the Land and Property review approved by Council in March.

CR19 – risk of **Loss of Internet and Wide Area Network Connectivity.** This had been a new risk on the register relating to reliance on cloud computing solutions for day to day Council operations. A control for this had been procurement and

deployment of 5G rapid Sites for City Hall and Church Street Council Offices. These had been procured but not yet deployed.

CR20 – risk of **Loss of Access to Mobile Phones.** This had been another new risk on the register which had a control regarding increasing resilience of the telecom provider to have dual providers to allow business to continue if a cyber-attack targeting this infrastructure came to pass.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

8. WORKPLAN FOR 2026/27

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

Background

In order to assist the Committee with its oversight responsibilities a suggested meeting schedule and work plan had been prepared.

The following standing items were on each meeting agenda, with the exception of the June meeting which was a single item agenda to consider the financial statements:

- Follow-up actions from previous committee meetings
- Internal Audit Update
- Single Tender Action Update
- Fraud, whistleblowing and data breaches update
- Meeting with Auditors in the absence of management

Key Issues

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
18 May 2026	• Annual Statements of Assurance • Corporate Risk Register • Review of Terms of Reference
22 June 2026	• Draft Financial Statements Review
22 September 2026	• Audited Financial Statements Approval • Draft Report to those charged with Governance • Corporate Risk Register • Policy Status Review
14 December 2026	• Final Report to Those charged with Governance • Final Audit Letter

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
	• Improvement Audit and Assessment Reports • Interim Statements of Assurance Update
22 March 2027	• Draft External Audit Strategy 2025/26 • Review of Corporate Risk Register • Annual Internal Audit Report • Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 • Meeting Schedule and work plan 2026/27

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

9. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

Background

In line with good practice the Audit Committee should review it terms of reference annually and make recommendations to Council to ensure that it keeps up to date with developments within legislation, guidance and regional and national issues.

The last review was carried out in June 2025.

The review had been carried out by the Head of Finance and there was only one significant change in respect of relaxing the membership rules in order to improve continuity of membership. All amendments were highlighted in the attached draft, which it was anticipated would go with the updated scheme of delegation to the Annual Meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

In the absence of the Head of Finance, the Director summarised the changes. There was one significant change which removed restriction preventing Committee and sub-Committee Chairs from sitting on the Audit Committee. The change was to provide continuity and reduce the high turnover of Members experienced over the last four years.

Mr Cummings noted that the Terms of Reference provided opportunity for Members to meet with Auditors in the absence of management. He felt that it was unnecessary to have this as a standing item on every Audit Committee agenda and suggested

that this procedure be undertaken formally once a year with Members able to request this ad-hoc at any meeting.

A discussion took place around how an ad-hoc request could be made. Alderman Graham emphasised that the mechanism should give Members complete confidentiality so that nothing inhibited anyone with something they wished to raise.

Mr Cummings suggested that any Member or the auditors themselves, could contact the Chair directly and indicate they wished to raise something.

The Chief Executive recommended a similar process as Any Other Notified Business requests. A request could be made by email to the Chair up to the day before the meeting. The Committee was content with that approach and the Director committed to updating the standard agenda template with the session occurring annually. He felt it would be appropriate for this to take place at the September meeting.

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

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

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

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

11. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6: 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.

12. INDEPENDENT MEMBER UPDATE

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

SCHEDULE 6: 1. Exemption: information relating to any individual.

The Director advised that the Independent Member's term was ending, with recruitment ongoing and their service continuing until end of June.

13. 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.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair returned to a previous query that was deferred from earlier in the meeting.

7(a) SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS OF ASSURANCE – APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2026 (Continued)

****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)

14. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE AND INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE 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 Strategic Change, Multimedia Officer and Democratic Services Officer all withdrew from the meeting

during the discussion of the item at 7.35 pm and returned to the Council Chamber at 7.40 pm.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chair who was in attendance for his last meeting in the post, thanked the auditors and Committee Members, in particular the outgoing Independent Member, Mr Cummings. Councillor Morgan thanked the Chair on behalf of all Members.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.46 pm.

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	27 May 2026
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Deputation Request from Donaghadee Rugby 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	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* 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 Peter Walker on behalf of Donaghadee Rugby Football Club.

The attached request form states, at the outset, that 'Donaghadee Rugby Football Club wished to make the deputation to encourage the Council members to support our case for a new lease to replace the current 50 year lease and to build a new clubhouse at Donaldson Park, Donaghadee.

The current lease has 5 years to run. A new lease is fundamental to funding the rebuilding of the clubhouse as we currently cannot get Grant Aid to improve the rugby grounds and the rest of the site as our current lease only gives us leasehold interest of the first floor bar and kitchen area'.

The deputation request form is attached at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Considers the deputation request.

Ards and North Down Borough Council

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

I/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:	Peter Walker
Date of request:	15th June 2026
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Donaghadee Rugby Football Club
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Active & Healthy Communities Committee

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.

To encourage the Council members to support our case for a new lease to replace the current 50 year lease and to build a new clubhouse at Donaldson Park, Donaghadee.

The current lease has 5 years to run. A new lease is fundamental to funding the rebuilding of the clubhouse as we currently cannot get Grant Aid to improve the rugby grounds and the rest of the site as our current lease only gives us leasehold interest of the first floor bar and kitchen area.

The Councillors are probably aware that the initial proposal for this site at Donaldson Park had been a Sports Hub with rugby, soccer, cricket and ladies hockey on an extended site but this plan has now been abandoned due to the inflated costs, now estimated at over £11 million.

A number of months ago the Rugby Club approached the Council Officers with a proposal for the redevelopment of the old clubhouse at an estimated cost of somewhere between £800,000 and £1.1 million (a saving of £10 million) but, after extensive discussions and investigations with consultants, it was proposed and agreed that the best way forward would be to build a new clubhouse at an estimated cost of £1.46 million. This is currently subject to a draft Business Case and further discussions. The new clubhouse would satisfy the Council's ambitious plans for energy saving towards net zero, allow ample disabled access (which the current club does not have) and satisfy the community need for an accessible sports ground, gym and sports room rental for activities such as:

- Yoga, Pilates, Zumba and Spin classes
- Weight Training
- Fitness Club
- Dance Teaching and Practice
- Arts, e.g. creative writing, book clubs, life drawing, water colouring
- Music, e.g. choir, guitar and ukulele clubs
- Youth and community development (Duke of Edinburgh Award and other youth schemes)
- A local café within the clubhouse
- Office space, which can be rented

This Rugby Club has been in existence for 140 years and hope to be in Donaghadee for another 140 years. We are a very successful junior rugby club with senior, under 21 academy, colts, maxis and minis, female and disabled teams. We are the only club in the area that field a disabled team. We use the club and playing fields 6 days a week. We expect that we could employ 4 to 5 full time staff and 3 to 4 part time staff if the site can be developed as proposed. The clubhouse is in a very poor condition and we need to move forward within the next year or so. We need financial support from the Council as well as the Grant Aid and investment from local business that we will be chasing. Donaghadee does not have a gym or an indoor sports facility and this development will provide that. It is proposed that the Rugby Club will maintain the new clubhouse and grounds under the new lease for the benefit of the whole of the community in Donaghadee. This will release the Council from any further investment or maintenance commitment in the premises and grounds and it is something that Donaghadee Rugby Club currently commits to as it should be noted that the Rugby Club has invested over £400,000 in the playing fields over the last 44 years and have scrupulously maintained our leasehold part of the building. We need support to make this development happen as quickly as possible for the benefit of the whole of the Donaghadee community.

Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024

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. 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
Town Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Email: dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 013 3333

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	27 May 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	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* 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.

To	Responsible Committee	Date Received	Submitted by	Notice (Original and any amendment)	Council & Committee Meetings (Date & Item)	Status (Most recent status update at the top followed by detail of what has been accomplished to date)	Responsible Officer	Final Outcome
11	Active & Healthy Communities	31.05.15	Councillor Muir & Alderman Keery	Rory McIlroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McIlroy Organisation. Proposal currently being drafted related to to supporting young people in sport for their consideration and then will be reported to Council. The Chief Executive has now met with the Rory McIlroy Foundation and a proposhas been presented to them, which we are awaiting to hear back on.	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)	To be removed from Tracker follow May 2026 Council
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	Report back after rates set for 2027/28 Feasibility study agreed. Linked to Muckers Dog Park proposal. 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 recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance)	
564	Environment	08.02.23	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.	Council February 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Report back when EA confirms its intentions Officers still awating 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	This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience.	Council 29.11.2023	Update report to be brought to June 2026 EC NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee Second report to June 2025 C&W Committee.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	

599	Active & Healthy Communities	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	"That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)	Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024	Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Update to May A&HC Committee	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams. Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved.	Council 27.03.24 Item 18.3 Enviroment Committee 10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 06.11.24 Item 3 Environment Committee 11.06.25 Item 3 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 9	Agreed to note at May 2026 EC that no further activity should be embarked upon in relation to a breakwater project. However, further research will be undertaken in relation to sourcing possible funding in relation to point 1 of the decision taken in March 2026. Council wrote to DfI 08.04.26 - no response received yet 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. 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,	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	To be removed from Tracker after May Council

619	Environment	29.05.24	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson	That this Council notes with concern the temporary closure of Groomsport Tennis Courts due to issues around the safety of the playing surface. 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.	Council 29.05.24 Item 20.1 Community & Wellbeing 15.01.25 Item 5 Environment Committee 07.01.26 Item 8	Parks and Regeneration have met to discuss - alternative funding streams being investigated. Report back when further information is available. 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. 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. Assigned to January 2025 C&W Agenda. Moved to EC due to restructure.	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	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. 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. 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.	Alison Curtis (Head of Corporate Governance) & Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	

629	Environment	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clandeboye road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed."	Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3) September C&W Committee Environment Committee 3 December 2025 (Item 6)	Update report to be brought to June 2026 EC subject to agreement with CCVA 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. NOM assigned to EC 01.10.2025 following transformation Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage. Report to June C&W Committee with porgress report as communicated to DEA members and local community in April and May 2025 on next steps and plans for enhancement of the site. Update to October 2025 C&WC.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.2) Environment Committee 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1) Environment Committee 7 May 2025 (Item 3) Environment Committee 3 December 2025 (Item 4) 8 April 2026 (Item 6)	Report to September 2026 in advance of Business Case Agreed at April 2026 EC - based on Option 1: 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. Agreed not to continue with the pedestrian access arrangements in their current form. Furthermore, officers to investigate other means of safely providing pedestrian access to HRC sites alongside vehicular access and report the outcome of this to a future meeting. Agreed at EC 7 May 2025 to proceed with a three-month trial at Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs Agreed at April 2025 Environment Committee to proceed with Option 3 for a pilot scheme in Holywood and Donaghadee HRCs in order to obtain a proper evidence basis for demand; and that consideration of pedestrian access is included in the work around the future of the HRC estate as outlined in Option 1. Further report to follow. Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

638	Place & Prosperity	22.10.2024	Councillors Harbinson & McCracken	That this Council should: 1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade, Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Council's Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments. 2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use. 3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive disposal policies.	Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2) Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)	Agreed, follow up report to be brought to Committee, subject to ratification by May Coucil. Report to be brought to 7 May P&P Committee 2026 Strategic Development, Lands, and the GIS officer met 16.10.25 to discuss how to get the information from GIS. Update to be provided to Elected Members by 17.10.25 Update report to P&P in the first quarter of 2026 Agreed at 7 Nov 2024 P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council 2024 - initial report to be brought back to future P&P Committee	Director of Place and Prosperity	
640		05.11.2024	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair	That this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses. Further to this, Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; further commits to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this budget and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.	Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.		
655	Environment	18.02.2025	Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas	That this Council brings back a report outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber, to accommodate a list of historically researched names, currently being collated as per War Memorial Trust guidelines, of the fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, which were previously not included	Council 26.02.2025 Environment Committee 5 March 2025	Agreed at May 2026 that the Council agrees to progress with the production of the three plaques as outlined above, utilising existing maintenance budgets. Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Environment Committee 05.03.2025. Agreed to refer to Environment Committee at Council 26.02.25	Peter Caldwell (Head of Estates)	To be removed from Tracker follow May 2026 Council

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	Options agreed with stakeholders – report to EC after 27/28 rates agreed 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)	
	Place & Prosperity	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	Place and Prosperity Committee now progressing this 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.	Place & Prosperity	
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 June A&HC Committee.	Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure	

671	Active & Healthy Communities	20.05.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee	**Responsible Dog Walking in Public Spaces.** This Council, as a 'Dog Friendly Borough' recognises the increasing use of public parks and footpaths by professional and recreational dog walkers, and the need to balance animal welfare, public safety, and the enjoyment of public spaces for all of our Borough's residents. This Council notes that: Multiple dogs under the control of a single individual may pose challenges to effective management and public safety. Excessive numbers of dogs being walked simultaneously can lead to increased risk of dog fights, interference with other park users, fouling, and uncontrolled behaviour; There has been an increasing number of professional dog walkers, offering services within the Borough and there is a lack of licencing, registration or other requirements which may lead to inadequate insurance, training and experience, adding further potential risks to people and pets; and · Many local authorities across the UK, including our neighbour Belfast City Council, have introduced limits on the number of dogs that may be walked at one time. The Council therefore resolves to: Produce a report outlining the costs and steps required to introduce a local restriction under the relevant provisions of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act (Northern Ireland) 2011: 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.	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.1	Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda. Moved to A&HC due to restructure. Update to March 2026 A&HC Committee. Letter sent to Andrew Muir 12.02.26 by CE. Update to May A&HC Committee.	Gareth Kinnear Head of Environmental Health & Regulatory Services	
672	Place & Prosperity	20.05.25	Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson	Amendment to Notice of Motion 672 submitted by Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson "This Council welcomes the update on Marine Gardens provided by Bangor Marine on 13 August 2025 and agrees that: 1. Council officers should work alongside Bangor Marine to support public communication around this project. This includes inviting Bangor Marine to the next meeting of the Bangor CAG to update stakeholders, supporting the proposed public consultation hub led by Bangor Marine, and by holding regular meetings with Bangor Marine to ensure accurate and complementary messaging on respective websites, newsletters and social media. 2. Council should also work with Bangor Marine to support a commercial marketing plan with the aim of attracting investment for the further phases of Queen's Parade along with complementary investment that will support the ambitions of the wider City Deal. An initial outline should be brought to Committee in Q1 2026 with a view to approve draft marketing collateral that can be used at future property investment conferences in the UK and abroad."	P&P 4.9.25 Council 25.06.25	Report to be brought to June 2026 P&P Committee 1. BM to be invited to next CAG (soon to be relaunched as LAG, likely Jan/Feb 2026 whilst the C/TAG to LAG process is formalised 2. Re: commercial marketing plan, update report to P&P in first quarter of 2026. Agreed to adopt NOM at Sept 2025 P&P - ratified at Sept 2025 Council	Director of Place and Prosperity	
673	Environment	21.05.25	Alderman Graham and Councillor Cochrane	That this Council notes the popularity of public spaces such as beaches during the summer months. Further to this Council will task officers to bring back a report to explore options for the extension of public toilet opening hours during the summer months to 9pm near beaches and other busy areas. Council Officers will further bring back a report on expanding baby changing facilities within our Borough at public toilets.	Council 25.06.25 Environment Committee - September Item 20.2 Environment Committee 03.12.2025 Item 3 Environment Committee 04.02.26 Item 4	Update report to be brought in 2027 Agreed at EC 04.02.26: AMENDMENT AGREED. That we accept officer proposal with the addition of a review in one year's time to ascertain usage and value for money Report brought to December 2025 EC: ALTERNATIVE RECOMENDATION AGREED to note the report and bring back a report on costs and options on extending the summer opening hours to cover April and September as well as May to August, to redevelop and relaunch a community scheme to increase provisions for the public during the summer months and review its impacts in order to bring a report back to Council after a period of review. Agreed to adopt NOM at September EC Assigned to September 2025 EC Agenda	Keith Patterson (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

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 June Committee	Anton Cozzo Head of Leisure	
681	Corporate Services	09.09.25	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Cathcart	That this Council expresses its deep disappointment at the correspondence sent to each councillor in Northern Ireland by NAC NI dated 2 September 2025 recommending that councillors take “industrial” action and considers the balloting of members to take any form of strike action is inappropriate, ill-judged and unlawful. Notes that the eleven Councils in Northern Ireland pay a corporate rate to fund the NAC NI in Northern Ireland and that individual councillors are by default members of NAC NI rather than by choice. Is further of the view that if the NAC NI wishes to act like a union then it should be governed by the same laws as any other union and that membership should be voluntary and a matter for individual councillors rather than funded by the ratepayer. As such, this Council agrees to withdraw its corporate funding from the NAC NI, writes to inform the NAC NI of this decision and calls on the executive members of the NAC NI to resign their positions given the gross over-reach of this correspondence and how it has brought the role of hard-working councillors into disrepute.	Council 24.09.25 - October Corporate Services Committee	Added to the agenda for CS 14/10, 14/11 letter sent to NAC NI by CEX. NAC NI have confirmed that this will be dicussed 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 conjuction with the Craigavad and Helen's Bay Branch of the Royal British Legion, to bring a miltary event to Holywood.	Council 24.09.25. Corporate Services Committee	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 September 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	This Council recognises the link between domestic abuse and non-accidental harm to companion animals and the emotional trauma this causes victims and survivors, acknowledging that companion animals are often used as tools of coercion and control in abusive relationships and that their welfare is intrinsically linked to the safety and wellbeing of victims. The introduction and implementation of Ruby's Law, as proposed in other parts of the UK, seeks to provide legal protection for pets in households where domestic abuse occurs, ensuring that they are considered in protective orders and safeguarding measures. Therefore, this councils resolves to: 1. Write to the Ministers for Justice, Communities, Finance, DAERA, and Health, calling for: 1.1 The introduction of Ruby's Law in Northern Ireland; and 2.1 them to work in partnership to deliver a cross-departmental collaboration with Causeway Coast Dog Rescue charity, and other animal welfare and domestic abuse organisations as required, to ensure the development of robust and enforceable provisions, taking a multidisciplinary approach to identify key stakeholders and government agencies to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and coercive relationships and the protection of their pets. 2.2 Promote public awareness of the connection between domestic abuse, coercive control and animal abuse, in collaboration with statutory agencies and animal welfare organisations. 3. Encourage engagement and collaboration within all Councils and other key stakeholders to support the implementation of Ruby's Law in the community to protect animals and people.	Council 29.10.25 AHC	Report to March 2026 A&HC Committee. 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	That this Council is deeply alarmed that the definition of victim in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 does not distinguish between those who perpetrated wrongdoing during the Troubles and the innocent victims they harmed, injured, killed or bereaved; believes that innocent victims should not have to interact with terrorists and their supporters when accessing victim support services; asserts that there is no moral equivalence between victim-makers and innocent victims; welcomes the fact that the victims pension legislation makes a clear distinction between perpetrator and victim; condemns the Alliance Party's decision to intentionally blur this line by removing the word "innocent" from the description of a victim in a recent Assembly motion addressing the legacy of the past; and resolves to write to the Justice Minister requesting that she personally apologise for suggesting that victim makers could also be considered victims.	Council 29.10.25 Corporate Services Committee	Reply received from Justice Minister and report to CS Feb 2026. Further response from the Chief Executive sent following meeting. Letter from Justice Minister reported and agreed at April Corporate Services Committee. To be removed following ratification after April Council meeting.	CEX Office	
692	Active & Healthy Communities	12.11.25	Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall	This Council notes with deep concern the recent deaths of two-family dogs in our Borough, linked to panic caused by fireworks and the many other animals that suffer year on year. We recognise the severe distress fireworks cause to people, pets, livestock, and wildlife, and the growing public concern over unregulated use. We express our sympathies to the affected families and commend local animal welfare groups for their ongoing support. This Council writes to The Department of Justice to request the commission of an urgent review of Northern Ireland's fireworks legislation, to include: Further that Council works with AND PCSP to explore how we can effectively tackle the antisocial behaviour associated with fireworks.	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, Craigavad is an integral section of the North Down coastal path and the Ulster Way. That this Council reassess whether it has responsibility for maintaining the road and for strengthening the sea wall and sea defences along the North Down coastal path section of Station Road, in view of: the fact that Council was prepared to assume responsibility for the road and sea defences under the failed Greenway project; the fact that this is a right of way as asserted by Council. That a report is brought back to the relevant Committee, to include assessment of who owns or is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the sea wall and sea defences along Station Road.	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 adaptions.	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: • 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 June A&HC Committee & Head of Finance to attend committee meeting.	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 identifiy 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	Report to be brought in Autum 2026 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 responsbility 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 availabe all expected maintenance is being carried out efficiently and effectively. A proactive maintenance regime was agreed when this Counicl was created and has worked well in some areas but has not had the dersired impact in other areas. Basic maintenance and upkeep of our public realm particulary 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 June 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 suppport 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 estabilishing 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. Nikki Dorrian to draft letter to Stormont.		
707	Environment	17.02.2026	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Brooks	That this Council notes with deep concern the recent destruction caused to bushes, trees and wild grass in The Commons, Donaghadee. Further to this, Council agrees to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, calling upon him to designate The Commons, Donaghadee as either an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), or another appropriate form of protected status, in order to help safeguard this important green space.	Council February 2026 Environment Committee 04.03.26 Item 14.2	Agreed at May 2026 EC to note the report and response from DAERA Council wrote to DfI 08.04.26 - response received 21.04.26 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 Northen Ireland fishing fleet. The changes which mean that overseas crew require an Isle of Mans work visa rather than the transit visa or UK skilled worker visa and therefore cannot fish within the Isle of Man 12 nautical mile limit, effectively 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	CX Letter sent to Chief Minister's Office IOM 11.05.26 NOM agreed at April 2026 EC Agreed to refer NOM to April 2026 EC		
713	Environment	17.03.2026	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.	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)	

Corporate Services
Community & Wellbeing
Environment
Place & Prosperity
Planning