October 26th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 28th October 2026** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall, Bangor and via Zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

Attachment: C 2026.10.28 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 of October 2026

(Copy attached)

Attachment: LIst of engagements Mayor-Deputy Mayor October 2026.pdf ***Page 4***

6 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 30 September 2026

(Copy attached)

Attachment: C 2026.09.30 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: C 2026.09.30 MinutesPM.pdf ***Page 8***

7 Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)

7.1 Planning Committee dated 6 October 2026

Attachment: PC 2026.10.06 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: PC 2026.10.06 Minutes PM.pdf ***Page 47***

7.2 Environment Committee dated 7 October 2026

Attachment: EC 2026.10.07 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: EC 2026.10.07 MinutesPM.pdf ***Page 101***

7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 October 2026

Attachment: P&P Minutes - 08.10.26.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: P&P Minutes - 08.10.26 PM.pdf ***Page 148***

7.4 Corporate Committee dated 13 October 2026

Attachment: CS.2026.10.13 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: CS 2026.10.13 MinutesPM.pdf ***Page 203***

7.5 Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 14 October 2026

Attachment: AHC 2026.10.14 Minutes.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: AHC 2026.10.14 Minutes PM.pdf ***Page 244***

IN CONFIDENCE

7.5.1 Matter Arising: Item 12 - Leisure Strategy Pilot Capital Funding Update

(Report attached)

Attachment: Item 7.5.1 Leisure Strategy Pilot Capital Funding additional information.pdf ***Not included***

8. Resolution

8.1 Mid Ulster District Council UEFA Nations League Fixtures between Ireland and Israel

(Correspondence attached)

Attachment: Item 8.1 - Mid Ulster District Council UEFA Nations League Fixtures between Ireland and IsraelResolution.pdf ***Page 276***

9. Queen's Parade Update

(Report attached)

Attachment: Item 9 Queen's Parade Update Oct26.pdf ***Page 278***

Attachment: Item 9 Appendix 1 - Phase 1.A.pdf ***Page 280***

10. Sealing Documents

11. Transfer of Rights of Burial

12. Notice of Motion Status Report

(Report attached)

Attachment: Item 12 Notice of Motion Status Report.pdf ***Page 281***

Attachment: NoM Tracker (3).pdf ***Page 283***

13. Notices of Motion

13.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councilor Chambers and Alderman Brooks

That this Council requests a report on the viability and cost of upgrading Groomsport splash pad, including potential external funding and consideration through a future budget process. The assessment should take account of local feedback and the forthcoming Village Masterplan, which is anticipated to highlight the facility negatively

13.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee

This Council:

Notes, with concern, the rising numbers of people with breast cancer across Northern Ireland, recognising that early detection, diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve outcomes; and

Recognises that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, further highlighting the ongoing campaigns championed by Breast Cancer Now and other local and national breast cancer charities, that are dedicated to raising awareness of breast cancer, promoting early detection and supporting those affected by the disease.

Therefore this Council agrees to:

1. Promote awareness of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer by displaying information and signposting materials within appropriate public areas of Council-owned and managed buildings, including public toilets, civic buildings, leisure centres, community centres, arts venues and customer service facilities, utilising the most up-to -date information, guidance and awareness materials produced by recognised local and national breast cancer charities and organisations.

2. Explore opportunities to support Breast cancer Awareness Month in the future through existing Council communication channels, icnlduing digital platforms and public inofmraiton displays.

*** IN CONFIDENCE ***

Items for Approval

14. Contract Extension for Postal Services Contract

(Report attached)

Attachment: Item 14 Extension of Postal Service Contract.pdf ***Not included***

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

21 October 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, 28 October 2026 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer

2. Apologies

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Mayor's Business

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

6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 30 September 2026 (Copy attached)

7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)

7.1 Minutes of Planning Committee dated 6 October 2026

7.2 Minutes of Environment Committee dated 7 October 2026

7.3 Minutes of Place and Prosperity Committee dated 8 October 2026

7.4 Minutes of Corporate Committee dated 13 October 2026

7.5 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee 14 October 2026

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

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8. Resolution

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Therefore, this Council agrees to:

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2. Explore opportunities to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month in the future through existing Council communication channels, including digital platforms and public information displays.

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

Items for Approval

14. Contract Extension for Postal Services Contract (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS FOR OCTOBER 2026

Week Commencing:

Monday 5 October 2026

1.30pm	The Ultimate Pitch Local Heat, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 7 October 2026

9.30am	Visit to Seapark – DAERA Minister's visit
12.30pm	Greenflag Award – Walled Garden
2.00pm	Launch the LMP's Greentech Academy, SERC, Holywood
7.00pm	Reception for Naval Cadets

Thursday 8 October 2026

10.00am	Sullivan Upper School Careers Fair, Holywood
12.30pm	World Sight Day – RNIB Event, Bangor Castle
7.00pm	Mayoral Reception for Ryan Gray and Max Rescue Dog, K9

Friday 9 October 2026

9.00am	TEDx Event, SERC, Bangor

Sunday 11 October 2026

7.00pm	Deputy Mayor attending Ballycrochan Presbyterian Church Harvest Service

Week Commencing:

Monday 12 October 2026

10.00am	For Everyone Greenway Events – official opening of Greenway - Somme Centre/Whitespots
1.00pm	Recycling On The Go pilot – Ward Park

Tuesday 13 October 2026

11.00am	SERC Innovation Camp - Future Founders Innovation Camp

Wednesday 14 October 2026

7.30am	Bangor Rotary Club - Charity Breakfast, Bangor Golf Club
9.30am	Kilcooley Primary School with Natural World Products
10.30am	Visit to St Columbanus College – meeting International Visitors

Thursday 15 October 2026

11.00am	Launch of Poppy Appeal, Bangor Castle

Friday 16 October 2026

9.30am	Deputy Mayor - Community Halls, Caretakers Big Breakfast Donaghadee Community Centre

Saturday 17 October 2026

1.15pm	Park Pedal event Ards (Londonderry Park and Greenway)
2.30pm	GRANDfest2026, Queen's Hall, Newtownards

Week Commencing:

Tuesday 20 October 2026

2pm	Photo opp Habitat for Humanity – Newtownards

Wednesday 21 October 2026

11am	Launch of Your Recycling Matters campaign, Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor

Thursday 22 October 2026

9.30am	Minister Lyons - Funding Announcement - Public Realm Refresh, Holywood
10.30am	Opening of Positive Ageing Roadshow 2026, Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre, Newtownards
1.00pm	Deputy Mayor - In Bloom Awards 2026, Orange Tree House, Greyabbey
7.00pm	400th Anniversary - Ballywalter Presbyterian Church, Council Chamber, Bangor

Friday 23 October 2026

10.30am	Visit to Robert McGowan - Adult Opportunities Programme, Conlig
1.30pm	Annual Prize Giving, Glastry College, Glastry.

Saturday 24 October 2026

7.00pm	Deputy Mayor Leid AND Lairn TRU Concert, Donaghadee Parish Church

Sunday 25 October 2026

10.00am	Haunted Harvest Trail, Walled Garden, Bangor
11.00am	Ards Puppet Festival, Ards Arts Centre, Newtownards
2.00pm	RBL Poppy Garden Dedication 2026, The Market House, Bangor

Week Commencing:

Monday 26 October 2026

11.00am	Ards Puppet Festival, Ards Arts Centre, Newtownards

Thursday 29 October 2026

9.30am	Anglo Irish Friends Event, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin
7.15pm	Deputy Mayor - Bangor One-Act Drama Festival, Studio 1A, Hamilton Road, 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 30 September 2026 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor Blaney)

Aldermen:

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

Councillors:

Ashe (7.10pm)
Boyle
Brady
Cathcart
Chambers
Cochrane
Douglas
Edmund
Gilmour
Harbinson
Hennessy
Hollywood
S Irvine (Zoom 7.48pm)
W Irvine
Kendall (Zoom)
Kerr (Zoom)
McBurney (Zoom)
McClean
McCollum
McCracken
Morgan
Newman
Quinn
Smart
Thompson
Wray

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 Blaney) 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 had been received from Councillors McKee and Moore. An apology for lateness had also been received from Councillor S Irvine.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor reported that this month he had been honoured to host, with the Chief Executive, the inaugural Light of the World Conference on Friday 11 September. The conference had brought together attendees for an inspiring and meaningful event, and it had been a privilege to play a role in its successful delivery. The event was a great success and provided an opportunity for meaningful engagement, reflection and fellowship among church leaders across the Borough.

Continuing he stated that it had been wonderful to attend the Annual Veterans Day Parade on Friday 18 September. The event saw the Council reaffirm its commitment to the Armed Forces community by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant; exactly 11 years after first signing the agreement in 2015. The event provided an opportunity for residents and visitors to come together to recognise and honour the service and sacrifice of veterans from across the Borough who had served in the Armed Forces. It also acknowledged the important contribution made by serving personnel, reservists and military families to communities both locally and nationally.

The Mayor added that it had also been great to meet the new US Consul General for Belfast, Christopher Rendo, and to join him in a tree planting ceremony in Hunts Park, Donaghadee to commemorate the USA250 and he looked forward to welcoming the Consul General back to the Borough in the near future.

Continuing the Mayor stated that it was with deep sadness that he had learnt of the passing of Heather Lavery who lost her battle with cancer. Heather was a valued member of the business community in Newtownards for over 40 years and was an active member of the Newtownards Chamber of Trade, serving as a member of the Board, Secretary and Vice President. Thoughts and prayers went out to Heather's family and colleagues in both the Chamber and Sheldon Gallery.

Finally the Mayor offered his congratulations to the teams for delivering both the TASTE Ards and North Down at the Castle and the CHILLI Festival in the Walled Gardens at the weekend. Despite awful weather on Sunday, large crowds enjoyed the many choices of food and drinks on offer with fantastic demonstrations and live music.

NOTED.

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

(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor spoke with enthusiasm on a number of engagements which he had attended and had enjoyed and highlighted some of the engagements which had taken place during September 2026 ably assisted by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Cochrane:-

- Seaton 10K Run, Bangor
- Launch of Mayor's Charities – Link available to make donations
- Mayoral Reception - Retirement of Canon Ronnie Nesbitt

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

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 23 AUGUST 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

Matter of Accuracy

Councillor McCollum noted reference in the minutes made to the Mayor's afternoon with Joshua McCready, his grandparents and his uncle rather than his cousin.

NOTED.

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

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Environment Committee dated 2 September 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Cathcart proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Councillor Cathcart indicated he wished to raise two matters around Items 10 and 22.

Item 10 – Page 27 – Pedestrian Access to Holywood and Millisle HRC

(Councillor Ashe entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.10pm)

Councillor Cathcart proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman Graham, that this Council agrees that pedestrian access at Holywood HRC is included for consideration within the 2027/2028 rate setting process.

Councillor Cathcart recalled that considerable debate had been undertaken on this matter which had concerned HRCs at Holywood and Millisle. Questions had been raised by his Group given the costs associated with Millisle and the fact that there was no real appetite for this locally and as such they were content to proceed with the proposal for Holywood only. Continuing he recalled previous discussions with former colleague Rachel Woods on this matter and the more recent reports which had come forward with associated costings.

Commenting as seconder Alderman Graham noted the frustration of those who lived adjacent to the HRC Holywood who could not access it on foot. As such he was happy for that to be considered as part of the rates setting process.

Rising in support Councillor McCollum noted that it came on the back of an Alliance Party motion to permit pedestrian access to HRCs and welcomed the change of heart which had now taken place to support this. Continuing she noted that Holywood had a significant number of flats and apartments in close proximity to the HRC and as such she welcomed the proposal.

Councillor Wray indicated that he too was happy to support the amendment adding that the measures that were being put into place were over the top and expensive and a more common sense approach should be adopted.

Also expressing his support Councillor Hollywood welcomed it particularly for those residents who did not drive and the elderly. He added that there was clearly a demand for this in Holywood and as such he was very supportive.

Councillor Kendall thanked the proposer and seconder for bringing forward the amendment as this was an issue which had been raised with not only herself but colleagues for many years. She agreed that it made sense to proceed with these access arrangements for many local residents and she was very happy to support it.

At this stage Alderman Adair also expressed his support for the amendment but added that the people of Millisle had never asked for this and were content with the current arrangements in place. He noted that a request had been made for Donaghadee but for logistical reasons that had not been possible.

Alderman Brooks stated that he condoned everything which Alderman Adair had just said. Donaghadee had a very similar HRC to that in Holywood being in the centre of a densely populated area. He recalled the great unhappiness there had been when pedestrian access had ceased adding that he believed in respect of recycling that it should be made as easy as possible for residents. As such he indicated that he would like Donaghadee to be attached to the amendment to be considered at the rates setting process.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that the report brought forward in September had been a second report, with the initial one reviewing the practical possibility of walking into any HRC. All HRCs were analysed and it was believed that pedestrian access would be possible in both Millisle and Holywood and further details were brought back specifically on those two locations. While Donaghadee had previously been ruled out he advised that if the Member so wished that could be reconsidered.

At this stage Alderman Brooks commented that for many years the HRC in Donaghadee had been fully accessible with no main roads in its vicinity. As such he was asking for it to be considered as offered by the Director.

By way of summing up Councillor Cathcart thanked members for their support. In relation to Donaghadee he was content for the Committee to look at it but did not believe that it should be tied into his amendment.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Graham, that this Council agrees that pedestrian access at Holywood HRC is included for consideration within the 2027/2028 rate setting process.

Item 22 – Any Other Notified Business

Councillor Cathcart advised that he had wished to raise an item under Any Other Notified Business but had been informed that because it was a staffing matter that he would be unable to do so. As such he sought guidance on what Members could raise in respect of staffing matters.

In response the Chief Executive advised that the process for raising AONB was outlined in Standing Orders and that she would be more than happy to discuss the matter offline directly with the Member.

NOTED.

Item 16 - Notice of Motion 706 Fallen Trees over Enler River

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that officers:

- Provide a further report which details the quantum of the risk for dealing with the trees and possible mitigations so a more informed decision can be made.
- Seek appropriate advice as to how the Council should behave to deliver positively and effectively in a situation, on third party land, where there are dangers to the public in an easily accessible area.

By way of background Councillor Morgan advised that a Notice of Motion had been submitted in March 2026 about this issue and had been debated at that time. The fallen trees were adjacent to a well used path and numerous residents had raised it with each of the constituency offices in Comber. Storm Eowyn in January 2025 had caused the trees to fall and the matter had been raised with a variety of statutory agencies. There was a clear health and safety danger and at the last Committee Members had been advised that the trees were stable and it had not been possible to determine who owned the land onto which they had fallen. The cost to remove the trees would be approximately £3,000 and if the Council were to undertake this work, a concerning precedent could be set. As such it was recommended that the report was noted, and she felt that was unacceptable. She also believed that it was unacceptable for all the statutory agencies to be washing their hands of the matter and in the absence of a landowner, she believed this was a reasonable request. She added that she would appreciate Members support for this.

Commenting as seconder Alderman McAlpine surmised that if anyone were to be hurt as the result of the fallen trees the Council would feel very responsible. She believed there were things which could be done such as the erection of signs and press releases advising about the issue.

At this stage Councillor Douglas advised that this had been a Notice of Motion which she had brought to the Environment Committee in March and she had asked officers to ascertain who owned the land to get the trees safely removed. She made reference to what had been agreed at that stage which she added had been supported by Councillor Ashe. Councillor Douglas indicated that she would continue to be in regular contact with Council officers to bring her Motion to a successful conclusion for the residents of Comber.

Alderman Smith indicated that he was happy to support the amendment and asked why the Rivers Agency had not done anything about the matter particularly as it was a designated water course which would lie within its remit of responsibility.

In response the Director of Environmental Services confirmed that the Council had consulted with the Rivers Agency as it was a designated water course. However, as there was no blockage they believed there was no need for intervention.

Alderman Cummings commented that the residents of Comber would be keen to see this matter resolved and continuing he asked if a risk assessment had been carried out by the Council.

The Director confirmed that the stability of the tree had been considered, and it was believed there were no risks associated with it. The risk around the potential of someone getting hurt was something which he suggested could be quantified. He added that risks for the Council associated with it were detailed in the Minutes on page 49.

Alderman McIlveen suggested that the report missed the point of the Notice of Motion which was for everyone to work together to reach a successful solution. He added there were many risks associated with the fallen trees and on reading the initial report it seemed clear that would not be the end of the matter. Alderman McIlveen reiterated that he did not believe the amendment dealt with the Notice of Motion and in his view the Council should be taking the lead in this matter in an attempt to secure a solution.

RESOLVED on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that officers:

- **Provide a further report which details the quantum of the risk for dealing with the trees and possible mitigations so a more informed decision can be made.**
- **Seek appropriate advice as to how the Council should behave to deliver positively and effectively in a situation, on third party land, where there are dangers to the public in an easily accessible area.**

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

7.2. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 3 September 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 11 – LAG Minutes

Councillor Brady advised that he was continuing to get questions from concerned residents about the comments made by the Bangor Marine representative at the LAG meeting. As such he wished to have further clarity around the fact that work would stop if Bangor Marine did not reach the claim back stage. Councillor Brady added that it was his understanding under the contract that once it was started it had

to be completed and continuing, he asked whether or not that was the case and if not what the risks would be to the project at this stage.

In response the Director of Place and Prosperity reminded Members that this had been raised at the Place and Prosperity Committee and he had nothing further to add other than the explanation which had been provided at that time. He recalled that Members had also been reminded that LAG minutes were not verbatim minutes and instead were a flavour of the comments made at the meeting. He added that the Member was correct in that once a Phase had commenced it had to be completed.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.3. Corporate Services Committee dated 8 September 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Item 4 – Draft Annual Self-Assessment Report 2025/26

Councillor McCracken proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted with the addition:

The Chief Executive will provide an evaluation report of the 2023-2026 absence management strategy to Members, with an analysis of why it failed to make any progress towards the 5% target.

The Chief Executive should also set out next steps for how high rates of long-term absence could be reduced, including identification of specific interventions for further evaluation.

Councillor McCracken noted that the 2023-2026 Absence Management Strategy was built around the Council's corporate target of a 5% sickness rate. However, that target was not being met with staff absence levels reaching over 7%, a cost of £3million in lost productivity. He noted that the figures were largely due to a number of staff off on long term absence and he believed part of the problem to be a cultural one with work place factors contributing to absence.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen raised a point of order that the matters being referred to should be considered 'In Confidence', in particular, Item 10. He recalled there had been some discussion around what should be heard 'In Confidence' with a report to be brought back on that matter.

The Mayor indicated that he too would share those concerns.

Councillor McCracken indicated figures referred to were from a publicly available document.

At this point the Chief Executive expressed concern around a statement made by the Member in relation to the culture within the organisation. Technically the research he referred to did outline that in some organisations that was the case however not so within the Council. As such she would have some concern around the language used adding that she had no issue with annual figures being discussed as they were in the public domain.

Continuing Councillor McCracken indicated that some of his comments made had been personal comments, however he believed it underscored why sickness statistics were discussed 'In Confidence'. Greater transparency was required to provide a better understanding of the root causes of the Council's absence figures, adding that the position was not consistent. As such he believed that the Policy's should be clear and while the Council should not be discussing individual cases it should be publishing its absence figures on a quarterly basis in order to be more accountable to the public. Continuing he stated that compassion for the workforce was a value which everyone shared and he acknowledged the access staff had to a very supportive sick care scheme providing six months full pay followed by six months half pay. He stated that this should not become a barrier to pro-active management and in order to move forward he suggested that the Council looked beyond wellbeing initiatives. Managers he stated should be appropriately equipped to manage attendance with structural discipline across three distinct pillars. Those being Wellbeing, Sickness Management and Capability Management. Wellbeing was about caring for staff, Sickness Management was about managing absence, and Capability was about whether or not someone could do their job. He provided an overview of how he believed that should be undertaken adding that high absence levels created a strain on budgets and an increased reliance upon temporary staff. That he stated was why a new strategic approach was required to enable management effectively alongside wellbeing frameworks.

(Councillor S Irvine joined the meeting online at this stage via Zoom – 7.48pm)

The seconder Alderman McRandal asked to reserve his right to speak at this stage.

The Mayor sought comments from Members at this stage and as there were none, he invited Alderman McRandal to make his comments.

Alderman McRandal indicated that he had nothing further to add.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Director had already drafted a significant report to be considered by the Corporate Committee which would answer a significant number of those queries raised by Councillor McCracken. She further reminded Members that quarterly updates were also brought to the Committee.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen indicated that he did not wish to get into too much detail when the meeting was not 'In Committee'. He commented that there were certain elements of what Councillor McCracken had said that he did not recognise

and as such took issue with some of what had been said in relation to the Council's current management of absence. However, he acknowledged that absence figures were high and was mindful of the discussion which had taken place at the last Corporate Services Committee meeting following which the Director had been in contact with Party Leaders to discuss the way forward. As such he stated that he was content to await the forthcoming report from the Director and revisit the matter at a later date.

Alderman McRandal commented that he too was privy to what came to Group Leaders and as such he had seen nothing on this matter and was disappointed that others were not as keen to see progress on it. Therefore, he urged other Members to support what Councillor McCracken was asking for.

At this stage the Chief Executive advised that the Council's absence levels had decreased during the past two previous years.

By way of summing up Alderman Smith acknowledged that everyone was supportive of reducing the Council's absence rate adding that matter was debated in great depth last month by the Committee. Continuing he acknowledged the introduction of many interventions introduced in an attempt to reduce the numbers adding that it was an ongoing process due to the terms and conditions afforded to staff. Alderman Smith sympathised with Councillor McCracken's intentions but acknowledged the discussion around the best method to achieve that. As alluded to by the Chief Executive, the Director intended to bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee to address many of the issues raised by Councillor McCracken. As such he was hopeful some of the issues he had raised could be dealt with at that meeting.

At this stage a vote was taken by a show of hands and with 12 voting FOR, 16 voting AGAINST and 9 ABSTENTIONS, the amendment FELL.

NOTED.

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

7.4. Active and Healthy Communities Committee dated 9 September 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Item 5 - Consultation Response - Flags and Emblems Bill

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that Council approves the drafted response and submits it to Department for Infrastructure.

Alderman McRandal thanked officers for taking the time to draft a well-considered and constructive consultation response. At the Committee Unionists backed a DUP proposal that Council submitted no response to this consultation. He believed the reasons outlined by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Cochrane in making that proposal were invalid and he believed that it was important that Council did submit a response. He recalled that Councillor Cochrane stated that he did not believe it had anything to do with the Council and Alderman McRandal believed that was incorrect. The Bill proposed to deal with the removal of flags or emblems from the vicinity of sensitive places, including public parks.

One recent example where Council would have a direct interest in the scope of this Bill was during the summer there had been a replica UVF flag flying in a Council managed park in Holywood. As referenced in the report and the draft consultation response, it was proposed that Council would have a role to play in respect of consultation, community engagement and decisions affecting Council assets and public spaces. Alderman McRandal suggested that DUP Members had been happy to involve themselves and Council officers in matters that had nothing to do with Council when it suited them. Indeed, he stated that you did not need to go back too far to find Notices of Motion from DUP Members requesting that officers wrote to Stormont Ministers on a range of matters that were clearly outside of the remit of Council. Often those Motions were obviously politically motivated.

Continuing Alderman McRandal recalled that it had also been suggested at Committee that the legislation could be used to discriminate against Unionist culture. That was he stated nonsense. The Bill was about enforcing a code of conduct which was about respect for the flag itself, respect for the community in which it was displayed and respect for the event that it commemorated or celebrated. It was about enabling freedom of expression, but in a way that was respectful and inclusive. He noted that the Bill would not apply to flags or emblems displayed on residential or private property, nor to flags or emblems displayed specifically by public authorities.

Alderman McRandal stated that the need for stronger legislation was eminently clear given the experience in Holywood this summer. Flags had been put up overnight on Holywood High Street, many of them similar in design to those of a prescribed paramilitary organisation. People had voiced their objection to this to him and other elected representatives and authorities. To those from a range of backgrounds, including Unionist, this clear marking of territory was either offensive, or simply made them feel uneasy. As such there was much anger and frustration. He asked why should a small number of people, acting in the dead of night, dictate the tone of what was normally a diverse harmonious town in this way.

Continuing Alderman McRandal advised that they could not get any action to be taken, due to the current weak legislation and instead they had been bounced around between the authorities. DfI would not take responsibility for removing them because PSNI could not provide a guarantee of safety for DfI employees. Similarly, PSNI would not remove them because, although they resembled paramilitary flags, they were not. He declared that residents of the Borough had an interest in this matter and that the legislation would have both direct and indirect impacts upon Council. Therefore, it was right and proper that Council submitted a response to the consultation. He asked for a recorded vote to be taken.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Morgan noted that the Council frequently responded to consultations or Notice of Motions which while relevant to the people of the Borough were not necessarily to the direct work of the Council. As such she believed that it was quite possible for the Council to express views on this consultation adding that she could not see why it would not.

Councillor Morgan expressed the view that the Bill and therefore the consultation were extremely relevant to the people of Ards and North Down and a matter which she along with her colleagues received numerous emails about unwanted flags. Residents were extremely concerned about the proliferation of flags, and territory marking. The Bill was not about preventing legitimate cultural expression but recognising that public and shared spaces should belong to and feel welcoming for everybody. Councillor Morgan noted that sadly there were times in the Borough when this was not so, adding that everyone would be aware of that. She suggested that a no response advocated that the Council did not care about shared spaces when it absolutely should. As such she was sorry and embarrassed that some members of Ards and North Down Council thought that not responding was an acceptable course of action. Reducing intimidation and promoting inclusive shared spaces was a must do, and very much a Council responsibility. The Code was about respect for the flag itself, respect for the community in which it was displayed and respect for the event it commemorated or celebrated. She added that it was about enabling freedom of expression, in a way which was respectful and inclusive.

Continuing Councillor Morgan commented that Councils provided many facilities which brought people together and as such she believed it made sense that the Council was involved in the process of developing a workable code of practise for Flags and Emblems. Some of obvious issues for the Council included:

- The need to establish a clear role for local Councils and decisions effecting Council assets and public spaces
- The need to understand and be clear about partnership working between the DFI, Councils and PSNI
- Resource considerations

Councillor Morgan thanked officers for their work on this response and encouraged Members to get on with the job and approve the drafted response and submit it to Department for Infrastructure.

Councillor Wray noted that the deadline for consultation submissions had passed being on 17 September 2026. He expressed the view that the Council's decision taken at that time was correct although he acknowledged that it was a sensitive issue. He noted Alderman McRandal's comments that flags were being erected illegally at night and countered that it was not illegal to do so, adding that what was illegal was the erection of flags of an illegal organisation. As such he believed going forward it was essential to work with the PSNI noting that the legislation had changed around what it could and could not do. Continuing he encouraged the Alliance Party when the matter was being discussed at Stormont to ensure a consensus was reached. Councillor Wray further stated that he had concerns around this Bill as he believed it would make for bad legislation with any amendments

submitted by other Party's rejected. As such he encouraged the Alliance Party to work with other Parties.

Alderman McIlveen commented that there appeared to be some confusion around Notices of Motion and responses to Consultations on Bills. During the Council's previous term, the Alliance Party group leader Andrew Muir had been aware that unless a Consultation on a Bill was specific to the role of the Council, they were simply noted. There was also an understanding that if the Council was unable to secure a corporate response, no response was made. Continuing he understood that the Alliance Party was being precious about this as it was a Private Members Bill, but the proposal taken was that it was left on the table and up to individual parties to respond accordingly. A course of action which had been followed for many years. Referring specifically to the Bill he expressed the view that it was a complete mess with many things wrong with it. He reiterated that he did not believe it was appropriate to shoehorn a response in on this matter.

At this stage Councillor Boyle commented that Unionist Councillors would never go anywhere without a flag up as if they did, they would feel half naked. On the night he recalled how he had spoken on this matter and gave his views on it, questioning how much respect they had for their flag whenever it became a rag after four months and yet it was still saluted. He had made efforts throughout the Ards Peninsula in respect of not only Union flags or the Northern Ireland flag but flags of paramilitary organisations which had disbanded over 30 years ago. Those flags were erected in a village which he represented whose residents did not wish to see any flags flown and despite best efforts they had not been removed. Councillor Boyle expressed the view that it was depressing driving through those areas where flags were flown, adding that the vast majority of people that he knew did not want those flags. At this stage Councillor Boyle stated that there are those who believed the Union must be held fast and to respond would demonstrate weakness and instead they needed to stand tall with clenched fists. That in his opinion was an absolute mess. The Council often talked about attracting businesses into the Borough and he asked who in their right mind would want to invest there when lampposts were adorned with all sorts of flags. As such he believed it was time to get a normal Borough back for its residents and that would not slap culture or celebrating it and he supported the amendment as it was the right thing to do and was not weak to do so. Instead, he believed that it was strength to do so.

Councillor Cochrane stated that this had nothing to do with the Council, and he believed the Alliance Party had brought it to the Council for very unnecessary reasons. Referring to the Bill as a mess once you got into the substance of it, adding that there was no financial explanation for it or quantification of the scale of the issues. The Bill would only serve to add further financial expectation upon DfI. Councillor Cochrane believed that the Bill would also be open to political abuse and interference, adding that if people believed in a pluralistic society everyone should be open to flags and traditions being celebrated and acknowledged. That was something that did not need to be offensive and instead everyone should be able to accept and tolerate different cultures.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reiterated the comments made by her colleagues that this matter was something which clearly the Council could not agree on as a

corporate body. She referred to Councillor Boyle's comments and stated that she was standing in the Council Chamber sure in who she was and what she believed in and was not half naked. Continuing she noted that Councillor Boyle had also talked about respect and referenced the events of the previous weekend stating that she believed there were some difficulties with respect for the rule of law. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also referred to Councillor Boyle's comments that the 'Union must be held fast with clenched fist' commenting that she found that surprising as their fists were not clenched and instead were open as they always had been standing within the middle ground. She stated that the Unionists in the Council chamber could join together and enforce their views on this Flags Policy but instead they wished to ensure that a corporate response was a corporate response. She added they were content that the Union was secure and would continue to be so and ensure it was so by acting within the realms of the law. Culture and heritage was in everyone's face and she referred to the Fleadh which had recently taken place with signs still in place in Belfast six weeks later some with Irish writing all over them. She urged common sense as the Council would not agree on this and urged Members to remember the process of how the Council dealt with such matters.

At this stage Alderman Adair expressed disappointment with the remarks made by Councillor Boyle around doom and gloom stating that as a representative of the Ards Peninsula he recognised that it was a united community with respect for all. Flags he stated had been flown for many years throughout the Ards Peninsula and the majority of people respected that and had respect for their neighbours. Alderman Adair added that he did not stand with clenched fists but instead worked for all residents throughout the Peninsula in all communities adding that he believed the Union was best for everyone. He also reminded Members that the cross of St Patrick was on the Union Flag, and he had stood for everyone. Alderman Adair stated that he was proud of his flag and proud of his community and agreed that it had been a long-standing policy of the Council that where there was division, that no corporate response would be made. Individuals were able to make their own submission on respect of the Bill if they wished to do so.

Councillor McCracken stated that this was an issue which caused concern amongst large numbers of residents and for Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Cochrane to suggest that it did not matter to the Borough was incorrect as it mattered to a large number of residents. Continuing he stated that he did agree with Councillor Wray that it needed a cross-party approach to enable an all-party consensus to be brought forward. Councillor McCracken commented that going forwards flags should not go up without permission or be left to go ragged and he made reference to the Flags protocol within the Cabinet Office, adding that to leave a flag ragged on a lamppost showed disrespect to it. Regulations meant flags could of course be flown but in the proper way, to a proper standard and with the appropriate consent.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen referenced Standing Order 20.12. Explanations. He noted that Councillor McCracken stated that he had said that it 'didn't matter to the people of the Borough' and Alderman McIlveen confirmed that he had not said that. Instead, the thrust of his argument was in relation to how the Council approached such responses and had said that it was an issue. As such he asked for Councillor McCracken to retract that allegation as it was wholly inaccurate.

Councillor Cochrane also rose on a point of order relating to Standing Order 20.12. stating that Councillor McCracken had described him as saying that it ‘didn’t matter’. The point to which he was referring to was the Council’s responsibilities which was factual that it did not have responsibility to remove flags and instead it was a matter for the PSNI and DfI. He had also made comment around the Bill itself but had not said that it ’didn’t matter’.

Councillor McCracken stated that was the clear intent of what was said.

Councillor W Irvine expressed the view that the right decision had been in made in respect of taking the matter forward. He believed that it was a consultation of a political nature and as such agreement on it was never going to be reached. As such he believed the right approach was for individuals and Parties to submit their own responses to it. Councillor Irvine added that he would have a number of concerns with the Bill and as such believed the correct approach had been taken.

At this point Councillor McCollum indicated that she had a number of points to make in respect of some of the comments which had been made. Councillor Wray had advised that the date for responses had passed and she asked if it was at the discretion of DfI whether or not it was prepared to accept late responses.

The Director of Active and Healthy Communities advised that a response could still be submitted, and it would be up to DfI whether or not it chose to accept it.

Continuing Councillor McCollum noted the response had already been drafted and was ready for submission. She further noted that Councillor Wray was keen to obtain consensus which she agreed with, however a good start to that would have been to agree to the submission of a response to the consultation. Alderman McIlveen had referred to a distinction between a corporate response and a Notice of Motion stating that if it had nothing to do with Council, the Council did not submit a response. She had also felt patronised by his explanation on the role of Members, adding that the word mansplaining had come to mind. She further noted that Alderman McIlveen had used the word ‘precious’ and she objected to that in relation to this issue as it would seek to minimise and dismiss the feelings of many of her constituents. Councillor McCollum advised that this issue had dominated her inbox throughout the Summer with constituents feeling either distressed or offended. Referring to Councillor Cochrane she noted he had reiterated that this had nothing to do with Council and that was the main reason behind his original proposal, this she believed was rich coming from a Member who had brought at least two Notices of Motion on matters which were nothing to do with Council. Councillor McCollum stated that the Alliance Party was completely open, welcoming and encouraging of flags being flown legally and appropriately in terms of celebration and commemoration. Continuing she stated that it was clear that was not what the Bill was about and instead it was dangerous, disingenuous, misleading and provocative to suggest otherwise. She reminded Members that the Consultation was linked to priorities within the Council’s Corporate Plan and masked men erecting flags in the middle of the night clad in balaclavas in residential streets was not a feeling of safety within a community. Many of her constituents had felt marginalised, excluded and intimidated in the place they called home. Finally, she believed that they left a chill factor and as such did not create a safe or welcoming community, something which the Council was promoted to do.

Alderman McIlveen rose to raise a further point of order in respect of Standing Order 20.12 stating that he had been described as ‘mansplaining’ and ‘patronising’. He had been explaining what historically the approach had been and as such he did not believe that was patronising. As such he would take issue with being described as ‘mansplaining’ or ‘patronising’.

At this stage Councillor McCollum rose to comment that she had said that ‘she felt patronised’ and as such Alderman McIlveen could not tell her how she felt.

Councillor Gilmour rose to make comment given the number of accusations which she believed had been lobbied towards her colleagues, adding that what had taken place had been disgraceful. She asked for Councillor McCracken’s accusations and comments to be put on record where he claimed that Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Cochrane had said that ‘the response did not matter’ adding that they may wish to follow that up with the Local Government Commissioner for Standards. Continuing she made reference to what had been heard from across the Chamber and it would seem that legally and appropriately only applied whenever it suited. Referring to comments made by Councillor McCollum around masked men putting up flags on lamp posts there were processes in place to deal with those. Referring to the Consultation Councillor Gilmour recalled issues raised by the Alliance Party in relation to Linfield Football Club flags, the most animated she had seen them in a long time. Councillor Gilmour concurred with her colleagues that this Consultation did not have direct oversight for the Council and as such she believed the correct approach had been undertaken.

At this stage Councillor Ashe rose to state that she agreed with some of the comments which had been made especially those around open hands, consistency and being pluralistic. She referred to a Notice of Motion which had been brought forward on flags and bonfire programmes which rate payers money was used to fund and at which national flags were burnt. She had tried unsuccessfully to stop that and reminded Members to be mindful of open hands and a pluralistic society adding that she hoped next July they would be in their communities asking for flags not to be burnt. Councillor Ashe stated that she hoped this would be done but did not believe that it would.

Alderman Smith noted that 45 minutes had been spent passionately debating this matter for which submissions had closed a fortnight ago. While it was an important issue, he believed the ship had sailed and Members as individuals did have the opportunity to submit a response themselves had they felt the need to do so. Alderman Smith stated that it was a political issue and a lot of time had been spent discussing something which was out of date by a fortnight.

As Chairman of the Committee, Alderman Cummings believed that it conducted itself well and the debate which had taken place that night had been an exchange of opinions which while differing, was respectful. The debate which had taken place exposed the fact that it needed to be broadened as opposed to being retained into a corporate response. Continuing he emphasised the importance of ensuring any comments made were kept to the facts.

As a Recorded Vote had been requested the Mayor asked for that to be undertaken at this stage.

On being put to the meeting, with 13 voting FOR, 22 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 4 ABSENT, the recommendation was declared LOST.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (13)	AGAINST (22)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (4)
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Councillor**	**Councillors**
McAlpine	Adair	Blaney	Kendall
McDowell	Armstrong-Cotter		Kennedy
McRandal	Brooks		McKee
	Cummings		Moore
Councillors	Graham		
Ashe	McIlveen		
Boyle	Smith		
Brady	**Councillors**		
Harbinson	Cochrane		
Hennessy	Cathcart		
McBurney	Chambers		
McCollum	Douglas		
McCracken	Edmund		
Morgan	Gilmour		
Quinn	Holywood		
	S Irvine		
	W Irvine		
	Kerr		
	McClean		
	Newman		
	Smart		
	Thompson		
	Wray		

Item 18.1 - Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Gilmour

Alderman McRandal indicated that at the meeting he had supported this Notice of Motion, however in hindsight he believed that he should not have supported it in its current form. Instead, he should have sought to have it amended and therefore he rose to ask that his comments and the dissatisfaction of his Party group be recorded.

The Motion he stated primarily dealt with concern about anti-social behaviour a concern which he shared but wished to see more done to deal with this problem. While they were grateful to the PSNI and other agencies for their efforts they wished to see more police officers on the ground. It was unfortunate that the Party bringing the motion, the DUP, seemed to be more concerned with playing politics than finding common ground, and instead had tried to make political capital out of the other elements of the Motion. On the maximum age of criminal responsibility, he noted that

the proposer changed that on the night from ‘a rejection of lowering the age of criminal responsibility’ to ‘a rejection of increasing the age of criminal responsibility’, The direct opposite and therefore he was not sure how that constituted a non-substantive amendment, but that was by the by. Regardless they did not agree with the amendment for the following reasons.

Evidence showed that early intervention and holistic support was better at interrupting offending behaviour than early criminalisation and entry into the justice system.

- Long-term international studies consistently showed that early criminal justice involvement increased the likelihood of continued offending.
- Northern Ireland data showed lower reoffending rates for diversionary approaches compared with deeper formal interventions.
- Children first recorded offending at 13 or under were among the most likely to reoffend.
- Trauma-informed and restorative approaches were associated with better long-term outcomes for both children and communities.

Continuing Alderman McRandal stated that they rejected the criticism of the Justice Minister. Work on revised anti-social behaviour legislation, including revised Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and drinking in public, was ongoing for introduction in the next mandate. It was noted this could not happen in the current mandate for two reasons: 1) there was half a mandate due to Assembly collapses, and 2) it was complex. He understood that a view from DFC on the views of Councils on enforcement powers for drinking in public had not yet been forthcoming.

Councillor Cathcart expressed his disappointment by this course of action from the Alliance Party as he had welcomed its support at the meeting. He stated that his Motion had been brought to deal with this serious issue in the Borough and he had not made any attacks on the Justice Minister at that time. He added that he had been disappointed that the legislation had not been passed in time and understood the difference of opinion in respect of the age of criminality. While disappointed he believed Alderman McRandal had been directed by his Party leader to read this statement out. Councillor Cathcart indicated that he would continue to raise the matter of anti-social behaviour in order to deal effectively with the problem.

Alderman McIlveen acknowledged that the headlines had been very embarrassing for the Alliance Party as they had Members who had criticised the Minister. He took issue then with the fact that it now appeared to be all the DUP’s fault and they were the bad guys in relation to this. Alderman McIlveen stated that no one had been forced to vote for the Motion and as such he rejected the criticism as it was backed on the night.

NOTED.

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

7.5. Audit Committee dated 21 September 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 10 - Advisory Review – Procurement of Synthetic Pitches

Councillor Newman indicated that she wished to raise the above item which was considered In Committee.

Councillor Boyle also indicated his wish to comment on the same matter.

The Mayor advised that the matter could be discussed once the meeting went into Committee.

NOTED.

8. COURSES AND CONFERENCES (Appendix II)

8.1 NILGA CONFERENCE 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that correspondence had been received from NILGA providing details of the 2026 Local Government Conference taking place on Thursday 8 October at Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn.

The conference theme was " The Politics of Delivery: Leading Through Uncertainity" and NILGA would encourage Councillors and officers from all 11 Councils to attend this flagship event.

RECOMMENDED that the Council consider the correspondence.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the correspondence be noted.

RECESS

The Council went into recess at this stage 9.00pm and resumed at 9.20pm.

NOTED.

(Councillors Ashe and Kerr left the meeting at this stage – 9.20pm)

9. CALL FOR EVIDENCE FOR REGIONAL BALANCE BILL (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED :- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Regional Balance Bill was introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 8 June 2026. The Private Member's Bill sought to improve the Executive's response to regional imbalances in economic performance and living standards by placing a statutory duty on the Executive to develop and implement a Strategic Regional Balance Framework.

The Committee for the Economy issued a Call for Evidence inviting stakeholders to provide views on the provisions of the Bill. The responses received would inform the Committee's consideration of the Bill and the development of any necessary amendments.

The deadline for responses was 22 September 2026. As that preceded the September meeting of the Council, the response set out below was submitted in advance of the deadline on the basis that it was subject to formal ratification by the Council on 30 September 2026. The Committee was advised that any further comments or amendments agreed by the Council would be submitted under separate cover following the meeting.

The Bill as introduced and the accompanying Explanatory and Financial Memorandum was attached in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

ANDBC Response to the Call for Evidence
The Council's response to Questions 6 to 30 of the Call for Evidence was set out below. The reasons had been included to assist Members' consideration of the proposed responses. As the online questionnaire did not provide an opportunity to include supporting reasons for the yes/no answers, those did not form part of the response submitted to the Committee for the Economy.

Clause 1: Strategic Regional Balance Framework
6. Do regional economic and related disparities need legislation in order for them to be addressed appropriately?

Response: Yes

Reason: A legislative framework was considered more likely to improve long-term coordination, accountability and delivery across departments and help build confidence that regional funding decisions were made fairly.

7. Should the obligation to develop a Strategic Regional Balance Framework sit with the Executive?

Response: Yes

8. Does the Bill correctly set out what should be included in the Strategic Regional Balance Framework, including the roles of departments; mechanisms to address disparity; criteria and methodology for assessing regional disparities; targets and milestones; use of cross-border data; and identification of a baseline year?

Response: Yes
Reason: The Bill clearly set out the key elements to be included within the Strategic Regional Balance Framework.

9. Does the Bill correctly set out the consultation process for the development of the Strategic Regional Balance Framework, its publication and revision?

Response: Yes

Reason: District councils are specifically identified as consultees and should therefore have an opportunity to contribute to the development and review of the Framework.

10. Do you have any other comments on Clause 1 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 2: Reporting, Review and Support Functions

11. Is it reasonable and sufficient to require all departments, when developing, adopting, implementing or revising any policy, strategy or plan, to have due regard to the need to reduce regional disparity and to the Strategic Regional Balance Framework?

Response: Yes

Reason: A consistent and coordinated approach across departments is more likely to be successful in addressing regional disparities.

12. Is it reasonable and sufficient to require all departments to exercise their functions, so far as is reasonably practicable, in a manner calculated to contribute to the outcomes and targets set in the Strategic Regional Balance Framework?

Response: Yes

13. Do you have any other comments on Clause 2 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 3: Annual Reporting

14. Do you agree that all departments should be required to report annually on how they have reduced regional disparities in the preceding 12-month period?

Response: Yes

Reason: Annual reporting will help assess progress, support corrective action where required and provide greater transparency on the regional distribution and impact of public investment.

15. Do you have any other comments on Clause 3 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 4: Annual Reporting

16. Do you agree that the Department for the Economy should be required to report annually, and that the Minister should make a related statement, on how all departments have reduced regional disparities in the preceding 12-month period?

Response: Yes

Reason: Annual reporting and Ministerial oversight will help assess whether the Framework is achieving its intended outcomes and provide greater transparency on progress in addressing regional disparities.

17. Do you have any other comments on Clause 4 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 5: Reviewing the Framework

18. Do you agree that the operation and effectiveness of the Framework should be reviewed by the Executive every five years?

Response: Yes

Reason: Regular review will help assess the effectiveness of the Framework and identify any changes required to improve delivery.

19. Do you have any other comments on Clause 5 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments.

Clause 6: Guidance and Research

20. Do you agree that the Department for the Economy should provide guidance and information and undertake, commission or support research on regional disparities?

Response: Yes

Reason: Guidance and research will support informed and evidence based decision making.

21. Do you have any other comments on Clause 6 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 7: Defining Regional Disparity and Regions

22. Do you agree with how regional disparity may be defined by the Bill?

Response: Yes

Reason: The definition in Clause 7 includes the principal economic and social indicators commonly used to assess regional disparities and provides a robust basis for assessment. The Council supports the use of these indicators, recognising that their application and weighting will be important in ensuring a fair and balanced assessment of regional disparity.

23. Should regional disparity indices be specified in the Bill?

Response: Yes

Reason: The inclusion of core indices supports consistency and transparency in the assessment of regional disparities.

24. What other indices should be used to define regional disparity?

Response: No additional indices proposed at this stage

Reason: The indicators set out in Clause 7 provide a broad range of economic and social measures commonly used to assess regional disparity. The Council considers that the methodology, weighting and application of these indicators are likely to be of greater significance in determining outcomes than the introduction of additional indices.

25. Do you agree with how the Bill may define a region within Northern Ireland?

Response: Yes

Reason: The Bill provides flexibility by recognising Local Government Districts and other statistical geographies designated by NISRA as appropriate units for assessing regional disparity.

26. Do you have any other comments on Clause 7 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Clause 8: Commencement and Short Title

27. Do you agree that the provisions of the legislation should come into operation immediately after Royal Assent?

Response: Yes

28. Do you have any other comments on Clause 8 or suggested amendments to this clause?

Response: No additional comments

Proposed Additions and Amendments

29. Please provide information on any other potential amendments that you consider would enhance the Bill and the rationale for those amendments.

Response: No additional comments

30. Please provide any additional comments on the Bill that you consider should be taken into account.

Response: No additional comments.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the response to the Committee for the Economy's Call for Evidence on the Regional Balance Bill and forwards any further comments the Council may have.

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

The proposer Councillor Boyle expressed his thanks to officers as well as his colleague Sinead McLaughlin for her assistance.

Commenting as seconder Alderman Smith noted the submission had been made on 23 September 2026 and he was content with that. He surmised that Sinead McLaughlin a Foyle member had introduced this with an expectation that it would assist areas such as the North West to secure greater Government investment and reduce regional imbalance. Continuing he stated that he hoped this Borough would also reap the benefits having the lowest GDP of all Council areas with GVA also second lowest. The Borough also did not receive its fair share of public capital

investment evidenced by the state of the roads. As such he looked forward to seeing progress being made on the Bill.

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

10. BUSINESS GROWTH ACCELERATOR NON-DOMESTIC VACANT RATING LIABILITY (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED :- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Department of Finance issued a consultation on proposals relating to the Business Growth Accelerator and Non-Domestic Vacant Rating Liability.

The consultation sought views on proposals intended to encourage business growth, investment and occupation of commercial premises, whilst also considering changes to the treatment of vacant non-domestic properties.

The consultation provided an opportunity for local government, businesses and other stakeholders to comment on the potential economic and financial implications of the proposals.

The deadline for responses was 23 September 2026. As that preceded consideration by the Council, the response set out in Section 2 was submitted in advance of the deadline on the basis that it was subject to Council approval. Any amendments arising from Council's consideration would be submitted to the Department of Finance under separate cover.

The consultation document was attached at Appendix 1.

ANDBC Response to Consultation
The Council's response to Questions 7 to 34 of the consultation was set out below. The reasons had been included to assist Members' consideration of the proposed responses. Where the consultation questionnaire did not provide an opportunity to include supporting reasons, only the responses themselves formed part of the submission.

Proposal 1: Business Growth Accelerator

7. Do you support a Business Growth Accelerator?

Response: Yes

8. Does the current system discourage investment?

Response: Yes

9. Would this policy incentivise new activity, or mainly defer valuation increases that would already be occurring?

Response: Yes – likely to encourage investment by reducing upfront costs and supporting business growth.

10. What is the appropriate grace period that could be adopted?

Response: More than 12 months.

11. Should enhanced support apply where vacant property units are brought back into use?

Response: Yes

12. How should "qualifying improvements" be defined?

Response: Qualifying improvements should include significant capital investment, expansion, redevelopment or substantial refurbishment that materially improves the functionality, capacity or economic use of a property. Routine maintenance, repairs and minor cosmetic enhancements should not qualify.

13. Should minimum or maximum thresholds apply within the policy?

Response: Yes – A minimum threshold should apply to avoid relatively minor improvements qualifying for relief. Support should focus on significant capital investment capable of delivering business growth, regeneration or wider economic benefit.

14. Are any property types best excluded?

Response: No – Eligibility should be determined by the nature and impact of the investment rather than the property type.

15. How can administrative burden be minimised?

Response: Clear guidance and eligibility criteria should be published by the Department. The application process should be simple, straightforward and proportionate, with unnecessary administrative requirements avoided wherever possible.

16. Should advance notification be required from an applicant before any extension or improvement works commence?

Response: No

Reason: Advance notification could create an unnecessary administrative burden and potential barrier to investment. Eligibility should be capable of being demonstrated through appropriate evidence following completion of the works.

17. How should the policy align with the completion notice process?
Response: The completion notice process should be used as the trigger point for the grace period, avoiding the need for additional administrative processes.

18. What economic benefit would result from this policy proposal?

Response: The proposal could encourage business investment, expansion and property improvement by reducing the immediate impact of increased rates liability. This may support business growth, improve investor confidence, create employment opportunities, enhance commercial premises and contribute to longer-term growth in the rates base once the grace period expires.

19. Are there more effective alternatives to achieve the same policy goals?

Response: No more effective alternative has been identified. However, complementary measures such as grant schemes supporting property improvement, vacancy reduction and regeneration could further enhance the impact of the proposal.

20. Additional comments on the Business Growth Accelerator

Response: No additional comments.

Proposal 2: Non-Domestic Vacant Rating Liability

21. Do you support increasing NDVR liability to 75% and 100%?

Response: Yes

22. Should current NDVR exclusions remain?

Response: No

Reason: Existing exclusions should be reviewed and retained only where clearly justified. Exclusions should not undermine the objectives of reducing vacancy, encouraging occupation and bringing properties back into productive use. Any exclusions should be designed to minimise opportunities for avoidance and support the effective operation of the policy.

23. What is the appropriate timing for introducing any increased NDVR liability locally?

Response: 18 months

Reason: This provides a fair opportunity to market and reoccupy vacant premises while maintaining an appropriate incentive to address vacancy, support regeneration and encourage productive use of property.

24. Are alternative approaches available aside from increasing rating liability?

Response: Yes – Alternative approaches could include vacancy and dereliction grant schemes, streamlined planning or change-of-use processes, and town centre

living initiatives. These may be most effective when used alongside, rather than instead of, changes to NDVR liability.

25. How should this change align with the wider rates and valuation system?

Response: The change should align with the wider rating system in a way that minimises opportunities for avoidance and ensures consistent treatment across property types. It should complement wider measures aimed at reducing vacancy, increasing occupation and supporting regeneration, while recognising differing market conditions.

26. What complementary measures are needed to promote occupancy?

Response: Further financial support for the regeneration and reoccupation of vacant and derelict properties, alongside measures that support mixed-use development, including living above shops. Streamlined delivery processes, while maintaining appropriate governance, may also help accelerate investment and occupancy.

27. What do you see as the behavioural impacts associated with the policy proposal?

Response: The proposal may encourage owners to let, improve, redevelop or dispose of vacant properties. However, it may also increase the risk of non-payment in some cases, potentially resulting in additional enforcement and debt recovery activity.

28. Are additional anti-avoidance measures required prior to implementation?

Response: Yes – Measures should be considered to minimise opportunities for artificial or short-term occupation arrangements and ensure the policy encourages genuine reoccupation and productive use of vacant premises.

29. Should treatment vary by sector or property type?

Response: Treatment should generally remain consistent across sectors and property types; however, if any variation is introduced, it should be evidence-based and targeted at supporting the reoccupation and regeneration of vacant high-street properties, where the impacts of vacancy are often most acute. Any differential treatment should be clearly defined, transparent and support town centre and high street revitalisation.

30. How can collection be maximised upon introduction of the policy?

Response: The policy should be integrated within existing rates billing and collection arrangements, supported by clear communication and accessible payment options.

31. Should mitigation measures apply in cases of market failure?

Response: Any mitigation measures should be clearly defined, evidence-based and supported by a transparent rationale. Criteria should be applied consistently and be capable of withstanding challenge.

32. Should increases depend on duration of vacancy?

Response: Yes – A phased approach based on the duration of vacancy provides a reasonable opportunity to secure a tenant or bring a property back into productive use, while encouraging different behaviours where properties remain vacant for prolonged periods, including letting, sale, redevelopment or reinvestment.

33. What wider impacts do you foresee as a result of this proposal?

Response: The proposal may encourage the reoccupation of vacant properties, supporting increased business activity and growth in the non-domestic rates base. Wider impacts may include improved vibrancy and footfall in town and city centres, enhanced placemaking, increased investor confidence and support for longer-term regeneration and revitalisation.

34. Additional comments on Non-Domestic Vacant Rating Liability

Response: In relation to Q22, existing exclusions should be reviewed and retained only where clearly justified. Exclusions should not undermine the objectives of reducing vacancy, encouraging occupation and bringing properties back into productive use. Any exclusions should be designed to minimise opportunities for avoidance and support the effective operation of the policy.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the response to the Business Growth Accelerator and Non-Domestic Vacant Rating Liability Consultation and forwards any further comments the Council may have.

Councillor McCracken proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman McDowell that the recommendation be adopted with additional comment to be inserted at item 19 of the consultation and forwarded to the Department of Finance.

‘A further complementary measure would be to introduce a three-year rates holiday for newly constructed commercial properties, or until the individual hereditament is occupied, whichever occurs first. The relief should apply separately to each hereditament within a development. For example, where a new office building comprised, multiple floors assessed as separate hereditaments, an occupied floor would become liable for rates immediately, while unoccupied floors would continue to benefit from the holiday, subject to the three-year maximum.

Council considers that this would provide a targeted incentive to increase the supply of new commercial property by reducing the financial risk associated with the period between completion of construction and occupation. At present, the prospect of a significant rates liability while newly constructed space remains unoccupied can materially increase the risk of development and may discourage investment in new commercial space. Extending the principle of the proposed Business Growth Accelerator to genuinely new commercial development would therefore support investment, regeneration and economic growth, including major projects such as Bangor Waterfront.

The measure provides a temporary holiday for unoccupied commercial property rather than a permanent relief. Nor would it shelter occupied properties from rates. Once a hereditament is occupied, it would enter the rating system immediately and contribute to the rates base. The proposal could also include appropriate safeguards to ensure that the relief applies only to genuinely new commercial development and cannot be obtained through changes of ownership, subdivision or reclassification of existing premises.'

The proposer Councillor McCracken stated that he wished to see a change to the way in which Northern Ireland approached business rates, something which particularly mattered for Bangor given the opportunities associated with the Waterfront development. One of the biggest risks for developers was what happened once new premises were completed and no-one took up occupation, leaving them with hefty rates bills to pay regardless. In order to address that he was suggesting that consideration was given to providing a three-year rates holiday for new commercial development or until each unit was occupied. Continuing he welcomed proposals around the Business Growth Accelerator surmising that they would be particularly welcome in association with the Bangor Waterfront development providing a wide range of benefits for all. He believed the rates system should help manage the risks associated with any new development rather than make those risks greater. The ultimate aim was to grow the rates base to make it easier for commercial developers. Councillor McCracken added that his proposal was for genuinely new commercial development to encourage future investment, make regeneration easier all of which would help to ensure that Bangor Waterfront reached its full potential.

Commenting as seconder Alderman McDowell expressed his support for the amendment. He recalled how previously large office accommodation had been built and as it was nearing completion the financial crash of 2008 occurred. As a result, the organisation had taken a few extra years to get the accommodation fully let out. Having rates payable on completion of building without tenants in place would be an impediment to having new business accommodation in the Borough which was badly needed.

Alderman Smith commended Councillor McCracken on his innovative amendment and indicated that he had two questions to ask in relation to it. He referred to the Council's focus on town centres and as such would there be any contradictions to that and furthermore did the amendment relate to anywhere in the Borough.

In response the Director of Place and Prosperity advised that officers had prepared the response in such a way that it had been left open for Member's comments. He confirmed that consideration was being given to the Council's objectives within its Corporate Plan and he did not at this time have any further answers in respect of the queries raised around Councillor McCracken's amendment. He added that it was an amendment to suggested answers to questions made by officers.

Alderman McIlveen noted that what was before them was a suggested response for the Department to consider further. While he agreed with the principle of it he believed it was not necessary to get hung up on the detail. He also welcomed the

suggestion that consideration was given to a ‘rates holiday’ agreeing that it was worthy of further consideration.

(Councillor Kerr rejoined the meeting online at this stage – 9.31pm)

Alderman Graham indicated that he was not totally against this but did have concerns that a situation could arise where this incentive could take away from building and developing in the marketplace. He believed there was a balance to be struck based upon intelligent marketing rather than building being undertaken randomly in the hope that tenants could be secured.

By way of summing up Councillor McCracken referred to Alderman Smith’s comments stating that he believed there should be no distinction between town centre and out of town locations. Continuing he welcomed Alderman McIlveen’s comments agreeing that these were merely suggestions at this stage adding that the risk for developers was that they would be left with empty buildings. Councillor McCracken further commented that any property developer would likely have to borrow money on which interest would be paid. As such appropriate analysis would likely take place before committing capital to any new investment.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that the additional comment to be inserted at item 19 of the consultation and forwarded to the Department of Finance:

A further complementary measure would be to introduce a three-year rates holiday for newly constructed commercial properties, or until the individual hereditament is occupied, whichever occurs first. The relief should apply separately to each hereditament within a development. For example, where a new office building comprised multiple floors assessed as separate hereditaments, an occupied floor would become liable for rates immediately, while unoccupied floors would continue to benefit from the holiday, subject to the three-year maximum.

Council considers that this would provide a targeted incentive to increase the supply of new commercial property by reducing the financial risk associated with the period between completion of construction and occupation. At present, the prospect of a significant rates liability while newly constructed space remains unoccupied can materially increase the risk of development and may discourage investment in new commercial space. Extending the principle of the proposed Business Growth Accelerator to genuinely new commercial development would therefore support investment, regeneration and economic growth, including major projects such as Bangor Waterfront.

The measure provides a temporary holiday for unoccupied commercial property rather than a permanent relief. Nor would it shelter occupied properties from rates. Once a hereditament is occupied, it would enter the rating system immediately and contribute to the rates base. The proposal could also include appropriate safeguards to ensure that the relief applies only

to genuinely new commercial development and cannot be obtained through changes of ownership, subdivision or reclassification of existing premises.

11. SIB WASTE SPECIALIST – CONTRACT EXTENSION (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED :- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in October 2024 Solace approved the recruitment of a Waste Specialist, employed by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), for a period of two years to support the 11 District Councils in relation to:

- Extended Producer Responsibility on packaging (pEPR);
- Deposit Return Schemes (DRS);
- Common Collection systems.

Andrew Cassells was appointed to the role and currently provided 2.5 days per week in support of councils.

The arrangement was regulated by the Operational Partnership Agreement, which was signed between the Strategic Investment Board, The Council Waste Forum (on behalf of the 11 Councils and SOLACE) and NILGA. In addition, there was an agreed Work Plan with quarterly reports to Solace and the establishment of a Project Board to oversee the post.

The OPA had been reviewed and a new draft copy proposed (attached) with Councils' financial as followed:

	Cost per Council
Year 1 – 2026/27	£5,211
Year 2 - 2027/28	£5,367

Note – costs in line with current financial commitment by Councils and based on a 3% uplift on SIB salaries.

The current agreement was discussed at a meeting of the Council Waste Forum and based on the achievements listed below, the CWF proposed the extension of the current agreement.

Achievements in the last two years:

- Provided Councils with regular updates on the implementation of pEPR;
- Helped secure circa £3m paid directly to Ards and North Down Borough Council annually for investment in the collection and processing of packaging Waste
- Assisted in discussions with DAERA regarding use of pEPR payments;
- Source of knowledge regarding further legislative changes;

- Provides a “Northern Ireland Council” voice at national meetings;
- Assisting in consultation responses.

As stated, the Waste Specialist provided a regional response during the development of the estimated pEPR payments and the table below showed the initial amount predicted for Northern Ireland beside the amount payments for the last two years with an additional £12M of pEPR funds diverted to Northern Ireland.

	2025-26 (initial estimate Dec 2024)	2025-26 (Actual July 2025)	2026-27
Total for Northern Ireland	£38,949,000	£50,893,272	£52,165,794

The ability of the SIB Waste Specialist to relay the views of Northern Ireland Councils had been very beneficial both on a national and local stage and on this basis, it was proposed to retrospectively extend the OPA agreement with effect from 9 September 2026 to ensure that there was no break in service for the SIB employee. The agreement would be for a further two years and cover the period of DRS implementation.

SOLACE, at its meeting on 4 September 2026, agreed to recommend an extension of the SIB Waste Specialist role. The extension was agreed subject to agreement from the 11 NI Councils.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the extension of the revised Operational Partnership Agreement between the Strategic Investment Board, Council Waste Forum (on behalf of the 11 Councils) and NILGA from 9 September 2026 for 2 years at a cost of approximately £10,580.

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

12. NI VETERANS AWARD (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED :- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that as a proud signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Council had been invited to attend the Northern Irish Veterans Awards 2026. That was an initiative that recognised the outstanding achievements of veterans, reservists, and cadets who were making a real difference in civilian life.

Now in its 5th year, the NI Veterans Awards was more than just a celebration it was a brilliant opportunity to engage, connect and network with the wider Armed Forces community across Northern Ireland. For more information, please visit www.veteransawardsireland.com.

The event took place on Thursday 22 October 2026 at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Belfast. The evening brought together veterans, service leavers, reservists, cadet force adult volunteers, and Forces-friendly employers to share inspiring stories and celebrate success. The cost to attend the event was £90 plus VAT per delegate.

It was recommended that Alderman Trevor Cummings attended the event on behalf of the Council in his role as Veteran Champion.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves that Alderman Cummings attends this event in his role as Veterans Champion.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

Grants of Rights of Burials – following documents:-

a) Grants of Rights of Burial D41497 – D41531
b) Duplicate - Michael Donohue – Clandeboye SX 7372
c) Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) Collaboration Agreement Addendum
d) Ards & North Down Borough Council to Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited – Lease of Substation Site at Church Lane, Bangor

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Adair that the Seal of the Council be affixed.

14. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The Chief Executive notified Members of the following Transfer of Rights of Burial:

James Smyth – Frederick Anderson
Clandeboye AR 5786

Elizabeth Hamilton – Jane Stitt
Redburn 3255

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the Transfer of Rights of Burial be agreed.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix VII)

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 would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

16.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers

This Council notes the offer from a local elected representative who wishes to personally donate a piece of infrastructure to the town of Donaghadee.

Council recognises that public donations can enhance our local spaces, but notes that clear guidance ensures these gifts align with Council standards, maintenance capabilities, planning legislation and legal requirements.

Consequently, this Council requests that relevant officers investigate and report back on the appropriate, formal channels through which such a donation can be officially proposed, assessed, and progressed. This report should outline the necessary compliance criteria, installation requirements, and corporate governance steps required to successfully cooperate with the donor and bring this project to fruition.

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

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman

In line with the Council's Corporate plan to support economic sustainability within the Borough, the recent business start up and growth figures are extremely encouraging. However, in the context that Ards & North Down has the lowest GDP/head in Northern Ireland, the lowest GVA growth, has 9% of NI's population yet only 3% of its exports and less than 1% of R&D spend, yet historically has received the least Invest NI support of any council area, that Council requests a deputation from Invest NI to hear directly on how they are supporting the Council's ambitious business growth targets, including what resources and programmes they are dedicating to the Borough. Furthermore, Council also writes to the Economy Minister to request a meeting to discuss how her Department can provide a fair share of resources to support business investment and employment growth in our Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Newman, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place & Prosperity Committee.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood

That this Council:

Condemns Michelle O'Neill's participation in and endorsement of the memorandum agreed in Cardiff by Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, which calls upon the British Government to prepare for, plan and facilitate constitutional change in each jurisdiction;

Rejects the memorandum's assertion that "Westminster's time is coming to an end" and its attempt to present constitutional change as inevitable;

Affirms that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

Reaffirms the principle of consent, under which Northern Ireland's constitutional status can change only with the consent of a majority of its people;

Rejects any attempt by Sinn Féin to portray its objective of removing Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom as the position or collective voice of the people of Northern Ireland;

And accordingly calls upon the Chief Executive to write to the First Minister:

1. Expressing this Council's condemnation of her participation in and endorsement of the Cardiff memorandum;
2. Reminding her that the jurisdiction in which she holds office is Northern Ireland, whose present constitutional status is as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and

3. Reaffirming that Northern Ireland's constitutional future will be determined by the people of Northern Ireland in accordance with the principle of consent, and not by declarations agreed between Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

This Council further reaffirms its support for Northern Ireland's continued place within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the public and press be excluded from the following items of confidential business.

(The Director of Environmental Services left the Chamber at this stage – 9.40pm)

7.5. Audit Committee dated 21 September 2026

In respect of matters of accuracy Councillor Newman advised that she had referenced a date of 31 December 2026 and not 31 December 2027 as had been recorded in the minutes.

NOTED.

Item 10 - Advisory Review – Procurement of Synthetic Pitches

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)

A Preliminary Review report into the procurement and payment of a leisure contract was provided.

The recommendation was that Council note the report.

The recommendation was acceded to and the Audit minutes were approved and adopted.

(The Director of Environmental Services re-entered the Chamber at this stage – 10.15pm)

17. GREENWAY NETWORK PROJECT: APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

IN CONFIDENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the purpose of the report was to recommend the appointment of a suitably qualified consultancy service to progress one major and one local planning applications as part of the next phases of the greenway project development process that are required to be prepared and submitted to secure the necessary statutory approvals for some updates to existing plans. Furthermore to secure ongoing specialist support in order to complete the existing project. The specialist consultancy services required include planning, environmental assessment, ecology, road safety audit, design review, planning application preparation and associated technical support.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Approves the appointment of Perfect Circle JV Limited/AECOM via the Scape framework to support the delivery of the Greenway Network project.

Further recommended that Council Approves the continued appointment of Perfect Circle/Aecom via the Scape framework to commission further specialist consultancy services that may be required throughout the remaining lifecycle of the Greenway Network project.

The recommendation was adopted.

18. WESTWINDS COMMUNITY CENTRE- REQUEST FOR LICENCE (Appendix VIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION – RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUISNESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

Council was asked to grant a Licence to a community group at West Winds Community Centre, Newtownards.

The recommendation was that the recommendation be acceded to.

19. BBC REQUEST DONAGHADEE COMMUNITY CENTRE – REQUEST FOR LICENCE (Appendix IX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE –CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Council was asked to approve a request from the BBC in relation to a proposal for Donaghadee Community Centre.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the public and press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.26pm.

ITEM 7.1

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on Tuesday 6 October 2026 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McCollum

Aldermen: Graham, McAlpine, McDowell, McIlveen, Smith

Councillors: Cathcart, Hennessy, Smart (Zoom, 7.06pm), McClean, Morgan, Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Harbinson, Councillor Kendall, Councillor Kerr and Councillor McKee.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair sought Declarations of Interest.

Councillor Cathcart declared an interest in Item 4.4 (La06/2026/0103/F) as one of the 22 objectors to the street hub application.

He explained that the objections related to the original proposed location which was in front of the Court House, which was a listed building. The location of the hub had now changed and was a considerable distance along the street. He asked how the relocation was possible without the requirement for a new planning application.

The Head of Planning and Building Control understood that the location was still within the redline boundary but the presenting officer would clarify. The application was refused initially because it was positioned in front of the listed building but officers were content with the new location.

Councillor Cathcart advised that he would still exclude himself from the discussion of that item as technically he was still an objector.

NOTED.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 4 AUGUST 2026

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

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

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2026/0077/F - DEMOLITION OF EXISTING DWELLING AND ERECTION OF A REPLACEMENT DWELLING WITH GARAGE

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.
DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: Called in to Committee due to six or more objections.
Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling with garage
Site Location: 80 Ward Avenue, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planner outlined the Case Officer's Report, explaining that this was an application seeking full planning permission for demolition of an existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling with garage at 80 Ward Avenue, Bangor.

(Councillor Smart joined the meeting remotely – 7.06pm)

The application had been recommended for approval and was presented to Committee as six or more representations contrary to the officer's recommendation had been received.

The Committee was shown the existing dwelling which was set back from Ward Avenue on an elevated site overlooking the Kingsland Recreational Grounds and Seacliff Road.

The Committee was advised that the site was also located within the proposed Bangor East Area of Townscape Character (ATC).

As the site was located within a proposed ATC, the existing building had been assessed to determine whether or not it was considered to make a material contribution to the overall appearance of the proposed ATC. The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on this and advised they had no objections to the demolition.

The key buildings noted within the proposed ATC were Victorian and Edwardian. No. 80 was an Inter War dwelling and whilst it did have some architectural detailing such as corbelled eaves, a slate roof and robust chimneys on the ridgeline, it was not one of the best examples of buildings from this era in the area and would not be considered a key building in the proposed ATC. The dwelling had also been extended to the front, side and rear in an unsympathetic way, further lessening the contribution that it made.

Further slides showed the main views of the site within the surrounding area from Seacliff Road and also glimpses from Ward Avenue and Clifton Road where it was less visible set in behind the dwellings fronting Ward Avenue.

The Committee was advised that the replacement dwelling would be erected in a similar position to the existing dwelling but would be set slightly further back from the eastern building line facing Seacliff Road and would also include a projection to the western elevation to accommodate a garage. Vehicular access would be from Ward Avenue and private amenity space would be located at the eastern side of the site, similar to the current arrangements.

The Committee was advised that the proposed dwelling would be three storey in height with a mono pitch roof comparable in height to the adjacent dwellings. Finishes included white render, grey aluminium windows and zinc cladding, all of which were already found on other buildings in the area.

Members were shown the western elevation facing Ward Avenue. The roof had been hipped slightly and would be finished in a dark grey zinc cladding to help blend in with the dark coloured pitched roofs of existing dwellings viewed from this aspect.

Further slides showed the side elevations of the dwelling and Members could see the pitched roof and also the two-storey projection to the rear.

During the processing of the application, the proposal was amended at the request of the Planning Service to set the dwelling back in line with the established building line facing Seacliff Road, to reduce the prominence of the dwelling and ensure no unacceptable dominance or loss of light would occur to the adjacent properties at Nos. 78 and 82.

The Committee was shown an artist’s impression of what the completed dwelling would look like. While a very contemporary design, there was already a variety of architectural styles from different eras within the proposed ATC. In addition to the more traditional Victorian and Edwardian buildings, there were examples of other modern and contemporary architecture, particularly within this particular area of the proposed ATC.

Further slides illustrated the dwelling immediately adjacent at No. 78, the large box dormers allowed by the Planning Appeals Commission at No. 82, the three-storey apartment complex at the junction of Seacliff Road and Seaforth Avenue and Kingsland Nursing Home on Seacliff Road.

The Council had also recently submitted an application for the redevelopment of Ballyholme Yacht Club on the opposite side of Seacliff Road. While not yet determined, meaning that limited weight could be afforded to the proposal in the consideration of this current application, it did nevertheless demonstrate the contemporary design approach also proposed by the Council within this part of the proposed ATC.

In the context of all these material factors, the Planning Service was content that the proposal would comply with policy QD1 of Planning Policy Statement 7 and policy LC1 of Planning Policy Statement 7 Addendum in that it would not result in any unacceptable damage to the local character or environmental quality of the established residential area and proposed ATC.

Turning to the potential impact of the development on the residential amenity of existing dwellings, the Committee was shown four adjacent properties that had the potential to be directly impacted upon.

Looking first at Nos. 60 and 62, the main three storey section of the proposed dwelling would be a distance of approximately 27m from the closest parts of the rear of these dwellings and 33m from their main rear elevation. The two-storey garage projection would also be located 21.2m from the main rear two storey elevation of the dwellings. All of these distances exceeded the recommended 20m ‘back-to-back’ separation distance for opposing upper floor windows as set out in the Creating Places Guidelines which was considered to be sufficient to ensure adequate levels of privacy within established residential areas. While a small roof terrace was proposed above the garage projection, there would be no potential for any overlooking, given that a 1.8m high opaque glass screen was proposed.

It was considered that the proposed terrace would actually have less of an impact than the existing balconies at the rear of Nos. 78 and 80 which currently had unscreened views towards Nos. 60 and 62.

The occupant of No. 62 had raised particular concerns in relation to loss of light and dominance and the potential impact on both Nos. 60 and 62 had been considered in detail in the Case Officer’s Report and Addendum. Where a proposed building would be positioned directly opposite an existing building, as was the case for this application, the 25-degree light test could be applied as a tool to aid in the assessment of potential loss of light. This was recommended in the BRE Daylight and Sunlight Guide and while not set out in planning policy, it was accepted as the UK’s primary good-practice document for assessing daylight.

The Committee was shown a diagram demonstrating that the proposed dwelling would be located a sufficient distance from the rear ground floor windows of Nos. 60 and 62 to ensure that the 25-degree angle was not breached. The blue line showed the angle from the rear ground floor window of No. 62 and the red line showed the angle drawn from the closest rear ground floor window of No. 60.

Further slides showed views from the rear of No. 62 towards the application site. While there was no doubt that the replacement dwelling would appear larger from this view and there would be less of a gap between Nos. 80 and 82, at this distance,

it could not be argued that the dwelling would result in an unreasonable overbearing impact or an unacceptable degree of dominance.

As shown in the earlier slides, the height of the proposed dwelling was very much in keeping with the adjacent dwellings. The Committee was shown a contextual elevation which also showed that while reduced, spacing would still remain between the existing and proposed dwellings when viewed from Ward Avenue and the rear of Nos. 60 and 62.

The Committee was shown the view from the ground floor living room of No. 62 with the approximate location of the proposed dwelling shaded yellow. While the amount of visible sky would be reduced slightly, there was still sky visible above and this would be increased further with the proposed removal of the tree to the top right of the photo. From this distance it was also not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable dominant impact.

In terms of the potential impact on the privacy of No. 82, the proposed dwelling would have a number of upper floor windows on its side elevation which would face No. 82. However, as shown in the photograph presented to Committee, the existing dwelling had two upper floor bedroom windows which already had direct views towards the windows of No. 82. There would also be no unacceptable loss of light to No. 82 as the windows located on its gable were all secondary sources of light to the rooms which they served with the main sources of light located on the eastern elevation.

In terms of the potential impact on No. 78, the proposed replacement dwelling would be positioned a similar distance from the party boundary to the existing dwelling. As shown in the photographs presented, both dwellings already had windows on their side elevations within close proximity to each other which resulted in a degree of overlooking between both dwellings. The replacement dwelling would continue to include a number of upper floor windows on the side elevation however it was not considered that these would result in any significantly greater degree of overlooking than the current situation, nor would the replacement dwelling result in any unacceptable loss of light to any habitable rooms of No. 78.

A total of 11 letters of objection from eight separate addresses had been received throughout the processing of the application; however, following submission of amended proposals in July, objections were received from only three addresses. All the concerns raised had been considered in detail in the Case Officer’s Report and all consultees were content with the proposal.

In conclusion, the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposal met all of the relevant policy requirements set out in PPS7 and PPS7 Addendum with regard to impact on the character of the area and the amenity of neighbouring properties and it was therefore recommended that full planning permission should be granted.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Councillor Cathcart asked how the demolition assessment related to the wider character of the ATC, noting that the area featured pitched roofs and bay windows. He asked if any buildings outside of the Victorian and Georgian periods could be demolished.

The Senior Planner advised that it was not simply a matter of period. Number 80 was not a particularly good example due to unsympathetic extensions and alterations over the years. It was therefore not judged to make a material contribution to the ATC.

Councillor Cathcart felt that the proposed building design would appear out of character and understood that the ATC policy required replacement to be a betterment. He put this to the Officer who explained that it was a 'no harm' test to appearance or character. The ATC was still a proposal and had no defined character yet but officers could still assess the impact objectively. There were other modern and contemporary buildings in the area and while this building would be seen against traditional buildings, these would only be glimpses behind existing dwellings rather than sustained views while travelling along the road.

Councillor Cathcart noted that harm was something for the Committee to determine. He asked whether the assessment of the wider ATC was a formal visual test, given the prominent hilltop site which overlooked a large area. The Officer advised that it was predominantly a visual test, also required under Policy QD1 of PPS 7. Officers had considered how it read with established built form, the critical views and their extent. The ATC was substantial and stretched across the Ballyholme Bay area and contained a great variety of architectural styles.

(Councillor Smart withdrew from the meeting – 7.20pm)

Alderman McAlpine noted the building was three storeys with only the nursing home nearby at that height and had a sloped flat roof rather than a normal pitched roof. She asked if two or two and a half storeys had been considered, believing that the bank of three windows made it comparable to the nearby apartments and contributed to the mass.

The Officer explained that the Planning Service could only assess what was submitted and could only seek amendments if something was unacceptable. She referred to other buildings (Nos 82 and 84 and apartments at Seacliff Road and Seaforth Avenue) which were all three storeys and interlinked. The height was below Nos 82 and 84, so it was difficult to argue that it was excessive.

(Councillor Smart rejoined the meeting remotely – 7.22pm)

Councillor McClean recalled previous concerns about large modern buildings in ATCs. He took comfort that the Council had appeared to have opposed the dormers at No 82 which had been allowed on appeal. He asked if No 78, approved in 2021, had come before the Committee as he would have had concerns.

The Senior Planner confirmed that No 78 had had renovations and alterations to an original house that was itself of modern design and she did not believe it had come to Committee.

The Chair introduced Mr Adam Harbinson, who was in attendance to speak against the application. His address to the Committee was summarised as follows:

Mr Harbinson advised that he was the owner of 62 Ward Avenue, located to the west of the application site at No. 80, where he lived with his wife and two young children. He noted that the rear of his home faced No. 80 and, for ease of reference, would primarily refer to the information contained within the Case Officer's Report.

Mr Harbinson referred to the photographs on pages 11 and 16 of the report, which demonstrated the relationship between his property and No. 80. It was further noted that, as stated in the report, much of the vegetation currently visible in the photographs on page 16 would either not be present during the autumn and winter months or would be removed as part of the construction of the proposed dwelling.

Addressing the Committee on the issues of overlooking and overshadowing, with particular reference to the scale of the proposed dwelling and its proximity to his home, Mr Harbinson stated that he believed there were inaccuracies within the report which, cumulatively, resulted in a more favourable assessment of the proposal's impact on his property than was warranted. He clarified that he did not object to the construction of a new dwelling at No. 80 and acknowledged that he may have been incorrect regarding the alleged inaccuracies but wished to ensure that a thorough assessment of the potential impact on his home was undertaken.

The proposed dwelling featured a raised roof terrace, located above a garage, which would face his home and garden and would be positioned at the site boundary closest to his property. Reference was made to page 17 of the report, which stated that the terrace would be 21 metres from his property. He further referred to the diagram on page 18 of the report, which was annotated with various measurements. Mr Harbinson contended that the illustrated measurement line extended from a point several metres into his property to a point near the raised terrace and was shown as measuring 21.2 metres. However, he maintained that a line drawn from the rearmost first-floor windows of his property to the terrace would measure less than 21.2 metres. He also noted that the raised terrace would be only a few metres from his rear garden, which his family should be able to enjoy without a raised platform overlooking it at the closest boundary of the site. In his view, the report's conclusion that "no greater degree of overlooking will be created" could not be the case.

Mr Harbinson also expressed concerns regarding overshadowing, stating that, due to its size and proximity, the proposed dwelling would overshadow his property. He did not believe the impact on his home had been fully captured within the report. Reference was made to page 19 of the report, which stated that his home "will not be overshadowed or lose any sunlight". He advised that the rear window of his living room faced No. 80 and noted that the proposed dwelling represented an increase in all dimensions over the existing dwelling, due in part to an increased ridge height and the extension of the ridgeline across almost the full width of the property boundary. In his opinion, the proposed dwelling would cast a new shadow into, and block sunlight from, his living room.

He made further reference to the assessment within the report based upon a 25-degree line drawn from the rear of his property towards the site at No. 80. It was noted that one of the diagrams on page 20 indicated that the 25-degree line should be drawn from the centre of the lowest window, which he considered would equate to

a height of approximately 1.6 metres on his living room window. However, Mr Harbinson contended that the calculation within the report was based on a height of two metres without explaining why the higher point had been used.

He also noted that the report used a separation distance of 33 metres between his property and the proposed dwelling, although this measurement was not referenced elsewhere within the report and, he maintained, the proposed dwelling would be located closer to his property than this. In addition, the height of the proposed dwelling was stated within the calculation as 9.5 metres, whereas page 8 of the report referred to elevations of 10.6 metres and 11.9 metres.

Mr Harbinson concluded by stating that a calculation based upon a distance of less than 33 metres, a building height of 10.6 or 11.9 metres, and a 25-degree line drawn from the midpoint of his living room window would, in his view, produce a different result and demonstrate that the proposed dwelling would overshadow his home.

(Councillor Smart withdrew from the meeting – 7.35pm)

The Chair invited questions to the speaker and Councillor Wray noted that Mr Harbinson had suggested that minor alterations could have made a major difference. He asked what those minor alterations would be and which planning policies were breached in its current form.

Mr Harbinson agreed with the suggestion for two or two and a half storeys from Alderman McAlpine. As far as he was aware, this had not been considered. He felt that the design was selectively drawing on features of existing buildings, including No. 80’s older roofline and No. 78’s modern extension to justify a new, very modern building. He said he was unable to cite the relevant policies as this was not his expertise.

Councillor Cathcart asked Mr Harbinson to respond to the officer’s view that the proposed terrace might be a betterment and Mr Harbinson stated that the existing balconies did not look to his home or garden in the same way and the proposed terrace would sit at the closest point to his property. No 78’s large roof terrace was designed to look over Ballyholme Bay but the proposed terrace did not have the same outlook and would face his property.

Councillor Hennessy noted the officer’s point that the development would remain beyond the 20-metre minimum distance. He asked the speaker for his view on this and Mr Harbinson felt that 21.2 metre distance was not much more than the minimum and invited Members to come and see the outlook from his living room.

Mr Harbinson returned to the public gallery and the Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification.

Councillor Morgan queried the 20-metre rule and asked if it was policy. The Officer advised that it was a guideline from Creating Places, a design guide for residential development. It applied between opposing rear first floor windows to provide privacy and avoid overshadowing and loss of daylight. She clarified that the 21.2m related to the two-storey element with 27m to 33m to the higher three storey part.

Councillor Morgan asked whether the 25-degree line passed above the yellow outline of the proposed dwelling and why the 25-degree angle was used. The Officer advised that neither the blue line from No. 62's living room window nor the red line from the closer ground floor window at No. 60 intersected the proposed building. She advised that the 25-degree test was in the BRE Daylight and Sunlight Guidelines rather than planning policy and was widely used in the UK for daylight assessments when buildings faced one another.

Councillor Hennessy queried the front facing Seacliff Road and how it compared to the existing building. The Officer advised that the ground-floor width was similar but increased further up.

In a further query, Councillor Hennessy noted that the height was similar to the neighbouring dwelling and smaller than No. 82. He asked how much weight was given to the overall mass. The Officer advised that it had been assessed against the semi-detached block at Nos. 82 and 84, a substantial and higher building and was comparable in scale and mass.

Councillor Cathcart queried the term obscure glazing and the Officer explained that it meant preventing something from being seen. It was referred to in PPS 7 as an appropriate mitigation against overlooking and was regularly conditioned. The 1.8-metre screen was above average eye level of 1.7 metres and was conditioned to be in place prior to occupation.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the speaker's concerns about overlooking and asked for the Officer's view. The Officer showed the existing balcony at No. 80 and the steps and higher balcony at No. 78. Views from these were towards No. 60 rather than No. 62, but if the tree were removed there would be direct views. The proposed terrace would have an obscure screen that could not be seen through.

Alderman Smith noted the 21.2 metre distance was measured from the corner of the garage and terrace and asked the distance to No. 62's projecting conservatory. The Officer did not have the exact measurement but confirmed it would be less. The conservatory was at ground floor, the 20-metre guideline related to opposing first-floor windows, and the 1.8m high screen would obscure views from the terrace towards the conservatory.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council grants Planning Permission.

Councillor Wray sympathised with Mr Harbinson but had heard no policy reason that could justify refusal. The proposal had passed the 25-degree light test, provided adequate privacy and he noted other modern designs in the proposed ATC.

The seconder, Councillor Morgan, was also sympathetic to Mr Harbinson but she could not see a reason under policy that would withstand scrutiny.

Councillor Cathcart could not support the proposal. He believed that the matter was finely balanced and he did not view the proposal as a betterment and felt it did not

reflect the characteristics of the area and was out of context. He considered it contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS 7, as it was not appropriate to the character and topography of the site in layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance.

On being put to the meeting with 5 voting FOR, 2 AGAINST, 4 ABSTAINING and 5 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED.

The vote was recorded as follows:

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

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation to grant planning permission be adopted.

4.2 LA06/2024/0465/F - AGRICULTURAL SHED (RETROSPECTIVE)

(Appendix II – III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.
DEA: Ards Peninsula
Committee Interest: Called in from the Delegated List.
Proposal: Agricultural shed (retrospective)
Site Location: Approx. 95m North of 37 Craigboy Road (Four Acres Farm), Donaghadee
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

The Principal Planner outlined the Case Officer's Report, explaining that this application was before Members due to a call-in by Alderman McIlveen.

(Councillor Smart rejoined the meeting remotely – 7.52pm)

The reason for the call-in was to consider whether the application met the criteria set out in Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21 including whether it was essential for the efficient functioning of the business, whether there were other suitable buildings on the holding or enterprise and whether there were any health and safety reasons for the building.

The recommendation was to refuse planning permission.

All consultees were content and there were no objectors.

Members were advised that at the time of the submission of the planning application and site visits by the Case Officer in July 2024 and December 2024 the shed had not been constructed but had since been built without the benefit of planning permission and was now considered to be retrospective.

Members were also advised that, while the front page of the Case Officer's Report stated a recommendation to grant permission, this was an administrative error and it was clear from the content of the report and the recommendation that it was to refuse planning permission.

The Committee was shown the application site which was located approximately 95m north of 37 Craigboy Road in the countryside outside Donaghadee.

The site was set back over 120m from Craigboy Road on flat land immediately adjacent to an existing farm building and was not visually prominent in the wider rural landscape.

Views of the shed were limited primarily to the eastern approach along Craigboy Road.

The yard was enclosed by a combination of post-and-wire fencing and gated access points.

The boundaries of the site were partly defined by mature hedging, which further assisted in integrating the development into its surroundings. An existing gravelled area was located to the front of the existing shed extending to the retrospective shed which was the subject of the application.

Further slides showed photographs of the sheds on the site.

The Committee was shown the block plan and elevations of the shed constructed on the site. It measured approximately 13.9m by 7.3m with a maximum height of 3.9m.

External finishes comprised vertical timber boarding, concrete blockwork, a profiled metal sheet roof and black uPVC rainwater goods.

The building reflected the appearance of a traditional agricultural structure and incorporated materials commonly found within the rural area. The scale, form and design were sympathetic with the existing agricultural shed located immediately adjacent to the site and the building read as part of a coherent farm group.

Turning to policy CTY10, Members were advised that this was the first part of the assessment as it was a requirement in policy that a farm be 'active and established'.

Paragraph 5.56 of PPS21 referred to criteria set out in CTY10 as to what constituted active and established, namely that the farm business was currently active and had been established for at least six years.

Paragraph 5.39 of PPS21 defined 'agricultural activity' as including the production, rearing or growing of agricultural products, harvesting, milking, breeding animals,

keeping animals for farming purposes, or maintaining land in good agricultural and environmental condition.

The policy did not require a high or specified level of activity; rather, given the low threshold set out, it was sufficient to show that the land was being maintained in good agricultural and environmental condition.

For this particular proposal it had been demonstrated and was accepted that the farm was active and established and that an assessment of further policy tests could be considered as set out in CTY12.

Turning to Policy CTY12, Members were advised that, having established that the holding was active and established, planning permission would be granted for development on an active and established agricultural or forestry holding where it was demonstrated that it was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or forestry enterprise, and as could be seen, several criteria were listed within the policy.

The proposal was considered to fail CTY 12 because it had not been demonstrated that:

a) it was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or forestry enterprise;

b) there were no suitable existing buildings on the holding or enterprise that could be used; and

c) the proposal was sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings.

The policy explained that, exceptionally, consideration might be given to an alternative site away from existing farm or forestry buildings provided there were no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding and where it was essential for the efficient functioning of the business.

The Committee was advised that the applicant stated that the retrospective shed was required for the secure, weather-protected storage of crops and feed, together with the housing of livestock.

The applicant had advised that pedigree sheep were kept on the farm and that the building had been used for lambing and the housing of sheep.

Additional information submitted during the assessment of the application explained that the holding operated a pedigree sheep enterprise, with ewes capable of lambing at various times throughout the year.

The applicant had advised that ewes required monitoring in the weeks preceding lambing, together with ongoing supervision following birth and during periods of illness or veterinary intervention and that the building provided a controlled and sheltered environment.

The Committee was shown photographs submitted as part of the supporting information, with the date provided on the images indicating 25 May 2025.

Further slides showed photographic evidence submitted in support of the application to show storage of potatoes within the retrospective shed along with bulk storage of potatoes.

Members were advised that limited, if any, weight was being given to these images as:

- they were undated with no verifying details submitted as to when they were taken or whether they were grown on the business holding;
- they were inconsistent with observations made on site visits, for example, the potatoes showed a concrete plinth and internal arrangement which differed from the internal arrangement of the retrospective shed;
- the Council was therefore unable to verify that the photographs accurately depicted the retrospective shed subject to the application;
- in addition, no evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that potatoes formed any component of the agricultural enterprise. A review of available aerial imagery over a number of years indicated that the holding had predominantly been managed as grassland, with fields appearing to be cut for silage or hay production, together with limited areas of tree planting. No obvious evidence of potato cultivation had been identified; and
- furthermore, the supporting letter submitted by the Ulster Farmers' Union in 2024 described the business as being limited to a silage-based enterprise and made no reference to potato production.

The applicant had also indicated during a site visit that hay was produced from the holding but the Case Officer had determined there was no evidence of hay storage within either the retrospective or the lawful agricultural shed and no evidence had been submitted demonstrating a requirement for additional storage capacity associated with hay production. The Council was therefore not satisfied that the retrospective shed was reasonably required for hay storage purposes.

Further slides showed that, while the applicant had stated that the retrospective shed was required for livestock management and crop storage, observations during site visits indicated that the existing agricultural building was not being utilised to its full capacity and retained available floor space capable of accommodating crop and feed storage associated with the holding.

The Committee was shown aerial photographs relating to the site.

Members were advised that the policy directed new buildings to be sited beside existing farm buildings.

While the Council acknowledged that the dwelling at No. 37 Craigboy Road was associated with the wider farm holding, it was a residential property and not a farm or forestry building as required by the policy.

The Council had been consistent in its interpretation of this element of the policy. Reference was made to application LA06/2022/1258/F for a farm shed for the storage of fodder and machinery at Ballyblack Road, Portaferry, which had been refused planning permission and dismissed at appeal. The Commissioner determined that the domestic structures were not farm buildings for the purposes of Policy CTY12 and stated that “CTY12 requires that the proposal is sited beside existing farm buildings”.

Reference was also made to application LA06/2024/0438/O for the erection of a shed for storage and machinery 100m south of No. 35 Ballymaleddy Road, Comber, which had been called in to Planning Committee. The application had been refused permission, appealed by the applicant Ryan Doherty and subsequently dismissed at appeal. The Commissioner did not accept that an alternative site away from the holding was essential and concluded that, logistically, a shed could be accommodated within the existing farm holding.

Members were advised that the agricultural building which was the subject of the application was sited beside only one farm building and therefore failed to comply with this aspect of policy.

The wording of the policy was considered clear in that a proposal was required to be clustered with existing buildings, not a single building. As there had only been one shed on the application site when the application was submitted, it did not fulfil the policy requirement.

The unauthorised shed had been built while the application was being processed and was not built in accordance with policy, as it had not been constructed as part of a group of buildings.

With regard to the SPPS, Members were advised that it largely echoed the provisions relating to agricultural development set out in PPS21 and stated that “new buildings must be sited beside existing farm buildings” and that “an alternative site away from existing buildings will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances”.

In summary, whilst acknowledging the particular circumstances of each application, the Planning Service had sought to apply the policy in a consistent manner.

The approval of the proposed development would have the potential to create a precedent for future applications that would undermine the policy. Compliance with planning policy was in the public interest and a matter of acknowledged importance. It was considered that the arguments put forward for this application were not exceptional circumstances which would justify setting aside planning policy.

In closing, the Officer advised that refusal of planning permission was therefore recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification.

Alderman McIlveen referred to an area of land owned by another family member of the applicant. He asked whether, if it were the applicant's land, those buildings would be considered a cluster with the shed. He clarified he was asking about the visual aspect, not ownership.

The Officer explained the proposal had to be grouped with buildings of the farm holding, and only one shed had existed before the retrospective shed was built.

Alderman McIlveen argued the policy referred to farm buildings, not buildings of the same holding, and its aim was to avoid random sheds in fields. He asked where the requirement for the same holding came from.

The Principal Planner explained it was a visual test aimed at avoiding scattered development. She showed views on the approach along Craigboy Road, with farm buildings on the left, the farm dwelling at No. 39, a clear visual break, and the retrospective shed on lower land. It would not be considered grouped or clustered with those buildings.

Alderman McIlveen felt it did look clustered visually. In terms of necessity, he noted the shed was a different and not particularly large building, with ventilation and a water supply serving sheep that the other shed lacked. He asked whether this nursery use could easily be transplanted into the existing shed, which appeared focused on vehicles and maintenance.

The Officer pointed out that the slatted shed had a tractor parked in it and potatoes had been shown in an image provided by the applicant, so it had mixed uses, and hay had also been mentioned.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether, given the shed was set up for rearing sheep and the existing shed held vehicles, it was not more appropriate and therefore necessary to have them in a separate shed.

The Officer advised that only two pens had been built and a water supply could be put into any shed. The existing shed was large with considerable space. Sheep had been on the farm before the shed was built around May 2025, so she queried where they had been kept before that.

The sheep appeared to be pedigree Valais Blacknose, which could lamb throughout the year, but lambing was usually January to April, and in her experience an open-sided shed was very exposed for lambing. Any shed could be ventilated. Several drive-bys and site visits had not found many sheep on site.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether officers felt the storage and sheep could all fit in the existing shed and the Officer advised that the pile of potatoes shown was not large and, with the boxes, could easily be stored in the larger shed. The retrospective shed was not necessary for the efficient running of the farm.

Alderman McIlveen asked why the applicant would build a shed he did not need and the Officer replied that it was not for her to speculate. The applicant had chosen to build it while the application was under determination, entirely at his own risk.

Councillor Morgan queried how the original shed had gained planning permission and felt that there was an unclear picture of the operation's scale. She asked for assurance that evidence of need had been requested, and how many livestock the NED condition would allow.

The Officer explained the original shed had permitted development (PD) rights for agriculture. The land was on a field number on DAERA maps, so was agricultural land. SES had been consulted and had no objection, as the shed was for machinery storage with no livestock.

A certificate of lawfulness had been granted under Part 4 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, which did not require proof of an active and established farm.

It was less than 75 metres from the nearest farm buildings and 65 metres from a non-farm dwelling. It was determined at the end of May 2021, but the shed had been built at the start of May.

In terms of evidence of need, the Officer confirmed that while the onus was on the applicant, evidence of need had been requested during processing. Six to 10 sheep had been seen on site and SES had been consulted on that basis. Receipts satisfied officers that it was a farm business, but there was no real evidence on potato production or on why the shed was necessary.

On livestock numbers, the Officer advised that NED and SES had been consulted, including on proximity to designated sites. SES had concluded there would be no likely significant effect on any European site, based on the shed housing no more than five or six pedigree sheep during lambing or adverse weather, which would not produce sufficient ammonia to affect sites within 7.5 kilometres.

SES advised a condition restricting livestock levels to those assessed, to ensure continued compliance with environmental requirements.

Councillor Morgan noted that this meant a shed for five sheep and the Officer confirmed a condition would be needed. She added that the information supplied stated its primary function was temporary isolation and lambing for short periods, and that even with all stock housed at once, manure would be no more than one wheelbarrow a week.

The Chair introduced Mr Alan Mains (Agent) and Mr Kyle McBride (Applicant) who were in attendance to speak in support of the application. Their address was summarised as follows:

Mr Mains said that the relevant policy was CTY 12 of PPS 21, which supported agricultural development on an active and established holding where the building was necessary for the efficient use of that holding.

He stated that there was no dispute that this was a genuine and long-established farm. The holding had been farmed by the family for approximately 35 to 40 years and now supported a developing livestock enterprise alongside its traditional crop production.

Mr Mains emphasised that this was not speculative development but a modest agricultural shed required for housing, monitoring and safely managing the farm's sheep, particularly during lambing and periods of severe weather.

It was submitted that the building met the principal requirements of CTY 12.

Firstly, it was considered necessary for the efficient operation of the holding. The applicants had approximately 35 to 40 sheep, including a valuable pedigree flock. The building provided shelter, lambing and isolation facilities and allowed the animals to be monitored by CCTV. Its practical value was illustrated by the fact that no animals had been lost since it came into use.

Secondly, it was considered appropriate in character and scale. The building was described as being approximately one Land Rover wide and three Land Rovers long. Its ridge height was significantly lower than the neighbouring shed and it was approximately one-third smaller.

Thirdly, it was stated that the building integrated with the landscape. It was screened by mature hedging, did not occupy a prominent or skyline position and did not extend development further into the countryside. Reference was made to the officer's report, which described a "compact group of agricultural buildings".

Mr Mains noted that PPS 21 made clear that integration did not mean invisibility. The test was whether a building blended unobtrusively with its immediate and wider surroundings and, in his view, this building achieved that.

The principal concern was identified as whether the shed was sufficiently close to the existing farm buildings.

It was noted that the shed was located less than 5m from an existing agricultural building on the same holding. That building had previously been approved within approximately 75 metres of the original farm cluster. Mr Mains contended that the new shed therefore sat closer to the main cluster, filled the space between existing buildings and strengthened the appearance of a coherent agricultural group. It did not represent isolated development.

Mr Mains further submitted that CTY 12 required a building to be sited beside existing farm buildings but did not prescribe a fixed distance. A separation of less than 5m should reasonably be regarded as being "beside".

He further argued that, even if Members disagreed with that interpretation, CTY 12 allowed an alternative position where it was essential for the efficient functioning of the business or justified by health and safety considerations. In his view, both circumstances applied in this case.

The shed was said to support the safe handling, shelter and isolation of livestock. It protected those working with the animals during periods of severe weather and assisted the farmer in meeting animal welfare responsibilities. Reference was also made to Northern Ireland legislation requiring those responsible for livestock to provide a suitable environment and protect animals from suffering, injury and disease.

Mr Mains referred to paragraph 5.50 of PPS 21, which stated:

“As agriculture and forestry continue to change and develop, it is important that the planning process continues to support the operational needs of these enterprises.”

It was argued that this application represented an established family farm adapting its operations in order to maintain a viable livestock enterprise.

Mr Mains noted that there had been no objections from neighbouring residents and no evidence of harm to residential amenity, rural character, road safety, or the natural or built heritage.

In conclusion, Mr Mains stated that the Committee was being asked to approve a small, necessary and well-integrated agricultural building. Approval would support animal welfare, farm safety and the continued viability of a rural enterprise without causing identifiable planning harm.

The Chair invited questions to the speakers and Alderman Smith asked why the additional shed was needed when officers suggested the existing shed had enough space.

Mr McBride explained the application shed was purpose-designed for livestock, which were prone to disease and ammonia. The slatted sides allowed for ventilation. The existing shed would sweat with animals, would be impossible to work in on machinery, and would hold the ammonia smell. The pens could be configured to run sheep tightly to prevent injury and could hold from five up to 50 or 60 sheep. Hay could be stored at the end in the off-season.

Alderman McIlveen queried the use of the original shed and why it was not suitable.

Mr McBride explained that it stored two Land Rovers, rotavators, two diggers, trailers, a plough and a tractor, in use non-stop throughout the year. He added that the shed appeared emptier at the second site visit because half the machinery was out in operation. They had also installed pallet racking to make the most of the space.

Livestock would make the smell overwhelming as the shed was unventilated, and it was not adaptable. The new shed had been built because it was needed, with 5-foot concrete walls for the sheep safety and welfare. In the existing shed, the tin ran to the ground and sheep could cut their feet and push it off the structure.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether injury to sheep was the main concern and Mr McBride confirmed it was. In the existing shed, sheep caught legs and stripped their skin on the metal walls whereas livestock sheds used 5-foot concrete panels. He added that a lambing photograph of his fiancée was taken at 3.30am, and the shed gave her shelter and gave him peace of mind through CCTV.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether the open side was an advantage given officers' concerns about severe weather. Mr McBride stated it was. The prevailing wind was westerly, so the back faced west and the open front faced east with an overhang designed on a 25-degree angle to keep rain out. It was somewhat exposed to wind at the front, but ventilation and dispersing the smell were the main reasons for the design.

Alderman McIlveen queried the number of livestock losses before the shed was built. Mr McBride explained they had only had livestock for a couple of years. In the first year sheep had lambed in the fields and some had been lost. Since the new shed, with 24-hour monitoring, they had not lost an animal, and they had invested for welfare reasons.

Councillor Hennessy queried the applicant’s farming background and Mr McBride explained his grandfather had farmed all his life, until age 96, and the family had farmed this holding since 1992. Four Acres Farm had previously been a potato supplier up to 2015. He had taken over the farm at that point and partnered with RGWP Ltd, growing crops for an anaerobic digestion plant to generate renewable energy, which continued. They had always had some livestock, all registered with DAERA, including eight pedigree Valais Blacknose and about 40 fat stock. Fat stock numbers varied with monthly markets.

Councillor Hennessy referred to a photo which showed potatoes being stored on the premises. Mr McBride stated he had been asked for examples of how the shed could be used and the two images were AI-generated. A removable concrete divider, of the same construction as the outer walls, had been shown to the case officer. It was currently removed but could be reinstated, and in winter would separate the sheep from hay and bales.

Councillor Hennessy noted the SES advice limited sheep numbers to five and asked why that number could not be kept in the larger shed. Mr McBride stated space was the main reason, given the machinery and pallet racking. Sheep also created smell and urine, and the existing shed had no drainage, fastening points or water.

Councillor Hennessy asked if this was why the shed was built before permission was granted and whether he had been in contact with officers. Mr McBride stated that the first application had been approved and, having read CTY 12, he was convinced he met it. The planning application had taken much longer, the shed had been ordered and winter was approaching. The case officer had advised it was right on the line, with some points undecided, and his hand had been forced by the winter.

Councillor Cathcart asked how long the shed had been in place and Mr McBride explained it had been about one year.

Councillor Cathcart said he was confused by the AI images. After a year of use the purpose should be established, and real images of the shed in use should have been provided.

Mr Mains explained he had been brought in around 24 months earlier and was surprised the 2024 application was still under discussion. He respected the planners, who had tried to work with them, but evidence depended on weather and the season.

Several planners with different opinions had been involved and they had struggled to avoid creating a precedent. Mr McBride had genuinely tried to help by illustrating possible uses.

Councillor Cathcart repeated that, after a year, there should be examples other than sheep. Mr Mains stated there had been long periods without contact from the Planning Service, and the applicant had submitted the evidence that had been requested.

Councillor Morgan, having previously kept sheep herself, asked about the breed. Mr McBride confirmed they were Valais Blacknose from Switzerland, worth around £5,000 and up to £20,000 each, which showed the need to look after every animal.

Councillor Morgan understood what it was like to lose sheep. However, she struggled to see why five ewes needed such a large shed rather than the existing one. Hurdles and slats could be used. A strong ammonia smell from five ewes would suggest something was wrong, and SES were content because it was only five. She added that the use was temporary, for lambing.

She also struggled with the lack of evidence despite the onus on the applicant and repeated requests. There were only AI-generated potatoes, no hay or silage photographs and no receipts. The refusal recommendation would not have come as a surprise, yet no evidence had been provided.

Mr Mains felt it was unfair to suggest information had flowed smoothly. At times the applicant had felt it would be supported, and he felt officers were embarrassed by how long it had taken. They had always supplied what was asked for. He believed officers did not want to create a precedent, but believed that with conditions, the application could be approved.

Councillor Morgan shared the disappointment at the delay but still struggled with the lack of factual information despite requests.

Mr McBride added that, while only five or six sheep would be housed at a time, all 35 had been put through the shed the previous Sunday for shearing and dosing for foot scald. They were not housed there, but the shed was invaluable for that in winter.

He added that he had no experience of planning applications. The application was for a livestock shed with hay storage, and when asked for evidence of crop use he had provided examples. He did not buy hay at that time of year. Councillor Morgan added that an invoice would have done.

Alderman Graham noted Mr McBride's enthusiasm and asked whether sheep would be a long-term part of the farm. Mr McBride confirmed it was the future of the farm, hence investing upwards of £30,000 in the shed to do it properly and fit it into the area. His fiancée had started with the small pedigree flock, after which they had developed the fat sheep business.

The speakers returned to the public gallery and the Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification.

Councillor McClean asked whether the application had been finely balanced, as suggested, and whether mitigation could give officers comfort that no precedent would be set.

The Planning Officer stated the application was not compliant and had never been a 50/50 case. Officers had been consistent on agricultural sheds, particularly on necessity, and two appeals had been dismissed in the Borough.

There had been every opportunity given to the applicant to submit supporting information, and it had taken a year for the agent to do so. The use had changed from machinery storage to include livestock. DAERA correspondence referred only to the smaller flock and made no mention of potatoes.

The Officer added that sheds could be modified, and the concrete dividers could be moved and set along the edge of a shed. Sheep did get injured, but sheds and panels could be adapted for livestock. Hay had to be kept dry, so she did not know why it would be stored in an open-sided shed.

Councillor McClean appreciated the candour about the AI image and asked whether officers had known about this. The Planning Officer stated they had never been told but had assumed it was AI, noting it showed possibly the cleanest farm she had ever seen. She clarified that the past potato production had been run by Ian McBride, who was not named on the application.

Councillor Cathcart asked why this had not been made clear in the report, as Members needed to know. The Planning Officer added that officers had not been told the shed was going to be built either.

Councillor Cathcart asked what harm a shed beside another permitted development shed caused, and why action was being taken.

The Planning Officer stated the policy referred to buildings in the plural and there was only a single shed. She recalled explaining this to Mr Mains. Internal footage from the shed dated from May 2025, well over a year earlier.

She read from a March 2025 email from the case officer. It noted the supporting statement referred to housing livestock while the description referred to fertiliser storage, and requested an amended description, details of livestock and further evidence. It noted further consultation with NIEA and SES might be needed and

raised concern that the shed grouped with only one building. At the December 2024 site visit there had been no shed.

Alderman Graham asked whether officers accepted the building was clearly for livestock. The Planning Officer stated it was not solely for livestock, as a tractor was also shown and hay storage had been mentioned, so it was for general agricultural use.

Alderman Graham asked why the shed would have ventilation and cladding if it was not intended for livestock. The Planning Officer explained the application had originally been for hay and fertiliser storage, and had changed during processing. It was the applicant who stated the design was suitable for livestock.

Councillor Morgan stated she did not want to stand in the way of a business, but NED had been clear the maximum was five sheep on a temporary basis. The shed was now said to be used for running fat stock through for treatment, which was easier on concrete. She felt that there were conflicting claims of the shed's intended use which did not stack up. She put this to the Officer who agreed there was a dilemma, as significantly more livestock had been referred to than the number assessed. Consultees had set the condition on the information provided, and officers would have to go back to SES.

Councillor Morgan noted that running 35 sheep through handling facilities produced considerable waste, and the shed could not contain or dispose of it properly.

RECESS
(The meeting adjourned at 9.02pm and resumed at 9.16pm)

Alderman McIlveen asked officers to confirm that retrospective applications were lawful as a means of regularising development. The Planning Officer confirmed this.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether being retrospective was a material consideration and the Planning Officer confirmed it was not, though it still had to comply with policy and was built at the applicant's own risk.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether proximity to other farm buildings had been part of the PD assessment for the original shed. The Planning Officer explained the PD legislation required a building to be within 75 metres of the nearest group of principal farm buildings, but was different legislation from CTY 12 and did not refer to purpose.

Alderman McIlveen felt the logical purpose of the distance test was to avoid isolated buildings. The Planning Officer stated the question for legislation was simply whether it complied.

Alderman McIlveen asked whether, under PD, the other farm buildings needed to be on the same holding.

The Planning Officer stated it was a separate holding. On investigating the PD application, she had found the agent stated the applicant owned all the land, with

Certificate A signed. A Land Registry check showed the land was owned by another person, on whom no Certificate C had been served.

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the recommendation be adopted and the Council refuse planning permission.

Councillor Morgan stated she was sorry, having loved keeping sheep herself, but planning was a blunt process. The onus was on the applicant to show need and, despite requests and the time taken, the evidence had not been provided. Approving applications without proper evidence would create a terrible hole, and AI photographs did not suffice.

She found it inconceivable that the shed was needed for five sheep. The existing shed was not ideal but could hold five sheep, at about 1.2 square metres each, for temporary isolation or veterinary treatment. She was concerned it was being used for other purposes, which would need a condition. In terms of location, policy required it to be close to other buildings and it was not.

Alderman McIlveen felt too much emphasis was being placed on some matters. The NED response was based on an early email and might have differed if higher numbers had been given, and it was only a recommendation. The verbal evidence heard should be weighed, as it explained more about the shed's use. The photographs were not useful and he would have preferred other evidence, but they were not a reason for refusal.

In terms of policy, he considered the shed necessary for efficient use of the holding, for lambing and other purposes, and noted Councillor Morgan had acknowledged its benefits. It looked much more like a livestock shed than the other building, and very expensive sheep required the best housing.

He described a strange dance over what could be considered a farm building. The policy did not say same holding, yet Members were being asked to exclude what they could see with their own eyes. There was a visual cluster and it met policy. Being retrospective did not matter, and in fact helped Members see its use. He therefore could not support the proposal.

Alderman Graham felt there was a lack of understanding of day-to-day farming. On his own farm, a building built as a silage silo now stored barley and fertiliser and part of a telescopic handler, and other buildings had held potatoes and now held straw and machinery. Farm buildings were inevitably multi-purpose.

He felt the investment in concrete walls of about a metre and a half and Yorkshire boarding pointed to the shed's long-term livestock purpose. He recalled the March 2013 snowstorm, when farmers lost livestock. It was not for the Committee to second-guess how a farmer managed his operation, and housing sheep in a multi-purpose shed with tools and equipment would be bonkers.

He agreed with Alderman McIlveen on clustering, noting the new shed was closer to the other buildings. He felt the distinction between one building and several was

dancing on a pinhead, as farmers often now built one large building instead of several smaller ones.

Councillor Hennessy supported the proposal. He had found it very difficult and agreed the building appeared to be primarily for the sheep, which were valuable and important to the farm. However, it was for the applicant to evidence the use. He appreciated the presentations, but it came down to policy, and officers had shown the wide view and the gap between the retrospective shed and the other buildings.

Alderman Smith felt the evidence presented demonstrated the necessity for the shed, that there was no alternative for the purpose required, and that it was needed for the sustainability of the farm business.

On being put to the meeting, with 4 voting FOR, 5 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING and 4 ABSENT, the proposal FELL.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (4)	**AGAINST (5)**	**ABSTAINED (3)**	**ABSENT (4)**
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
McAlpine	Graham		
McDowell	McIlveen		
	Smith		
Councillors	**Councillors**	**Councillors**	**Councillors**
Hennessy	McClean	Cathcart	Harbinson
Morgan	Wray	McCollum	Kendall
		Smart	Kerr
			McKee

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

The proposer felt the application met Policy CTY 12 as it was necessary for the efficient use of the holding. It was clearly a livestock shed and, given the expense of the sheep and its use, that use could not take place in the other shed, so there was no other suitable building. It was sited beside existing farm buildings, even if not on the same holding, and this was a visual test that he was satisfied was met.

On being put to the meeting, with 5 voting FOR, 4 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING and 4 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED.

FOR (5)	**AGAINST (4)**	**ABSTAINED (3)**	**ABSENT (4)**
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
Graham	McAlpine		
McIlveen	McDowell		
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillors**	**Councillors**	**Councillors**

McClean	Hennessy	Cathcart	Harbinson
Wray	Morgan	McCollum	Kendall
		Smart	Kerr
			McKee

The Head of Planning and Building Control sought clarification on conditions.

Alderman McIlveen was content to delegate conditions to officers. He also agreed that officers should return to SES on the higher number of sheep, as its view might differ.

The Chair advised that written confirmation would be needed from the applicant of the number of sheep to be housed. Councillor Morgan asked that the handling activity also be understood, as it produced a considerable amount of waste.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the Council grant planning permission with the final conditions delegated to officers.

(Alderman McDowell withdrew from the meeting – 9.42pm)

4.3 LA06/2026/0073/F - REPLACEMENT NI WATER OVERGROUND CONTROL KIOSK AND ALL ASSOCIATED SITE WORKS

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.
DEA: Comber
Committee Interest: Called in to Committee due to six or more objections.
Proposal: Replacement NI Water Overground Control Kiosk and all associated site works
Site Location: Lands directly North of 107 Whiterock Road, Whiterock
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the Case Officer's Report, explaining that planning application LA06/2026/0073/F was for a replacement NI Water overground control kiosk and all associated site works on lands directly north of 107 Whiterock Road, Killinchy.

The recommendation was to grant planning permission. All consultees were content.

The Committee was shown the application site which was located within the settlement of Whiterock in close proximity to both the public Whiterock Road and the coastline of Strangford Lough. The site was within the Strangford and Lecale AONB.

Further slides showed the site in its wider context. The proposal lay to the north of an apartment building at 107 Whiterock Road and directly adjacent to the entrance of No. 1 Braddock Reach which had a timber fence to the front of the property.

The site itself was largely flat, consisting of tarmac with three chevron road signs, due to the site's proximity to a sharp corner on the Whiterock Road.

The Committee was shown the existing kiosk which was to be replaced on a section of road that sloped steeply upwards to the south.

Members were shown the proposed layout. The proposal involved the replacement and relocation of an NI Water overground control kiosk, which incorporated bollards and amended positioning of existing road signs to facilitate this.

The supporting statement provided with the application indicated that the location of the existing kiosk was unsafe for maintenance works considering its roadside location close to a sharp corner and that the relocation of the kiosk would move it off the roadside.

The Committee was shown the proposed kiosk plans.

Members were advised that the proposal had been amended from that originally submitted. The original plans included a telemetry aerial, however, following strong levels of objection from neighbouring residents, the aerial was removed. The works therefore now consisted only of the kiosk and associated site works.

Members were also advised that an objector had raised issues regarding the serving of notice on his lands. Peter and Anne Taylor, in an email dated 2 October 2026, wished Members of the Planning Committee to note that they were the landowners of the affected land and had not granted NI Water consent, an easement, wayleave or other property right for the proposed kiosk.

The Planning Service was satisfied that notice had been served and NI Water had issued evidence to this effect.

Members were advised that any issue of land ownership was a civil matter and the Planning Service was content that the proper procedure had been followed in the serving of notice.

Given the location within an AONB, the relevant policy considerations were the SPPS and Policy NH6 of PPS2.

Policy NH6 of PPS2 stated that permission would only be granted for new development in an AONB where it was of an appropriate design, size and scale for the locality, with consideration also given to siting, conservation of features of importance and whether the proposal respected local materials, design and colour.

The supporting statement submitted with the application indicated that the dimensions and green colour of the proposal meant it would not be prominent and therefore would not have any adverse impacts upon the surrounding AONB.

It was acknowledged that the structure would have a utilitarian appearance similar to other structures required for such utilities, however this had to be balanced against its height of only 1.5 metres and the wider area context which included a large

corrugated metal shed at the entrance to Braddock Reach which was a more prominent feature.

Other ancillary works such as bollards and the movement of chevron road signs were of such a minor scale that they were not deemed to have any significant impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding AONB.

The proposal was not of such scale or significance that it would detract from the character of the AONB.

With regard to residential amenity, Environmental Health was consulted and was satisfied that the mitigation measures outlined in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan were satisfactory and these had been conditioned.

There would be no loss of light, overshadowing or dominance to the closest properties at No. 1 Braddock Reach and the apartments at 107 Whiterock Road.

There would be no environmental impact on Strangford Lough and relevant consultees were content. A condition had been included to ensure a 10m buffer for works as requested by Shared Environmental Service.

Turning to flood risk matters, Members were advised that the application site was located within the undefended 1 in 200 year coastal flood plain.

It was considered that the proposal was an exception to policy as it related to utilities infrastructure.

The applicant submitted a Flood Risk Assessment in compliance with PPS15 and DfI Rivers was content with the proposal in relation to Policy FLD1.

DfI Rivers advised that it disagreed with the proposal being considered an exception under FLD1, but was content with the logic and findings of the Flood Risk Assessment. No reasoning was provided for its disagreement with the classification of the proposal as an exception. Given that the determination of whether the proposal fell within an exception rested with the Council, the Planning Department was content that the proposal could be considered as an exception.

As DfI Rivers was content with the Flood Risk Assessment, the Planning Department was satisfied that the proposal was acceptable under Policy FLD1 of PPS15.

Further information was provided by the applicant to justify the positioning of the proposal within the floodplain, namely that it allowed a clear line of sight to the Wastewater Pumping Station and enabled workers to operate safely away from the public road.

The Planning Service had also queried a possible siting outside the floodplain with the agent.

Members were advised that alternative options had been considered to move the structure out of the floodplain, however these were considered unacceptable due to

the potential to impede vehicular access to the apartments at The Moorings. In addition, in that position only 0.3m of space would remain for pedestrians on a dangerous corner.

Given the siting constraints and the weighing up of material planning considerations, together with the proposed siting within the floodplain, the proposal for an essential utilities development was considered acceptable and the grant of planning permission was recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Alderman Smith sought further detail on the landowner's concerns about the application.

The Planning Officer explained that planning permission went with the land, irrespective of ownership, provided notice was served on the owners and Certificate C completed and signed as a true declaration. Mr Taylor had queried proof of service, and the case officer had obtained from NI Water the certificate served on Mr and Mrs Taylor. They had acknowledged this but wished it recorded that they did not consent. The Officer explained that it was a civil matter between NI Water and the landowner and Members could only consider the planning matters.

Alderman Smith noted Environmental Health had referred to potential noise impacts on the nearby apartments and asked whether this had been resolved. The Planning Officer explained Environmental Health had acknowledged potential noise and recommended an amended condition requiring an outline construction environmental management plan covering noise and dust mitigation.

The Chair introduced Michael Graham, Sean Milligan and Paul Cooke, who were in attendance to speak in support of the application.

Mr Graham appreciated that the Council's Planning Service had recommended approval of the application and thanked planning officers for their efforts in processing the application.

It was explained that NI Water sought permission for the erection of a replacement overground control kiosk, together with all associated infrastructure and site works, on lands directly north of No. 107 Whiterock Road, Whiterock, Killinchy.

Mr Graham stated that the proposal was essential to allow the adjacent NI Water Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) to continue operating.

The position of the kiosk had been dictated by the location of the existing WwPS and the requirement for a direct line of sight between the two facilities when undertaking maintenance tasks. It was further noted that the proposal would facilitate safer access for maintenance operatives by providing adjacent off-road parking for maintenance vehicles.

The control kiosk was being located on the public roadside to the south-west, which resulted in health and safety risks for NI Water operatives undertaking maintenance activities. At present, operatives were required to walk along and, in some cases, cross the public road when carrying out maintenance between the two facilities. It

was also noted that there was no adjacent area in which maintenance vehicles could be parked, resulting in parking on the public road. In addition, the existing kiosk did not benefit from a direct line of sight to the WwPS.

Mr Graham advised that the small scale of the proposed kiosk and associated site works, including bollards and the relocation of chevron road signs, meant that the development would not be prominent, particularly when viewed in the context of the larger existing development to the rear.

It was further stated that the kiosk and associated works would not adversely impact upon the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would be absorbed into the locality without detriment to its character.

Mr Graham noted that, whilst the site was located within the undefended 1 in 200-year coastal flood plain, the proposal comprised utilities infrastructure and therefore met the exceptions test contained within Policy FLD1 of PPS15. It was also highlighted that the Planning Service was satisfied that the proposed siting represented the only viable option and that DfI Rivers was content with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment.

Members were advised that all potential impacts had been thoroughly assessed through the detailed technical information and assessments submitted in support of the application. It was stated that there would be no adverse environmental, visual or amenity impacts.

Mr Graham further noted that all consultees had raised no objections, subject to conditions, and that the Planning Service was satisfied that all third-party concerns raised during the processing of the application had been fully addressed and considered.

In closing, he argued that the proposal aligned with the Local Development Plan, namely the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015, together with all relevant prevailing regional planning policy.

The Chair invited questions to the speakers and Councillor Wray asked whether anything could be done to reduce fan noise, as he was aware of loud kiosks from other providers, especially in summer.

Mr Milligan explained it was a small kiosk with a small control panel and less equipment than larger sites. Any fans would be very low noise, but it generally used passive ventilation and it was expected there would be no need for a mechanical fan. The switching and radio equipment was electronic, so there would be no audible switching.

Councillor Morgan asked whether the road would be dug up and Mr Milligan advised that some works would take place as part of the wider drainage area project, but not for the kiosk.

Councillor Morgan urged NI Water to be considerate to residents and patch it properly as soon as possible.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed the presence of an NI Water official, noting that they did in fact exist and suggested that they remain for later items on the agenda.

He noted that this was the only water investment in the Borough, and encouraged further investment. He asked what the consequences were of removing the aerial from essential equipment.

Mr Milligan explained that, following objections, NI Water had reviewed the matter and could use other telecommunications. It was not ideal and he would have preferred the aerial, but there was a workaround.

Councillor McClean asked whether everything reasonable had been done to make the kiosk less ugly and more in keeping with the AONB. Mr Milligan explained it was green plastic-coated, the aerial had been removed and it was the smallest kiosk available. Nobody liked utilitarian infrastructure, but it had to be kept as small as possible.

Councillor McClean was satisfied but asked for consistency, noting some very unsightly NI Water infrastructure along the North Down coastal path.

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

Councillor Cathcart was satisfied with the report and recognised that the equipment was essential.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the Council adopts the recommendation to grant planning permission.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair advised that Item 4.5 would be taken next to accommodate the speakers, with Item 4.4 taken afterwards.

4.5 LA06/2025/0903/F - DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING 1 RETAIL UNIT AND 27 APARTMENTS WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS, PARKING AND SITE WORKS

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.
DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye
Committee Interest: Application site incorporates land in which the Council has an interest.

Proposal: Demolition of public house building and construction of mixed-use development comprising 1no. retail unit and 27no. apartments with associated access, parking and site works
Site Location: 25-29 Hibernia Street and former car park lands to the rear/north east, Holywood
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the Case Officer's Report. The application site was located on the northern side of Hibernia Street and east of the Holywood Bypass. The site outlined in red contained the existing 'Platform P20' public house fronting Hibernia Street and part of the public pay and display car park to the rear.

The Officer presented views of the site from Hibernia Street with the existing public house fronting the street and the new Radius Housing offices opposite.

The Committee was also shown views from within the public car park looking towards the rear of the public house.

Further images showed views from the site towards Shore Road and the recently constructed apartment development.

Members were advised that the site was within Holywood Town Centre but outside of the Primary Retail Core and partially within Development Opportunity Site HD26 as identified in Draft BMAP.

The Committee was advised that the site was also located just within the Holywood South Proposed ATC and that the surrounding urban area was characterised by a range of uses and development comprising a variety of designs and heights.

Members were shown the existing and proposed site layout plans with the existing buildings to be demolished shaded red. The wider site outlined in blue was subject to an extant planning permission for a mixed-use development which had been commenced under approval LA06/2018/0436/F granted on 6 March 2019. The current application essentially sought approval for amended proposals for part of this site.

Further slides showed the previously approved layout for the wider site and the current proposal with the area subject to the amendments highlighted in yellow. The remainder of the previously approved development would remain unchanged. Within the area highlighted in yellow, the original permission included a single storey building housing two retail units and a service yard. The current application now proposed a four-storey building with a single retail unit and residential parking at ground floor level and 27 apartments on the upper floors.

The Committee was shown the southern and northern elevations of the proposed building and further slides showed the eastern and western elevations. Materials included dark grey painted render and beige clay facing brick to walls, a dark grey membrane to the roof and dark grey aluminium windows.

Further slides showed a comparison of the approved and proposed contextual elevations. The first was the Hibernia Street elevation where the proposed building would present an improved frontage to the street instead of the service yard previously approved. The next slide showed the south-eastern elevation facing towards the town centre and High Street and illustrated the previously approved single storey retail units and service yard being replaced by the taller building, similar in height to the apartments at the Marine Parade/Shore Road junction. Finally, the north-western elevation from Marine Parade showed that the taller building would be visible behind the lower approved retail units but, again, would be comparable in height to the other existing adjacent buildings.

Members were advised that the increased height and scale of the building on this part of the site was considered acceptable within the site's context. The immediate area was already characterised by substantial buildings including those on Hibernia Street and at the junction of Marine Parade and Shore Road.

The Committee was advised that the Council's Conservation Officer and Historic Environment Division had both been consulted on the application given the proximity of the site to a number of listed buildings and the Holywood Conservation Area. Both had advised that they were content with the proposal. HED considered that while the previous scheme was considerably lower, none of the adjacent listed assets exhibited designed views to or from the application site. The application site sat lower than High Street and the current proposal was at the same height as the recently completed buildings to the north and south-west and, on that basis, HED was content that the proposal would have a negligible impact upon the setting of the adjacent listed assets.

The Conservation Officer also noted that the planning history suggested that this part of Holywood, adjacent to the Holywood Bypass, had the capacity to absorb higher rise development and that this was reflected in the draft BMAP Urban Design Criteria where building heights of four storeys, or five storeys with a setback, were permitted adjacent to Marine Parade. On this basis, the Conservation Officer was also content that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Committee was shown the proposed ground floor plan which incorporated a retail unit and 27 parking spaces for the proposed apartments. Parking provision for the retail unit would be provided within the public car park as per the previous approval. Access for servicing and bin storage for both the retail unit and apartments would be provided via an entrance onto Hibernia Street.

Further slides showed the first-floor plan layout for the apartments and Members were advised that the second and third floors would repeat this general layout with amenity space being provided by way of balconies and small landscaped courtyards.

All statutory consultees were content with the proposal subject to the conditions set out in the Case Officer's Report. Only one letter of objection had been received raising concerns in relation to potential disruption during construction, the height, scale and massing of the building and the impact on parking, all of which had been considered in detail in the Case Officer's Report.

The Committee was shown an artist's impression of the finished development alongside the previously approved development viewed from within the public car park which illustrated how the two developments would sit together.

In conclusion, the Planning Service was content that the proposal complied with all of the relevant policy requirements. The principle of mixed-use development on the site had already been established through the long history of planning approvals. It was considered that the proposed scheme would further contribute to the wider regeneration of the site and surrounding area and, on this basis, it was recommended that full planning permission be granted.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Councillor Wray welcomed the application. He noted the 27 spaces, one per apartment, and asked about extra demand for parking from visitors and the retail unit, and whether the report referred to the Hibernia Street car park.

The Planning Officer explained the extant permission for two retail units was the fallback, and reducing to one unit reduced the retail parking requirement. One space per unit had been accepted for several Holywood schemes in accessible locations with good public transport, and officers were being consistent.

Councillor Wray noted the Hibernia Street car park was in high demand, as he had found that day, and there were wider parking issues in Holywood. He asked how the residents' spaces would be monitored.

The Planning Officer explained the 27 spaces were inside the building, on the ground floor beneath the apartments, so accessible only to residents. Retail parking would be in the public car park as per the previous permission.

Councillor Cathcart asked whether the water connection was a negative condition or relied on the previous approval.

The Planning Officer explained that although there was a previous approval, 27 apartments were being added. NI Water had advised the wastewater impact assessment had reached Stage 2, so conditions were prior to occupation rather than commencement. This allowed development to proceed, and NI Water was content subject to condition.

The Chair introduced David Mounstephen, George Robinson and Simon Robinson who were attending in support of the application and to answer any questions.

Councillor Cathcart asked whether they were confident the NI Water connection would be in place before completion and the agent confirmed Stage 2 was complete, a solution had been designed, and the applicant had paid NI Water to deliver it. Mr Robinson added that drainage improvements carried out as part of the earlier works on the site had improved local wastewater management, which had been seen as a positive.

The speakers returned to the public gallery.

Councillor Cathcart proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted, that the Council grant planning permission.

Councillor Cathcart felt this was exactly the type of development town centres needed. Higher buildings with more people living in town centres would improve footfall and would be welcomed by Holywood businesses. Having the parking within the footprint of the building was impressive and addressed parking concerns.

Alderman Graham felt it was an opportunity to rebuild part of Holywood, and apartments so close to the railway station were ideal. Parts of the area needed redevelopment, the artist's impressions showed an attractive scheme, and he hoped it would proceed quickly.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Council adopts the recommendation to grant planning permission.

(Councillor Cathcart withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 4.4 – 10.17pm)

4.4 LA06/2026/0103/F - ERECTION OF A FREESTANDING 'STREET HUB' (COMPRISING TWO DIGITAL 75-INCH LCD DISPLAY SCREENS EACH SIDE) TO REPLACE A BT TELEPHONE BOX

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.
DEA: Bangor Central
Committee Interest: Called in to Committee due to six or more objections.
Proposal: Erection of a freestanding 'Street Hub' (comprising two digital 75-inch LCD display screens each side) to replace BT telephone Box
Site Location: On the Pavement in front of the 'Casino', 10 Quay Street, Bangor
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the Case Officer's Report, explaining that the proposal was for the erection of a freestanding 'Street Hub' (comprising two digital 75-inch LCD display screens each side) to replace a BT telephone box. The application was before Committee due to the number of objections received. These would be detailed later within the presentation. There were no objections from statutory consultees.

The Committee was shown the application site which consisted of an area of public realm on Quay Street, close to Bangor Marina and the McKee Clock. The site was bounded by the public road to one side and a row of commercial properties on the other. These properties included a gaming machine unit called 'Casino', a café, a gift shop and the Old Court House. The site included several pieces of street furniture including trees, public seating, a lighting column, directional signage and a BT phone kiosk.

Members were advised that the area had a busy town-centre character with no residential properties in the immediate area.

Further slides showed that the proposal was located within the Town Centre and that the commercial units facing the site were included in the Primary Retail Core. In terms of built heritage, the area also fell within the proposed Bangor Central Area of Townscape Character. The Court House was a listed building and was affected by the proposal.

The Committee was shown details of the design, with the Hub measuring 3m in height and 1.2m in width. The black aluminium-framed structure would be 0.35m deep. The Hub would serve two functions: the delivery of upgraded telecommunication and digital connectivity infrastructure and the provision of two screens (front and back) for the purpose of digital advertising.

Members were advised that the proposal was originally submitted with the Hub located outside the Court House. This had received a substantial number of objections. Concern was also raised by the Historic Environment Division which considered the proposal to have an adverse impact on the listed building. Furthermore, the Council had refused a similar application at this location several years ago. The appeal against the Council's decision was also dismissed. There had been no material change in policy context since and a different decision by the Council to the initial current proposal would be irrational. These concerns were raised with the agent, and it was agreed to relocate the Hub to the southern side of the site and away from the Court House.

The Committee was advised that the new location would be outside the 'Casino' and would be positioned midway between the road edge and the shop units. This location was chosen so that the Hub would be 'read' with the existing street furniture and therefore soften any visual impact. The Casino itself had a large fascia advertisement with oversized individual lettering and bold colours and it was considered that this context could accommodate the proposal much easier than in front of the Court House. There would be no direct views of the Hub in isolation with the Court House, or with the McKee Clock on the opposite side of the road.

Further slides showed the proposed location and wider streetscape context. Whilst a Street Hub would not ordinarily be considered a main Town Centre use, the proposal was in broad compliance with the SPPS2 given its location in the Town Centre. The proposal would not prejudice the objectives of the SPPS2 and would likely be supplementary to the role and function of the town centre.

Members were advised that, given the passing traffic and various pieces of street furniture, there were no significant medium or long-distance views of the proposal. The trees in particular, especially in summer, reduced the visual impact of the Hub. The proposal would be subordinate to the row of commercial properties while the scale and mix of buildings in the area would assist in mitigating and softening the visual impact of the proposal to passers-by.

In conclusion, the Planning Service considered that the proposal was not in conflict with relevant policy provisions and did not harm protected features and, as such, recommended the proposal for approval.

The Chair invited questions to the Officer for clarification and Councillor Wray asked why the phone box needed to be replaced at all, rather than simply removed, as everyone agreed it no longer served a purpose.

The Planning Officer explained it was part of upgrading digital technology in towns, as phone boxes were mainly unused, and officers considered this structure more suitable.

Councillor Wray maintained that the box was not in operation and the matter should be taken up with BT, as he did not see the function of the hub. The Chair advised that the Committee could only consider the application as presented.

Councillor McClean asked whether the large number of objections had receded now that the hub had moved away from the courthouse.

The Planning Officer explained the objections had come in when it was proposed outside the courthouse and had focused on the setting of the listed building, as HED had confirmed. She did not know why the applicant had chosen that location again, but the red line was large enough to move it without a new application. When re-advertised, far fewer objections were received.

Councillor McClean asked whether the objections on file reflected awareness of the move. The Planning Officer could not confirm this but advised they had reduced significantly.

Councillor McClean sought clarity on the proposed new location and the Planning Officer confirmed it was at the edge of the red line, in front of the Casino. Councillor McClean understood it would sit between existing street furniture. He would have preferred nothing there and noted the very good planning reason for the earlier refusal, but the applicant was entitled to apply, and he acknowledged Councillor Wray's point.

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

On being put to the meeting, with 5 voting FOR, 2 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING and 6 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (5)	**AGAINST (2)**	**ABSTAINED (3)**	**ABSENT (6)**
Aldermen	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**	**Aldermen**
Graham		McAlpine	McDowell
McIlveen			
Smith			
Councillors	**Councillors**	**Councillors**	**Councillors**

Hennessy	Morgan	McClean	Cathcart
Smart	Wray	McCollum	Harbinson
			Kendall
			Kerr
			McKee

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the Council adopts the recommendation to grant planning permission.

(Councillor Cathcart re-entered the meeting – 10.35pm)

5. STREET NAMING – GLENLYON GATE, HOLYWOOD (FILE REF FP/2026/2276/MAST)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that a small development comprising of five detached dwellings was currently under construction on lands at 163 Church Road, Holywood, and required a new street name.

The developer had proposed 'Glenlyon Gate' as the new street name due to the development being in close proximity to the small public park known as Glenlyon Park and was in keeping with the surrounding neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the street name of Glenlyon Gate.

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

6. PROPOSED APPROACH TO BELFAST CITY AIRPORT PANS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Belfast City Airport was proposing a programme of improvements to enhance passenger facilities, improve aircraft operations and strengthen connectivity to and from the airport.

Its proposals included both physical redevelopment works and changes to existing operational controls set out in the Planning Agreement, including an increase in the permitted number of aircraft take-offs and landings per annum and amendments to the hours during which aircraft operations might take place.

Two separate Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) had been submitted to both Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council, in line with legislative requirements for proposals in the 'major' category of development.

The majority of the total proposed development lay within the Belfast City Council area with the extent of development within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area comprising less than one hectare of land.

Ards and North Down's Planning Service had allocated the PANs the following references:

LA06/2026/0775/PAN

This PAN related to a proposed full planning application affecting land within the administrative areas of both Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The proposed development comprised:

- Extensions and alterations to the existing passenger terminal, including construction of a replacement passenger pier and associated aircraft boarding facilities. Additional aircraft stands and improvements to apron and taxiway infrastructure. Improvements to airfield operational facilities and supporting infrastructure. Inclusion of sustainable construction measures and low carbon technologies.
- Surface access and infrastructure improvements comprising a multi-modal forecourt. Enhancements to vehicular access, egress and internal circulation, including creation of a new left slip road from the Sydenham Bypass into the airport and improvements to the airport entrance through a dual right turn lane.
- Rationalisation and enhancement of car parking provision, including the creation of a multi-storey car park and long stay car park.
- Installation of a foul sewer connection from the onsite pumping station to Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works.
- A temporary construction compound, and associated infrastructure, engineering, landscaping and ancillary works.

LA06/2026/0778/PAN

This PAN related to a proposed outline planning application for supporting airport infrastructure and associated development, including:

- ancillary aviation operations, including aircraft hangars, aviation fuel tanks and associated infrastructure;
- a hotel;
- the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at various locations across the airport;
- an electric vehicle charging hub; and
- improvements to landscaping, drainage, utilities, servicing infrastructure, and other ancillary development

BCA Master Plan, EIA Scoping and Pre Application Discussion

As indicated by the Proposal of Application Notices (PAN), the planning submissions comprised both a full and an outline planning application for the physical works required to accommodate future passenger growth at the Airport, alongside proposed modifications to the Planning Agreement between Belfast City Airport (BCA) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

These submissions responded to the BCA Master Plan 2040, published in March 2026, which was subject to extensive voluntary consultation with the public, airlines, and other key stakeholders during 2025.

A comprehensive programme of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping and Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) had been undertaken with Belfast City Council over the past six months. The Council understood that Belfast City Airport had also been engaging with Belfast City Council regarding the proposals and potential administrative arrangements.

Extent of Development in ANDBC

The boundary map submitted with the PANs showed the interaction between the local authority boundaries and the site boundary.

There were two discrete areas of the application site located within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. These were extracted and shaded within the report.

The first comprised the junction and mini roundabout at the link road between Belfast Road and Airport Road West. The inclusion of this area within the EIA boundary provided flexibility to accommodate and assess any junction improvements or associated works that might be identified through the ongoing design and assessment process.

The second section was to the east of the airport and comprised a section of land to the north east of Airport Road West and inclusive of part of Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW). This area was included within the site boundary as a new underground pipe would be installed connecting the Airport's onsite pumping station to the WWTW.

Local Government Act

Under Articles 7 and 9 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, councils could discharge their functions jointly or a council might arrange for its functions to be discharged by another council.

Should the PANs progress to application stage, it was considered useful to clarify for the applicant the administrative arrangements.

There were two options from which to choose a course of action.

1. Advise the applicant/agent to submit four applications, two to Belfast City Council and two to Ards and North Down Borough Council. This option would allow both Councils to retain control of their respective areas.
2. Advise the applicant/agent to submit four applications (as above) to each council and Ards and North Down Borough Council discharges the planning function to Belfast City Council. This option would allow Belfast City Council to

process the entire scheme, with Ards and North Down Borough Council becoming a consultee.

Call In by the Department for Infrastructure

It was entirely likely, given the scale of the proposal and associated amendments required to the legal agreement, that the Department would exercise its powers under section 29 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011 and direct the applications to be referred to it instead of being dealt with by the council(s), in which case any decision made as above became moot.

It was recommended that the Council agree to Option 2 above, as the areas of the proposal located within the boundary of Ards and North Down were so small and inconsequential to this Borough in the context of the wider scheme, that it would be of no benefit to the processing for this Council's Planning Service to determine.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the detail in this report and agrees to Option 2 above, and for the Head of Planning to respond to the applicant and Belfast City Council in this respect.

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

7. DRAFT RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVIDENCE RE PROPOSED TREE BILL

(Appendix VII – IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members were referred to a previous report to the Council meeting of 26 February 2025 under Item 9.1, regarding a Public Consultation on a Private Member's Bill on improving tree protections in Northern Ireland.

At that time Peter McReynolds MLA had written to the Council as a key stakeholder informing of his consultation on a proposed Private Member's Bill which sought to strengthen the legal protection on individual and groups of trees, as well as long-established woodland, in Northern Ireland.

It followed a report published by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman entitled 'Strengthening Our Roots – Tree Protection in the Planning System' (November 2023 – reported to Council under Item 7.1 of November 2023).

Officers had proposed a response to that consultation by Peter McReynolds which was approved by Council at its meeting of February 2025.

The Committee for Infrastructure launched a Call for Evidence of which the Council was notified by email on 10 July 2026 but which did not specify a timeframe for response and erroneously referred to another Bill. Further to review of the NI Assembly website, it transpired that the closing date was 16 September 2026. Officers had received confirmation that the Committee was willing to accept a late response.

The Heads of Planning of this Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council attended an online meeting with NILGA, the Bill's proposer, and the Woodland Trust, on 28 July to discuss all elements of the proposed Bill.

Officers had reviewed the proposed Bill in detail and had provided commentary in the attached table on each element, and as such Members were directed to the attached draft Bill and the Table of Comments proposed to be issued to the Infrastructure Committee in respect of the Call for Evidence.

As noted in the table to this report, it was considered that this Bill would introduce increased pressure on councils in respect of budget and staffing resource.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached response to the proposed Tree Bill.

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

8. NOTICE OF MARINE CONSTRUCTION LICENCE APPLICATION CONSULTATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that DAERA's Marine Licensing Branch had consulted the Council to advise that it had received an application from NI Water for a marine construction licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to construct an outfall pipe at 6A New Harbour Road, Portavogie.

A copy of the application form and supporting documentation were available on DAERA's website.

NI Water had provided the following detail on the application form:

AtkinsRéalis was laying a new surface water sewer on New Harbour Road, Portavogie, on behalf of NI Water. This would discharge 10 l/s into The Irish Sea via a new outfall pipe to serve a proposed 3G pitch development on New Harbour Road, Portavogie. The works would include construction of 10m of 200mm PVC, outfall pipe at a rock armour on Portavogie Bay Beach adjacent to Portavogie Harbour flowing to Irish Sea. The proposed outfall pipe would include 200mm of concrete surround for protection and anchoring. The work would involve the removal and reinstatement of the rock armour to existing condition.

This application had arisen as a consequence of the planning permission granted by the Committee at its meeting of 31 March under LA06/2020/0844/F regarding the existing football ground to the rear of 8-10 New Harbour Road, Portavogie:

"Upgrade to existing football ground to include the replacement of the existing grass pitch with synthetic surface, fencing and floodlighting along with replacement changing pavilion, additional car parking spaces and associated siteworks. Widening of existing vehicular access lane. partial demolition and making good of garage at

No. 8, relocation of vehicular entrance to No. 8 and construction of new perimeter walls to match existing at 4, 6 and 8 New Harbour Road to provide visibility splays"

The Council had been asked if it wished to comment, by way of a template on DAERA's website, by 22 October 2026. Given this solution was essential to the implementation of the above permission, it was recommended that the Council respond with No Objection.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves a consultation response of No Objection.

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

9. NI WATER UPDATE – KINNEGAR WWTW

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members would be aware of ongoing wastewater capacity issues and details of closed catchments as advised through the report at Item 5 of Planning Committee meeting of 03 March 2026 and subsequent correspondence/meeting with DFI Minister on 15 June to highlight concerns.

Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works

NI Water had recently contacted this Council, along with Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to advise of ongoing issues with the performance of Kinnegar WwTW which had not been meeting its Water Order Consent and had been deemed 'a failing works'. The area served by Kinnegar WwTW was the orange area circled in red on the attachment impacting the three Council areas.

NI Water had advised that this situation left it open to prosecution from its environmental regulator. As a result, it had taken the decision to close Kinnegar WwTW to all new developments that would see an intensification of wastewater discharge with effect from 1 August 2026.

Implications for Planning

This latest situation would have the following implications:

a) Any new proposal that would see an intensification of foul discharge would not be permitted a connection to the NI Water wastewater network;
b) Any sites with extant planning permission or where it could be proven that there was a like-for-like foul discharge within the last five-year period, would be permitted connection to Kinnegar WwTW;
c) Any site with planning permission whereby NI Water did not raise the capacity of Kinnegar WwTW as an issue, a connection would be permitted; however, this should be tempered with the fact that quite a lot of the sewer network in this sewer catchment was also at capacity resulting in the developer being required to undertake a Wastewater Impact Assessment and associated solution engineering works to mitigate the impact on the network;

d) Any application currently in the planning process which had received a positive consultation response from NI Water in respect of the capacity of Kinnegar WwTW would also be honoured.
e) Going forward, any application whereby NI Water received a planning consultation that was not subject to a live Pre-development Enquiry or Wastewater Impact Assessment would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

NI Water had provided a list (not exhaustive) that covered most of the types of sites it would be expected to see as detailed below:

- Green field site – no extant planning. Response would be that the development could not be supported and refusal of planning permission recommended
- Green field / brownfield site – extant planning. A positive response would be provided with regards WwTW capacity.
- Brown field re-development site or change of use – NI Water response would raise issues with WwTW capacity but would recommend submission of PDE. That would afford the developer opportunity to submit any supporting information they might have to allow NI Water to complete a like-for-like assessment. Once NI Water had completed its PDE assessment it would revise the planning response accordingly.
- In all cases where it was proven that development would see an intensification of foul discharge, the NI Water recommendation would be to refuse planning permission.

At this stage NI Water did not have a timeline for the reopening of Kinnegar WwTW. Planning for the next cycle of funding PC28 was ongoing and it was unable to advise if there was any opportunity for Kinnegar to be included in this cycle. NI Water had advised that it would not be until March 2028 before the financial regulator made a formal determination on NI Water's funding bid after which there would need to be sufficient funding provided by the Department for Infrastructure.

NI Water had only recently updated its website in respect of Kinnegar WwTW now having no capacity, and Planning Service was currently liaising with NI Water regarding appropriate wording for the Planning pages of the Council's website to alert potential applicants/developers and was in the process of cross-checking applications falling within the catchment as identified.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the attachment.

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

Alderman McIlveen stated the report again showed the chronic underinvestment in Northern Ireland's water infrastructure, which was very disappointing for wider planning. He sympathised with Members representing Holywood, noting Newtownards was also in a closed catchment.

The Chair added her concern, noting it was a live issue given the applications before the Committee and would remain so for some time.

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

10. MINISTERIAL-LED ENGAGEMENT FORUM WITH DFI MINISTER – IDENTIFIED ACTIONS

(Appendix X – XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members were previously updated via Item 8 of the agenda at the Planning Committee meeting of 07 July 2026 regarding a key strand of the wider Planning Improvement Learning and Engagement Programme being to strengthen direct political engagement between the DFI Minister and Planning Committee Chairs.

A meeting took place on 18 June 2026, and the Head of Planning provided an overview of the detail discussed with the Minister within Item 8 as referenced above.

Further to the conclusion of that meeting, NILGA had written to the Committee Chairs thanking them for participation and requesting that the outcome note be shared with Committee members, as attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the attachments.

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

11. QUARTERLY TREES REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that this report represented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. This update provided information from 16 June 2026 to 17 September 2026.

Table 1 – Tree Preservation Orders Served

TPO (Full or Provisional)	Date Served	Address
Provisional	24 July 2026	Lands at Craigavad Park, Holywood
Provisional	30 July 2026	1-7 Cultra Park and Including 23 Cultra Avenue, Holywood
Confirmed	6 August 2026	Lands at 1-7 Croft Manor, Holywood
Confirmed	24 August 2026	Lands at 72 Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards

Confirmed	3 September 2026	'Dromkeen House' Sullivan Upper School Prep Department, 1 Alexandra Park, Holywood
Provisional	17 September 2026	St Philip and St James Holywood Parish Church, 71 Church Road, Holywood

Table 2 – Consent for Works Decisions

TPO or Conservation Area	Consent Granted / Notification Accepted*	Consent Refused
Tree Preservation Orders	3	0
Conservation Area	2	0

Tree Preservation Orders – addresses: 1. 243 Bangor Road, Seahill. 2. 44 Ballymenoch Road, Holywood. 3. 4 The Grange, Comber.

Conservation Area – addresses: 1. 6a Victoria Road, Holywood. 2. Riverside Development, Holywood.

* Notification referred to when the Council received notification of proposed works to trees within a conservation area. If the Council did not accept the proposed works, it had to serve a TPO within the 6-week period from the date of notification. 'Notification Accepted' meant that the Council did not consider it necessary to serve a TPO and thus there was no objection to the proposed works.

Works to Trees - Tree Preservation Order Protection

1. 243 Bangor Road, Seahill – felling of 1 no. tree
   - 1 no. tree were requested for felling for safety reasons.
   - Request was to remove the tree for the health and safety reasons due to the location of the tree in relation to the dwelling and structural damage to wall attached to the house and the house itself. A supporting statement was submitted with the application which stated that the tree was proposed for removal due to its significant lean on the existing wall which formed part of and was structurally connected to the existing building. It noted that the tree was exerting pressure on the wall and there was concern regarding its long-term stability and the potential for structural damage to both the wall and the house.
   - No evidence had been submitted as part of the application to confirm or substantiate that the tree was causing structural damage to the dwelling. Damage to the adjacent wall which was attached to the house was clearly visible, with significant cracking evident at the time of inspection. While no technical evidence had been provided to establish causation, it appeared that the tree might be contributing to this damage, particularly given its proximity to and apparent contact with the wall.
   - It was considered the felling of the tree was acceptable for safety reasons having regard to the location of the tree and the damage presently visible to the wall. The tree had already outgrown its location and, as it continued to

mature, the potential for further conflict with nearby structures was likely to increase over time.
- Replacement tree planting was conditioned with 1 no. standard native tree at a height of 3-3.5m to be located within the curtilage of the property and carried out during the next available planting season following commencement of the works permitted.

2. 44 Ballymenoch Road, Holywood – carry out works to 1 no. tree group
   - 1 no. tree group was requested for remedial works for management and maintenance reasons.
   - The trees comprised a mature linear group of single-stemmed Leyland cypress (Leylandii) trees, with individual heights ranging from approximately 10 to 12 metres. The group extended over an approximate length of 20 metres.
   - These remedial works were considered acceptable and appropriate as they would reduce the trees appropriately whilst preserving a good amount of tree foliage and the tree group's overall shape.
3. 4 The Grange, Comber – felling of 1 no. tree and carry out works to 9 no. trees
   - 1 no. tree was requested for removal for safety reasons and works to 8 no. trees were for management and maintenance reasons. The tree requested for removal was not protected and therefore the Council's consent was not required for removal of this tree.
   - The remedial works to 9 no. trees were considered to be appropriate and acceptable for management and maintenance reasons. It was considered that the reductions represented proportionate level of reduction that would assist in managing the size of the trees whilst retaining their amenity value and overall contribution to the locality.

Conservation Area Notifications

1. 6a Victoria Road, Holywood – felling of 1 no. tree
   - The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to remove 1 no. tree for safety reasons given the poor condition of the tree.
   - The crown displayed extensive dieback, with almost half of the canopy dead and a noticeably reduced density of live foliage.
   - It was considered works to 1 no. tree to be acceptable given the tree's deteriorating health and poor overall condition.
   - Replacement tree planting was not a requirement within a Conservation Area, however, was recommended in this case.
2. Riverside Development, Holywood – felling of 1 no. tree and works to 8 no. trees
   - The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to fell 1 no. tree for safety reasons given the significant lean present in the stem of the tree, which gave rise to reasonable safety concerns and carry out works to 8 no. trees for management and maintenance reasons.
   - Removal of 1 no. tree was considered acceptable for the reasons stated, for safety reasons given the significant lean present in the stem of the tree, which gave rise to reasonable safety concerns.
   - Replacement tree planting was not a requirement within a Conservation Area, however, was recommended in this case.

- 1 no. tree for remedial works had a large spreading crown which encroached into overhead lines. During inspection two rubbing branches were clearly visible to the overhead lines.
- No objection to the remedial works to this tree as they were minor in nature and were unlikely to have any detrimental impact on the tree's health or appearance. A substantial crown would remain following the works, ensuring the tree's overall form and amenity value were retained.
- Remedial works to the remaining 7 no. trees considered acceptable. These trees overhung the laneway located to the rear of a number of houses located on Church Road and also overhung their rear returns and works allowed adequate clearance for pedestrian access along the laneway.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

12. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ADVANCED LISTING NOTIFICATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members considered advanced notification of the proposed listing by DfC at its meeting of 04 August (under Item 9), and supported listing of two properties as follows:

- Ardkeen House, 12 Killaire Road, Crawfordsburn; and
- Claremont House, 89 Victoria Road, Holywood.

DfC's Historic Environment Division had since written to the Council to confirm the listing of the two structures above, which had been added to the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

13. DFI MINISTER RESPONSE RE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

(Appendix XII – XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members would recall ongoing dialogue between the Council and the Minister for Infrastructure regarding infrastructure investment in respect of Northern Ireland Water.

Further to a report to Committee at its meeting of 04 August 2026 (Item 6), the Council agreed to write back to the Minister to:

- strongly object to the lack of inclusion in infrastructural investment in closed catchment areas, particularly the South Street pumping station, Newtownards, within the 2028-33 Price Control period;
- ask her to review what opportunity exists to consider planning permissions that have been granted, but not implemented, and the variance between Councils in how these are considered; and
- ask for her confirmation that she will, as Minister, give priority to infrastructure investment to protect the future viability of the Borough's town and urban centres.

A letter to the effect above issued from the Chief Executive on 08 September, and the Minister had issued the attached response dated 22 September 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the attached response from the Infrastructure Minister.

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

14. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS

(Appendix XIV – XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the report set out planning appeal decisions, new appeals and withdrawn appeals as follows:

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was dismissed on 23 July 2026:

PAC Ref	2025/A0109
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0262/F
Appellant	Ronald Shields
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for 'Retention of private amenity/shelter building made from sustainable recycled materials, wildlife hide, timber footbridge and associate landscaping and planting'
Location	Land approx. 200m SE of 110 Kempe Stones Road, Newtownards with existing access to Greengraves Road

The above application was called into Planning Committee from the delegated list whereby the Officer recommendation was to refuse planning permission. The Council refused the application on 16 December 2025 for the following reason:

- The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.

The Commissioner noted that the appellant made it abundantly clear that the appeal site was used for recreational purposes for him and his family in the same manner as a residential garden would be. The personal use of the appeal site for private amenity purposes and recreational activity did not involve the local population or tourists, nor did such a domestic scale of use necessitate a countryside location. Therefore, Policy OS 3 of PPS 8 did not apply.

Additionally, no cogent argument was presented to persuade the Commissioner that the appeal development would not set an unwelcome precedent for other such types of personal use in the countryside. The Commissioner was not persuaded, in the evidential context, that the appellant and his family lacked access to open space in general and the related opportunities.

It was concluded that the appeal development was not one of the types of development which, in principle, was considered to be acceptable in the countryside. It was also not demonstrated that there were overriding reasons why the development was essential and could not be located in a settlement. Accordingly, the development was contrary to Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21 and it therefore also conflicted with the SPPS2.

2. The following Enforcement Notice was quashed on 19 August 2026:

PAC Ref	2024/E0044
Council Ref	LA06/2021/0144/CA
Appellant	Mr & Mrs Wm Wylie
Subject of Appeal	Alleged: 1. unauthorised ancillary building; 2. unauthorised wooden pergola; 3. unauthorised extension of domestic curtilage which includes concrete path; 4. unauthorised building; 5. unauthorised building; 6. unauthorised shelter; 7. unauthorised laying of hardstanding laneway
Location	Lands at 107 Comber Road, Newtownards

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

The PAC issued a decision on this enforcement appeal on 3 October 2025. Following an application for judicial review, the High Court quashed the decision and remitted the enforcement appeal to the Commission for redetermination.

The Commissioner only determined the appeal in respect of ground (e) that copies of the Enforcement Notice were not served as required by section 138 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

In reaching her decision she determined that the appellant suffered disadvantage which amounted to prejudice in that the Enforcement Notice was not properly served and therefore he did not have the full statutory period available within which to consider the allegations, obtain advice, identify potential relevant decisions and determine the scope and presentation of his case.

The Council was liaising with its legal advisors in respect of the legal advice received after the initial PAC decision was quashed, with regard to this outcome.

3. The following appeal was upheld on 27 August 2026:

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

The above application was called into Planning Committee from the delegated list whereby the Officer recommendation was to refuse planning permission. The Council refused the application on 06 March 2026 for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY2a of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that there is no cluster of development which appears as a visual entity in the local landscape, the site is not bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster and the dwelling would, if permitted, significantly alter the existing character and visually intrude into the open countryside.
- iii. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 and Policy CTY8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the proposal does 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, result in the extension of ribbon development along the Holywood Road and would result in the loss of an important visual break.
- iv. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 and Policy CTY14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the dwelling would, if permitted, result in a suburban-style build-up of development when viewed with existing and approved buildings (criterion b), would fail to respect the traditional pattern of settlement in the area (criterion c), and would create or add to a ribbon of development (criterion d, see Policy CTY 8). This would cause a detrimental change that further erodes the rural character of the countryside.
- v. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 in relation to safeguarding human health and protecting environmental receptors. Insufficient information has been provided to address Environmental Health concerns arising from the site's proximity to Northstone Craigantlet Quarry, including potential adverse impacts from noise, vibration, dust, and land contamination. In the absence of a

comprehensive noise and vibration assessment, air quality assessment, and contaminated land risk assessment, the proposal fails to demonstrate that it would provide a safe and healthy living environment for future occupants.

The central issue in this appeal was whether the application site formed part of an existing cluster of development in accordance with Policy CTY2a of PPS21. The Commissioner believed the site formed part of an established cluster of development and considered that surrounding buildings read as a coherent and visually connected group when viewed from a number of publicly accessible viewpoints which therefore constituted a visual entity within the local landscape. The Commissioner concluded that the proposed dwelling would consolidate and round off the existing cluster rather than extend development into the open countryside and the proposal met the requirements of Policy CTY2a and represented a form of countryside development acceptable in principle under CTY 1 of PPS 21.

Having concluded that the proposal complied with Policy CTY2a, the Commissioner determined that the development would not create or add to a ribbon of development. The Council's reason for refusal based on Policy CTY8 was therefore not sustained.

With regard to rural character under Policy CTY14, the Commission was of the opinion that as the proposal would not create a suburban-style build-up of development and would sit within an existing cluster rather than extend development into open countryside, with the existing vegetation and surrounding development integrating the proposal into the landscape, the development would not have an adverse effect on the character of the surrounding rural area.

With regard to the proximity of the adjacent Craigantlet Quarry and asphalt plant, the Commissioner concluded that the evidence as presented did not demonstrate that future residents would be adversely affected by quarry operations.

No evidence was produced to demonstrate that blasting would have an unacceptable impact on future occupants. The Commissioner placed substantial weight on technical assessments previously undertaken in connection with the asphalt plant (not submitted in respect of this particular application) which indicated that predicted noise levels would remain within accepted standards, air quality impacts would not be significant and existing environmental controls and pollution prevention measures were in place.

The Commissioner also opined that there was no evidence that the site had been contaminated with concerns largely based on the site's proximity to the quarry rather than site-specific evidence.

It was concluded that the Council had failed to substantiate any of its reasons for refusal and the appeal was allowed subject to conditions relating to access, landscaping, acoustic mitigation measures and commencement of development within five years.

New Appeals

4. The following appeal was lodged on 28 July 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/A0047
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0345/O
Appellant	Ivan Robinson
Subject of Appeal	Off-site replacement dwelling with new access to Ravara Road
Location	Site approx. 8m North of 29C Ravara Road, Ballygowan

5. The following appeal against an Enforcement Notice was lodged on 28 August 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/E0053
Council Ref	LA06/2026/0003/CA
Appellant	Mary Woolsey
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised farm building
Location	Land at 300m SW of 12 Cardy Road, Greyabbey

6. The following appeal against a Works to Protected Trees decision was lodged on 26 August 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/T0001
Council Ref	LA06/2026/0176/WPT
Appellant	David Law
Subject of Appeal	Application for works to remove 12 dead ash trees, 3 failed/poor quality young trees and removal of two limbs on two ash trees (one limb per tree) that overhang adjacent properties. The trees are to be replaced with more suitable native species
Location	Opposite 87 Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards

7. The following appeal was lodged on 14 September 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/L0009
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0906/CLOPUD
Appellant	Neil Thompson
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development for 'Proposed completion of dwelling and garage approved under X/2004/0527/O and associated consent issued under X/2007/0928/RM'
Location	Site 250m South of Ballyblack Road East, Carrowdore

Withdrawn Appeals

8. The following appeal against an Enforcement Notice was withdrawn on 22 July 2026 after planning permission was granted under LA06/2024/0536/F for 5no. detached tourist accommodation units (retrospective) on 30 July 2026.

PAC Ref	2026/E0006
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0179/CA
Appellant	Samual Townsley
Subject of Appeal	Alleged: 1. Three No unauthorised buildings with unauthorised decking; 2. Unauthorised tourism use, known as Cuan Mor Lodges, including reception area and 5 No buildings providing tourism accommodation
Location	Land at 86 Ballydrain Road, Comber

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.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the third appeal decision in the report (Kenneth Black, Craigantlet Road) stated the appeal had been dismissed, when he understood it had been allowed.

The officer confirmed this was an administrative error and the appeal had been upheld (now corrected in the minutes). The Chair noted the learning from that decision could be discussed on another occasion.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

15. ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED LISTING

(Appendix XVII – XIX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person.

16. QUARTERLY ENFORCEMENT REPORT

(Appendix XX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

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

17. VERBAL UPDATE RE STAFFING

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 1: relating to an individual.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.47pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor Cathcart	
Aldermen:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter	Cummings (7.28 pm) McAlpine (Zoom)
Councillors:	Brady Douglas Edmund (Zoom) Harbinson	Kendall Newman Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies and those were noted from Alderman McRandal and Councillors Ashe, Blaney and Boyle. Apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Cummings.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest and none were made.

NOTED.

3. NOTICE OF MOTION 619 GREYABBEY TENNIS COURTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in May 2024, the Council agreed the following decision arising from a Notice of Motion:

“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 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."

A subsequent update report was presented to the Council in January 2025 outlining the costs and anticipated works required for tennis courts across the Borough. At that meeting the Council agreed:

"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**."**

A further report was brought to Council in January 2026 recommending that:

"Council await the outcome of the Leisure Facilities Audit and the further delivery of other older children provision locations as outlined in the Play Strategy in order to accurately determine the level of facility provision required across the Borough, as well as Greyabbey, and the priority areas to be delivered in accordance with available budgets provided through the rates and grants that will be sought."

An alternative proposal was subsequently agreed in January 2026 that:

"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."

Key Issues

Greyabbey Village Plan
If the future development of a MUGA in Greyabbey was to be a joint village renewal and Parks project, it was required to be considered in the context of the priorities of the emerging Greyabbey Village Plan. That should take account of the Council's wider strategies on play provision for older children.

Following adoption of the Village Plan, identified projects would then be prioritised through an agreed assessment framework considering strategic fit; community need; community benefit; deliverability; funding availability; and value for money.

The Greyabbey Village Plan was expected to be launched later this year. Development of the Plan commenced in May 2024 and included extensive community engagement with residents, community organisations, schools and other local stakeholders through workshops, surveys, public events and drop-in sessions.

The findings informed a series of proposed priorities and actions for the village. The provision of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) was raised during the engagement process, primarily in the context of improving recreational opportunities for children and young people.

The emerging outdoor recreation priorities were:

- Enhance Recreational Areas
- Walking and Cycling Trails
- Increased Green Spaces

During public consultation on those priorities, there was additional support expressed for the inclusion of a MUGA within the emerging priorities for the village.

Leisure Facilities Audit
Under the Leisure Strategy Implementation Plan approved by Council in 2025, a Borough-wide Leisure Facilities Audit was currently being undertaken. The audit would provide an evidence-based assessment of existing and future requirements for leisure infrastructure, including tennis courts, pitches, MUGAs and other recreational facilities. The audit would assist the Council in determining:

- The level of tennis court provision required across the Borough;
- Whether existing facilities should be retained, enhanced or replaced;
- The future requirement for MUGAs and other recreational infrastructure; and
- The relative priority of investment across settlements.

Until the audit had been completed, it was not possible to determine the appropriate future level of tennis provision within Greyabbey or whether there was a demonstrated need for the proposed Greyabbey MUGA Project.

Existing Recreational Provision
The Council had recently invested in recreational infrastructure within Greyabbey through the refurbishment of Islandview Play Park, completed during 2025/26 in accordance with the Council's Play Strategy.

The Play Strategy also identified a future requirement for provision aimed at older children and young people within Greyabbey. That could potentially be delivered through a MUGA, wheel sports facility or similar recreational infrastructure, subject to consultation, assessment of need and available resources.

MUGAs delivered through the Play Strategy were generally informal recreational facilities, typically providing opportunities for football and basketball on a tarmac surface enclosed by perimeter fencing. They were freely accessible for public use.

While such facilities could support a range of informal activities, they were not normally designed to provide dedicated tennis facilities. Tennis provision required court-specific dimensions, surfacing, line markings, posts and net systems which differed from the design and purpose of a standard Play Strategy MUGA.

Next Steps
At this stage, the scale, specification and priority of the Greyabbey MUGA Project would be informed by the completion of the Borough-wide Leisure Facilities Audit and adoption of the Greyabbey Village Plan. Together, those would provide the strategic and evidence-based framework for considering future recreational investment within Greyabbey.

The Play Strategy adopted a phased approach to the delivery of older children's facilities across the Borough based on population size, strategic need and available resources. The remaining locations identified for future older children's provision were:

- Bangor (76,403 population, 2021 Census) - Bangor Cycle Park being delivered through PEACEPLUS funding and additional provision planned through the Bangor Waterfront Scheme;
- Holywood (10,757) - delivery planned during 2026/27;
- Donaghadee (7,325) - Pump Track being delivered through PEACEPLUS funding;
- Portaferry (2,372) - delivery planned during 2026/27;
- Ballywalter (2,008);
- Cloughey (1,347);
- Groomsport (1,224); and
- Greyabbey (879).

The Play Strategy therefore provided an existing phased programme of investment, with a number of larger settlements currently prioritised.

Following adoption of the Greyabbey Village Plan, projects identified within the Plan, including recreational proposals, would be assessed and prioritised using the agreed project assessment framework.

Officers were not currently aware of any confirmed external funding programme that would support a project of this nature. However, appropriate funding opportunities would continue to be monitored as they arose.

Summary
The report provided an update on the consideration of recreational facilities within Greyabbey following previous Council decisions relating to tennis court provision and the potential development of the Greyabbey MUGA Project.

Community engagement undertaken through the emerging Greyabbey Village Plan had identified support for enhanced recreational opportunities for children and young people, including interest in a potential MUGA.

However, the nature, scale and priority of any future provision had not yet been determined. The Borough-wide Leisure Facilities Audit would provide the evidence base for assessing future demand for tennis courts, MUGAs and other recreational facilities, while the Greyabbey Village Plan would establish the wider community priorities for the village.

It was therefore considered appropriate that any further development of the Greyabbey MUGA Project was informed by the findings of the Leisure Facilities Audit, the adopted Greyabbey Village Plan, the existing Play Strategy programme and wider Council priorities.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees that further development of the Greyabbey MUGA Project, as a joint Village Renewal and Parks Project, continues as informed by the findings of

(i) the Borough-wide Leisure Facilities Audit,
(ii) the priorities identified through the adopted Greyabbey Village Plan and
(iii) the Councils Play Strategy for the delivery of older children's facilities across the Borough.

Furthermore, **agrees** that funding opportunities continue to be sought for the project.

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

Alderman Adair stated that he was delighted to see the positive recommendations coming before the Environment Committee. He remarked that he often felt the Council lacked a ‘can-do’ approach and was therefore pleased to see some progress being made. He stressed that the need for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in Greyabbey was significant and asked whether a MUGA could be accommodated on the existing site or whether additional land would need to be acquired.

In response, the Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that a sports MUGA would require additional land. He added that a standard play MUGA would also require additional land if the Council wished to retain the existing tennis courts, however, if the tennis courts were removed, additional land might not be necessary. Alderman Adair explained that the Notice of Motion had arisen following a report relating to tennis facilities and recalled that funding had previously been identified. He asked if those funds remained available and the officer advised that he was unaware of any such funding. Alderman Adair requested that, if it were to be available, it should be allocated to the project given the growing population in the village and the active local football club and the location becoming a hub for the community. He believed that a MUGA would provide significant benefits to the wider village. The project had been identified as a priority within the Village Plan. Alderman Adair also called for the establishment of a rural development fund, expressing disappointment that this had not been progressed during the current Assembly mandate. He concluded that the proposed development would represent another step forward in improving facilities for Greyabbey.

Councillor Wray concurred with Alderman Adair's comments. He noted that work on the Development Plan had commenced in 2024 and was expected to be launched soon. He agreed that a MUGA was the number one priority for the village and expressed disappointment that residents had not yet seen tangible progress after two years. He confirmed that he would continue to advocate for the project and asked when the leisure facilities audit would be completed. Referring to the proposed size of the MUGA, Councillor Wray stated that he believed it was too small to meet the needs identified by the community and suggested that the Council may need to acquire additional land adjacent to the site to provide a facility of an appropriate size.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries agreed that any additional land would ideally be located adjacent to the existing site. He advised that the option had not yet been investigated. He further stated that a report would, hopefully, be brought to a future meeting outlining how the Council intended to progress a feasibility study for the area, which would address many of the questions raised. He noted that a survey had already been undertaken with local clubs and other interested parties. Councillor Wray welcomed the report coming forward in the near future.

Councillor Edmund welcomed the progress that had been made while expressing reservations that the matter could have been progressed more quickly. Referring to villages across the Ards Peninsula which were growing he commented that they would all have additional recreational needs in the future and urged the Council not to overlook them.

The Director noted the comments that had been made and, by way of reassurance, stated that he would work to ensure that the Village Plan was progressed as quickly as possible.

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

4. SAND DUNE AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT

(Appendices I – IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the report provided the further information and evidence requested by the Council following its in-principle decision of December 2025 to agree in principle to purchase a mobile biosecurity wash-down unit and relevant mechanical beach-cleaning equipment, subject to the estimates process. That was too late for the estimates at that time and so was now being considered. It summarised the regulatory advice received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and reported the findings of ecological surveys at Cloughey, Portavogie, Millisle and Seapark, and sought a decision on whether the proposed mechanical beach-cleaning equipment should be considered or whether a phased, nature-based coastal management approach should be adopted.

In November 2023, the Council agreed Notice of Motion 585, which recognised the value of the Borough's beaches and coastal environment and asked officers to report on the proactive cleaning and maintenance of beaches in accordance with applicable environmental requirements.

In January 2024, the Council noted the work being undertaken to manage beaches and the coastal environment sustainably. Officers were also asked to report on the potential installation of beach biosecurity sanitation units, possible funding and locations, and how associated equipment might support mechanical beach cleaning.

A further report was considered in January 2025. The Council agreed that officers should undertake fact-finding visits to beaches managed by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and report on

potential improvements, including the possible phased provision of biosecurity facilities.

Those visits took place during August and September 2025. Officers and Elected Members observed that mechanical cleaning at Portrush East Strand was targeted at small litter items rather than the routine removal of seaweed. Mechanical cleaning was not taking place at Whiterocks, Cranfield or Tyrella. At Whiterocks and Tyrella, dune restoration measures included marram planting and the management of public access.

In December 2025, the Council agreed in principle to purchase a mobile biosecurity wash-down unit and relevant mechanical beach-cleaning equipment, subject to the estimates process. The associated report provided an indicative capital estimate of approximately £125,000, comprising around £55,000 for a mobile wash-down unit and £70,000 for a mechanical beach cleaner. It also noted that staffing and vehicle maintenance costs would be additional.

The December 2025 report indicated that some form of mechanical cleaning might be possible subject to appropriate biosecurity controls. Subsequent detailed engagement with DAERA and NIEA on 11 February 2026 clarified that biosecurity was only one part of the regulatory process. The environmental designations, conservation objectives and site-specific sensitivities affecting the Council's beaches created substantial additional constraints. That represented material new information for the Council's consideration.

Key Issues

Continued Beach Maintenance: The Council was responsible for cleaning and maintaining amenity and recreational beaches under its ownership or management. The Parks and Cemeteries Service undertook routine manual litter picking, bin servicing where facilities were provided, environmental inspections and other appropriate maintenance through its ranger service. Specialist contractors removed hazardous or harmful material when required. Community and volunteer beach-cleaning activity was also supported through the provision of equipment and the collection of bagged litter.

The retention of appropriate natural seaweed and strandline material did not mean that litter would be left on beaches. Litter and harmful material would continue to be removed, while natural material would be retained where it was safe, practicable and environmentally appropriate. Exceptional accumulations affecting health, safety or essential access would continue to be assessed on a site-specific basis and, where necessary, discussed with the relevant regulatory authorities.

Environmental role of dunes and strandline material: Coastlines and sand dune systems were valuable natural assets. They supported specialised plants, invertebrates and birds, contributed to landscape character and public amenity, and could help reduce exposure to coastal erosion and storm impacts. Healthy dunes could absorb wave energy, trap wind-blown sand and adjust over time as coastal conditions changed.

Vegetation was central to dune formation and stability. Pioneer plants and dune grasses trapped wind-blown sand and bound sediment through their roots. Natural wrack, including seaweed and seagrass deposited along the strandline, provided shelter, organic material and nutrients for coastal plants and invertebrates. It could also create obstacles around which sand accumulated, supporting the early stages of dune development.

Retaining appropriate natural strandline material, protecting existing vegetation and managing trampling could therefore support biodiversity and improve the ability of dune systems to respond to erosion and storm events. Those measures were habitat-management and local resilience interventions. They were not engineered coastal-defence schemes and did not alter statutory responsibilities for coastal flooding or erosion.

DAERA and NIEA Advice: Officers met DAERA and NIEA on 11 February 2026 to discuss routine mechanical beach cleaning, including the proposed removal of natural seaweed and strandline material. NIEA advised that the environmental designations and site-specific conservation objectives applying to the Ards and North Down coastline would make approval difficult and, where any activity was capable of being approved, it would be subject to significant restrictions and mitigation.

The Borough contained a range of coastal systems, from relatively sheltered lough shores to more exposed Outer Ards beaches. Their management must therefore be site-specific and informed by local geomorphology, ecology and conservation objectives. Practices observed elsewhere, including the limited mechanical removal of small litter items at Portrush East Strand, did not provide a direct precedent for routine mechanical cleaning or seaweed removal at the Council's designated beaches.

The principal matters identified for any proposed mechanical intervention included:

- whether the activity was necessary and whether a less damaging method was available;
- the potential removal of sand or sediment together with the target material;
- disturbance to wintering birds, other protected species and strandline invertebrates;
- damage to dune vegetation, dune toes and natural sediment movement;
- vehicle access, rutting, noise, visual disturbance and the risk of fuel or hydraulic leaks;
- biosecurity and the potential spread of invasive non-native species;
- the timing, frequency, operating area and weather or tidal conditions; and
- the handling, classification and lawful disposal of collected material.

Appendix 3 illustrated the regulatory and operational controls that would have to be considered if a site-specific mechanical intervention were proposed. However, it should be noted that this was not an approved operational procedure and did not confer permission to undertake mechanical cleaning.

Environmental Designations and Approvals: The surveyed locations were within or close to areas protected for their habitats, species and coastal features. Exact

boundaries and the relationship of any proposed works to protected features must be confirmed against a site plan before work was designed or commissioned.

Site	Designated sites potentially affected	Required Approach
Seapark	Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site, together with the relevant ASSI boundary	Confirm the exact works area and zone of influence with NIEA before intervention
Millisle, Portavogie & Cloughey	Outer Ards ASSI, SPA and Ramsar site, together with any relevant marine designation within the zone of influence	Undertake site-specific ecological assessment and confirm HRA, assent and marine requirements

Where an operation was likely to damage the features of an ASSI, the Council, as a public body, must apply to DAERA for assent. Where a proposal could affect an SPA or SAC, the Council must also complete the appropriate Habitats Regulations Assessment process. The HRA should accompany the application for assent where both requirements applied. A marine licence or exemption may also be required, depending on the nature and location of the activity.

Those requirements applied to all potentially damaging operations and not only to mechanical cleaning. Dune planting, fencing, access management and invasive-species control would therefore be designed in consultation with relevant specialists and progressed only after all necessary assessments, landowner permissions and regulatory approvals had been obtained.

Evidence from Tyrella: During the September 2025 fact-finding visit, officers observed a practical dune-restoration approach at Tyrella involving marram planting, retention of appropriate natural strandline material and low-impact fencing to reduce trampling. That provided a useful example of measures that could be considered at suitable sites within Ards and North Down, subject to site-specific assessment, consent and monitoring.

2026 Ecological Surveys: Ecological surveys were undertaken in July 2026 at Cloughey, Portavogie, Millisle and Seapark. The surveys considered the extent and condition of existing dunes, vegetation zones, strandline material, informal access routes, invasive species and opportunities for habitat enhancement. The detailed reports were provided at Appendix 2.

All four sites contained some dune or coastal vegetation, although their scale, condition and potential for enhancement varied. Cloughey and Portavogie contained the most extensive dune systems. Dune grasses recorded across the sites included sea lyme grass, sand couch and marram grass, together with other lower-growing coastal species.

Common pressures included trampling and informal paths through vegetation, gaps within dune systems and the presence of invasive or potentially invasive plants,

including sea buckthorn at relevant locations. The surveys identified opportunities to improve habitat condition, manage access and increase public understanding of the ecological role of dunes and natural strandline material.

Site(s)	Recommended Management Direction
Cloughey, Portavogie and Millisle	Interpretive signage and community engagement; appropriate native dune planting in areas confirmed as suitable; low-impact fencing to protect restoration areas; rationalisation of informal paths while retaining suitable public access; and invasive-species management in accordance with an approved method.
Seapark	Interpretive signage explaining the importance of natural strandline material and coastal vegetation. Any physical intervention would be subject to further site assessment and regulatory advice.

The recommendations related to the four surveyed sites. They did not diminish the importance of other amenity beaches, including Ballywalter, which would continue to be litter picked and maintained. Subject to need, site conditions, resources and approvals, the survey and management approach could be extended to other suitable coastal locations in the future.

Strategic Context: The proposed approach supported the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan and its wider climate adaptation and sustainability objectives. It was also consistent with Notice of Motion 725, which recognised that local coastal interventions must sit within a clearer regional framework for coastal monitoring, planning, governance and funding.

A nature-based approach allowed the Council to improve habitats and local resilience within its existing land-management role while continuing to seek clearer Northern Ireland Executive leadership and funding for the wider issues of coastal flooding, erosion and infrastructure protection.

Financial and operational implications: The December 2025 report estimated an initial capital cost of approximately £125,000 for a mobile machinery wash-down unit and a mechanical beach cleaner. That was an indicative equipment estimate and did not include the full costs of implementation, including:

- additional staffing, supervision and seasonal cover;
- tractors, towing vehicles, fuel and transport between sites;
- storage, servicing, repairs, inspections and replacement;
- operator training, personal protective equipment and safe systems of work;
- containment and lawful disposal of wash water and collected material;
- ecological surveys, HRA, assent, licensing and compliance monitoring; and
- the administration required to plan and document each site-specific operation.

No approved Parks and Cemeteries capital or revenue budget was currently available for the work. Given the limited circumstances in which the equipment could potentially be used, the low likelihood of approval for routine removal of natural

strandline material and the substantial whole-life cost, officers did not consider that procurement would represent value for money at this time.

The proposed nature-based measures would also require a costed delivery programme. Signage, engagement and some monitoring may be deliverable within existing resources, while planting, fencing, access works, invasive-species management and specialist ecological support may require additional funding. Any unfunded requirement would be brought forward through the estimates and business-planning process before a commitment was made.

Next Steps
Subject to Council approval, officers would develop a phased implementation programme for the four surveyed sites. That would include:

- confirming ownership, exact designation boundaries, protected features and regulatory requirements with DAERA and NIEA;
- establishing baseline information through fixed-point photography, vegetation condition records and, where proportionate, simple dune-profile monitoring;
- engaging local residents, schools and community organisations and developing consistent interpretive signage;
- identifying priority restoration areas and retaining safe, clearly defined and, where practicable, accessible routes to and across the beach;
- preparing site-specific specifications for appropriate planting, low-impact fencing, access management and invasive-species control;
- obtaining all required assessments, assents, permissions and licences before physical work begins;
- preparing capital and revenue cost estimates and identifying potential internal and external funding; and
- monitoring the initial phase through fixed-point photography, vegetation-condition assessments and site inspections, with a progress report presented to Committee 12 months after implementation commences.

Routine manual litter removal, environmental inspections and responsive management of health, safety and access issues would continue throughout this process as usual.

Summary
The Council had considered the potential use of mobile biosecurity and mechanical beach-cleaning equipment over a number of reports. Following the December 2025 in-principle decision, more detailed regulatory engagement and ecological assessment had now been completed.

DAERA and NIEA advice indicated that routine mechanical removal of natural seaweed or strandline material at the Council's designated beaches would be difficult to approve and, if capable of approval in a particular circumstance, would be heavily restricted. Biosecurity controls would address only one part of the environmental and operational requirements.

The 2026 surveys found clear opportunities to improve the dune and coastal habitats at Cloughey, Portavogie, Millisle and Seapark through site-appropriate planting, low-

impact fencing, access management, signage, community engagement, monitoring and invasive-species control. Those measures would complement, rather than replace, the Council's routine manual litter-picking and beach-maintenance activity.

In view of the regulatory constraints, ecological risk, limited operational use and whole-life cost of mechanical equipment, officers recommended that the proposed purchase should not proceed at this time. A phased and costed nature-based programme provided a more proportionate and environmentally responsible approach.

RECOMMENDED that the Council:

1. Agrees, in light of the regulatory, ecological and financial evidence, not to progress the proposed purchase of a mobile biosecurity wash-down unit and mechanical beach-cleaning equipment at this time.
2. Agrees that any future mechanical beach intervention will be considered only on an exceptional, site-specific basis, subject to environmental assessment, necessary approvals, a full business case, identified funding and further Council approval.
3. Agrees that officers develop a costed implementation and monitoring programme, secure the necessary approvals, and report progress to Committee 12 months after implementation commences.
4. Notes the advice received from government agencies and the findings of the 2026 ecological surveys.
5. Endorses a phased, nature-based management approach for the surveyed sites, subject to site-specific assessment, approvals and available budgets, including appropriate conservation, access management, community engagement and monitoring measures.

The Chair initially commented, noting that agreement had previously been reached to purchase equipment in principle and asking why a further report had been brought forward. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that, while a decision had been made in principle in December 2025, the report had been presented again to provide further clarity following engagement with statutory agencies and the completion of ecological surveys. He advised that the report sought to update Members on developments since the previous discussion and ensure that members had as much information on the issues as was possible.

Alderman Adair proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Edmund:

That Council uphold its decision of December 2025 and produce a business case, through the current rate-setting process, for the purchase of a mobile biosecurity wash-down unit and mechanical beach-cleaning equipment and that, following such purchase, an updated report on Actions 2-5 be presented to Council.

Alderman Adair welcomed the additional clarity in the report but questioned why the matter had returned to the Committee given the Council’s previous decision. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that officers had undertaken further engagement and ecological surveys of the dune systems since 2025 and that the

recommendation sought to balance those findings with the previous Council decision.

Speaking to his amendment, Alderman Adair stated that he was seeking the adoption of best practice already operating elsewhere. He referred to a site visit to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council with Councillor Wray, and expressed disappointment that some Members who were strongly opposed to mechanical beach cleaning had not attended. He noted that beach cleaning had historically been undertaken by the legacy Councils and argued that the proposal involved a proportionate approach. He further called for a programme of sand dune restoration across the Peninsula and highlighted concerns regarding rodent and fly issues at a number of coastal locations. He stated that amenity beaches represented less than 5% of the Borough's coastline and believed a balance could be struck between environmental protection and public amenity. He urged Members to uphold the decision already taken by the Council and consider the concerns of local residents when making decisions.

As seconder to the amendment Councillor Edmund highlighted the importance of tourism to the Borough. He stated that well-maintained beaches contributed positively to the experiences of residents and tourists and helped to support the Council's tourism strategy. He considered that the proposed equipment would help maintain beaches to a high standard and support the local economy.

Councillor Wray advised that his interest in the issue had arisen through discussions at the Coastal Erosion Forum and attendance at the site visit to the North Coast. While sympathetic to many of the points raised by Alderman Adair, he considered that the report contained new information regarding costs and potential environmental impacts and thought that the Council needed to balance the interests of residents, tourists and future generations. Although he accepted that improvements could be made, he considered mechanical beach cleaning could go too far and noted that regulatory restrictions would limit its use.

(Alderman Cummings entered the meeting at 7.28 pm)

Alderman McAlpine expressed concern that the proposed equipment could prove costly while having limited practical application. She suggested that alternative methods should be explored to address beach maintenance issues without causing environmental damage and stated that she was not convinced the proposal represented the most effective solution to the problem that existed.

Councillor Brady reiterated his opposition to the proposal, citing the reasons outlined in the report. He stated that seaweed and coastal vegetation provided a natural defence against erosion and expressed concern that mechanical cleaning could worsen existing coastal challenges. He also highlighted the environmental protections applying to habitats used by species such as Brent Geese and questioned both the legality and value for money of the proposal. He advocated for nature-based solutions and advised that he could not support the amendment.

Councillor Kendall also opposed the amendment, citing environmental concerns and the significant cost involved in purchasing the machinery. She stressed the

importance of directing Council expenditure towards priority areas in the cost of living crisis and also protecting the Borough's coastline. While acknowledging concerns regarding specific locations, she did not believe the proposed machinery was the appropriate solution and stated that she could not support the amendment being brought.

Councillor Harbinson referred to the evidence contained within the report and considered that mechanical beach cleaning would cause environmental damage. He stated that less intrusive measures such as litter-picking could continue but advised that he could not support the amendment.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter argued that beach conditions had deteriorated since mechanical cleaning had stopped about ten years previously. She noted that other Councils continued to undertake similar activity within legal and environmental requirements and emphasised that the equipment would be used selectively rather than on a daily basis. She questioned whether current approaches had been effective, particularly in relation to coastal erosion and rodent issues, and considered the proposal to be a worthwhile investment.

In summing up, Alderman Adair stated that current approaches over the previous decade had not delivered satisfactory outcomes and argued that beaches had become increasingly neglected. He called for a more proactive approach to maintenance and stated that residents were not receiving an acceptable level of service. While acknowledging concerns regarding expenditure, he maintained that the proposal represented an investment and reaffirmed his commitment to advocating for improved services across the Ards Peninsula.

The proposal was put to the meeting and the voting was as follows; 6 voting FOR, 6 AGAINST and the Chair using the casting vote voted FOR and the proposal was CARRIED.

FOR (6)	**AGAINST (6)**
Aldermen	**Aldermen**
Adair	McAlpine
Armstrong-Cotter	**Councillors**
Cummings	Brady
Councillors	Harbinson
Cathcart	Kendall
Douglas	Newman
Edmund	Wray

The Chair explained that he normally abstained when votes were taken but he had made the decision to vote on this matter since the original decision to approve had been made in December 2025. Referring to the staff involved in beach cleaning currently he put on record his thanks to them for the work they undertook.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that this Council uphold its decision of December 2025 and produce a business case, through the current rate-setting process, for the purchase of a mobile biosecurity wash-down unit and mechanical beach-

cleaning equipment and that, following such purchase, an updated report on Actions 2-5 be presented to Council.

5. DONAGHADEE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE PROPOSAL

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."

At the May 2026 Environment Committee a response to the Notice of Motion report was submitted along with a response from DAERA which indicated that such a designation was not appropriate. Members further agreed therefore to investigate the option of designating the area as a Local Nature Reserve.

The specific area was known locally as 'the second Commons'. The removal work was not carried out or authorised by the Council and did not form part of any planned maintenance. The machinery was used to remove hedges, shrubs, trees and wild grasses, resulting in the loss of a naturally evolved habitat that had developed over decades. The area was known for its biodiversity value and was well used by the public, particularly walkers. The incident was reported to Police Service of Northern Ireland and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Environmental Crime Division.

As the works occurred outside a protected site, the matter was passed by the Environmental Crime Division to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Wildlife Team. Council Officers were advised by the NIEA Wildlife Team to report the matter to the PSNI as a wildlife crime, which had already been completed. Although the affected area was not currently designated, it sat close to a number of protected sites:

- Outer Ards Special Protected Area (SPA)
- Outer Ards Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Outer Ards Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

Key Issues
The second Commons was located immediately adjacent to the Outer Ards ASSI, SPA and Ramsar designated area, with the North Channel SAC located further east. While those designations did not currently extend to the second Commons itself, they provided important environmental context and highlighted the contribution the site made to the wider ecological network.

Members would recall that, at the May 2026 Environment Committee, discussion focused on opportunities to enhance biodiversity within the site and potential mechanisms for securing greater protection for the area in the future. Officers subsequently explored those options through engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

The second Commons was not currently designated, as it did not contain the existing features required to qualify for designation as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar Site. Officers were therefore exploring whether another form of designation, such as Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status, may be appropriate and what criteria the site would need to meet.

Historically, the second Commons comprised areas of dense and scattered gorse scrub interspersed with longer grassland. The unauthorised vegetation clearance in January 2026 highlighted both the ecological value of the site and its vulnerability to damage. The incident reinforced the need to consider an appropriate framework for future site protection, habitat restoration and biodiversity enhancement.

Initial discussions with DAERA indicated that Local Nature Reserve designation may represent a suitable option for further investigation. However, designation could not be assumed and would be subject to the completion of ecological assessments, consideration of site boundaries and consultation with relevant statutory bodies.

In addition to its biodiversity value, the site contributed to habitat connectivity within an area surrounded by nationally and internationally designated sites. It also provided an accessible natural space for local residents and visitors and presented opportunities for environmental education, community involvement and future habitat enhancement.

Should the Council agree to progress consideration of Local Nature Reserve designation, Officers would work with NIEA and DAERA to identify an appropriate site boundary and determine any survey work required to support the process. Information required for consideration may include:

- Ecological and geological survey information
- Proposed site boundary
- Long-term site management plan
- Opportunities for local community involvement and education
- Public access arrangements
- Biodiversity enhancement proposals.

Once a site had been identified and accepted by the Council for potential Local Nature Reserve designation, consultation with the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside would begin. The process would be facilitated by NIEA, which would present the relevant site information to the CNCC. The CNCC would then decide whether to endorse the proposal.

Below was the recommended criteria for Local Nature Reserve designation:

- A site of high natural heritage and/or earth sciences interest or value in a local context.
- A site of moderate natural heritage and/or earth sciences interest or value locally, and of high value for environmental education or research.
- A site of moderate natural heritage and/or earth sciences interest or value, and of high value within the Council area for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public.
- The site must be capable of being managed for nature conservation and/or earth sciences, and/or for maintaining special opportunities for study or research as a priority concern.

The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, Article 22, gave local councils the power to acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves. It also enabled councils to make byelaws for the protection of nature reserves.

Should designation ultimately be approved, a detailed management plan would be prepared setting out conservation objectives, habitat enhancement measures, maintenance requirements, monitoring arrangements and opportunities for community engagement.

Council officers were scheduled to meet DAERA representatives on site in the coming months to assess the current condition of the second Commons and determine what further work may be required to support consideration of Local Nature Reserve designation.

In parallel with the designation assessment process, habitat restoration measures would continue. Through the 2026/27 planting season, the Council's Tree and Woodland Officer would coordinate the planting of approximately 1,000 native tree whips across suitable areas of the second Commons to assist natural regeneration and improve habitat diversity.

Next Steps
Following the planned site meeting with DAERA, Officers would:

- Confirm the most appropriate designation route for the site;
- Establish the requirement for any ecological, geological or boundary surveys;
- Develop an indicative programme for progressing any designation proposal;
- Continue habitat restoration measures, including the planting of approximately 1,000 native tree whips during the 2026/27 planting season; and
- Report back to Committee with recommendations on the preferred way forward.

Summary
The unauthorised clearance of vegetation at the second Commons in January 2026 highlighted the ecological importance of the site and the need to consider appropriate measures to support its future protection, management and enhancement.

While the site did not currently meet the criteria required for national or international environmental designations such as Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar status, initial discussions with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs indicated that Local Nature Reserve designation may warrant further consideration.

Approval was therefore sought to continue engagement with DAERA and NIEA, undertake any necessary ecological and boundary assessments, and, subject to the outcome of those assessments, progress consideration of Local Nature Reserve designation and associated consultation, whilst continuing to deliver habitat restoration measures across the site.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to proceed with the process of the potential designating of the second Commons, Donaghadee, as a Local Nature Reserve, including the completion of any required ecological assessments, boundary reviews and consultation processes, and notes the habitat restoration measures currently being progressed by Council Officers.

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

Councillor Kendall stated that the designation was an excellent idea and noted that, following a previous Motion on the matter, there had been strong public support in recognition of the area's environmental value. She fully supported the designation and reported that she had recently been contacted by residents from Donaghadee and the surrounding areas who had expressed their affection for The Commons, despite it being outside her electoral area. She noted the strength of local campaigning to protect the site and the outrage felt regarding the damage that had been caused.

Councillor Kendall also enquired whether there had been any follow-up action in relation to the environmental crime that had taken place. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the Council had engaged with the relevant authorities, however, there had been insufficient evidence against to progress a case against any particular individual.

Councillor Harbinson thanked officers for their response and expressed disappointment that no further action could be taken. He also thanked DAREA and NIEA for their engagement on the matter.

In closing, the Chair referred to Councillor Cochrane's original Motion and advised that, owing to another engagement, he had been unable to attend the meeting. The Chair noted that Councillor Cochrane was pleased with the outcome and appreciative of the work carried out by officers.

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

6. NAME TO BE ADDED TO BANGOR WAR MEMORIAL

(Appendices V & VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that officers had received representations requesting that the Council consider adding the name of Flight Lieutenant Brian Kenneth Levinge Fuge, Service Number 41394, 541 Squadron, Royal Air Force, to the existing Bangor War Memorial.

Flight Lieutenant Fuge died on 19 March 1945, aged 28, and was commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at the Runnymede Memorial, Panel 265.

The supporting evidence confirmed that Flight Lieutenant Fuge was the husband of Olive M. Fuge, of Bangor, County Down. Ministry of Defence correspondence further confirmed that he joined the RAF in 1938, served with distinction across a varied wartime career, and was killed in action while flying daylight photographic reconnaissance sorties over Bremen and Berlin.

Key Issues

Flight Lieutenant Fuge's service record provided clear grounds for local commemoration. He served with No. 47 Squadron in Khartoum from January 1940, was involved in operations against Italian colonies in East Africa following Italy's entry into the war, was shot down on 13 June 1940 and held as a prisoner of war until spring 1941. He subsequently served with No. 267 Squadron in Egypt before retraining as a photographic reconnaissance pilot and joining No. 541 Squadron at RAF Benson in April 1944.

The current Bangor War Memorial plaques do not have sufficient space available to accommodate an additional name. If permission was granted, a further plaque would therefore be required. Any additional plaque should be designed, specified and installed in a style, material, lettering and finish that was in keeping with the existing plaques and the dignity of the memorial.

Next Steps

Subject to Council approval, officers would confirm the design of the additional plaque, seek specialist quotations for manufacture and installation, and ensure that the proposed plaque was sympathetic to the existing memorial. Officers would also liaise with relevant stakeholders as required before the works were progressed.

Summary

Flight Lieutenant Brian Kenneth Levinge Fuge was formally commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Ministry of Defence had confirmed his RAF service, his death in action on 19 March 1945 and his Bangor connection through his wife, Olive M. Fuge. The addition of his name to Bangor War Memorial would provide appropriate local recognition of his sacrifice.

As no space remained within the existing plaques, the proposal required the addition of a new plaque designed to match, as closely as practicable, the appearance and character of the current memorial plaques.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the addition of Flight Lieutenant Brian Kenneth Levinge Fuge, Royal Air Force, to Bangor War Memorial and authorises officers to progress the design, procurement and installation of an additional plaque in keeping with the existing memorial plaques.

The Chair referred to the report which had been very touching to read and terribly sad and he welcomed the addition of the name to the memorial.

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

Alderman Cummings concurred with the comments made and paid tribute to the bravery of Flight Lieutenant Fuge. He noted that Fuge had married a local Bangor woman and had participated in a number of operations that resulted in his imprisonment in Italy. Following his release, he returned to active service and was tragically killed over Berlin shortly before the end of the war. Alderman Cummings thanked those who had brought the matter to the Council's attention and commended officers for their prompt response.

Members were advised that the work was not expected to be onerous and funding was available to progress it quickly. The additional plaque would be modest in size and would allow for further names to be added if they came to the Council's attention.

Councillor Wray welcomed the report and expressed his full support. He stated that local people were aware of the history and that the Borough commemorated such individuals with dignity and respect and he knew that would continue.

Councillor Kendall also expressed her support, highlighting the importance of preserving and sharing stories. She thanked officers for their assistance and looked forward to the completion of the work.

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

7. NOTICE OF MOTION 684 LIGHTING BETWEEN DONAGHADEE HARBOUR AND DONAGHADEE COMMUNITY CENTRE

(Appendices VII & VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the Notice of Motion 684 Lighting between Donaghadee Harbour and Donaghadee Community Centre requested that the Council investigate measures to improve pedestrian safety on the roadway between Donaghadee Harbour and The Parade, Donaghadee.

Officers undertook a site assessment and considered a range of potential measures to reduce conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Particular consideration was given to the feasibility of providing a dedicated pedestrian footpath, together with other measures aimed at improving pedestrian safety and visibility.

The location presented a number of significant physical constraints, including a narrow carriageway, limited visibility at the adjoining road junction, existing residential properties and the presence of the heritage listed seawall and coastal defence infrastructure.

Key Issues

Option 1 - Provision of a Pedestrian Footpath

Officers investigated the feasibility of providing a dedicated pedestrian footpath along the roadway. However, the available road width was insufficient to accommodate both the recommended carriageway width and the minimum recommended footpath width of 0.75m as outlined within *Manual for Streets* guidance.

The narrowest point occurred adjacent to the steps leading to the seawall, where insufficient space existed to safely accommodate both vehicular traffic and pedestrian infrastructure.

Officers also considered priority narrowing arrangements or chicanes. However, the acute angle of the adjoining road junction significantly restricted driver visibility. Sightlines were limited to approximately 20m in places, which was below the average stopping distance required for vehicles travelling at 30mph.

Furthermore, the end of The Parade was regularly utilised as a vehicle turning area. The introduction of traffic management measures in that location would adversely impact vehicle manoeuvrability and could create additional safety concerns.

The potential for widening the roadway was also examined. However, such works would be constrained by existing properties on one side and the seawall/coastal defence structures on the other. Consequently, officers did not consider the provision of a pedestrian footpath to be a viable option.

Option 2 - Directional Signage

Officers identified an alternative route which would direct pedestrians from the Marina car park through Copelands Car Park and onto The Parade via Manor Street. The proposal would require the installation of four wayfinding signs mounted on existing Council lighting columns or suitable structures, as shown on the attached plan at Appendix 1.

Estimated cost: **£1,200.** This could be completed within existing Estates budgets.

Option 3 - Improved Lighting

Officers had worked with street lighting providers to develop a lighting scheme that would improve pedestrian visibility along this section of roadway.

The proposed design comprised four lighting columns located on Council-owned land, as illustrated on the attached lighting design at Appendix 2.

Estimated costs were:

- Lighting provision: **£8,000**
- Provisional installation costs: **£10,000**

Total estimated cost: £18,000
This sum had provisionally been included within the scope of works to be completed from the DfC-funded "Clean City and Tidy Towns" initiative, which would go to Place and Prosperity Committee for approval on 8 October 2026. Option 3 remained subject to that approval. The Local Action Group for Donaghadee was supportive of the proposal.

Planning permission would be required due to the height of the proposed lighting columns necessary to achieve the required light distribution. Installation could not proceed unless planning approval and funding were confirmed.

Next Steps
Should Members wish to progress measures to improve pedestrian safety at this location, officers would proceed with the detailed design and implementation of the preferred option, subject to the availability of funding and any necessary statutory approvals.

Where Option 3 was selected, it would be dependent on approval of the "Clean City and Tidy Towns" initiative at Place and Prosperity Committee. Planning approval would also be required prior to installation.

Summary
Officers had investigated a range of options aimed at improving pedestrian safety on the roadway at Donaghadee Harbour and The Parade.

Following assessment, officers had concluded that the provision of a pedestrian footpath was not feasible due to insufficient road width, restricted visibility and site constraints.
Two alternative and deliverable measures had been identified:

- Option 2: Installation of directional wayfinding signage (£1,200).
- Option 3: Installation of improved street lighting (£18,000).

Both options would contribute to improving pedestrian safety. Option 2 provided a low-cost, immediate wayfinding measure by encouraging use of an alternative route, while Option 3 provided a higher-cost lighting scheme to improve pedestrian visibility during periods of darkness, subject to planning approval and funding.

Both Options 2 and 3 could be progressed to provide reasonable improvements to pedestrian safety during daylight hours and during the hours of darkness.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees whether to progress Option 2, Option 3, or both Options 2 and 3, subject to the availability of funding and, where applicable, planning approval.

A: Progress Option 2 - Directional Signage as an immediate low-cost pedestrian safety measure.
B: Progress Option 3 - Improved Lighting, subject to planning approval and confirmation of funding.
C: Progress both Option 2 and Option 3, subject to planning approval and confirmation of funding.

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

Councillor Harbinson expressed his support for Option C. He reported that he had been in the area the previous week and now that the evenings were getting darker he understood the issue of the dark corner more clearly.

Councillor Wray agreed with those comments and thought this was a sensible option and the right decision to make the area as accessible as possible.

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

8. FUTURE CEMETERY PROVISION – STRATEGIC NEED AND CAPACITY UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the purpose of the report was to update Elected Members on the current cemetery provision, strategic need and capacity. The last cemetery capacity update was reported in March 2026.

The Council provided and managed cemetery and burial services across Ards and North Down. The availability of new grave space varied significantly between locations and, in a number of cemeteries, capacity for new graves was now severely restricted.

The requirement to plan for future cemetery provision was longstanding. Following a review of site options in 2016, an Outline Business Case (OBC) for future cemetery provision was completed in March 2022. That was followed by a Feasibility Study in May 2023 and a further OBC Addendum in April 2024. The April 2024 work considered a number of further potential sites and identified a site near Six Road Ends as the preferred option, at that time, for a new cemetery, in addition to extending the existing facility at Movilla in Newtownards. Subsequent land availability and site investigation work demonstrated that this and other alternatives were either unavailable or unsuitable.

The search for suitable land had been extensive. Approximately 20 sites were considered between 2012 and 2020 and approximately 30 sites in total had been considered by March 2026. Constraints included landowner willingness, shallow rock, groundwater and drainage, topography, location, insufficient site area, title issues and planning considerations.

In January 2025, the Council undertook a targeted search for approximately 14 hectares within a defined 1,500-acre area between the A21, Bangor Road and Gransha Road South. 47 identified landowners, together with local and larger commercial agents, were contacted, but no suitable offer was received. A subsequent Borough-wide exercise identified additional lands as reported to Council in August 2026; however, following initial investigation, Ballymacormick Road remained the only viable option.

In March 2026, the Corporate Services Committee considered the diminishing cemetery capacity position and the history of the site search. Members agreed that acquisition of the Ballymacormick Road site by agreement was preferred, with vesting retained as a fallback should agreement not be achieved. The Committee also supported progressing planning.

On 26 August 2026 the Council subsequently agreed to acquire approximately 22.6 acres at Ballymacormick Road, Bangor, with each party responsible for its own legal and valuation costs, and to progress a planning application at the earliest practical date. The report presented to the Council advised that approximately five years could be required from acquisition until a new cemetery was developed and available for use, subject to planning, approvals, procurement and construction timelines.

Legal completion of the land transaction remained subject to the normal due diligence and conveyancing process.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a wider strategic update on cemetery provision across the Borough, including current capacity, actual burial activity, demographic change and the requirement for medium and long-term planning.

A separate report would include recommending approval of an updated Outline Business Case in respect of the Ballymacormick Road project, as the previous business case was based on other potential sites.

The development of future cemetery provision and ongoing capacity monitoring would require officer resources and may result in future revenue and capital requirements. Any additional financial commitments would be subject to separate approval through the Council's business case and budget processes.

Key Issues
Current Cemetery Capacity: Updated operational information at the end of July 2026 demonstrated that the availability of new grave space varied significantly across the Council's cemetery estate. The July 2026 capacity assessment covered nine cemeteries. The figures were approximate and assumed that identified graves were ultimately available for use, which could not be guaranteed.

Cemetery	New burial plots available at end of July 2026	Average burials into new graves per annum*	Approximate remaining capacity
Clandeboye	1,390	226	6.5 years
Movilla	68 (extension in planning)	89	End 2026
Ballyvester	38	29	1.3 years
Redburn	16	34	End 2026
Loughview	1,752	36	50+ years
Whitechurch	157	13	12+ years
Kirkistown	685	15	30+ years
Greyabbey	82 (testing underway)	10	Under Review
Kircubbin	438	2	100+ years

Remaining capacity estimates were indicative only and may vary depending on actual demand, plot availability, site constraints and future operational factors. The table above demonstrated two important issues.

Firstly, there was an immediate capacity pressure at a number of locations. Movilla and Redburn were projected to exhaust current new-grave capacity by the end of 2026, Ballyvester had approximately 1.3 years remaining.

Secondly, the headline Borough-wide figure for remaining plots did not reflect how cemetery demand operated in practice. Of the approximately 4,490 new burial plots identified in the nine cemeteries, a significant proportion was concentrated in Clandeboye and Loughview. Demand, however, was not evenly distributed across the Borough.

Factors including family connections, existing burial rights, settlement patterns, accessibility and longstanding local preferences influenced where families wish burials to take place. Capacity in one part of the Borough could not therefore automatically be regarded as a direct substitute for capacity which had been exhausted elsewhere.

That was particularly relevant to Clandeboye. While it currently provided a significant medium-term capacity buffer, demand transferred from other cemeteries as they closed to new graves may accelerate its rate of depletion.

Actual Burial Demand:
The data in the table below demonstrated that reopening existing graves accommodated a significant proportion of current demand. Approximately 44% of the interments represented in the assessment nevertheless required a new grave. There was also significant variation in activity by location. Clandeboye recorded an average of 507 interments per year and Movilla 242, compared with much lower annual activity at some cemeteries with substantial remaining capacity. For all nine

cemeteries included in the assessment, average annual activity between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2026 was:

Type of interment	Average per annum
Burials into new graves	454
Burials into existing graves	588
Total interments	1,042

That further demonstrated why future cemetery provision should be considered in terms of both capacity and geographical demand, rather than solely by reference to the aggregate number of plots remaining across the Borough. The current operational evidence therefore confirmed that additional long-term provision was required alongside measures to manage the period before any new cemetery became operational.

Demographic Change: The latest NISRA 2022-based sub-national population projections were published in February 2026 and provided an important additional consideration for long-term cemetery planning. These are the latest official projections available specifically at Local Government District level and run to 2047. For Ards and North Down, the projected change over the first ten years was:

Age Group	2022	2032	Change	% Change
0-15	29,700	24,900	-4,800	-16.2%
16-64	97,400	95,700	-1,600	-1.7%
65-84	32,800	38,600	+5,800	+17.7%
85+	4,400	7,500	+3,100	+70.3%
65+ total	37,200	46,100	+8,900	+24.0%
All ages	164,200	166,700	+2,500	+1.5%

Source: NISRA, 2022-based Sub-national Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland (published February 2026).

NISRA also projected a natural population decrease of approximately 5,300 people between 2022 and 2032, meaning projected deaths exceeded projected births over that period, with net inward migration offsetting that reduction.

The significance for cemetery planning was that relatively modest projected growth in the overall population masked a substantial change in its age structure.

Ards and North Down's median age was projected to rise from 45.2 years in 2022 to 48.3 years in 2032, the highest projected median age of any Northern Ireland council area.

Population projections should not be interpreted as precise forecasts of future burial demand. Demand would also be influenced by mortality rates, cremation, the

reopening of family graves, church and other burial provision and changing funeral preferences.

Nevertheless, the demographic direction was material when considered alongside actual Council burial activity and existing cemetery capacity. It reinforced the importance of undertaking long-term cemetery planning in advance of existing provision being exhausted.

Changing Burial and Cremation Preferences: Traditional burial remained an important component of bereavement provision in Northern Ireland. It was also recognised that cremation was becoming increasingly available and that funeral preferences were likely to change over the operational life of any future cemetery. The Council should therefore avoid basing long-term provision on an assumption that current patterns would remain unchanged. Future provision should be sufficiently flexible to consider:

- traditional coffin burial
- the reopening of existing family graves
- dedicated provision for cremated remains
- appropriate memorialisation
- potential woodland or nature-based burial
- future changes in public preference

That approach was consistent with the current OBC, which identified coffin and cremated-remains provision and opportunities for nature-based burial as matters for the site-specific master-planning process.

Statutory and Service Context: Council burial grounds operated within an established legislative and regulatory framework, including the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 and the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992. Specific duties also arose under the Welfare Services Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 where arrangements for the disposal of a deceased person would not otherwise be made.

The Council therefore had statutory powers and regulatory responsibilities associated with the provision and management of burial grounds, together with a clear public-service responsibility to ensure that its bereavement services were planned and managed appropriately.

Cemetery provision was specialist infrastructure. Potential sites required consideration of ground conditions, groundwater, drainage, access, planning, ecology, neighbouring amenity, operational requirements and other technical matters before burial use could commence.

That substantially limited the number of sites capable of providing appropriate cemetery provision and helped explain the extensive search process undertaken by the Council.

Lead Time for New Cemetery Provision: A significant consideration was the period required to bring a new cemetery into operation. The report presented to Council in

August 2026 advised that approximately five years could be obtained from developing the Ballymacormick Road land until the site was developed and available for use, subject to planning, approvals, procurement and construction timelines.

The draft OBC Addendum illustrated an indicative sequence comprising:

- land acquisition and project mobilisation
- master-planning and technical investigations
- pre-application engagement
- planning application and determination
- detailed design
- updated business case and funding approval
- procurement
- construction and commissioning
- operational readiness

The current indicative programme identified an opening by approximately 2031, subject to the relevant approvals and project programme being confirmed. That lead-in period must be considered alongside the current position at Movilla, Redburn, Ballyvester and Whitechurch. Waiting until existing cemetery capacity was exhausted before securing and developing replacement provision would therefore create a significant risk to continuity of service.

Strategic Need: The strategic requirement for future cemetery provision and the detailed development of a particular site were related but distinct matters. The need for additional provision was demonstrated through:

- actual cemetery capacity;
- actual rates of new-grave usage;
- the geographical distribution of available capacity;
- demographic change;
- the transfer of demand as individual sites reach capacity; and
- the lengthy period required to identify, approve and develop additional cemetery land.

The Ballymacormick Road project represented the Council's response to this wider strategic requirement following an extensive search and appraisal process. The updated OBC Addendum relating specifically to Ballymacormick Road was therefore being presented as a separate report on this agenda.

That separation was important. Acquisition of land did not constitute approval of the final cemetery design or construction expenditure. The current Addendum identified that the Ballymacormick site was approximately 22.6 acres and was smaller than the site assumption used in the April 2024 OBC. A site-specific masterplan and plot-yield assessment were consequently required to establish the precise level and duration of future burial provision, although a conservative estimate would suggest 25 years was possible

Public engagement would be undertaken during the design and service delivery planning for the site, in addition to the statutory consultation required by the planning application process.

Similarly, the historic April 2024 capital estimate related to the previous preferred site and should not be treated as a current construction cost for Ballymacormick. A detailed updated financial appraisal would be required before any construction commitment was sought.

Interim Capacity: a new cemetery would not address the immediate capacity pressures at individual sites. An interim capacity plan was therefore required for the period before new long-term provision became operational. That should include:

- bi-monthly reporting of new grave allocations and remaining capacity
- burials into new and reopened graves
- cremated-remains interments
- unusable or obstructed plots
- the impact of redirected demand on Clandeboye and other cemeteries
- continue to explore opportunities for minor extensions and layout efficiencies
- operational requirements as activity transfers between sites
- clear communications with funeral directors and bereaved families
- contingency arrangements should individual cemeteries reach capacity earlier than anticipated

The draft OBC Addendum recommended this approach and regular reporting through the Council's project governance arrangements.

Next Steps
It was proposed that the Parks and Cemeteries Service continued to develop and maintain a Borough-wide Cemetery Capacity and Demand Plan. The Plan would maintain a live assessment of capacity using actual burial and grave-allocation information and would be updated as demand transferred between locations. The Plan should progressively incorporate:

- cemetery-by-cemetery new grave capacity
- actual annual and monthly interments
- new graves and reopenings
- cremated-remains activity
- remaining usable plots
- future plots capable of being brought into use through works
- demographic information
- changing funeral preferences
- operational implications of transferred demand
- medium and long-term capacity requirements

Further historic burial information would also be incorporated to provide a longer-term trend and strengthen future demand modelling.

In parallel, the Ballymacormick Road project would continue through the staged business-case and project-governance process. The separate report on the agenda presented the updated OBC Addendum and the proposed next project gateway.

The subsequent stages would include site-specific master-planning, confirmation of plot yield, technical investigations, planning, community and stakeholder engagement, updated cost information and a refreshed business case before any construction approval was sought.

Public engagement would be undertaken as part of the design and service delivery planning for the site, in addition to the statutory consultation required by the planning application process.

It was proposed that Members receive periodic updates on both the Borough-wide cemetery capacity position and progress with future cemetery provision.

Summary
The requirement to plan for future cemetery provision within Ards and North Down was longstanding and had been considered through successive business cases, feasibility studies and land-search exercises.

Updated July 2026 operational information provided further evidence of the pressures now facing the service.

Movilla and Redburn were projected to exhaust current new-grave capacity by the end of 2026, Ballyvester had approximately 1.3 years' capacity remaining.

While substantial numerical capacity existed at some other locations, that capacity was unevenly distributed and could not simply be regarded as interchangeable across the Borough.

The burial information also demonstrated continuing demand for new grave space. Across the nine cemeteries assessed, there were on average 1,042 interments per year between April 2023 and March 2026, comprising 454 burials into new graves and 588 into existing graves.

The latest NISRA demographic projections provided additional strategic context. The overall population of Ards and North Down was projected to increase relatively modestly between 2022 and 2032; however, the number of residents aged 65 and over was projected to increase by 24%, with the population aged 85 and over increasing by approximately 70%.

Demographic change did not in itself determine future grave demand. However, when considered alongside current cemetery capacity, actual burial activity, the distribution of demand and the approximately five-year period required (subject to planning, approvals, procurement and construction timelines) to bring new cemetery provision into operation, there remained a clear need for medium and long-term cemetery planning.

The evidence presented in this report demonstrated a clear strategic requirement for additional cemetery provision and the need for continued monitoring and management of existing capacity whilst long-term provision was progressed.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the updated cemetery capacity and burial-demand position set out within this report.

The Director advised that although reports on this issue had previously been considered in confidence because it referred to lands, this was the third time the matter had been brought before the Environment Committee in the past year. Officers wished to present all non-sensitive information in public to facilitate open discussion and transparency.

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

Alderman Adair thanked officers for the detailed report and highlighted the urgent need for additional cemetery provision across the Borough. Referring to Whitechurch, Ballywalter and Greyabbey, he noted that approximately 82 grave spaces remained, equating to around ten years' capacity. He asked when the results of ongoing testing work on some sites would be reported to the Council, noting that rock formations had affected burial capacity and may require some areas to be repurposed, potentially as memorial gardens. He stressed that burial remained the preferred option for many residents and the Council must ensure adequate provision for the future.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the report and the identification of additional land for Newtownards, noting that capacity pressures had become a significant concern. She sought an update on the timeline for the Movilla extension. Officers advised that the planning application had been submitted and was awaiting determination. Design work was progressing so that construction could commence once approval was received but that Planning matters remained the main factor affecting timescales.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter queried whether further site clearance works could proceed in advance to reduce the risk of capacity issues. Officers advised that limited clearance had been undertaken but environmental considerations, including badger setts and survey requirements, restricted further works. Additional information had also been requested by NIEA and officers were continuing to respond to those requests for further information.

The Chair thanked officers for the report, noting the significant and continuing demand for burial space. He observed that burial remained the preferred option across Northern Ireland and queried whether that was largely cultural. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that, while cremation capacity could increase in future, burial remained the highest-demand service in Northern Ireland at around 80%, comparing that to 20% in other areas of the United Kingdom. He also emphasised the Council's legal obligation to provide burial provision.

Councillor Kendall noted a growing cultural shift towards alternative end-of-life arrangements and asked whether greater consideration had been given to cremation. She also expressed concern regarding the limited remaining capacity at Holywood Cemetery. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the focus had been on progressing cemetery expansion projects, although cremation may need to be considered in the future given increasing demand for that and waiting times elsewhere in the country. Legislative changes would, however, be required before cremation provision could be progressed within the Borough.

The Chair thanked officers for their responses and acknowledged the efforts of officers working in this area. He recognised the sensitivity of the issue and stressed the importance of carefully considering all available options.

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

9. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 716 DONAGHADEE HARBOUR SHARED ISLAND FUNDING REQUEST

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in June 2026, the Council made the following decision as a result of a Motion brought by Members.

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

The Council further acknowledged the continued work and contribution of Donaghadee Sailing Club and Donaghadee Community Development Association in seeking solutions to those 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.

Key Issues
In preparation for this meeting, Peter Martin MLA approached the Chief Executive and Director of Environmental Services to suggest that a meeting first be held with the Shared Island Funding body, in order to ascertain if there was any potential scope within its funding criteria that might look on such an application favourably.

A meeting was held on 24 July 2026 and was attended by the Council's Chief Executive and Director of Environmental Services, Peter Martin MLA, Councillor Cochrane and two representatives of the Taoiseach's office, representing the funder.

The discussion focussed on the importance of being able to demonstrate the all-island strategic cross border significance of any project that the fund might be used to support. However after some discussion, the conclusion from the funder's

representatives was that this was unclear. Officials from the fund also highlighted that to be eligible for funding, government ministers from both jurisdictions needed to agree and name cross-border projects. Examples of projects that might secure the funding were given as cross border rail network or other transport corridors. So in terms of marine infrastructure developments therefore, there would need to be Irish harbours or ports upgrading in parallel to which any investment in Donaghadee could be demonstrated to link to specifically, in order to deliver an all-island shared economic benefit.

The advice was therefore that a positive outcome to a funding application under Shared Island was extremely unlikely. Those at the meeting agreed therefore that there would be no benefit in putting resources into pursuing that further.

Other possible funding sources were suggested such as the next round of Peace Funding should it come to fruition. That could be investigated in due course when information became available.

Next Steps
It was not envisaged that there was any further value in pursuing Shared Island Funding for a project at Donaghadee Harbour as proposed.

Summary
Council asked 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. An investigatory meeting with the funder had led to the conclusion that the likelihood of securing such funding was very unlikely but that future Peace programmes may offer an opportunity, which officers would investigate should that opportunity arise.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

The Chair stated that Councillor Cochrane had wished to speak on the matter on behalf of his constituents noting that no other Donaghadee representative sat on the Environment Committee. He criticised the Department for Infrastructure's response to the issue, referring to the sea wall collapse and the concerns raised by local representatives, including both Peter Martin MLA and Councillor Cochrane. He stressed the need for DAERA and other agencies to identify a way forward, warning that failure to act would have significant consequences.

Councillor Kendall described the lack of action on coastal defences as shocking and warned that sea level rises would have catastrophic consequences for the Borough, with significant areas of land at risk of flooding. She questioned why the matter was not receiving greater attention at Executive level and expressed disappointment that Shared Island funding might not be available. She emphasised that the issue affected the entire island and required a coordinated response and adequate funding. While unhappy with the position outlined, she acknowledged the report.

Councillor Wray agreed with the comments made and said the issue was well worth exploring. He thanked those involved in bringing the matter forward but stated that the Executive needed to adopt a more proactive approach, adding that the area had been overlooked for too long.

Alderman Adair was critical of what he described as a lack of action by central government departments despite years of warnings regarding coastal erosion. He highlighted the impact on the Borough and wider infrastructure network, noting that roads and coastal protection measures remained underfunded. While acknowledging the efforts of Council staff with limited resources, he expressed hope that future funding arrangements would provide greater support.

Councillor Brady agreed with the previous comments and said that a cross-departmental approach was required as a matter of priority.

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

10. BANGOR CASTLE WALLED GARDEN SOCIAL VALUE ANALYSIS

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that in 2025, Ards and North Down Borough Council commissioned Queen's University Belfast, through the GroundsWell research programme and the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action, to undertake an independent assessment of the social value generated by Bangor Castle Walled Garden.

The commissioning of this social value assessment reflected the Council's commitment under its Corporate Plan to better understand, measure and evidence the wider social, environmental and community outcomes arising from Council investment. In particular, it supported Priority 3: Social, which sought to create an engaged Borough where citizens and businesses had opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.

The study was commissioned to provide an evidence-based assessment of the wider social, health, educational and community benefits arising from the Council's ongoing investment in the management and maintenance of this flagship facility.

The research utilised a mixed-method approach incorporating a literature review, focus groups with volunteers and Council staff, stakeholder interviews and an online public survey which received 591 responses. The assessment examined the social value generated through five key areas of impact:

- Mental wellbeing;
- Physical health;
- Social connectedness;
- Volunteering; and
- Education.

The study applied recognised Social Return on Investment (SROI) and social value methodologies, drawing upon HM Treasury Green Book guidance and other established valuation frameworks to estimate the wider social benefits arising from the Walled Garden.

Key Issues

Independent Evidence of Significant Social Value: The research concluded that Bangor Castle Walled Garden generated substantial social value for residents, visitors, volunteers and the wider community. The study estimated that the facility generated approximately £1.68 million of social value annually. When compared with annual maintenance costs of approximately £250,000, this represented a social value return of £6.71 for every £1 invested by the Council. The analysis also demonstrated a positive return under all scenarios tested by the researchers, indicating a robust and consistent social benefit from the facility. The report further noted that the findings were likely to represent a conservative assessment, as a number of wider benefits including ecological value, climate resilience, place identity, civic pride and benefits to children and young people could not be fully quantified within the scope of the study.

Contribution to Health and Wellbeing: The strongest impacts identified by the research related to physical and mental wellbeing. The findings demonstrated that the Walled Garden provided an accessible, safe and welcoming environment that supported relaxation, emotional wellbeing, gentle physical activity and opportunities for recovery and reflection. The study found strong evidence that the Walled Garden contributed positively to quality of life and wellbeing, particularly through reducing stress, improving mood and providing opportunities for regular engagement with nature. Participants also highlighted the importance of the facility in supporting individuals experiencing social isolation, bereavement and health-related challenges.

Supporting Community Cohesion and Inclusion: The research identifies the Walled Garden as an important community asset that strengthened social connections and promoted inclusion. Respondents highlighted its role as a place where individuals, families and community groups could meet, interact and participate in shared activities. The report found strong evidence that the facility helped reduce social isolation and fostered a sense of belonging within the local community. The importance of maintaining free public access was consistently highlighted as a key factor in ensuring the Walled Garden remained inclusive and accessible to all sections of the community.

Educational, Environmental and Sustainability Benefits: The research identified Bangor Castle Walled Garden as an important educational resource, supporting greater understanding of horticulture, biodiversity, seasonal change and environmental stewardship among visitors. The report further concluded that the Walled Garden contributed to a number of wider sustainability objectives and aligned with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including good health and wellbeing, quality education, sustainable communities, climate action and partnership working.

The Importance of Volunteering: The study recognised volunteers as a key contributor to the success and sustainability of the Walled Garden. In addition to supporting the operation and development of the site, volunteering activities generated benefits including improved wellbeing, enhanced social interaction, skills development, community pride and environmental stewardship. The report highlighted the significant contribution volunteers made as ambassadors for the facility and as an important source of horticultural knowledge and community engagement.

Strategic Relevance: As the Council's first pilot assessment of social value, the findings provided independent evidence of the value generated through Council investment in Bangor Castle Walled Garden and demonstrated the facility's contribution towards a range of corporate priorities, including health and wellbeing, sustainability, community development, social inclusion, volunteering and lifelong learning. The report also provided a useful evidence base to support the Council's developing approach to social value, community wealth building and wider consideration of social return on investment within future planning and decision-making processes.

Strategic and Legislative Context: As part of the Council's broader work to explore and embed social value considerations within service planning and investment decisions, the pilot study provided practical evidence of how social value could be assessed and measured in a local government context. The findings of the research aligned with the Council's wider objectives in relation to community wellbeing, sustainability, social inclusion and social value. The outcomes identified supported the community planning and wellbeing ambitions of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the environmental and sustainability objectives of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and the principles of the Northern Ireland Executive's PPN 01/21 Social Value in Procurement. The report provided independent evidence of the social value generated through the Council's investment in Bangor Castle Walled Garden and supported the Council's ongoing work in relation to social value, sustainable development, community wealth building and the development of a Social Value and Procurement Framework, whilst also demonstrating a positive contribution towards a number of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Next Steps
Elected Members were asked to note the findings of the research and recognise the important contribution Bangor Castle Walled Garden made to the wellbeing of residents, visitors and local communities. The report presented a number of recommendations which the Council may wish to consider as part of future service planning, including:

- Expanding educational and organised visits;
- Developing further partnerships with educational institutions, including Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and SERC;
- Increase volunteering opportunities and participation;
- Embed social value metrics more systematically within future Council investment and decision-making processes;

- Support the development of the Council's Social Value and Procurement Framework;
- Maintain free public access to the Walled Garden and its facilities;
- Enhance promotion and awareness of the Walled Garden; and
- Undertaking additional research into specific wellbeing and health outcomes associated with use of the site.

Summary
The independent assessment demonstrated that Bangor Castle Walled Garden delivered significant and measurable benefits for residents, visitors and the wider community. The research estimated that the facility generated approximately £1.68 million of social value annually, representing a return of £6.71 for every £1 invested by the Council.

The findings confirmed that the Walled Garden was much more than a horticultural attraction. It was a strategically important community asset that contributed to improved health and wellbeing, stronger and more connected communities, volunteering, education, environmental awareness and wider sustainability objectives.

The report provided a robust evidence base demonstrating the value generated through the Council's investment in the Walled Garden and highlighted the importance of continued stewardship of this flagship facility for the benefit of current and future generations.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Kendall welcomed the report, describing it as excellent, and noted that she had received overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors regarding events at the Walled Garden. She remarked that improvements continued and considered the report a strong reflection of the success of the facility. While there was always scope for minor improvements, she hoped residents and visitors would continue to enjoy what she described as a very special place.

Councillor Harbinson agreed and welcomed the findings of the report. He noted that the Walled Garden was much more than a horticultural attraction, highlighting its contribution to health and wellbeing, community connections, volunteering, education, environmental awareness and sustainability objectives. He stated that anyone who had visited the site would recognise its value and expressed the hope that it would continue to go from strength to strength.

Councillor Brady described the report as highly important and thanked the volunteers whose efforts helped make the Walled Garden such an attractive and valued space in the centre of Bangor.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also welcomed the report, describing the Walled Garden as a hidden gem. She highlighted its value as a free, family-friendly attraction that

was accessible from across Bangor and well worth visiting. She noted that it was enjoyable throughout the year, including during the winter months, and praised all those involved in its development and upkeep. She added that the peace and ambience of the site made it a particularly valuable community asset and expressed a desire to see similar initiatives replicated elsewhere in the Borough.

Councillor Newman agreed that the report effectively demonstrated the value of the Walled Garden to residents of Bangor and beyond. Referring to proposals within the report, she asked whether the social impact assessment methodology could be applied more widely across Council services. In response, the Director advised that expanding the use of social value assessments was a key objective as laid out in the corporate plan from which this initiative stemmed as a pilot exercise. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries suggested that the Borough's cemeteries could be considered, given their importance as peaceful and valued community spaces. He noted that the independent nature of the assessment was important and highlighted the strong public engagement, with 591 survey responses reflecting the affection many people had for the site.

Alderman Adair stated that few reports could speak so positively about a Council asset. He described the Walled Garden as a hidden gem and a wonderful resource for the Borough. He encouraged continued promotion of the attraction, noting that many people remained unaware of it until they visited and experienced its quality for themselves. He also agreed with earlier comments regarding the potential application of social value assessments to cemeteries.

The Chair welcomed the positive feedback and noted the importance of maintaining a balance between free events and those with a modest charge to support ongoing activities. He described the Walled Garden as a place of calm and reflection and agreed that it was a valuable community asset. He thanked Members for their comments and welcomed the positive feedback received.

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

11. TOWN CENTRES WARDENS UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the Waste and Cleansing Services team had direct responsibility for waste collections, the cleanliness of the Borough's urban centres, and its public conveniences. Town Centre Wardens were introduced in December 2019 to provide a visible, responsive, and locally based presence in the Borough's city, towns, and villages across these service areas. Wardens operated in Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood. Wardens in Bangor, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee provided street cleansing coverage seven days per week, including weekends, while Holywood benefited from Town Centre Warden coverage five days per week from Tuesday to Saturday.

Role and responsibilities
The primary purpose of the Town Centre Warden role was to maintain town centre environments in a clean, safe, and tidy condition, identify and report issues requiring

attention, and provide a local point of contact for residents and visitors. A significant element of the role involved maintenance of the Council's public conveniences, with at least one third of each Warden's time dedicated to ensuring those facilities were cleaned and maintained to a consistently high standard. Wardens worked proactively throughout the day to address wider environmental issues and support the delivery of Council cleansing services, including:

- Litter picking
- Removal of dog fouling
- Chewing gum removal
- Responding to areas requiring additional cleansing attention; and
- Addressing environmental issues as they arise.

Town Centre Wardens complemented the Council's litter bin servicing arrangements. Public litter bins within town centres were emptied according to established schedules. Wardens helped ensure those facilities remained clean, serviceable and fit for purpose, thereby supporting effective waste management and reduced litter. Additional responsibilities included:

- Cleaning and maintaining street furniture, including benches, litter bins and signage
- Undertaking minor weed removal
- Monitoring town centre infrastructure and reporting defects, vandalism or damage
- Providing assistance and information to members of the public
- Responding to enquiries and acting as a visible representative of the Council
- Carrying out key-holder duties where applicable, including opening and closing facilities; and
- Cleaning and maintaining public convenience facilities.

More recently, with the introduction of defibrillator units at Council's public conveniences at Ballyholme, Millisle, Mill Street (Newtownards), and Seapark, Wardens could perform checks to ensure the units remained emergency ready. A key strength of the Town Centre Warden role was their ability to respond flexibly to changing local priorities.

Impact and outcomes

Town Centre Wardens made a significant contribution to maintaining the appearance and cleanliness of city and town centres across the Borough. The most recent Ards and North Down Borough Council Residents' Survey identified dog fouling and litter as important issues for local residents. Through their daily presence and broad range of responsibilities, Wardens enabled Waste and Cleansing Services to respond proactively to those concerns and identify areas requiring additional intervention, such as targeted cleansing or power washing.

The service continued to attract positive feedback from residents, businesses and visitors. Wardens provide a valued local presence and acted as an accessible point of contact for a wide range of service-related enquiries.

The quality of their work was reflected in national recognition received for Council facilities. In 2025, four of the Council's five Loo of the Year awards were achieved by facilities in Bangor, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards, all of which were supported by Town Centre Wardens.

In addition, Donaghadee was one of only four finalists shortlisted in the Ireland's Best Kept Small Town category of the 2026 Ireland's Best Kept Town Competition, reflecting the positive contribution made by Town Centre Wardens and wider Council services to the presentation and upkeep of the Borough's town centres.

Summary
The Town Centre Warden service provided a highly visible, flexible and cost-effective frontline presence within the Borough's principal settlements. Through a combination of street cleansing, public convenience management, infrastructure monitoring and community engagement, Wardens played a vital role in maintaining attractive, welcoming and well-presented town centres while supporting wider Council objectives relating to cleanliness, civic pride and public wellbeing.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Kendall thought that having people on the ground as a visible and flexible service was clearly what residents wanted and demanded as part of the service paid for by their rates. She was happy to note the report and stressed that work should continue to prevent the decline of the public realm which was an issue that many people had strong feelings about.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Brady had nothing further to add to those comments.

Councillor Harbinson asked how many wardens were employed by the Council and the Committee was informed that wardens covered two shifts across four towns and one warden covered Holywood which brought the total to nine. The Councillor felt this was a vital service and if there was criticism expressed currently it would be far worse without the wardens.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter congratulated the Chair for his forethinking of bringing this forward and thanked the Director and officers for the way the work had been carried out. She held a desire to see the Borough’s town centres be the best they could be. She thought that more work could be done to help the public understand the role of the wardens. She also praised the work of volunteers who carried out thankless work clearing up after people who had been careless about disposing of their litter.

Councillor Edmund stated that he was in Newtownards most days of the week and had seen the wardens and he thought that it was fair to say that the team was proactive and did work in a pleasant way and he felt it was important that people recognise that. This was a matter of reminding people about their duty to their

community. He gave thanks to the team in the town and city centres for getting work done. The Head of Waste and Cleansing thanked the Committee for their positive comments and he would feed that praise back to the team. He added that there would be an education campaign rolled out with the strapline Pure Disgusting and also highlighted the contribution of the Neighbourhood Environment Team.

The Chair thanked the team involved and agreed that the public valued town centres looking attractive particularly in these challenging economic times. He thought that graffiti and mess pulled the perception of a place down. He added that it was so unfortunate that millions of pounds were spent unnecessarily cleaning streets when those funds could go to something more productive. He said that the Council cleansing staff began working at 6 am and the public was grateful for that. Often the complaints received were not the responsibility of the Council but rather that of the Department for Infrastructure.

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

RECESS 8.58 pm
RECOMMENCED at 9.13 pm

12. BOROUGH CLEANLINESS SURVEY 2026/27 QUARTER 1 (APRIL TO JUNE 2026)

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that Live Here Love Here (formerly Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful) was a leading environmental charity which delivered the independent Borough Cleanliness Survey programme using trained assessors and a recognised Local Environment Audit and Management System (LEAMS) methodology. Ards and North Down Borough Council had commissioned four quarterly surveys in 2026-27 to provide an objective assessment of environmental cleanliness across the Borough, helping to identify areas for improvement, measure performance over time and provide assurance to Members that results were independently verified.

Survey methodology
The survey comprised 100 standard cleanliness transects and a further 25 dedicated dog fouling transects, providing coverage across a range of land use types including town centres, streets, roads, and recreational spaces. Together, those 125 survey locations were used by Live Here Love Here to provide a representative assessment of environmental quality and cleanliness standards across the Borough.

The survey measured litter, detritus, graffiti, flyposting and staining.

Under the LEAMS methodology, each transect was assessed and a grade and a value was assigned to each. The maximum LEAMS score was 300, where all 100 transects were graded ‘A’ and were assigned a value of 3.

Table 1 LEAMS grades and values

Grade	Value
A	3
B+	2.5
B	2
B/C	1.5
C	1
C-	0.5
D	0

A score of 198, or 66%, represented an acceptable standard, equivalent to an average grade B.

Survey results
The Quarter 1 litter survey recorded an overall value of 213 which was a LEAMS score of 71%, exceeding the acceptable performance threshold of 66%. The overall Litter Pollution Index (LPI) was 19%, indicating that 19% of surveyed transects failed to achieve the required cleanliness standard.

Of the 100 assessment scores recorded:

- 81% of transects achieved grades A, B+ or B and therefore passed.
- 19% of transects received grades below the required standard.

While overall performance remained above the acceptable threshold, the results indicated opportunities to improve litter standards in specific locations and land-use categories.

Summary
The Quarter 1 Borough Cleanliness Survey demonstrated that Ards and North Down Borough had achieved an overall standard above the accepted LEAMS benchmark, recording a score of 71%. Performance was particularly strong in relation to detritus, flyposting and graffiti.

The principal area requiring continued attention was litter. Cigarette-related litter, confectionery packaging and pedestrian-generated litter remained the most significant contributors to environmental quality issues. Targeted cleansing operations, behavioural change initiatives and enforcement activity would continue to be important in maintaining and improving cleanliness standards across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the findings of the Quarter 1 Borough Cleanliness Survey 2026/27 and the ongoing work being undertaken to maintain and improve environmental cleanliness standards across the Borough.

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

Alderman Adair thanked Live Here Love Here for its work and for presenting the report. He welcomed the encouraging results, noting the 81% cleanliness score and

commending the hard work of the Council's Street Cleansing Team. He highlighted concerns regarding areas under the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), where grass cutting often exposed significant amounts of litter that the Council was subsequently asked to remove. He noted the associated cost to the Council and stressed the need to target those responsible for littering through enforcement measures and a wider change in public attitudes. He suggested that resources spent addressing litter could otherwise be invested in parks and sports provision.

Councillor Wray also welcomed the report and commended the organisation for carrying it out. He referred to litter issues on the Ards Peninsula, noting that litter often accumulated in exposed rural locations rather than being generated locally. He highlighted difficulties where the Council was unable to remove litter on roads with speed limits above 30mph and DfI did not undertake litter collection. He referred to the West Circular Road, Bangor, as an example and emphasised the need for greater coordination between agencies to ensure litter was removed safely on roads where there was fast moving traffic. He also enquired about litter being blown from beaches, and officers confirmed that beach cleansing was undertaken as part of current Council practice.

The Chair noted that coordination between the Council and DfI had been discussed on numerous occasions to cut grass and have litter lifted at the same time. Whilst acknowledging the challenges associated with road safety management, he stressed that litter remained a problem and that efforts should continue to improve coordination and ensure affected areas were cleaned. Officers advised that coordination arrangements had previously worked well and confirmed that they would continue to pursue greater cooperation with DfI.

Alderman Cummings commended both Live Here Love Here and residents who had contributed to the results. He welcomed the report but noted that the surveys represented a snapshot in time. Officers advised that survey locations were selected randomly, were representative of both urban and rural areas within the Borough and included 25 dog fouling hotspots identified by the Council.

The Chair noted that whilst volunteers had offered to undertake litter collection in certain locations, it was often too dangerous and therefore important that statutory agencies carried out the work.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter expressed disappointment at litter levels in parts of Newtownards and commented on the need for individuals to take greater responsibility for their waste. She was surprised by the relatively low levels of dog fouling identified in the report and asked whether particular areas could be reassessed. Officers advised that results were broadly consistent with previous surveys and that the random methodology was intended to provide a representative picture of conditions across the Borough.

Councillor Newman asked whether there would be a Council response to issues identified around Clandeboye Retail Park, including the provision of additional litter bins. Officers advised that the purpose of the report was to identify areas requiring attention and inform future operational priorities, enforcement activity and litter bin

provision. It was noted that Clandeboye Retail Park was privately owned and therefore not the Council's responsibility, although issues in the surrounding roads would be considered.

Councillor Edmund stressed the importance of personal responsibility and the need to identify and fine offenders.

Councillor Kendall highlighted ongoing litter and fly-tipping concerns in Holywood and expressed frustration at the lack of visible improvement despite continued reporting. She referred to Redburn Park and Seapark, particularly in relation to dog fouling, and supported increased penalties for repeat offenders. She also emphasised the importance of agencies working together and enquired about future surveys. Officers confirmed that surveys would continue to be undertaken quarterly and that results would be reported to Members.

The Chair welcomed the fact that the report had been independently produced and raised concerns regarding graffiti, particularly in Bangor, and its impact on public perception. Officers advised that whilst graffiti was considered within the survey, the report did not provide sufficient detail to identify specific follow-up actions without further investigation.

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

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no Notices of Motion.

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Brady, that the public and press be excluded from the following items of confidential business.

15. TENDERS

15.1 MARINE SERVICE TENDER AWARD

DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

IN CONFIDENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that the tender was to provide occasional assistance to the Harbours Team

when additional tasks occurred that required assistance or a specialist skillset. The works package also included planned maintenance to our aids to navigation, located throughout our coastline.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves that the contract for the Provision of Marine Work Services be awarded to the highest ranking company.

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

15.2 TENDER FOR THE LOADING, TRANSPORT AND TREATMENT OF CONTAINER GLASS

DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

IN CONFIDENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council accepted glass bottles and jars for recycling through three services:

- A 4-weekly kerbside collection of glass bottles and jars offered to over 78,000 households.
- A weekly commercial collection of glass bottles and jars from 233 commercial premises within the Borough.
- Glass recycling bottle banks located at each of 9 Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) and at 8 community bring sites.

The Council managed all services in-house and deposited all glass at its North Road Waste Transfer Station. The Council engaged a contractor to manage loading, haulage and reprocessing of the material. Under the current contract, Ards and North Down Borough Council paid a per tonne charge of £17.50 to cover loading, haulage, and reprocessing of container glass. The current contract, for an initial one-year period with options to extend for a further 4x12-month periods, concludes on 31 October 2026.

In issuing this tender invitation, officers wished to invite responses which rebate a proportion of the market and/or PRN value to Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council awards the contract for the Loading, Transport and Treatment of Container Glass to the highest-ranking company.

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

15.3 EXTENSION OF THE TENDER FOR THE DESIGN, SUPPLY INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SOLAR PV SYSTEMS AT VARIOUS COUNCIL PROPERTIES

*****DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE*****

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environmental Services detailing that to ensure compliance across Council facilities, officers procured specialist contractors for the provision of the Design, Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Solar PV Systems at various Council Properties.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the contract with the current contractor for Tender for the Design, Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Solar PV Systems be extended for a further year.

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

16. ADDENDUM OF OUTLINE BUSINESS CAST ON FUTURE CEMETERIES PROVISION WITHIN THE BOROUGH

(Appendix XI)

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

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council had been considering the requirement for additional cemetery provision across the Borough for a number of years. An Outline Business Case (OBC) was completed by CavanaghKelly in March 2022, followed by a feasibility study undertaken by Park Hood in May 2023 and an Addendum to the OBC completed by CavanaghKelly in April 2024.

The April 2024 Addendum considered a number of potential sites and identified Six Road Ends as the preferred option at that time. Subsequent land searches and site investigations established that this and other potential sites were either unavailable or unsuitable. Approximately 30 potential sites had now been considered through the wider search process.

At its meeting on 26 August 2026, the Council approved the acquisition of approximately 22.6 acres of land at Ballymacormick Road, Bangor, and agreed that the project should progress towards planning. The acquisition remained subject to satisfactory legal due diligence and completion of the conveyancing process.

The attached September 2026 OBC Addendum had therefore been prepared to update the previous business case to reflect the Ballymacormick Road site, the Council's acquisition decision and the current position in relation to cemetery capacity, planning, affordability and project delivery. It updated, rather than replaced, the previous OBC, feasibility study and April 2024 Addendum.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Outline Business Case Addendum for Future Cemetery Provision (September 2026) and agrees that officers progress the project through the next development phase, including master planning, technical investigations, planning, design development and progress to RIBA Stage 3, and preparation of a refreshed business case.

The Director said this was an addendum to a business case that was previously adopted, and it took into account the new site and also some changes in costs since that time. He added that there would be a more detailed business case coming through but approval of the addendum in from of members would permit moving to the next stage of developing a design and seeking planning permission.

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.47 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, 08 October 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Councillor Smart	
Aldermen:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter (7.08pm) McDowell	
Councillors	Brady Edmund (Zoom) Gilmour Hennessy Hollywood Kennedy	McCollum (7.05 pm) McCracken Morgan Newman Thompson

Officers in Attendance: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Head of Economic Growth (S Ferguson), Head of Strategic Capital Development (P McGirr), Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage (S Mahaffy), and Democratic Services Officer (J Alexander).

Others in attendance: Frank Shivers and Johanne Jefferson (Bangor Chamber of Commerce); Mo Aswat and Noelle McAloon (Bangor BID Steering Group)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Mayor, Councillor Blaney. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor McCollum and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATIONS

(Appendix I)

3.1 Deputation by Frank Shivers and Johanne Jefferson on behalf of Bangor Chamber of Commerce

Ms Jefferson thanked the Chairman for the opportunity of speaking to the Committee on behalf of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce and declared that she was also a small business owner within the BID zone. She advised that Bangor Chamber of Commerce members had raised concerns about rising business costs including rates, wages, National Insurance, energy, rent, stock and VAT. Margins were being squeezed and independent retailers and hospitality businesses were having to work harder to stand still and, for some, their focus was not on next year's growth but how to keep the doors open. Ms Jefferson gave the example of a Bangor Main Street retailer, in business for over 20 years, who took in £10 the previous Saturday. Against that backdrop, the Bangor BID proposal would result in that retailer and other business owners being presented with another bill and that was the main reason that Bangor Chamber Board members could not support the BID.

Ms Jefferson remarked that Bangor should be made an easier, more affordable place to do business, with help to reduce the burden of rates, help with energy costs, attracting investment, filling empty units, and attracting more people into the city centre. The focus should be on helping businesses to grow rather than finding new ways to charge them.

Ms Jefferson remarked that the Chamber of Commerce had been talking to businesses across Bangor, the majority of whom had advised that they had received no official communication from the BID. The results of a recent Chamber survey showed that 61% of businesses had not received any written or in person communication from the BID. The survey also showed that 74% of respondents were strongly opposed to the BID, and many were unaware that there would be a ballot to agree to or decline the BID nor had they been consulted in relation to the boundary line which would decide which businesses would be impacted by the compulsory levy for five years. She acknowledged that highly successful BIDs were happening elsewhere in the UK but that some experienced BID managers had advised the Chamber of Commerce that Bangor may not be the right place for a BID.

In relation to the ballot, Ms Jefferson advised that eligibility to vote was decided by eligible businesses, not by all businesses who would pay the levy. There was no requirement for a majority of the businesses to agree to the BID. Therefore, if most businesses had not heard about it, many would not vote and a BID could be pushed through by a small number of votes. She attested that a BID should only go ahead if a majority of the businesses affected voted for it. If the case for the Bangor BID was strong, it should have no problem meeting that test. In England, legal action had been taken when a BID was voted in with a low voter turnout, and the majority of businesses were against the BID.

Ms Jefferson turned her attention to the £80K of public funds, £40K from the Council and £40K from the Department for Communities, to take the proposal forward. She voiced the Chamber's concern that it would be spent on a failed ballot and suggested that a practical use of those public funds would be vacancy projects, business grants, events, city centre marketing, shop front improvements and efforts to bring in more investment. She emphasised that the Council should consider

whether the proposed use of the £80K was value for money. She welcomed Council's actions in stepping up its support for Bangor businesses over the past few years, with more engagement with businesses and a real partnership between the Council, Bangor Chamber, the Local Action Group, and the wider business community. That success weakened the BID's case. Council was delivering vacancy work and grants; the Chamber was delivering events, training, promotion, and business support; and together were working on safety and antisocial behaviour. Given that work, she asked Councillors to consider what the BID could do that was not already being done or could not be done better by the structures already in place.

Ms Jefferson noted that the timing of the BID could not be worse for Bangor businesses who were asking the Government and Council to bring costs down. This was not the time to introduce the possibility of a new levy. She attested that energy and resources should be focused on regeneration of the city centre, new investment, tourism, a growing events programme and bringing businesses into empty units. She asked Councillors to put themselves in business owners' shoes when considering this proposal and to oppose the potential increased cost of doing business in Bangor.

Councillor Hollywood asked what Bangor Chamber's next steps would be if the BID proceeded. Frank Shivers advised that, if the BID were forced through by a very low margin, the Chamber would look at taking legal action. That had been successful previously where a BID had been forced into areas. He hoped that legal action would not be necessary and added that the Chamber's main objection was £80K of public funds being wasted on a BID that the Chamber believed would fail, together with the unwanted levy on Bangor businesses.

Councillor Gilmour asked, if the BID were not to proceed, what the Chamber would be recommending or looking for the Council to do to further business growth, in place of what the BID was aiming to do. Mr Shivers advised that the five Northern Ireland Chambers were working together for the Borough under an Ards and North Down Business Forum which was seeking funding for full-time staff, a development officer and marketing officers. Discussions were taking place with various funders.

Councillor Morgan asked how representative the Chamber was of Bangor businesses and what percentage of Bangor businesses were Chamber members, as this was crucial given the Chamber's stance against the BID. Mr Shivers advised that the Bangor Chamber of Commerce had been in existence for 90 years. The Board was made up of most sectors, but it did not claim to represent every business. He advised that the Bangor Chamber would currently have just over 200 members. In terms of a percentage, he advised that it would depend on where the town centre boundary line was drawn. The Chamber did not have a list of all businesses in Bangor.

Councillor Brady queried the Chamber's assertion that most businesses did not support the BID, given that Bangor had approximately 600 businesses, 200 of which were Chamber members. The survey he had seen was sent to all businesses in the area, 67% of which supported the BID. Mr Shivers advised that the overwhelming majority of people the Chamber spoke to were against the BID. Councillor Brady

noted that the levy on small to medium businesses appeared to be very small and questioned if it was reductive of the Chamber to campaign against the BID without giving its members the full picture, given that the value businesses might get from the BID in terms of marketing and collective purchasing might be greater than the levy. Mr Shivers responded that collective purchasing had been proven not to work.

Councillor Adair asked how many businesses would be at risk of potential closure or financial difficulty because of another levy. Mr Shivers was unable to give an accurate figure but confirmed that businesses had indicated this scenario to the Chamber.

Councillor Edmund asked for a percentage of businesses that would be in financial difficulty if a levy was imposed. Again, Mr Shivers advised that he would be unable to give a figure but clarified that it was a mandatory levy which, if unpaid, would lead to court proceedings.

3.2 Deputation by Mo Aswat and Noelle McAloon on behalf of the Bangor BID Steering Group

Mr Mo Aswat thanked the Chairman for the opportunity of speaking to the Committee on behalf of the Bangor BID Steering Group and advised that his company, the Mosaic Partnership, had helped to develop 150 BIDS across the UK including 8 in Northern Ireland. He introduced Noelle McAloon, BID Manager from Enniskillen.

Mr Aswat advised that a BID was simply an arrangement whereby businesses came together, decided what they wanted to do, how they were going to do it and what they were willing to pay for it. It could not be imposed by anyone, and it came into being if businesses eligible to vote were in favour; that was calculated by way of number and the rateable value. So, if 100 businesses voted, 51 would have to vote in favour and those 51 would have to have a greater total NAV than the 49 who voted against. The BID would run for five years, and a company was usually formed to run it, but many BIDs chose to run without any organisational setup. Across the UK, nine out of ten BIDS were voted in again and 350 BIDS were currently in their second, third or fourth terms. He further advised that, in Northern Ireland BIDs, voting required a 25% turnout by NAV. The level of money raised by BIDS in Northern Ireland ranged from £1M in Belfast to £95K in Strabane. He explained that collective purchasing was beneficial to business owners as demonstrated in their presentation, but that the BID was not about cost; it was about a return on investment.

Turning to the BID process in Bangor, he advised that they were talking to business owners over September, October and November and would provide businesses with a full business plan proposal before voting in March 2027. The BID boundary would not be finalised until the consultation had ended. Documents and surveys had already been distributed by the Bangor BID Task Group and that would continue until March 2027. The Task Group already included some Bangor businesses and would continue to grow to ensure that it was representative of the business community. He advised that the Bangor BID could potentially raise between £120K and £230K and around 75% of businesses would pay less then £1 per day.

Noelle McAloon introduced herself as the original BID Manager in Northern Ireland, was based in Enniskillen, and had worked in Council and in economic development. She noted that the Enniskillen BID was in its third term with many businesses that were originally against the levy now seeing the benefits. She advised that large multinationals such as Asda and Tesco also paid the levy. In terms of return for investment, if a business was struggling with its turnover, a BID could do collective marketing, increase footfall, confidence in the town centre, and turnover. She advised that, in Enniskillen, a gift card scheme was introduced and joined by 160 businesses. The scheme had resulted in £1.5M in sales in a town with a population of 13,000.

Councillor McCollum asked how the BID team could persuade a struggling trader to come on board and accept one more bill. Ms McAloon advised that the BID levy was unlikely to be the final straw for a struggling business as there would be more serious fundamental issues in their business. Those businesses would benefit from a business plan and collective marketing which would cover the cost of the levy, so the levy should not be seen as a hardship. Councillor McCollum pointed to the apparent failure of sufficient communication to the Bangor business community to which Ms McAloon reiterated Mr Aswat's explanation of the ongoing process. She further clarified that Northern Ireland BIDs have a 42-day voting process which is carried out independently by a Returning Officer.

Alderman McDowell asked for clarification on the administration costs, what types of activities the BID would do, the benefits of those activities, and what the breakeven point was. Noelle McAloon responded that, if a non-profit company was formed, the administration costs would be around 20-25% but that not all BIDs created a company. BID activities included a wide range of activities which were decided upon by the businesses in terms of what they wanted such as retail radio, seasonal activities, gift card schemes, year-long marketing, mural projects, dependent on what themes the BID had decided upon. Administration overheads were kept low.

Councillor Gilmour asked for clarification around the levy being applied to charities or non-profit businesses within the boundary, when thresholds would be introduced and when a BID Manager would be brought in. Ms McAloon advised that generally the smallest businesses with an NAV of under £4K would be exempt but this was a decision for each individual BID. Enniskillen did levy charity shops that were situated on the High Street, as they benefitted from BID activities. She advised that the matter would be part of the full business plan that would be available in mid-January, followed by the consultation which would run from the beginning of February until mid-March 2027, and a Bid Manager would be brought in approximately three months after a successful BID vote.

Councillor Hennessy asked how the BID Task Group planned to address the apparent lack of information. Ms McAloon advised that an initial fact sheet with surveys had already been distributed and 61 business had already responded. A Task Group member was going out to businesses one day each week.

Councillor Gilmour advised the Chairman that she had sent a proposal to him and the Director: that officers should bring back a report on the matters raised by the

deputations, including the extent of the Council's role in the bid process and any associated costs. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter seconded the proposal, adding that more information on the charging of charity shops would be appreciated.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour and seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that officers bring back a report on the matters raised by the Deputations, including the extent of the Council's role in the bid process and any associated costs.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

4. FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF HERITAGE IN ARDS & NORTH DOWN

(Appendices III & IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing during the Council restructure in 2025 a new service formed, whereby the services of Tourism, Events, Arts and Heritage were brought together. This had created further collaborative opportunities for the Council through the review of existing plans and team working. The benefits of the strength of the Borough's heritage as a tourism development opportunity and economic generator had not been fully explored. One of the key priorities of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 was to increase economic growth and a key strategic action was to 'Develop the culture and heritage assets of the Borough'. The Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2018-2030 set out a thematic priority to develop Visitor Experiences and the Integrated Arts and Heritage Strategy 2018-2025 (currently under review) had a priority action of 'Investment in our arts and heritage infrastructure'. It was therefore deemed timely to assess the potential of this area of work within the service. It was important to note that a considerable number of heritage assets within the Borough were not within the Council's ownership, so partnerships and collaborative working was pertinent to further development opportunities.

Between March and August 2026, the Tourism Service unit appointed a consultant to complete a feasibility study on the 'Tourism Development Potential of Heritage Assets within Ards and North Down' using funds from the existing Tourism Development budget.

The study's purpose was to help inform, where practicable, future heritage product development, heritage site enhancement potential, investment opportunities, identify gaps in the heritage product offering and strategic positioning for the borough's offering within Northern Ireland's wider visitor landscape, subject to additional funding.

The key requirements were to:

- Audit and evaluate Ards and North Down's (AND's) heritage and cultural assets and their tourism performance, this included, but was not limited to, opening times, visitor footfall, experiences delivered, financial viability, sustainability, etc.

- Identify opportunities for development of new or enhanced heritage/culture-based visitor experiences and increased/improved access to visitor attractions/sites.
- Assess feasibility, sustainability, and economic viability of opportunities identified.
- Provide indicative cost recommendations for suggested improvement projects and a clear action plan, over the next ten years, where appropriate, for activity that was within the scope of potential Council delivery or in collaboration with State owned facilities.

Consultation and engagement
Consultation took place with a variety of stakeholders arranged by ANDBC and facilitated by the consultant.

Those consulted included:

- Tourism organisations: Tourism NI, Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland, National Trust, Historic Environment Division, National Museums NI, Castle Espie.
- ANDBC: Tourism (including Food and Drink Development.), Arts and Heritage, Capital Projects, Parks, Community Planning, Regeneration, Events, Assets and Property Services.
- Heritage organisations: Ards and North Down Heritage Cluster, North Belfast Heritage Cluster, Great Lighthouses of Ireland.
- Members of the Loughs and Legends Eastern Shores tourism group.

Key Issues
The report identified four strategic themes as a guide to future investment, partnership activity and destination development. The projects were dependent upon existing budget or additional funding being secured. Together, these four themes aimed to create a more connected, immersive and sustainable heritage and cultural tourism offering to benefit visitors, businesses, communities and the Ards and North Down destination.

The themes were:

1. **A Connected Heritage and Cultural Destination**

To create a more connected and coherent heritage and cultural tourism offer that encouraged visitors to explore more widely across the Borough and engage more deeply with its places, stories and communities.

2. **Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough**

This theme sought to establish maritime heritage and Strangford Lough as defining elements of the Borough's heritage and cultural tourism proposition. Recognising the Lough as an internationally important landscape and waterscape where natural heritage, the historic environment, maritime culture and coastal communities combined to create one of the Borough's strongest and most distinctive visitor assets.

3. **Experience Development and Visitor Readiness**

To enhance the quality, accessibility and market readiness of heritage and cultural tourism experiences across the Borough, ensuring that visitors could engage with places, stories, landscapes and communities in meaningful, memorable and high-quality ways.

4. **Destination Stewardship and Sector Development**

To strengthen leadership, collaboration and organisational capacity across the heritage, cultural and tourism sectors, ensuring that the organisations, communities and businesses that shaped the visitor experience were supported to work effectively.

See Appendix 1 for the Overview and Executive Summary.

Next steps
Throughout the study, Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough consistently emerged as the Borough's most distinctive heritage and cultural tourism assets. Few destinations possessed such a concentration of coastal settlements, working harbours, maritime landscapes, historic sites and living maritime traditions within a single destination.

A total of eight potential projects under this 'Maritime' theme had been identified over the short to long term period for possible development (see Appendix 1 page 9 Programme 1 and Programme 2).

Officers suggested that by prioritising the delivery of three of the projects within these two programmes it would deliver opportunities to achieve best outcomes in relation to additional appeal and access to heritage in the development of experiences. These were:

Maritime Heritage Interpretation
Develop a Borough-wide interpretation framework for maritime heritage, providing a consistent approach to storytelling, interpretation, branding and visitor engagement. It would identify key themes, stories and locations and provide guidance for future interpretation projects, exhibitions, digital content and visitor experiences. Potential themes might include fishing heritage, maritime trade, harbour development, navigation, defence heritage, shipwrecks, island life and maritime folklore. The project was not intended to install interpretation at every site. Instead, it would establish an overarching interpretation framework identifying the Borough's principal maritime stories, themes and audiences, providing a consistent foundation for future signage, exhibitions, digital content, public art, visitor experiences and heritage projects delivered by the Council and partner organisations.

Associated budget £30,000 – Research and interpretation planning.

Maritime Digital Storytelling and Audio Guide Programme
Develop a suite of digital storytelling resources including audio guides, podcasts, QR-enabled interpretation, short films and digital heritage content that would bring maritime stories to life across the Borough. The programme would allow visitors to access content before, during and after their visit while providing opportunities to share stories that might not be suitable for traditional interpretation. Digital storytelling allowed the Borough to share richer and more personal stories than could be accommodated on traditional interpretation panels, including oral histories, archival recordings, local memories, folklore, interviews and contemporary community voices. Content could be updated over time and made available before, during and after a visit, extending visitor engagement beyond the physical site.

Associated budget £20,000 – Research, development of stories, production of digital content.

The two projects above would then provide the foundations for the delivery of element three:

Maritime Heritage Discovery Route (discovering a series of interconnected maritime places and stories). Develop a flagship visitor experience connecting Bangor Marina, Donaghadee Harbour, Grey Point Fort, Ballyhalbert, Portavogie, Portaferry and key locations around Strangford Lough through a shared maritime narrative. The project would interpret themes including fishing heritage, maritime trade, harbour development, lighthouse heritage, navigation, coastal defence, shipwrecks, wildlife and the Borough's enduring relationship with the sea. The trail would combine digital content, interpretation, visitor itineraries, guided experiences and links to existing maritime attractions, helping establish maritime heritage as one of the Borough's defining tourism experiences. The project was envisaged primarily as a self-guided maritime discovery experience supported by digital interpretation, suggested itineraries and themed visitor journeys. Guided walks, boat trips, coach tours and community-led experiences could subsequently be developed by local operators and organisations under the shared Maritime Heritage Discovery Trail brand.

Associated budget: £20,000 for trail development, stakeholder engagement, interpretation planning and digital content. (Physical infrastructure and interpretation installations would be subject to separate costing).

Total associated budget to complete the three projects: £70,000

The strength of this Maritime theme was furthermore identified within the following five projects, specific to Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough. These were defined as within a longer-term delivery period. Each of these had their own indicative project costs and would be subject to additional funding secured at a later stage.

1. Strangford Lough Signature Visitor Experience Programme
2. Donaghadee Lighthouse and Harbour Heritage Experience
3. Harbour and Waterfront Activation Programme
4. Coastal Communities Maritime Experience Network
5. Maritime Festivals and Events Development Programme

The Tourism service would endeavour to identify and apply to external funders to secure budget to proceed with this work, however, drawing down funds could not be guaranteed, nor any timescale attributed as to when it might be secured. An initial grant search had been undertaken, and officers would continue this on a regular basis.

Summary
The current Tourism Development budget was not sufficient to progress any of the identified three priority key projects. Therefore, the Options were

1. Phased funding across three years via the rates setting process for the three projects identified at £30k year one, £20k year two and £20k year three. A project would be commenced in 2027/28, subject to budget.
2. Seek external funding to deliver all the projects. No projects would be guaranteed to be delivered in year one or any year due to match fund requirement and undetermined funders or timeline.

The Tourism service planned to proceed this year with a couple of smaller projects identified in the study, at minimal budget, within existing Tourism budgets e.g. Pilot QR code based self-guided walking tour, in the short to medium term. Should these pilots prove successful then additional budget would be sought, through external funding, to extend delivery at suitable sites within the Borough, should that become available.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the outline plan in the next steps to progress the three key projects identified within the Study and further Approves phased funding of £30K in 2027/28, £20K in 2028/29, and £20K in 2029/30, subject to the rates setting process and/or receiving external funding.

Alderman Adair welcomed the feasibility study, noting that anything that improved tourism was welcome and that he was particularly delighted to see the focus on the harbour and waterfront, coastal communities, maritime experiences and festivals. He referred to the Borough's rich maritime heritage including the Ards Peninsula, Ballyhalbert, Portavogie and Portaferry. He noted that the Borough had some of the most beautiful areas in Northern Ireland, including Ballyhalbert - the most easterly point on the island of Ireland which recently received some investment, the fishing community of Portavogie, Portaferry and the breathtaking views of Strangford Lough. He remarked that he looked forward to what would be developed Borough-wide, including promoting local tourism, particularly given Bangor's proximity to Belfast with tourists arriving at the city's airport and cruise ships docking in Belfast harbour. He further advised that tourists from 50 cruise ships had visited Greyabbey and Mount Stewart last year.

Alderman Adair advised that US President Eisenhower was stationed at RAF Ballyhalbert during World War II which would be of interest to American tourists. He remarked that the Borough had a story to tell and had a lot to attract tourists such as its natural amenities, water sports, and beautiful coastline and these should be used to attract more visitors. In relation to Donaghadee Lighthouse, he advised the Committee that the Sir Samuel Kelly Preservation Society was interested in including it in its work. He added that Donaghadee was ripe for a maritime festival.

Councillor Hennessy remarked that this was long overdue in Donaghadee. Its lighthouse was a great attraction, and it was wonderful news that the Sir Samuel Kelly Preservation Society was going to include it in its work. The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage advised that she had been invited to a meeting to scope what could be done with such a valuable asset in the Borough.

Councillor Morgan asked if, given that the County Down coastline runs down past Killinchy, had any consideration been given to discussing a partnership with Newry & Mourne Council to include that area, as it would make the Strangford Lough story

more interesting, including not only World War II but also the Vikings and the oldest tidal mill in the world. She added that she would prefer the project timeline to be brought forward.

The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage confirmed that the areas around Strangford Lough were included in the report to capture the stories that had been mentioned. In addition, she advised that the Down Council's had worked together previously and may do so again following discussion. In relation to the delivery of the project, she advised that the main challenge for the service was resource and the finance required which she was hopeful would be secured through funding or the rates process. She, therefore, believed that the timeline was appropriate.

Councillor Edmund thanked the Head of Tourism, Arts, and Heritage for the report which he considered a step in the right direction for the east coast and for Strangford Lough.

Councillor McCracken echoed colleagues' comments and acknowledged the challenges ahead. He asked how the two Councils and the various heritage and tourism associations could be brought together and, if the two Councils did work in partnership on the project, would the costs be shared. Councillor McCracken also noted that food and drink did not identify strongly in the four themes in the report, as he considered it a strong part of the Borough's story. The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage advised that the project was primarily scoped for Ards and North Down. An audit had been carried out on 81 registered sites across the Borough and so there was a plethora of stories to start off with in addition to the work of identifying visitor experiences. That raised a series of challenges around access to and ownership of some sites. She recognised that it was a long-term plan and that it would require a huge amount of collaboration and partnership to bring it to fruition.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the report and the proposals for Donaghadee Harbour, particularly as he was a volunteer on the Sir Samuel Kelly Heritage boat and he noted that Groomsport was not featured although there were a lot of interesting activities happening there.

Alderman McDowell recalled the Coast of Down, where Down District Council and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board worked together. That joint working between councils seemed to have been lost over the years.

The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage confirmed that the various iterations of partnerships had included the Lough Shores of Down, Coast of Down, Armagh and Down, and included seven councils that worked together and received funding from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. That programme of work was no longer delivered across Northern Ireland, but consideration would be given to destination stewardship going forward and that would include cross-working. The new Chief Executive was looking at collaborative working and working more closely with councils.

In response to Alderman McDowell's suggestion that Councillors put forward ideas to create a more proactive approach, the Director of Place and Prosperity advised that he and the Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage had attended several seminars

where this matter was discussed and he advised that further information would be brought forward later in the agenda.

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

5. NOTICE OF MOTION 710 – DISPLAY OF THE SEFF MEMORIAL QUILTS

(Appendices V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in April 2026, the Council agreed that:

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

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

Key Issues

Officers had met with the Director of the SEFF (rebranded in 2025 to Supporting Empowering, Fair, Focussed) and agreed that an appropriate location for the siting of the quilts (all ten) was the Londonderry Room at Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Conway Square, Newtownards.

Several operational factors had to be considered in choosing the appropriate location including the staffing, security, accessibility and available opening hours. It was agreed that the Town Hall provided a prominent location with minimal additional resources required to facilitate the display of all ten of the SEFF Memorial Quilts. The quilts were large with the majority circa 3.2 metres wide by 2.2 metres in height (three were slightly smaller) and were displayed on freestanding metal cross bars.

The quilts display could be accommodated from 15-23 January 2027. It should be noted that the display was only possible at this time, as regular external room users would not resume until 25 January following their holiday break. One booking would be re-located to accommodate the quilts. They would be available for viewing during the Arts Centre Tuesday – Friday normal opening hours and would include evenings, along with extended Saturday opening on 16 and 23 January 2027.

Next Steps

The display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts would be subject to Screening, and the Screening Form had been submitted and was awaiting an outcome. Initial discussions had been undertaken with Good Relations colleagues, and these would continue to assist support the exhibition.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts at Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Newtownards from 15-23 January 2027, subject to screening.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed this development which was originally brought to the Committee by Councillor S Irvine and Councillor W Irvine. She noted that the need to incorporate the Borough's schools, which she had spoken about previously, was not included. She emphasised the importance of public awareness of the display and asked that the event be advertised well in advance, and not solely on billboards after Christmas, to ensure that those who wanted to attend and wanted to remember, grieve or understand, would have plenty of time to plan their visit and their journeys to the event. She noted that the stories depicted on the quilts were particularly topical given the current civil unrest and it was important for children to understand our past. The Alderman advised that the Council should make the most of having the quilts on display and advertise the event accordingly. She welcomed the extended opening hours.

The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage advised that the event had been discussed with Good Relations colleagues. There had been a change of officers, but initial discussions were positive with regard to the educational piece, and the Tourism team would be working with them on the launch piece so that families, groups, and education would be aware of the event. Early discussions would be had regarding school visits, and how best to engage with local schools to ensure that the opportunity was there for those who wanted to visit the event.

The Director of Place and Prosperity advised that this Notice of Motion was received after the budgets were set and the Tourism team had been working without a budget. He assured the Committee that information would be distributed to schools but that, for many schools, transport costs would be an issue and, hopefully, Good Relations colleagues would be able to help with that. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter acknowledged the budget issue and asked for a report to be brought back to the Committee in November or December 2026, outlining the plan for marketing the event. The Director asked the Committee to be mindful that, if Good Relations were going to be involved in the event, the matter would have to be referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee. That being the case, officers could bring a report, for information only, back to this committee. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter acknowledged the Director's statement and advised that she would contact Good Relations directly, outside of the chamber, to ensure that it was given the required consideration.

Councillor Hollywood expressed his support for the proposal and his admiration for the charity concerned and remarked that it had almost single-handedly kept alive the memory of all innocent victims of Northern Ireland's troubled past. It was a community that had largely been forgotten and was regularly dehumanised from an aggressive and grotesque rewriting of history. He expressed his belief that this event would go some way to attesting to the truth and keeping the memory of those innocent victims alive.

Councillor Gilmour expressed her support for the proposal and advised that Councillor Wesley Irvine had asked her to raise the question of the launch of the

event. She acknowledged that this had been dealt with in discussions. She noted her previous request that the quilts be moved around the Borough, her preference being Bangor. However, she acknowledged that the prime concern was the protection of the quilts while they were in the Council's custody and care, given the important nature of what they contained and the story that they told. She took comfort in their security in the Londonderry Room under the watchful eye of Arts Centre staff.

Alderman Adair expressed his support for the proposal and commended SEFF for the work they did in telling the story of the innocent victims of the troubles from the perspective of all sides of the community. He remarked that one of the victims of the Troubles, Private John Birch from Ballywalter, was featured on one of the quilts. He noted the importance of continuing to tell these stories to the younger generation and how SEFF did this through its website and Facebook page. He acknowledged the continued, profound impact these losses continued to have on the families and friends of the victims.

Councillor McCollum, as one of the families mentioned on the quilts, expressed her appreciation of all the efforts that had been made to ensure that families and members of the public could see the quilts. She hoped that the event space would be dignified, taking into consideration the gravitas of the event and everything it signified.

In summary Alderman Armstrong-Cotter acknowledged that the event space needed to be a place of thought to allow people to remember and grieve. She expressed her thanks to the staff and her hope that everyone who wanted to view the quilts would have the opportunity to do so. She also suggested that SEFF might be approached for contact details of the victims' families, on the understanding that they may not be able to oblige. She suggested that perhaps the Mayor could officially launch the event.

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

6. UKREiff 2026 ATTENDANCE, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROPOSED 2027 PARTICIPATION

(Appendices VI & VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that on 9th October 2025, the Place and Prosperity Committee considered the *UKREiiF Update* report and approved officer attendance at UKREiiF 2026. Two officers subsequently attended UKREiiF 2026 through the Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme.

The Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme provided a regional platform to promote investment opportunities across the Belfast City Region. For Ards and North Down, it enabled Council priorities such as Bangor Waterfront, Queens Parade, employment land and town centre regeneration to be promoted as part of a wider regional investment proposition, supported by the Belfast City and Region Deal Investment Prospectus (Appendix 1).

This report summarised the learning from UKREiiF 2026 and sought approval for continued participation in UKREiiF 2027, including a £15,000 budget provision to support the Council's contribution to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance by three Council representatives.

UKREiiF 2026 Attendance and Sessions
In 2026, two Council officers attended UKREiiF as part of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership delegation. Attendance was focused on sessions and networking activity most closely aligned to the Council's regeneration, investment, waterfront development and placemaking priorities.

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
Belfast City & Region Showcase	This BCRPP showcase highlighted the Belfast City and Region's investment proposition, including housing, transport-led regeneration, waterfront development, tourism and hospitality, logistics, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.	The session reinforced the benefit of promoting Ards and North Down as part of a wider regional investment proposition. It also demonstrated the need for the Council to have clear, market-facing project messages ready for use in regional promotional material and investor conversations.
Devolved Nations / Northern Ireland and Scotland Investor and Developer Session	This private session brought together towns, cities and regions from Northern Ireland and Scotland with investors, developers and end users seeking new opportunities. It provided a focused example of how devolved nations and regional partners can present a collective investment proposition while still promoting individual place-based opportunities.	The key learning was that devolved nations and regional collaboration can strengthen investor engagement by giving individual council opportunities greater visibility within a wider, more coherent regional narrative. For future attendance, the Council should use these sessions to understand how other areas package investment propositions, identify relevant investors and developers in advance, and position Bangor Waterfront, Queens Parade, city/town centre regeneration and employment land opportunities within a clear regional growth story.
Beyond the Seafront: New Models for Sustainable	This session considered how coastal regeneration can move beyond seafront improvement, tourism revival and heritage restoration to	The learning is directly relevant to Bangor Waterfront and wider coastal regeneration work. It highlighted the importance of

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
Coastal Regeneration	address wider economic, social and place-based challenges.	positioning waterfront regeneration as a wider economic and placemaking opportunity, rather than solely as a tourism or public realm intervention.
Coastal Communities – The Next Big Opportunities for Growth?	This session explored the future growth potential of coastal towns and the conditions required to create stronger coastal economies.	The specific learning from this session was that coastal towns should be positioned as growth locations in their own right, rather than viewed only through a tourism or seasonal visitor lens. For Ards and North Down, this supports the need to present the Borough's coastal assets as a connected economic opportunity, linking natural assets, enterprise, food and beverage, recreation, wellbeing, visitor economy and local community benefit. It also reinforced that stronger coastal places require a clear blueprint for growth, with investment propositions that explain what makes each coastal location distinctive and what practical interventions would help unlock further private sector interest.
Coastal Regeneration in Practice: A Masterclass for Place-Led Delivery	This invite-only masterclass provided practical insight from coastal regeneration research and brought together local authority leaders and specialists to consider the drivers of successful place-led delivery.	The specific learning from this masterclass was that successful coastal regeneration depends on practical delivery steps, strong local leadership, partnership working and an evidence-led approach to investment. The session highlighted the value of testing demand, understanding the delivery conditions for coastal projects and translating strategic ambition into phased, deliverable actions. For Bangor Waterfront and

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
		wider coastal regeneration work, the learning is that the Council should use early engagement, pilot activity, market testing and clear governance to de-risk projects and build confidence before progressing to larger-scale investment or delivery partnerships.
Mansion House-style dinner / senior investor engagement	This private dinner brought together senior UK Government Ministers, international investors, regional leaders and C-suite representatives as part of the wider UKREiiF programme. It provided an opportunity for senior-level engagement outside the formal conference sessions and supported the wider Belfast City Region presence at the event.	These high-level evening engagements added value by creating direct relationship-building opportunities with senior decision-makers, investors and regional partners in a more focused setting. For future attendance, the Council should continue to prioritise these opportunities, ensuring that officers are prepared with clear messages on priority projects and that positive contacts are followed up promptly after the event.
Belfast City & Region networking activity / evening engagement	The programme included wider networking linked to BCRPP, Consello and regional partners, including an evening engagement attended by a Council officer with a Government Minister and Belfast City Region contacts.	The key outcome was relationship-building at senior stakeholder level, reinforcing the importance of informal networking alongside formal conference sessions. The learning for future attendance is that officer participation should be planned to maximise access to ministerial, regional, investor and developer contacts, with follow-up actions captured after the event.

Overall, the 2026 attendance demonstrated that the greatest value from UKREiiF comes from combining the regional visibility provided through BCRPP with a more focused Council-level approach. For future attendance, officers should identify priority projects, prepare concise investor-facing messages, use the delegate platform to secure meetings in advance, prioritise sessions linked to regional investment delivery, and report back on contacts, learning and follow-up actions.

Key Considerations for Future Participation
The Council's participation should be considered in the context of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme, which provided a collective regional platform to promote investment opportunities and position the wider Belfast City Region to national and international audiences. Continued participation helps ensure that Ards and North Down is visible within that wider regional proposition and could maximise opportunities arising from shared marketing, profiling, networking and investor engagement.

Experience from UKREiiF 2026 demonstrated that future attendance should focus on sessions and engagement opportunities that provided structured access to investors and developers, showcase how comparable places present their investment propositions, and help position Ards and North Down opportunities within a wider Belfast City and Region growth narrative.

Correspondence in advance of UKREiiF 2026 identified the Coastal Regeneration in Practice masterclass as being strongly aligned to Bangor Waterfront and related strategic projects. This type of focused session provided practical insight into delivery models, market expectations, partnership working and the practical steps required to progress similar regeneration schemes.

Proposed Approach for UKREiiF 2027
It was proposed that Council continues to participate in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and supported attendance at UKREiiF 2027 for up to three Council representatives. Attendance should be planned around a clear set of objectives, including promotion of the Borough's strategic regeneration and investment opportunities, targeted engagement with investors and developers, participation in relevant regeneration and regional investment sessions, and follow-up engagement with potential partners.

To maximise value, officers would prepare a delegate activity plan in advance of the event, including agreed priority projects, a refined investment narrative for Ards and North Down, a target list of organisations and contacts, pre-arranged meetings and a structured post-event follow up process to capture outcomes and next steps.

Approval was sought for £15,000, which had been budgeted for, to support the Council's continued participation in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance by three Council representatives at UKREiiF 2027. Further details of the programme are provided in Appendix 2.

Participation through the Partnership provided access to a wider regional platform than the Council could achieve independently and enables the Borough's investment opportunities to be promoted as part of a broader Belfast City and Region investment proposition. This was important given the scale and competitiveness of UKREiiF and the need for public sector investment propositions to be clear, coordinated and market-facing.

Next Steps
Subject to approval, officers would confirm the Council's continued participation in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and progress

arrangements for UKREiiF 2027. The approach would apply the learning from UKREiiF 2026 to ensure participation was more focused, proactive and outcome led. This would include confirming the £15,000 contribution, identifying priority projects and investment messages for promotion through the Partnership platform, using the UKREiiF delegate platform and Partnership contacts to arrange targeted engagement with investors, developers and delivery partners, and implementing a structured post-event follow up process to capture contacts, learning, outcomes and next steps. The specific Council representatives attending UKREiiF 2027 would be identified and agreed later.

Summary
UKREiiF provided a significant opportunity for the Council to promote its strategic development and regeneration ambitions to a concentrated audience of investors, developers, public sector partners and professional advisers. The Council's 2026 attendance demonstrated the value of participating through the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme, particularly where attendance was supported by clear objectives, targeted networking and relevant programme sessions.

Continued participation in 2027 would enable the Council to strengthen its investor engagement activity, promote key Borough opportunities within a regional investment platform, learn from comparable regeneration initiatives and build relationships that may support future project delivery. Approval was therefore sought for budget provision of £15,000 to support continued participation in the Partnership and attendance by three Council representatives at UKREiiF 2027, taking place in Leeds from 18 to 20 May 2027.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Approves provision of £15K to support continued participation in the Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance at UKREiiF 2027 by up to three representatives.

Councillor Hennessy advised that Council should be involved in the partnership programme and that £15K was an effective use of funds because of the connections made and conversations had at these events. The Partnership Programme was a conduit to have those conversations at a strategic level. It was, therefore, important for Bangor and the wider Borough as a regeneration area. He noted that his previous Notice of Motion was similar to some of the matters outlined in the current report in relation to updating the Council's marketing collateral and he asked for clarification as to whether the report was referring to an actual physical and digital update of collateral. The Director of Place and Prosperity responded that there was a new team within Economic Growth and confirmed that the matters outlined in the Councillor's previous Notice of Motion would be considered.

Councillor Hennessy asked for clarification as to whether the Council was planning to attract private investment through the new partners at the waterfront, or would Council undertake that work itself. The Director of Place and Prosperity advised that it was the responsibility of Bangor Marine to look for investors but, when Council officers attended this event, they took a list of all development sites and all development opportunities and also arranged meetings with a curated list of attendees who may be interested in investment opportunities in the Borough. Officers also attended seminars on relevant topics such as the regeneration of the

Aberdeen waterfront. He also advised that Bangor Marine had been invited to attend the event as a partner of the Council.

Councillor Hennessy asked why the Council attendees had increased from two last year to three for the current year and what was to be gained from an additional officer attending the event. The Director of Place and Prosperity responded that three officers were included in the Council's membership of the Belfast City Region Place Partnership, which included attendance at the event.

In response to Councillor Brady's query on whether officers considered £15K to be value for money, the Director of Place and Prosperity advised that the purpose of attending the event was to meet with the other partners in the Belfast Region City Deal and to look at where we could come together and meet investors. Officers did not attend the event solely as Ards and North Down Council but as part of a collective that involved the regeneration and development of six council areas. That gave more weight to talks and meetings.

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

7. LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORTING THRIVING HIGH STREETS

(Appendices IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Action Plan provided a strategic framework to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth across Ards and North Down. Approved by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in February 2026, the Action Plan allocated £4.15 million to the Council to deliver a package of targeted interventions aimed at increasing productivity, supporting business growth and improving access to suitable business accommodation.

Two strands within the LEP Action Plan related directly to land and property: Business Space Revival and Space to Grow. Business Space Revival was intended to support the reuse and improvement of vacant or underused premises and sites. Space to Grow remained under development and was expected to support larger-scale activity to improve the supply and quality of business accommodation. A further paper would be brought back to Council once this strand had been fully developed.

Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme

Separate to the LEP programme of work, the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme was launched in 2025 as a coordinated package of support aimed at revitalising and regenerating the Borough's high streets. The programme had delivered practical, visible and place-based interventions which had supported existing businesses, stimulated private sector investment, addressed vacancy and dereliction, improved the appearance of commercial premises, and strengthened the overall competitiveness and appeal of city and town centres.

In addition to the grant schemes delivered under Supporting Thriving High Streets, officers had secured two further strands of funding: £900,000 through the Clean City and Tidy Towns Programme to deliver public realm enhancements across the five urban areas; and £300,000 through the Department for Communities Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding to provide additional support to address vacancy and dereliction.

The successful delivery of the Glow Up, Empty to Energised Pilot Grant and Freshen Up Grant schemes had demonstrated strong demand from businesses and property owners, clear private sector leverage, and the ability of targeted grant intervention to deliver visible regeneration outcomes. This provided a strong basis to expand the Empty to Energised approach beyond individual settlements and roll it out as a borough-wide vacancy and dereliction scheme.

Enhanced Empty to Energised (Borough-Wide Delivery)
It was proposed that £500,000 allocated through DfE's LEP Space to Grow strand, £300,000 of DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the remaining Council budget of approximately £185,000 available under the Empty to Energised Pilot were combined to deliver an enhanced Empty to Energised scheme on a Borough-wide basis.
The enhanced scheme would offer grants of up to £50,000 to help bring vacant, derelict or underused properties back into productive economic use. A trader or property owner contribution of 20% would be required.

This consolidated approach would build on the learning from the Empty to Energised Pilot and Supporting Thriving High Streets, while aligning delivery with the economic objectives of the LEP. It would create a stronger, more consistent and easier-to-understand grant offer, supporting a coordinated borough-wide approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction.

Benefits of this Proposal
The consolidation of these funding strands would provide a more strategic, efficient and impactful approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction across the Borough. Rather than operating separate schemes with differing criteria, timescales and application processes, the enhanced Empty to Energised scheme would provide a single, coherent route for applicants while allowing officers to direct projects to the most appropriate funding source.

This approach would help maximise the use of available funding, reduce duplication, improve the applicant experience and support more consistent decision-making. It would also enable the Council to prioritise projects that deliver the strongest economic and regeneration benefits, including the creation of new commercial space, support for business start-ups and expansions, increased footfall, improved townscape quality and stronger investor confidence.

Funding Strands Under the Enhanced Empty to Energised Scheme
• **DfE LEP Business Space Revival funding:** available for eligible projects on a Borough-wide basis.
• **DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding:** available for eligible projects within urban centre boundaries.

• **Council Empty to Energised funding:** available for eligible projects on a Borough-wide basis.
• **Grant intervention:** up to £50,000 per eligible property, subject to available budget and scheme criteria.
• **Applicant contribution:** 20% match contribution from the trader, property owner or applicant.

Expected Outcomes
The LEP Business Space Revival funding stream was expected to support a minimum of 10 grants of up to £50,000 within the first phase of delivery, with approximately £500,000 allocated to this stage and delivery to be completed no later than 31 March 2028.

The DfC funding was expected to support a minimum of 6 grants of up to £50,000, with delivery to be completed no later than 31 March 2027. This funding would apply within urban centre boundaries only.

The Council Empty to Energised funding stream was expected to support a minimum of 3 grants of up to £50,000, with approximately £185,000 available for allocation. This funding would be available on a Borough-wide basis.
Overall, the enhanced Empty to Energised scheme was expected to transform a minimum of 19 properties, based on the confirmed DfE (£500,000), DfC (£300,000) and Council (£185,000) allocations and assuming the maximum grant of £50,000 was awarded in each case. This figure might increase where applications were approved below the maximum grant level.

In addition to the physical improvement of vacant, derelict or underused properties, the scheme was expected to support a wider range of economic outputs. These included enabling new businesses to occupy previously unused premises, supporting existing businesses to expand or diversify, creating and safeguarding employment opportunities, increasing commercial activity within city, town and village centres, and contributing to growth in the Borough's non-domestic rate base. The anticipated outputs would be monitored through the application and grant claim process, including the number of properties brought back into use, new or expanded businesses supported, the level of private sector match investment secured, employment opportunities created or safeguarded, and any increase in productive commercial floorspace. These measures would help demonstrate the contribution of the enhanced scheme to local economic growth, place-based regeneration and the long-term sustainability of the Borough's economy.

Delivery Approach
Applicants would apply through a single application process. Officers would assess each project and determine the appropriate funding strand based on location, eligibility and required completion date. This would provide a more streamlined process for applicants, reduce confusion, and support effective programme management across the different funding sources.

The enhanced scheme would be delivered through the consolidation of the DfE LEP Business Space Revival allocation, the DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the Council's remaining Empty to Energised budget. Grant awards would be

subject to available funding, scheme eligibility criteria and the required applicant contribution.

The scheme would be delivered by officers from across the Economic Growth Service and managed within existing staff resources. Monitoring arrangements would be put in place to ensure expenditure complied with funding conditions and delivery deadlines.

Key Considerations
Key considerations included ensuring that project approvals aligned with funding eligibility requirements, delivery timescales and, where applicable, state aid or subsidy control requirements. These matters would be managed through the application, assessment, grant agreement and monitoring processes.

Next Steps
The enhanced Empty to Energised scheme would be delivered by a dedicated team of officers from across the Economic Growth Service and was expected to open for applications in Quarter 3 of the 2026/27 financial year.
The separate LEP Space to Grow strand remained under development. A further report would be brought to Council once the proposed approach, eligibility criteria and delivery arrangements had been finalised.

Summary
The proposed enhanced Borough-wide Empty to Energised scheme would provide a coordinated approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction by aligning DfE, DfC and Council funding through a single grant programme. Members were asked to approve the establishment of the scheme and the consolidation of the identified funding streams to support its delivery.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Approves the establishment of an enhanced Borough-wide Empty to Energised Scheme through the consolidation of the DfE LEP Business Space Revival strand, the DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the remaining Council Empty to Energised budget.

Alderman McDowell welcomed the substantial funding that the Council was putting into the economy to improve facilities for businesses and to create new jobs. £1M was being invested in some projects that had been undertaken before, one of which was open to the entire Borough. He acknowledged that this was part of a longstanding project through the Local Economic Partnership. He also noted the work on Space to Grow which would hopefully create larger opportunities for developing businesses.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the funding from the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities and noted that, when the Council used its budget, it was more likely that more funding would be provided. She welcomed the Minister’s input, congratulated the officers, and noted that the Council was being trusted continually due to its successes and its aim to create a thriving community. She enquired about the format of the enhanced Empty to Energised Scheme, how it would be managed, if it was to be rolled out Borough-wide, and how funds would be allocated.

The Head of Economic Growth responded that the scheme was building on the learnings from the Bangor and Newtownards pilot scheme, trying to simplify the process in line with feedback. The Council was maximising the funding received from the Departments. There would be a single application process, followed by assessment of applications by officers, and then allocation of funding; it was the Council's tried and tested applications process. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the simple applications format. She advised of a property that would soon be on the market and remarked on its potential suitability for multiple business premises, suggesting that it might be partly funded by the Council and partly by private enterprise.

Councillor Hollywood welcomed the report and asked if there was any evidence that the previous scheme had delivered lasting economic benefits, beyond an improvement in the appearance of buildings. The Head of Economic Growth advised that an evaluation was planned but that no definitive outcomes were available at that time.

Councillor McCollum advised that, when she proposed that Council had a scheme for vacancy and dereliction, it was focused on Newtownards, and she was delighted that this scheme would be Borough-wide as it was very much needed to positively impact the community. She thanked officers for their work on the scheme. In relation to the wastewater infrastructure, she noted that there was a closed catchment in Newtownards and partially closed catchments in Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood which would impact the scheme. She asked if sufficient information had been gathered to make a case to NI Water prior to running into issues. The Head of Economic Growth confirmed that officers would collate the necessary information and report back to the committee at the appropriate time.

Councillor McCollum advised that, from anecdotal feedback from Holywood Chamber of Commerce, there had been great appreciation for and approval of the work done in the town, with a feeling of support from the Council and of a partnership that was focused on the best interests of high streets. In addition, Bangor Chamber of Commerce had voiced its appreciation for the greater interest the Council was taking in supporting businesses on its high streets, which had resulted in an award.

In summary Alderman McDowell thanked the officers for all their work. He advised that it was important for members to talk to businesses and ask them to speak with the relevant Council departments because there were bigger opportunities on the horizon, so new expressions of interest would be welcomed.

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

REPORTS FOR NOTING

8. NEWTOWNARDS CITIZENS HUB – QUEEN'S HALL, ELECTED MEMBER WORKSHOP – 19 AUGUST 2026

(Appendices X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that in June 2026, the Council received an update report on the progress of the Newtownards Citizen Hub project. This was accompanied by a presentation on the RIBA Stage 2 designs.

Elected members requested that to fully understand the design to date, an Elected Member Workshop was to be convened. This was held at 4.00 pm on 19 August 2026, Londonderry Room, Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Newtownards. An invitation was extended to all members. The lead Architect and Project Manager (Samuel Stevenson and Sons), the Head of Service (South and East) and Branch Manager (Newtownards) Libraries NI (LNI) were in attendance along with the Chief Executive, Director of Place and Prosperity, Tourism, Arts and Heritage, Capital Projects and Community team members.

The Architect delivered a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation on the emerging design proposals, providing an opportunity for Elected Members to provide feedback and ask questions on key considerations. A range of topics were covered including but not limited to access, capacity, pricing, safeguarding, sustainability and staffing.

Key Issues
Elected members welcomed the overall concept, greeting the RIBA Stage 2 designs favourably with no substantial issues raised.

Next Steps
Operating arrangements of the project for the Council, and in partnership with LNI, requires considerable work. It was acknowledged that the current resource aligned to this was from the existing operational Council and LNI staffing structures. Once this work was complete it would inform an Addendum to the Outline Business Case (OBC) and would be brought back to the Council for approval at the appropriate juncture.

Further consultation would take place with Council and LNI staff, the community and neighbouring buildings alongside the planning consultation to help inform the planning submission.

Summary
Officers and LNI colleagues would continue to work on the next steps with the ICT team and a further report outlining an Addendum to the OBC would be brought back to Council at the appropriate juncture.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Notes the report and next steps.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter thanked officers for the additional work they had put into this workshop which was well attended. Attendees asked detailed questions in relation to child protection that were appropriately answered, and the workshop had the available facilities and space, and ensured that the library had full access and everything it needed. It was a good holistic approach. She declared her displeasure at the title of the hub and asked for a renaming to be considered as soon as possible. She noted that the Queen's Hall had been part of the fabric of the Borough since the Queen Mother opened it and should continue to be so. She acknowledged

the timeline and asked that the design and architecture company be made aware of all the needs. The Chairman clarified that the hub's title was a working title for three projects and would not be the name of the new facility.

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

9. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME EVALUATION SUMMARY – MID-SEASON 2026

(Appendices XI-XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that this report represented the mid-point of the 2026 programme and evaluated the five events that had been successfully delivered to date with four planned for the rest of the year. The events that had been delivered were:

Event	Date	Budget
May Day, Holywood	Monday 04.05.26	£21,300
Sea Bangor	Saturday 23.05.26 Sunday 24.05.26	£108,500
Summer Food Festival incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival	Saturday 20.06.26	£86,500
Ulster Pipe Band Championships	Saturday 01.08.26	£36,700
Bangor Beats and Rhythms	Saturday 01.08.26	£40,000

The programme to date had attracted 67,500 attendees, above the target of 61,000. This figure only included events directly delivered by the Tourism Events team, excluding shoulder events and other related events within the Taste Summer Festival and Bangor Vibes events.

Market research had been undertaken at each of the events. One event had market research undertaken by the in-house team - May Day. All other research had been undertaken by an independent market research agency. The market research for Bangor Beats and Rhythms formed part of the tender to deliver the event. The contractors reported back difficulties with the technology which were not evident until after the event, therefore its sample size was significantly smaller than the target set. Sample sizes ranged widely and therefore results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary was included in Appendix 1.

1. Holywood May Day — Monday 4 May 2026

The Holywood May Day celebrations were delivered in partnership with Holywood and District Community Council (HDCC). The event attracted an estimated c.10,000 attendees.

The event layout, (which had been revised last year) remained for the 2026 event and continued to contribute positively to crowd flow, accessibility, and the overall visitor experience. Set-up and de-rig operations were completed effectively, helped by the extended road closure times and traffic management assistance during the

derig stage, which were implemented following recommendations made at the 2025 debrief.

The event programme retained its traditional elements, including community-led activities, musical performances, children's entertainment, and a dedicated food and seating area.

1.1 Key Successes

- Partnership working between Council, HDCC, statutory agencies, contractors and local businesses.
- Positive feedback was received from local hospitality businesses, which reported strong trading throughout the day.
- The Chamber of Commerce expressed its satisfaction with the event and its impact on the town.
- The tea dance, event trail and fancy-dress competition organised by HDCC were all well attended and positively received.

1.2 Challenges and Observations

- The children's area was very popular throughout the day. Queue management around the 'play bus' attraction proved challenging and further to a review it was agreed that this attraction should not return in future years. Alternative children's attractions would be explored.

1.3 Market Research

51% of attendees were from the town of Holywood and an additional 32% of attendees were from the Borough leaving 16% of attendees from the rest of NI. Commentary received highlighted the family-friendly atmosphere, community spirit, entertainment programme and overall organisation as key strengths. Areas identified for consideration in future years included queue management in food areas, accessibility, mobility access and additional seating and toilet provision.

2. Sea Bangor — Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May 2026

Sea Bangor 2026 attracted approximately c.31,000 attendees across the event weekend. A new element added to this year's event included a road closure which incorporated Quay Street, Seacliff Road and Crosby Street. The closure increased the footprint of the event site and allowed existing businesses such as The Nines, The Guillemot and The Rabbit Rooms to be included within the event site. This also freed up space on the Eisenhower Pier and enabled a much more 'relaxed' atmosphere for viewing the Tall Ships and the on water activities including the Rowing Race.

Also, new this year, was the arrival of two traditionally rigged tall ships – Pellew and Spirit of Falmouth that stopped at Bangor as part of Full Circle sailing expedition carrying the Invictus flag. Their arrival enabled the addition of programming to welcome the ships and a flag raising ceremony which was open to the public on the Friday afternoon.

A Quiet Hour was introduced to the event this year. This was introduced as a result of feedback from the North Down Disability Action Forum during an Accessibility Audit which was carried out. It was reported that the large crowds, particularly on the

Pier could be intimidating for wheelchair users and other visitors who needed a more quiet environment.

2.1 Key Successes

- Visiting ships and associated heritage storytelling were highlighted as a key attraction.
- Introduction of a Quiet Hour with positive feedback.
- New event layout worked well, benefiting local hospitality businesses and creating additional space in the main event site, particularly the Pier.
- Partnership working between contractors, statutory agencies and Council services supported the successful delivery of the event.
- Successful implementation of the City Passport initiative, with all 1,000 passports distributed and good engagement reported by local businesses.
- Traffic management arrangements operated effectively throughout the event.

2.2 Challenges and Observations

Operational considerations had been identified to improve future delivery, however it was anticipated the new Waterfront site would host the event and this alongside programming would determine operational planning.

- Additional food provision should be considered at the end of the Eisenhower pier to improve the visitor offer across the full event footprint.
- Accessibility provision should be further enhanced, including improved drop-off facilities, clearer promotion of accessibility services and increased visibility of Quiet Hour arrangements.
- Lessons arising from isolated incidents involving drone use, accessibility needs and temporary infrastructure management would be incorporated into future planning.

2.3 Market Research

The event was strongly family-orientated with 74% attending as part of a family group. Attendees were almost entirely local with less than 1% reporting that they travelled from outside of NI. 85% of visitors to the event were from within the Borough. This was equal to last year and was not performing for Out of Borough attendance. A revision to the event would be key at the new Waterfront site. It was noted 73% of attendees said they came to Bangor specifically for the event. The expansion of the site for the event with the food and bar area on the closed road was well received with 79% reporting improvement to their experience.
Comments in general mentioned more activities for adults, not just children, as well as a wider range of food options, particularly for people with allergies or dietary requirements.

3. Taste Ards and North Down Summer Food Festival incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival – Saturday 20 June 2026

The Comber Earlies Food Festival was the headline event in the Taste Summer in Ards and North Down programme which showcased the Borough's food and drink offering. Programming at the event included artisan stalls featuring local producers, a demo kitchen featuring celebrity chef, local producer interviews, music stage and bar along with family themed arts, crafts and activities.
Attendance was recorded at c.12,000 visitors. The Passport initiative was well received with 15 businesses taking part and all of the 1,000 printed documents given

out. 20 ANDBC businesses traded within the artisan market, many representatives from the Taste AND Network. They all reported a strong day of trade with four businesses selling out completely.

3.1 Key Successes

- Celebrity Chef Nathan Anthony was a successful presenter at the demo kitchen.
- Quiet Hour inclusion and accessible and additional parking.
- Closing the Leisure Centre car park from Thursday to facilitate the event set-up.

3.2 Challenges and Observations

- Challenges remained regarding the proximity of the Comber Care Home and the event site. Officers would continue to review operational aspects regarding the site.
- Due to the ongoing popularity of this event, the capacity of the site was continually reviewed. It should be noted that weather had been particularly favourable for the last two years.
- In March 2026, further to a Council decision on the Comber Earlies Food Festival site location, it was determined that the 2026 event would continue at the Comber Leisure Centre (other option Parkway). The site would be kept under review and re-engagement with the Local Action Group would be the first stage of consultation should that be a requirement.

3.3 Market Research

64% of visitors reported attending the event as part of a family group with 23% of attendees coming from Out of the Borough. 2% of these came from outside of NI. 63% of visitors came to Comber specifically for the event and 96% of visitors spent money while they were at the event, 74% within the event site at the stalls and 20% spending within the town. Overall, the event met or exceeded expectations of the attendees.

4. Bangor Vibes

Bangor Beats and Rhythms, Ulster Pipe Band Championships, Picnic in the Park along with Bangor Amplified (delivered by the Chamber) was promoted by the Council as ‘Bangor Vibes’ – 1–2 August 2026, a weekend of music, culture and celebration. The following outlined the event activity delivered by Council.

4.1 Ulster Pipe Band Championships – Saturday 1 August 2026

The 73rd Ulster Pipe Band Championships were held at Ward Park (Arras). 36 bands participated in this event, managed and run by The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI). Attendance at the event was recorded at c.6,500. Operationally this was reported as a good site with ample parking for participants and coaches. Weather was particularly favourable on the event day. A number of trade stands, along with a bar facility, were well used alongside the musical programme, creating a pleasant atmosphere.

4.1.1 Key Successes

- Access, traffic management and parking were well managed.
- Adjacent car parks promoted on the day were well used.

- The ‘Mayoral led’ short parade at the conclusion of the event from Ward Park along the Gransha Road finishing at the Hamilton Road junction was a popular element of the day, with a good turnout of spectators both from those at the event itself and those who were in the city, as part of the overall programme.

4.1.2 Challenges and Observations

- The Park and Ride facilities were not as well used as anticipated and would be reviewed.
- Some feedback in the market research asked for additional family entertainment, however, this had been added by Council in previous years and was not well used.
- Signage to be reviewed relevant to this location.

4.1.3 Market Research Findings

44% of attendees to the Ulster Pipe Band Championships were from Out of the Borough and 8% of these came from out of Northern Ireland. 59% of visitors were attending as part of a family group. 67% of visitors came to Bangor specifically for the event and 18% of respondents attended Bangor Beats and Rhythms as well as the Ulster Pipe Band Championships. 96% of respondents said the event had met or exceeded their expectations with comments including more directional signage from the event into Bangor and the addition of seats and benches at the event. The added events within Bangor were mentioned as positive.

4.2 Bangor Beats and Rhythms - Saturday 1 August 2026

In February 2026, Council approved the delivery of an additional event in 2026 to maximise the opportunity to gain visitors travelling to the Belfast Fleadh, scheduled to take place on 2 - 9 August 2026. Further to Council approval, and following a procurement exercise, Bangor Beats and Rhythms was programmed, managed and delivered by Peter Corry Productions. The entertainment programme contained a variety of suitably themed performances including two sessions by Ards CCÉ.
The event was held in Holborn Square, using this venue as an events space for the first time. The programme ran from 1.00 pm to 9.00 pm and attracted c.8,000 attendees over the course of the day. The area was licensed and visitors were able to purchase drinks from an event bar. Engagement with local businesses generated additional benefit for neighbouring food operators. QR code technology facilitated click-and-collect purchasing, while participating businesses increased both stock availability and staffing resources to accommodate heightened demand. Dedicated seating areas within the venue enabled visitors to enjoy food and drink purchases in a comfortable environment.

Bangor Chamber worked in close collaboration with the Council to deliver a weekend of events, with the addition of ‘Bangor Amplified’. This entailed a series of musical performances in a selection of pubs and outdoor locations with bands programmed by the Chamber. The Chamber worked with The Rabbit Rooms and Wolseys to secure road closures which enabled them to extend outside seating. Both establishments had live music at these outdoor venues.

4.2.1 Key Successes

- Holborn Square was a successful events space, noting a few challenges in terms of delivery of large items of equipment.
- Support from local businesses and residents alike for the event delivery.
- Collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and partners.
- Support and programming from Ards CCÉ.

4.2.2 Challenges and Observations

- Co-ordination of all activity into a clear message for visitors.
- New/unknown event and event site requiring a high level of communication with businesses and residents.
- New event site with lessons on operational delivery for future use.

4.2.3 Market Research

19% of attendees were from Out of the Borough and 6% of these came from out of Northern Ireland. The majority, 53%, were within the 35-44 age bracket. 43% indicated they had either spent time visiting another arts/cultural space or spent time in the local area (e.g., shopping, visiting other attractions). This figure was reflected in the estimated average spend per attendee, being an extremely positive £40.60 per person.

Bangor Vibes Weekend Market Research

Officers engaged with the contracted market research company to undertake an online visitor survey to gauge visitor interaction with all elements of the weekend activity, alongside satisfaction. A brief overview of the outcomes of the report was below (103 sample). Data from the report had **not** been included within the summary document as there may have been visitors who attended multiple events, therefore may be open to double counting which would skew the figures.

80% of visitors came from the Borough (68% coming from Bangor). 20% came from Out of the Borough with 1% of those out of Northern Ireland. 71% of respondents attended Bangor Beats and Rhythms while 50% attended the Pipe Band Championships. 26% attended “other” which included the activity delivered by Bangor Chamber.

93% of visitors spent money while in Bangor, 74% being spent at stalls at the Pipe Bands or Bangor Beats and Rhythms, and 60% spent money within Bangor at shops and restaurants/bars. 65% of visitors would not have come to Bangor if the event had not been on.

89% of respondents to the Bangor Vibes survey stated the event/s that they attended met or exceeded their expectations with 55% specifically stating the event/s exceeded expectations.

Visitor Information Centres were based at Holborn Square, Ward Park (Pipe Band event) and Bangor Train Station. These outreach centres provided orientation and event information to people arriving in the city centre with a total of 1634 enquiries registered. Origin of visitors logged beyond NI included ROI, European, USA, South African and New Zealand. Anecdotally team members on the day noted there was movement and flow of people within the city both from Ward Park to the Pipe Band event at Ward Park Arras and from this event to Bangor, Beats and Rhythms and

Bangor Amplified events and vice versa. The day was also particularly favourable weather wise throughout making a nice summer atmosphere for those attending. Feedback from the Chamber of Commerce, its representatives and other participating partners during the Bangor Vibes weekend outlined significant additional footfall and business sales, particularly within hospitality businesses, as outlined in Appendix 2.

Accommodation in AND
49% of accommodation providers on the AND database provided feedback or were able to be assessed on their 'online booking status' during the period 1-9 August 2026. Of these 57 properties, 75% were fully booked during the entire period (1-9 August) and the remaining 25% were booked for a portion of that time (mostly earlier in the week). It should be noted that this was an overview of booking status only.

5. Key Issues and Next Steps for 2027 Events
Work in previous years had consolidated efforts in terms of adverse weather mitigation with no events this year to date being impacted. This had been reflected in the restricted use of gazebos and careful programming. Recycling activities had continued to be well used with zero contamination recorded, however the model in place did require specific budget.

Due to the positive feedback through market research, the Quiet Hours at Sea Bangor and Comber Earlies Food Festival would continue, where operationally possible across the programme, subject to budget. Feedback in some of the market research carried out this year had asked for the inclusion of Baby Changing Facilities at events. This would be explored for the 2027 planning.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025 (Martyn's Law). The Act aimed to improve organisational preparedness and protective security across the UK. It required certain premises and events to take reasonably practicable steps to prepare for potential terrorist attacks and to help keep people safe in the event of an attack. The Government intended for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months from the date of Royal Assent before the Act came into force. Officers would continue to consider the implications of this Act and impacts on budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Notes the contents of the report and its appendices.

Councillor McCollum advised the Chairman that she had sent through an amended proposal for this item, seconded by Councillor McCracken: that Council notes the contents of this report and attached appendices, acknowledges the compelling success of the Bangor Vibes event in terms of footfall, visitor numbers, economic benefit and community cohesion and agrees to include a similar event in the rate setting process for 2027-28.

She highlighted successful events such as May Day in Holywood and Sea Bangor, which took place during her mayoral year. She noted that the Fleadh Belfast 2026 was an extraordinary global success in terms of putting the spotlight on Belfast, together with the benefit to the community and the economy. She noted that it gave

the Council an opportunity to cement an identity for Bangor as a city of culture and music. Council's investment was made with the very clear objective of capturing the cultural and economic benefits of the Fleadh for our Borough, alignment with the pipe band championship and the picnic in the park. She acknowledged the work of officers and of Bangor Chamber of Commerce and thanked the Borough's talented musicians. She noted that there was now a very compelling case to build on that success in terms of live music events, linked with the cultural, food and drink, hospitality, and tourism sectors. She acknowledged the challenges and difficulties with accessibility and access which had already been reported, and the feedback on communications around the event, which were late.

RECESS
The Committee went into recess from 9.00 pm until 9.15 pm.

Councillor McCracken asked if the proposal would come back through this committee detailing the event in terms of its logistics, costs, and strategy. He acknowledged that officers would have a lot of work to do and that the pipe band championships would not be held at the same time in 2027. He remarked on the 60% higher footfall and the highest estimated average spend per attendee which had an enormous economic benefit to the city and to the wider Borough. By way of improving future events, he noted that some businesses, such as the Courthouse, featured live music but this was omitted from the marketing. There was an opportunity to bring all the providers into a wider marketing piece. Also, the event was not officially part of the Fleadh Fringe, and he noted that the Council would be in a much stronger position next if it were part of the Fleadh marketing and mentioned in its Fringe programme. Turning to the Sea Bangor event, he noted that the estimated spend was disappointing as it brought in one-third of the Bangor Vibes event and the spend on the out-of-Borough attendees was lower. He advised that Bangor Vibes should be the Borough's version of Londonderry's Hallowe'en.

The Director of Place and Prosperity advised the Committee that, in terms of Councillor McCollum's request to bring a report back to the committee, that was not in the original proposal and Councillor McCollum offered to make an amendment.

Councillor Gilmour noted that Councillor McCollum's proposal would not allow for further exploration of the details or costs because this year's Bangor Vibes was built on the fact that it was before the Fleadh and the pipe band championships were in Bangor that day. She attested that there was further work to be done and, to that end, she advised that she had written and sent an amendment: that a report be brought back outlining the costs and logistics of potentially adding a Bangor Vibes event to the calendar. She advised that Alderman Armstrong-Cotter would second her amendment. Councillor Gilmour added that, as the pipe band championships were scheduled to be in Newtownards in 2027, to capture all the elements of Bangor Vibes the Council would need to bid for another pipe band championship, move the pipe band championships to Bangor or work on the logistics of when the event would take place. A report covering all those elements would give the committee an opportunity to decide whether to add the event to the budget as a new event, reprofile the budget slightly with some additions, or look at the wider picture of events.

Councillor Hollywood noted, in relation to the Quiet Hour, that some amusement operators were charging carers and parents to accompany those with special needs on rides. That was not acceptable and he asked for confirmation that this would not be the case at future events. He also noted the remarkable value for money at the Holywood May Day event which attracted 10K visitors with a Council budget of just over £21K. By comparison, Holywood Mayday had the lowest budget per attendee of all five events. He asked officers to explain how funding allocation was determined across tourism events and whether there was a case to address the accessibility, seating and toilet provision issues identified around the Holywood May Day event, prior to next year's event.

The Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage advised that she would come back to the committee with a response to Councillor Hollywood's questions in terms of funding allocation and the appropriate supply of facilities and seating. She advised that there was no pro rata mechanism in place for funding but, where officers believed that there was an additional requirement to ensure that the event ran safely and securely, they would consider reprofiling within the overall programme.

Councillor Brady asked for clarification about which amendment would be voted on. The Chairman advised that Councillor Gilmour's amendment to the proposal was the only amendment officially on the table. Councillor McCollum responded that she had already asked if she could amend her proposal. The Chairman explained that Councillor Gilmour had formally submitted her amendment in writing with a proposer and seconder. Following discussion around the Standing Orders, the Chair confirmed that Councillor Gilmour's amendment stood.

Councillor Brady thanked officers for their work on the Bangor Vibes event and agreed that Bangor and the Borough needed more of these events. He noted that traditional music was having a massive revival and that the Council should capitalise on that given the number of talented traditional musicians in the Borough. He also agreed that the event's inclusion in the Fleadh's programme and marketing would be of immense benefit.

Councillor Newman remarked on the enormous success of the event and queried the sample size cited in Appendix 1 of the report, the lower sample size being 32 from the Bangor Vibes event. She further voiced her support for Councillor Gilmour's proposal.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter confirmed her support as seconder to Councillor Gilmour's amendment to the proposal for a full report to allow the committee to make informed decisions about future events, including Bangor Vibes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Armstrong- Cotter, that a report be brought back to the Committee outlining costs and logistics of potentially adding a Bangor Vibes event to the Events Calendar.

10. GREEN ECONOMY – UPDATE RELATING TO NOTICE OF MOTION 649

(Appendices XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that at the Council meeting held on 18 December 2024, Notice of Motion 649 was submitted by Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken. The Notice of Motion stated:

"That this Council, recognising the opportunities of the Green Economy to bring substantial funding to this Council, make significant savings and create new local jobs, sets up a working group comprised of Councillors and Officers to bring forward detailed proposals to achieve these benefits and, in the process, help reduce carbon emissions in the Ards and North Down area."
The Notice of Motion was referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee. A Green Economy Working Group was subsequently established to consider how the Council could respond to the motion. Initial discussions recognised that the Green Economy encompassed a broad range of activities and cut across a number of Council functions, including economic development, regeneration, development projects, estates, energy efficiency, tourism, climate adaptation and sustainability. It was also recognised that a single agreed definition or coordinated Green Economy programme had not yet been established within Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The Working Group discussions highlighted the need to better understand existing activity across Council services and to identify potential opportunities that might contribute to Green Economy objectives within the Borough.

Key Issues
Green Economy-related activity had the potential to support a number of Council priorities, including economic growth, sustainability, carbon reduction, regeneration, investment and job creation. However, given the wide range of opportunities that could fall within the Green Economy, it was important to avoid creating an extensive list of potential projects without first establishing a clear and realistic framework for action.

A key issue identified through officer discussions was the need to define what the Green Economy meant in the context of Ards and North Down Borough Council. This included consideration of the following areas:

- supporting businesses to operate more sustainably;
- developing green jobs and economic opportunities;
- reducing Council energy consumption and emissions;
- generating renewable energy from Council assets;
- embedding sustainability requirements within development briefs and future land opportunities;
- identifying external funding opportunities that could support delivery; and
- aligning future activity with existing sustainability, climate, circular economy and economic development programmes.

Since the original working group discussion in March 2025, officers had continued to explore a range of opportunities that could support the development of a local green economy and contribute to wider sustainability objectives. Discussions had focused on understanding activity already underway across Council services, identifying areas where sustainability and renewable energy considerations could be further embedded into Council projects and programmes, and considering how existing initiatives could be better aligned to support green growth.

Emerging opportunities had included support for businesses to improve sustainability practices, exploration of renewable energy potential across Council assets and landholdings, consideration of sustainability requirements within future development projects, and engagement with planning and economic development colleagues on how green economy objectives could be reflected in future policy and investment activity. Officers were currently reviewing progress across these areas to establish a clearer baseline of activity, identify priorities for future action, and inform the next phase of work with Members.

Next Steps
Discussions highlighted the benefit of developing a clearer understanding of existing Council activity relating to sustainability, energy management and carbon reduction, alongside identifying potential opportunities that might warrant further consideration. Reference was also made to examples of good practice from elsewhere, opportunities associated with Council assets and landholdings, and how Green Economy objectives might align with existing Council strategies and programmes. It was agreed that relevant information and background material would be collated and shared to support future discussions.

Summary
This report provided an update on the Council's response to Notice of Motion 649 regarding the Green Economy. Following the establishment of the Green Economy Working Group, discussions had taken place on a range of issues relating to sustainability, energy management, renewable energy and wider economic opportunities. These discussions had highlighted both existing activity and potential opportunities that might contribute to the Council's economic and environmental objectives. The report outlined the discussions to date and noted the intention to continue gathering information to inform future consideration by the Working Group.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the content of the report and the update provided in relation to Notice of Motion 649 regarding the Green Economy. In addition, it was recommended that Council Notes the work undertaken to date by officers to review existing activity and opportunities relating to sustainability, energy management, renewable energy and wider green economy initiatives; and that further information would continue to be gathered and reviews to inform future discussions of the Green Economy Working Group and any potential proposals that may emerge.

Councillor McDowell commented that it was encouraging to see the focus on the Council bringing in more energy saving elements into its own estate, and he welcomed any steps that would make the Council more efficient and allow it to save money and reduce its carbon emissions. However, he was very keen to take every

opportunity to bring in income which would help to offset the rates. He believed that working group would be beneficial to identify opportunities for additional income.

Councillor McCracken noted that when the proposal was first submitted, diesel fuel was £1.29 per litre and now it was over £2 per litre. He remarked that it was now more important than ever to move to a green economy with sustainable renewable energy generation, and he added that it was about resilience as well as reducing costs. More could be done about AI data centres, which were huge energy users, and moving to renewable energy. He added that, if the Council made progress on this, Ards and North Down could become one of the centres of green economy and renewable energy.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the report be adopted.

11. ECONOMIC GROWTH CONFERENCE 2027

(Appendices XV-XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity presenting an updated proposal for a Borough-wide Economic Growth Conference in 2027, including the proposed conference title, date, location, strategic rationale, anticipated benefits and draft itinerary.

A report was presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee in September outlining the ambition to deliver a Borough-wide Economic Growth Conference. At that meeting, it was agreed that officers would bring forward a proposed itinerary for members' information.

Conference Purpose

The proposed conference was intended to build confidence in the future of Ards and North Down by bringing together investors, developers, businesses, funders, civic leaders, community representatives and place-based partners. It would set out the Borough's growth proposition, showcase local and external examples of success, and highlight emerging opportunities for investment, enterprise, regeneration, tourism, community benefit and placemaking.

The programme would emphasise that sustainable economic growth was not only about attracting investment, but also about creating vibrant town and village centres, supporting local businesses, strengthening communities and developing attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.

The intended outcome was that delegates would leave with greater confidence in Ards and North Down as a place where businesses could start, stay, scale and succeed, and where investment could deliver lasting economic, social and place-based value.

Strategic Alignment

The conference would provide a timely platform to position Ards and North Down as a Borough of opportunity at a point when a number of important regeneration, investment, tourism and enterprise priorities were moving forward. It would bring together the audiences whose confidence, collaboration and decision-making were essential to turning ambition into delivery, including investors, developers, businesses, government partners, support agencies, town centre and village stakeholders, community representatives and civic leaders.

Hosting the conference would also allow the Council to move beyond individual projects and present a joined-up growth narrative for the Borough. It would demonstrate how investment, business support, high street regeneration, tourism development, skills, innovation and placemaking could work together to create stronger local economies and more resilient communities.

The event would serve as both a promotional platform and a catalyst for action, helping to promote the Borough externally, strengthen relationships with the local business community, support investor engagement, showcase local success stories and create opportunities for collaboration and project development.

It should be noted that this would be the first conference of its kind for Ards and North Down. As such, the 2027 event would provide an important opportunity to establish the concept, test the format and deliver the conference at a practical and achievable level in its first year. While the initial event should be focused, deliverable and proportionate, it was intended that the conference would provide a foundation for future years, with the potential to grow in scale, profile, sponsorship, partner involvement and impact as the model developed over time.

Proposed name: Invest | Grow | Thrive: People, Place and Prosperity

Subtitle: Ards and North Down Economic Growth Conference 2027

The proposed title, **Invest | Grow | Thrive: People, Place and Prosperity**, reflected the ambition to position Ards and North Down as a confident, connected and investable Borough. It was deliberately broad in appeal: **Invest** spoke to investors, developers and funders; **Grow** spoke to businesses, entrepreneurs and support organisations; and **Thrive** reflected the wider outcome sought for local communities, town and village centres, and the Borough as a whole. The reference to people, place and prosperity reinforced that economic growth must also support community wellbeing, local identity and high-quality placemaking.

Proposed date: Thursday 11 and Friday 12 March 2027
It was proposed that the main conference take place on Friday 12 March 2027, with a pre-conference reception held on Thursday 11 March 2027. These dates had been reviewed against the Council committee calendar, public holidays and the pre-election period, and would provide sufficient lead-in time to secure speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and partner participation.

Proposed location: Bangor

It was proposed that the borough-wide Economic Growth Conference be hosted in Bangor, recognising the city's role as a key focus for regeneration, investment, tourism and business growth within the Borough. Hosting the conference in Bangor would provide an opportunity to showcase the city's ongoing transformation and demonstrate confidence in its future as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Officers were currently exploring a number of potential venue options capable of accommodating the conference and supporting the proposed programme. These included locations within Bangor that could provide an appropriate setting for delegates, exhibitors, speakers and stakeholder engagement. The preferred venue would be confirmed as part of the next stage of planning and brought back to Members as part of a future report.

Regardless of the final venue selected, the conference would seek to showcase the Borough's investment, regeneration, enterprise and placemaking ambitions, while providing opportunities to highlight current and emerging projects across Ards and North Down.

Proposed Programme
Thursday 11 March 2027 – Pre-conference Reception

It was proposed that a pre-conference reception be held on the evening before the main event to provide an informal opportunity for speakers, sponsors, investors, businesses, elected members, community representatives and key stakeholders to connect in advance of the conference programme.

There was an opportunity to invite the local Chambers of Commerce and/or the Ards and North Down Business Forum to host or co-host the reception. This would strengthen business ownership of the event, demonstrate partnership working with the local business community and help position the conference as a shared borough-wide initiative rather than a Council-led event alone.

The reception would create early momentum, encourage meaningful networking and allow the Council and its partners to set a positive tone for the conference. It would also provide an opportunity to showcase Bangor and the wider Borough in a more relaxed setting, including through local food, drink and produce which highlighted the quality, creativity and distinctiveness of the local business base. This would reinforce the conference themes of investment confidence, business growth, community benefit and placemaking.

Friday 12 March 2027 – Main Conference
The main conference would be designed as a high-impact, Borough-wide event that moved beyond a traditional business conference format. It would combine inspiring keynote contributions, local success stories, community and place-based perspectives, practical growth labs, investor engagement and clear follow-up commitments.

The programme would tell a joined-up story about Ards and North Down as a place of opportunity: a Borough with investable town and city centres, distinctive coastal and rural assets, strong local businesses, active communities and significant regeneration potential. Community engagement would be woven throughout the day, ensuring that investment and business growth were clearly connected to local ownership, inclusive placemaking and benefits for residents, town centres and villages.

An indicative conference itinerary was provided in Appendix 1.

Delivery Considerations
It was proposed that a range of sponsorship, exhibition and partnership opportunities be made available to support delivery of the conference and encourage wider engagement from businesses, partners and place-based organisations. Potential opportunities might include headline sponsorship, session sponsorship, exhibitor stands, business support partner booths, investment showcases, community displays and delegate materials.

This approach would help offset delivery costs, strengthen private-sector and partner ownership of the event, and provide local businesses and organisations with a platform to promote their products, services, projects and opportunities to investors, funders, civic leaders and wider stakeholders.

Sponsorship and exhibitor packages could also be structured to provide accessible opportunities for smaller businesses, social enterprises, community organisations and local producers, helping the conference to reflect the breadth and diversity of the Borough's economy, communities and places.

It was also proposed that a modest delegate fee be applied, with discounted rates available for key stakeholders. The purpose of the fee was to encourage confirmed attendance and reduce non-attendance on the day.

Delegate Experience and Borough Showcase
It was proposed that screens be positioned at key points throughout the venue to enhance the delegate experience and maintain momentum throughout the conference programme.

Short video segments would be played at appropriate points during the event, featuring local businesses, key stakeholders, community representatives, funders and delivery partners. These would showcase local success stories, highlight current and emerging opportunities across Ards and North Down, and ensure that community, business and place-based perspectives were reflected throughout the programme.

The video content could also be repurposed following the event to support post-conference promotion, stakeholder engagement and wider communication of the Borough's investment, business growth and placemaking ambitions.

Next Steps
Officers would progress the conference concept into a more detailed development and planning phase. This work would be undertaken in collaboration with relevant Council services, including Tourism, Corporate Communications, Events, and other departments as required, to ensure the conference aligned with wider corporate priorities, place-promotion objectives and available resources.
Key next steps would include:

- Confirming the conference objectives, target audience and desired outcomes, and refining the programme content, speakers and delivery format.
- Engaging with relevant Council services, including Tourism and Events and Corporate Communications, to coordinate event planning, marketing, stakeholder engagement and delivery arrangements.
- Developing sponsorship, exhibition and partnership opportunities, while exploring appropriate local business and community participation to maximise economic, placemaking and community benefits.
- Confirming a preferred venue and finalising event management, communications and operational requirements to support successful delivery of the conference.
- Establishing a clear legacy and follow-up framework, including investor engagement, partnership development, opportunity tracking and a post-conference action plan to ensure the event generated tangible outcomes beyond the conference itself.

A further report would be presented setting out the proposed programme, delivery arrangements, partnership activity, resource implications and anticipated outcomes prior to the conference proceeding.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the proposed approach to the development of the Ards and North Down Economic Growth Conference 2027.

Alderman McDowell proposed the recommendation and commented on the exciting and interesting programme and noted that the Borough needed to make a name for itself as a place focused on economic development and job creation. He added that it was an important event for collaboration with and learning from various businesses and stakeholders.

Councillor McCollum seconded the proposal and echoed Alderman McDowell's statements.

Councillor Morgan questioned whether the planned event was too long and would leave attendees exhausted rather than inspired.

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

12. BANGOR WATERFRONT UPDATE – OCTOBER 2026

(Appendices XVII)

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

- Provided an update on progress across the wider Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme;
- Informed Members of progress on the planning applications for both Pickie and Ballyholme Yacht Club.
- Updated Members on the ITT for Bangor Marina.
- Updated Members on the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm.

Background

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) was a significant investment programme designed to drive inclusive economic growth across the Belfast City Region through investment in tourism, regeneration, innovation and infrastructure.

The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme was the Council's flagship project within the Tourism and Regeneration pillar of the BRCD. The programme provided for the coordinated regeneration of approximately two miles of Bangor's seafront, with the aim of enhancing its attractiveness as a high-quality visitor destination, supporting local economic activity, and improving the overall experience for residents and visitors.

Programme Overview

Overall Programme Status

The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme was progressing across all constituent projects under established governance and assurance arrangements. Delivery was aligned to the objectives set out in the Belfast Region City Deal,

focusing on quality design, value for money and long-term Borough-wide economic/social benefits.
All workstreams had progressed since the last report in June 2026 with projects advancing through key stages of design development, planning preparation and procurement. Programme dependencies, risks and emerging issues were managed via the established programme controls and reporting structures.

Programme and Milestones
The overall programme remained on track in terms of strategic direction, with constituent projects progressing in line with their respective delivery pathways.
As projects had advanced, interim milestone variances had arisen, primarily linked to procurement sequencing and the scale of design, survey and statutory processes required to support robust planning submissions. These variances were being actively managed. Officers were working through the stakeholder analysis with consultants with a view to updating the programme to reflect the delay in their appointment.

Financial Overview
The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme continued to operate within the approved funding envelope. Funding was by way of Belfast Region City Deal investment, Council contribution and private sector investment.

At programme level, there was currently no forecast increase in the overall budget. Cost pressures identified at project level, as designs had developed, were being actively managed through ongoing design review, value engineering and programme controls to ensure affordability was maintained.

Inflationary pressures relating to wages and materials remained challenging at the current time in the construction sector.

Workstream Progress Updates
Urban Waterfront & Public Realm (UWPR)
Current Stage: The Integrated Consultancy Team (Aecom) was now fully appointed and mobilised.

Progress:
- Indicative design concept proposals had been developed as part of the procurement process and these were being reviewed/further developed with Aecom prior to wider presentation to Members and stakeholders.

Next Steps:
- Review of information and work packages to inform design, programme and cost.
- Commencement of initial surveys and site investigations.
- Review and further development of design concepts to inform scope, programme and planning strategy.
- Progression of early design development and associated planning approach.
- Initiation of the Gateway Review process aligned to the appointed team and updated project information.

Pickie Fun Park
Current Stage: Working towards RIBA Stage 4 – development of technical design.
Progress:

- Planning submission submitted and validated.
- Design development was progressing alongside technical assessments and site investigations.

Next Steps:

- Progress the project through RIBA Stage 4 design development.
- Prepare and submit a building control application subject to approval of the revised proposals.
- Continue engagement with key stakeholders and statutory consultees.

BYC Watersports Centre
Current Stage: Working towards RIBA Stage 4 – development of technical design.
Progress:

- RIBA Stage 3 design development completed, with a coordinated and fully developed design proposal.
- Planning application and Marine Licence submission progressed, supported by a comprehensive suite of surveys and technical information.
- Strong overall support for the redevelopment, with feedback informing refinements to design and accessibility proposals.
- Continued collaboration with BYC Development Committee to ensure operational requirements were aligned with the design.

Next Steps:

- Progress planning process through to determination.
- Advance Stage 4 technical design.
- Consider project elements suitable for contractor design.
- Prepare for main contractor procurement process.

Marina Wetside Facilities and Infrastructure (Connie)
Current Stage: ICT Procurement – Tender list set. Working through RFI stage.
Progress:

- Procurement documentation for the appointment of the Integrated Consultancy Team had been developed in line with Council procurement procedures and governance requirements.
- The Pre-Selection Questionnaire (PSQ) stage had completed, with the panel having evaluated tender submissions on 25th June 2026.
- The Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage was underway, with successful suppliers at PSQ stage having been invited to submit a tender response by the closing date of 8th October 2026.
- Clarifications from suppliers were being received and responded to by the Project Team.
- Ongoing engagement with funding partners was in place to support the procurement process.

Next Steps:

- Respond to all clarifications.
- Individual and panel evaluation of ITT submissions.

- Continued engagement with funding partners and key stakeholders.
- Following approval processes, progress the appointment of the successful ICT.
- Progression of design development following appointment of the ICT.

Communications and Engagement
Considerable engagement across the Bangor Waterfront programme had to date been undertaken through statutory consultation with additional stakeholder input including public events, online consultation and targeted engagement. This process had ensured a broad and inclusive engagement process across both Pickie Fun Park and the BYC Watersports Centre and these sections of the programme were now awaiting planning decisions.

Officers' expectation was that the engagement process for the UWPR would, bearing in mind the scale of the project, be challenging. Currently, in conjunction with consultants, officers were working up the stakeholder engagement principles and would revert back for Committee input.

Next Steps
The programme would continue to progress across all workstreams, with the focus on the following:

- Progressing the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm project via the Aecom-led ICT. The external consultants were now mobilised and working closely with the ANDBC Capital Team.
- Developing the stakeholder plan with particular focus on the UWPR project.
- Moving forward with the detailed design on both Pickie Fun Park and the BYC Watersports Centre while awaiting outcome of the planning applications.
- The Marina ITT was now progressing and the Capital Team were responding to the clarification queries.
- Ongoing engagement with funding partners to maintain programme alignment and capital reporting.
- Development of the private sector investment strategy.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes that Aecom had been appointed and mobilised as lead on the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm commission. Also, that Council Notes that planning applications for both Pickie Fun Park and Ballyholme Yacht Club had been submitted and validated. Detailed designs for both these projects were proceeding to permit a prompt tendering and procurement process once statutory consents were in place.

Councillor McCracken thanked officers for the report and appreciated that there were complex issues involved. He enquired about the timeline as, when Pickie Fun Park was first started, he understood that the demolition of the current site was scheduled for April 2027, and that it would be in operation in 2028. He assumed that the lack of planning approval would move the timeline back and asked for an update on final delivery dates for Pickie Fun Park and the Yacht Club.

The Head of Strategic Capital Development advised that the planning for Pickie was in and validated and that officers were currently working on the technical design aspects to ensure that they were ready when planning consent was granted in

February or March 2027. Tendering was scheduled for January 2027 with work starting on the site in June 2027 with a view to a one-year construction period. He advised that Ballyholme Yacht Club was trickier due to a marine licence requirement making the statutory consultation process a bit more involved. The planning application had been validated, and it was hoped that planning consent would be granted in March or April 2027. However, the statutory consultation process was likely to cause a delay to completion in 2031.

Councillor Gilmour acknowledged that the waterfront projects had been on the table for several years and that some members of Council had changed in that interim period. She asked if there were any plans to have a members' workshop to answer questions on timeline and progress through the various stages. That would assist members who were frequently asked questions about various projects by constituents. The Head of Strategic Capital Development advised that officers were considering a members' workshop in November and were seeking a suitable date.

Alderman McDowell advised that a presentation of the Belfast City Deal had been given recently in Bangor Town Hall and asked if it could be put on the committee agenda so that members could be given sight of all the documents, photographs, etc, to give them a better idea of what to expect. The Chair and Director of Place and Prosperity agreed to send the presentation out to members to give them a helicopter view of the project, with the Head of Strategic Capital Development bringing a detailed report to the Committee later.

Councillor Brady asked officers to ensure that consultants "dotted their Is and crossed their ts" as many residents were concerned about the waterfront projects. He also asked if the wastewater system at Queen's Parade would have any impact on developments along the waterfront. The Head of Strategic Capital Developments responded that there were no real concerns flagged by NI Water about Pickie or Ballyholme.

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

13. UPDATE REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION 705 – STRANGFORD BRIDGE UPDATE

(Appendices XVIII-XIX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that at the meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee on 5 March 2026 it was recommended that the Council would write to the Minister of the Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

A letter was issued by the Chief Executive in April, and the response from the Minister dated 7 July 2026 was attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the response from the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to the feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

Alderman Adair advised that, since he brought this Notice of Motion to Council, the Minister had commissioned a review and consultation into the Strangford Lough Ferry service which fell far short of a feasibility study for a Strangford Lough Bridge, to Portaferry and Strangford. He noted that the letter from the Minister stated that she had considered the matter and sounded positive. This campaign had been ongoing since 1950. Two men, Mr Thompson and Councillor James McMullan from Portaferry, both now passed, led the campaign for a fixed crossing to improve connectivity between Portaferry and Strangford. The campaign laid dormant for 30 years until the Alderman's colleague resurrected it in the Northern Ireland Assembly. It was followed by a Notice of Motion brought to Council by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund, while Councillor Callum Bowsey brought a similar Notice of Motion to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. He advised that over 90% of people in the Ards Peninsula support the project.

He further noted that in the Minister's letter, she stated that she met with elected representatives. However, he advised that she did not meet with any of the five MLAs or the six Councillors in the constituency. Instead, she met with an abstentionist MP, Chris Hazzard, who was an MLA for South Down. As a Sinn Fein Minister, she was not interested in the wider community. The Borough was being neglected by the Department for Infrastructure. It received the least investment in roads in Northern Ireland. He affirmed that he would continue to raise this issue for a fixed crossing to improve connectivity between Portaferry and Strangford. It would open the area to vast opportunities. The Alderman advised that he wanted to see a feasibility study and reminded the Minister to have respect for the democratically elected representatives, the five MLAs and six Councillors. Finally, Alderman Adair paid tribute to local Portaferry resident, Mr Kevin Barry, who was now involved and trying to gather political support for the fixed crossing.

Councillor Thompson shared Alderman Adair's frustration with the Minister's response and noted that the matter needed to be progressed for the benefit of the community, opportunities, and tourism into the area.

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

14. SUPPORTING THRIVING HIGH STREETS – CLEAN CITY AND TIDY TOWNS FUNDING AWARD

(Appendices XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme was launched in 2025 as a co-ordinated package of support aimed at revitalising and regenerating the Borough's urban high streets.

The programme had provided practical, visible and place-based interventions to support local businesses, address vacancy and dereliction, improve the appearance of commercial premises and strengthen the overall attractiveness, competitiveness and resilience of the Borough's city and town centres.

Previous reports to the Committee had provided updates on the programme, including the Glow Up Grant Scheme, the Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme, the Freshen Up Grant Scheme and the Clean City and Tidy Towns funding application.

Members had previously been advised that an application had been submitted to the Department for Communities (DfC) to secure funding for public realm improvements across Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee.

Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award
Officers could now confirm that DfC had awarded £900,000 through the Clean City and Tidy Towns programme, subject to the normal funding agreement requirements. Together with a Council contribution of £90,000, this would provide a total programme value of £990,000 to support targeted improvements across the Borough's five urban centres.

The funding would be profiled across two financial years:
- **Year 1 (2026/27):** £600,000 from DfC and a £60,000 Council contribution.
- **Year 2 (2027/28):** £300,000 from DfC and a £30,000 Council contribution.

Securing this funding represented a significant further investment in the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme and would enable the Council to build on the momentum already achieved through business-facing grants by ensuring that improvements to individual premises were complemented by improvements to the wider public realm.

Scheme Overview
The Clean City and Tidy Towns scheme would protect previous investment, improve the appearance and functionality of high streets, support economic vitality and ensure that the Borough’s city and town centres remained welcoming, accessible and attractive places for residents, businesses and visitors.

The proposed programme of works would focus on targeted public realm enhancements across Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards, outlined below:

- Paving-related works in identified areas across each of the five towns.
- Street furniture improvements would include the purchase of litter bins in Year 1, with installation programmed for Year 2.
- Cycle infrastructure would include new installations in Newtownards in Year 1 and, in Year 2, the upgrade of the Abbey Street East Car Park cycle rack in Bangor to a lockable unit, together with new installations in Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood. The allocation of further cycle infrastructure works in Year 2 would follow publication of the Cycle Masterplan and associated consultation with the public and elected members.
- Seating works would include replacement of timber elements on seats in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards.
- Feature lighting-related works would include the removal of ground-mounted lights in Bangor, with units to be disconnected and removed and openings made good using a grout finish to match the surrounding surface;

replacement seat lighting and column lighting where required; lighting at Donaghadee Harbour and Community Centre; and festoon lighting for Hibernia Street in Holywood, subject to required consents.

- Planting works would include hard and soft landscaping improvements at Abbey Street, Bangor in Year 2 and works at Court Square War Memorial in Newtownards, including replacing the concrete planters, replanting and replacement benches in Year 1.
- Town Centre CCTV infrastructure works would include replacement infrastructure for existing camera locations and infrastructure for new camera locations in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, and Newtownards.
- Parklet works would include repairs, refresh works and vinyl wraps to three parklets in Bangor, one in Comber and three in Newtownards.
- The programme would also include wider placemaking and town centre dressing initiatives where appropriate, with all works prioritised on the basis of need, deliverability, visibility of impact, safety, accessibility, procurement requirements and alignment with existing and planned regeneration activity.

The budget would be allocated across Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee to ensure visible benefit across all urban areas. This approach would support consistency in the quality of the public realm, strengthen local pride, improve visitor perception and support wider economic activity across multiple high streets.

Programme Delivery
Officers would now progress immediately with the arrangements required to finalise the funding agreement, establish the delivery programme and commence procurement and implementation activity. Delivery would be led by the various council services with support from DfC and in partnership with the Local Action Groups.

A Project Board would be established to oversee the delivery of the scheme. The Project Board would track progress, budget, risk management, procurement, quality assurance and compliance with funding conditions. Regular monitoring and progress reports would be provided to DfC, and further updates would be brought to the Committee as the programme progressed.

Local Action Groups would be engaged as part of the programme delivery arrangements. The Local Action Groups had been briefed on the proposed improvements for their respective areas, with a presentation delivered at the most recent meetings to outline the proposed works, indicative allocations and delivery approach. The minutes of these meetings would be available to Committee in November.

Financial Implications

Proposed Workstream	Indicative Total Cost	Year 1: 2026/27		Year 2: 2027/28	
		DfC	Council	DfC	Council
Paving reinstatements	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	£0
Paving sealant	£150,000	£50,000	£0	£100,000	£0

Litter bins	£120,000	£100,000	£0	£20,000	£0
Cycle infrastructure	£30,000	£3,000	£0	£27,000	£0
Seating	£35,000	£0	£0	£35,000	£0
Feature Lighting	£65,000	£65,000	£0	£0	£0
Planting	£120,000	£20,000	£0	£100,000	£0
CCTV infrastructure	£270,000	£270,000	£0	£0	£0
Parklets refresh	£30,000	£0	£30,000	£0	£0
Placemaking and town centre dressing initiatives.	£130,000	£52,000	£30,000	£18,000	£30,000
Total	**£990,000**	**£600,000**	**£60,000**	**£300,000**	**£30,000**

Note: The Council contribution is shown against two project areas within the indicative funding profile; however, the overall Council contribution will be met collectively by all service units involved in programme delivery.

The table above provided an indicative breakdown of the proposed allocation across the main programme items and financial years. These figures were intended to support programme planning and budget monitoring and might be subject to change. Any required variances between budget headings or financial years could be submitted to DfC during programme delivery, subject to funding agreement requirements and Departmental approval.

Next Steps
Officers would progress the following next steps immediately:

- submit any required budget variances to DfC throughout the programme delivery period, in accordance with the funding agreement and approval process;
- establish the internal project board and confirm service unit representation;
- progress procurement, permissions and delivery arrangements in line with Council procedures and funding conditions;
- continue to engage with Local Action Groups;
- commence delivery of priority works as soon as practicable; and
- provide regular progress updates to DfC and future Committee meetings.

Summary
The confirmation of funding for the Clean City and Tidy Towns scheme was a significant and positive development for the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme. The funding would enable the Council to deliver a co-ordinated package of public realm improvements that would protect previous investment, improve the appearance and functionality of high streets, support local businesses, enhance visitor experience and reinforce civic pride across the Borough's city and town centres.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the successful award of Clean City and Tidy Towns funding and that officers will now progress the funding agreement,

governance, procurement, and delivery arrangements required to commence the programme of works.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed this as many constituents were concerned about who was responsible for the upkeep of the town centre and she was delighted to be able to advise them that it was the Department for Communities, Gordon Lyons, who had put funding where it was going to be used and had kept on top of projects. She queried whether the replacement Bangor lights would be ground lights as the lights in front of Newtownards Town Hall had similar issues, with water ingress and people slipping on them.

The Head of Economic Growth advised that the ground lights were due for removal rather than replacement. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the CCTV and advised that some of the parklets in the town were prone to flooding and asked for them to be taken into consideration for repair or removal, where appropriate. The Head of Economic Growth advised that the intended work was for revitalisation. The Alderman also asked for an update on the work planned for Court Street and at the War Memorial in Newtownards and asked for work to be extended to include the area from the British Legion and towards the town. The Head of Economic Growth advised that he did not have more details but would come back to the Committee with an update. He advised that the work in question was not for replacement paving and a review had taken place to identify where work was to be carried out so the Alderman's request may not be able to be satisfied.

Councillor Newman welcomed the news of more investment in the town centres. She asked for confirmation that the cycle infrastructure and some of the flooding issues on the parklets would go back to Local Action Groups for local feedback. The Head of Economic Growth confirmed that would be the case.

Members were also made aware that the Council had delayed issuing communications in relation to this programme pending the Minister's formal announcement and attendance at the launch event, which was provisionally scheduled for 22 October.

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

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman

The Notice of Motion referred to Committee by Council submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman, that Council requests a deputation from Invest NI to hear directly on how they are supporting the Council's ambitious business growth targets, including what resources and programmes they are dedicating to the Borough; and that Council write to the Economy Minister to request a meeting to discuss how her Department can provide a fair share of resources to support business investment and employment growth in the Borough.

In line with the Council's Corporate plan to support economic sustainability within the Borough, the recent business start-up and growth figures were extremely encouraging. However, in the context that Ards & North Down had the lowest GDP/head in Northern Ireland, the lowest GVA growth, had 9% of NI's population yet only 3% of its exports and less than 1% of R&D spend, yet historically had received the least Invest NI support of any council area.

Alderman Smith advised that the Borough received only one third per person spend on roads maintenance compared to neighbouring councils. Our area received the lowest Invest NI support, the fewest Invest NI supported jobs, and with the lowest growth out of all 11 council areas. The Council's early-stage entrepreneurial activity was above the Northern Ireland average, and the business one-year survival rate and birth rate equalled the Northern Ireland average as well. Evidence over the past five years showed that Ards and North Down had received £14.9M in assistance securing £59.2M of investment. In comparison, the next lowest was Mid and East Antrim at over 16 million, delivering 83 million pounds of investment. Newry Mourne and Down received over £39M of assistance from Invest NI, delivering over £211M of investment. In relation to Invest NI funded jobs, the Borough had 274 jobs over the past five years, again the lowest of the 11 council areas. If compared to our near neighbours, Newry Mourne and Down had 1,261 jobs, Lisburn and Castlereagh had 864. Overall, the Borough had 5% of all the jobs in Northern Ireland, 6% of the businesses and 9% of the population. But most worrying was the Borough's five-year growth and its gross value adder, the GVA, was 5%. The next lowest borough was Lisburn and Castlereagh on 15%, and the Northern Ireland average was 22%. The Borough had £19,500 per person, which was the lowest in Northern Ireland, and had 9% of the Northern Ireland population, yet only had 1% of the total R&D spend in Northern Ireland as a comparison.

Alderman Smith advised that the Borough also had the second highest disposable income which identified three things. The Borough was primarily a commuter economy and those who commuted secured a good income. But those who worked in the Borough on average earned less than anyone else. The 2025 median annual earnings in Northern Ireland was £31,700. It was nearly £35K for those living in the Borough, yet for those working in the Borough it was nearly £30K. Returning to the matter of R&D, Lisburn and Castlereagh, also commuter boroughs, received £39.6M of R&D investment in 2024, Newtownabbey received £75.4M, and North Down received £5M.

He advised the committee that the Motion was seeking a deputation from Invest NI to hear what plans they had to help the Borough's economy, how they would support our existing businesses to grow and flourish as well as attracting new investment to the Borough. It also requested a letter to be sent to the Economy Minister to seek a meeting about how that department could support the Council in achieving its goals of growing its non-domestic rates base, increasing local jobs and growing business in the Borough.

Councillor Newman acknowledged the positive work already taking place across the Borough including encouraging startup and growth figures that reflected the ambition, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit of local businesses. She clarified that the Motion was not about pointing fingers or suggesting that Invest NI was

deliberately overlooking the Borough. But there was an important question around how the Borough was classified when funding was calculated. The productivity element worked in the Borough's favour, but the peripherality element did not result in the same level of support received by other council areas. As a result, Ards and North Down received around £4.15M over three years whereas councils receiving the highest peripherality rating received over £5M. It would, therefore, be entirely reasonable to ask whether a whole council classification accurately reflected the economic and infrastructure challenges faced by some of the more rural and coastal communities within our borough.

She noted that the evidence suggested that Ards and North Down was not achieving its economic potential and not securing the same level of Invest NI supported projects as elsewhere. The overwhelming majority of local businesses were small and micro enterprises, but the Borough was not seeing the volume of investment, innovation funding, and export support that its business base should be capable of attracting. A deputation from Invest NI would allow Council to hear directly how they were supporting businesses in the Borough, what programmes were available, how many companies were accessing them and what more could be done to increase uptake. By also requesting a meeting with the Economy Minister, it would give Council the opportunity to explore some legitimate policy questions. For example, while Ards and North Down had productivity levels well below the Northern Ireland average, it was still within the Belfast Metropolitan Area for certain Invest NI regional targets. It was entirely reasonable to ask whether those classifications accurately reflected the economic realities and challenges faced by businesses across our borough. A meeting with the Economy Minister would allow the Committee to make the case that Ards and North Down deserved a fair share of the resources available to support innovation, investment, exports, and job creation.

Councillor Newman stated that, most importantly, the Motion was not simply about seeking more funding. It was about ensuring that businesses in the Borough were better connected to the funding that already existed. There were significant opportunities available through Invest NI, Go Succeed, innovation vouchers, research and development programmes, productivity grants, and cluster funding initiatives. The challenge was making sure local businesses were aware of them, supported to access them and successfully progress through the system.
If the Council could improve that pipeline, it could attract more investment, support more innovation, create better paid jobs, and strengthen our local economy for the future. She reiterated that the Motion was evidence-based, constructive and entirely consistent with the ambitions set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. It sought transparency, partnership, and a shared commitment to improving economic outcomes for the people and businesses of Ards and North Down. It was not asking for special treatment from Invest NI or the Department of the Economy. It was asking for fair treatment and most importantly, it was asking how we could work together to create more high-quality jobs, more investment and more economic opportunity for the people of the Borough.

Alderman McDowell gave his support for the Motion. He noted that in 2025, he had raised the bleak economic forecast for the Borough, but he was pleased that this Council was trying to turn around those situations. One of the difficulties the Borough had faced was the lack of business accommodation and a falling non-domestic rates

base, because companies were leaving the Borough. The Council had a responsibility to put conditions in place that would attract businesses. He noted that the Invest NI member in the Borough had been working closely with Council in relation to their land at Balloo, and they were aware of the Borough's situation. He noted that the Borough also had some highly successful businesses and many opportunities. He encouraged members to come together with ideas and suggestions to help move things forward in terms of jobs, business accommodation, and investment. He added that the Minister should be asked to keep the Local Economic Partnership Programme going. It was funded for three years and needed the same level of investment to continue.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter remarked that the department had refused to fund the Council and refused to give its officers an opportunity to do their job. It was evident from recent reports what the officers can do when they have funding to do it. It was essential that Invest NI understood their role because they had not played their part thus far and should be asked to step up to the mark and fund the Council in parity with other similar areas.

Councillor Brady noted that the Motion was timely and advised that he learned at the Strategic Partnership that the Borough had one of the most startling poverty problems based on the current statistics, which suggested that it was an unequal borough.

Councillor McCracken remarked that the businesses themselves would increase the R&D and exports and Council should facilitate that with funding from Invest NI. While he agreed with the thrust of trying to improve the problem and solve the problem that had been identified, he stated that he would prefer a more partnership style of approach rather than bringing Invest NI into a room and haranguing them. There was responsibility on all sides to find a solution. In recent years, Invest NI had stepped up to a large degree. The Council's ambition was to have economic development as its priority, but the resources were not being put in to achieve that. If more resource was made available, the Council could take its plans and proposals to Invest NI and get funding. Council also needed to listen to what businesses need, how R&D could be improved and what they would need to do that, what incentives they would need to help them export more.

In summing up Alderman Smith advised that the Borough needed a business base. It was about trying to deliver a partnership. He wanted an acknowledgement of the Borough's economic circumstances, a level policy playing field and a fair share of resources. He hoped that Invest NI would present to the Committee but felt that the Minister would be a greater challenge.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith seconded by Councillor Newman that the notice of motion be adopted.

(Alderman Smith withdrew from the meeting at 10:25pm)

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that the new Chief Executive of Tourism NI would be attending November's Committee meeting.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

17. EXTENSION OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE ACADEMY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

(Appendices XXI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION – SCHEDULE 6

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

FINANCIAL AND CONTRACT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE ACADEMY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

18. EXTENSION OF CONTRACT FOR THE TRANSPORT ACADEMY

(Appendices XXII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - SCHEDULE 6

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

FINANCIAL AND CONTRACT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE TRANSPORT ACADEMY

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that the public and press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.45 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 13 October 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair:	Alderman Smith	
Aldermen:	Brooks (Zoom)	McIlveen
	Graham (7.14pm)	McRandal
Councillors:	Chambers (Zoom 8.22pm)	McBurney
	Cochrane	McCracken
	Gilmour	Quinn
	W Irvine	Moore
	Thompson	

Officers in Attendance: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Corporate Governance (A Curtis), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

Also in Attendance: Councillors Boyle, Hollywood (Zoom) and Wray

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Alderman Smith) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies were received from Councillor S Irvine. An apology for lateness had also been received from Councillor Chambers.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

Alderman McIlveen declared an interest in the following items:

Item 3 - Presentation – Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) - Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan

Item 18 - Whitespots – Land Acquisitions

NOTED.

(Having declared an interest in the next item Alderman McIlveen left the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.02pm)

3. DEPUTATION- NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE (NIHE) ARDS AND NORTH DOWN HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN (Appendix I)

The Chairman invited Caroline Connor, Interim Director Strategic Housing Authority and Jill Gallagher, Interim Area Manager Ards & North Down to make their Presentation.

Ms Connor thanked Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and proceeded to guide Members through a Power Point presentation (see attached Appendix).

(Alderman Graham entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.14pm)

The presentation detailed the 2026 NIHE Investment Plan for Ards and North Down. Members were also provided with a Community Planning update and it was noted that an Information Sharing Agreement had been established with Ards and North Down Borough Council. The presentation provided an overview of:

- Local Housing Context
- NIHE Investment 2025/26
- Key Housing Challenges
- Key Housing Opportunities

The Chairman sought questions from Members at this stage and the following comments were made.

Councillor McCracken rose as a Bangor Central representative and asked what the barriers were to building more homes in that area.

Ms Connor advised that barriers to that included the costs to build and a number of physical constraints around flooding and land availability. It was noted that going forwards public lands would be looked at with a view to facilitating new schemes.

Continuing Councillor McCracken referred to a Motion he had brought to Council to consider what public land was available in Bangor Central which he hoped would assist with this matter going forwards. Referring to fuel poverty he welcomed the proposals as rising energy costs were an ongoing issue for so many. He asked if there were any financial constraints on this.

In response Ms Connor confirmed that it was a focus of the Board's consideration around its investment programme and how priorities were made. She added that they very much welcomed the budget provision for the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Councillor W Irvine expressed his thanks for the Presentation and referred to those people who were in housing stress compared to the amount of allocations which

were handed out. He acknowledged the difficulties there were around that adding he was also aware that temporary accommodation was also particularly difficult, with many people having to move outside the area. He sought some comments on that. Continuing he also referred to a new scheme in Bangor which residents had been very impressed with and had won a number of awards.

Ms Connor confirmed there had been a sharp rise in temporary accommodation requests with an increase of 1,300 since 2023. Efforts were made to ensure that temporary accommodation was located near the applicant's support network and it was noted that the length of stay in this accommodation could be lengthy and up to two years. Ms Connor acknowledged the need to plug the gap and provide other housing options.

Also expressing her thanks for the presentation, Councillor Moore referred to the issue of tackling damp and mould and asked what the state of that problem was in the Borough.

Ms Connor indicated that she could provide that specific information in relation to the Member in due course. Continuing she advised that measures had been introduced to combat that issue including a Damp & Mould Action Plan which had been developed. She added that there had been an increase in reporting of this issue with visits undertaken and risk assessments carried out.

At this stage the Chairman referred to the Programme for Government priority which was 33,000 additional homes by 2039, which equated to 3,000 per annum for this Borough. He noted that currently the build rate was running at about a third of what that target was and as such he asked if it was expected to increase or would there be constraints due to a lack of budget and issues with waste water infrastructure.

In response Ms Connor indicated that there were a number of factors including funding which had impacted build ability with 1,800 units funded instead of 2,350. In order to meet the Programme for Government targets they were required to exceed 2,000 units per annum. Members were advised that an Action Plan had been put into place to deal with this. In terms of waste water she advised that they were actively working with Northern Ireland Water and for this year and she was content there were no significant issues in respect of this. Continuing she stated that this year's issues were primarily around funding and noted two reviews which had been commissioned by the Minister which looked at how opportunities could be maximised to deliver more new starts within the budget available.

The Chairman asked one further question around the age demographic in Northern Ireland with the Borough having one of the oldest and he asked what plans were in place to mirror that and meet the associated needs.

Ms Connor advised that an Older People Strategy was in place along with a Strategic Needs Assessment which was being developed to support people. Those she stated would deal specifically with older people and address the gap between supply and need.

The Chairman thanked Ms Connor and Ms Gallagher for attending and wished them well.

NOTED.

(Ms Connor and Ms Gallagher left the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.30pm)

(Alderman McIlveen re-entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.30pm)

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the Council had a Policy Development Process in place since 2016 (Appendix). The process provided guidance for officers on how policies should be developed, drafted, consulted on, approved, implemented and reviewed.

A review had now been undertaken to ensure the process remained clear, practical and fit for purpose. The revised process had been updated to provide a more structured and concise framework for officers, while retaining the key governance principles of evidence-based policy development, appropriate consultation, legislative compliance, approval, implementation, monitoring and review.

The updated process was set out across four clear stages:

1. Identify need
2. Draft and consult
3. Sign off and approval
4. Implement, monitor and review

The purpose of the review was not to introduce a significantly different process, but to make the existing requirements easier to understand and apply consistently across the Council.

Key Issues
The main reasons for updating the process were outlined below.

1. To make the process clearer and more concise
The revised process presented the key stages in a simpler and more logical order. This helped officers understand what needed to happen before drafting begins, during consultation, at approval stage and after a policy had been adopted.
The updated version removed unnecessary repetition and used clearer language. This should make the guidance easier to follow for policy authors, managers and consultees.

2. To clarify roles and responsibilities
The updated process explained the responsibilities of policy authors, Heads of Service, Directors, HOST, CLT, Committee and Council more clearly. It also

confirmed when advice should be sought from relevant officers, such as Corporate Governance, Legal Services, Human Resources, Trade Unions, Equality and Disability, Sustainability and Data Protection. Clearer roles would help avoid confusion, reduce delays and ensure policies were developed through the correct governance route.

3. To strengthen early engagement and evidence gathering
The revised process placed greater emphasis on early engagement before a policy was drafted. This included gathering views from those affected by the policy, those responsible for implementing it and officers with relevant specialist knowledge. This approach should help ensure that policies were evidence-based, proportionate, operationally practical and aligned to stakeholder needs from the outset.

4. To improve implementation, monitoring and review
The revised process gave greater attention to what happened after a policy was approved. It confirmed the need to communicate and deploy policies effectively, provide guidance or training where required, monitor whether the policy was achieving its intended outcomes and review policies within agreed timescales. This would help ensure policies were not only approved, but were properly implemented, understood and kept up to date.

Next Steps
Subject to approval, the revised Policy Development Process (see Appendix) would replace the 2016 version.

The next steps were to:

- finalise the revised Policy Development Process and Guidance;
- update the Council's Policy Register;
- communicate the revised process to relevant officers;
- ensure officers developing or reviewing policies were aware of the updated requirements;
- provide guidance or support where required; and
- continue to monitor the effectiveness of the process through future policy reviews.

Summary
The revised process provided a more structured framework for developing, consulting on, approving, implementing and reviewing Council policies. It clarified roles and responsibilities, strengthened early engagement, supported compliance with screening requirements and reinforced the importance of implementation, monitoring and review.

The updated process would support greater consistency across the Council and help ensure policies were developed in a transparent, evidence-based and proportionate way.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the revised Policy Development Process and Guidance 2026 and agrees that it replaces the 2016 version.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCracken commented that PRINCE2 was one of the main project management tools used within the private sector, noting there was also a 'light' version of this. As such he asked if there was a 'light' version of the Council's Policy Development Plan to deal with those smaller changes.

In response the Head of Corporate Services commented that there was no 'light' version as such for any new policies as officers believed those should go through the full scrutiny process. Reviews undertaken however could bypass certain elements of it as long as records were kept of what those minor changes were. She added that all existing policies had gone through the entire process.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. QUEEN ELIZABETH II RENAMING AND SCULPTURE REQUESTS OCTOBER 2026 UPDATE

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing three requests, detailed below arose through separate Notices of Motion but were closely connected by their commemorative purpose. In September 2024, the Council agreed in principle that a single Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be undertaken for the three requests, subject to identification of a preferred memorial option and receipt of the outstanding Cabinet Office responses (See Appendix). The Director advised that officers would come back to Committee to advise on the plans for consultation.

October 2026 Update

Advice from the Cabinet Office had now been received for all three requests and was different for each request. This report detailed the three requests, the advice received and the subsequent actions that need consideration at this point.

Officers had revisited the screening forms as a result of receiving the Cabinet Office's responses. The screening outcome was as follows:

- Naming of the area at Portavogie War Memorial – Screened Out – with mitigation
- Renaming of Marine Gardens, Bangor– Screened Out – with mitigation
- Permanent memorial sculpture at Marine Gardens – unchanged at this stage

The relevant background and current position for each request were set out below.

Naming of the area at Portavogie War Memorial

In March 2023, Council agreed a Notice of Motion to rename the square/green area at Portavogie War Memorial 'Queen Elizabeth Square' in memory of Queen Elizabeth II.

The public memorialisation guidance states *that protected Royal names and titles are granted sparingly and subject to strict standards. Applications should explain:*

- *the reason the name is sought;*
- *the history of the organisation or body;*
- *relevant Royal connections or associations; and*
- *any other information considered appropriate.*

The guidance indicates *that proposed names incorporating 'memorial' or 'remembrance' may be looked upon favourably where possible, while the full title of Queen Elizabeth II remains closely protected. Approval is therefore required for protected naming, but not ordinarily for an unofficial statue or portrait without a commercial element.*

A request was sent to the Royal Names Team in December 2023. The supporting application described the proposed site, Portavogie's maritime heritage and the Borough's Royal connections.

The proposal was equality screened. The screening identified potential adverse impact in relation to religious belief, political opinion and good relations, and the Council's initial position was that a full EQIA was required.

The Cabinet Office asked that the request be revisited after public consultation and referred the Council to the public memorialisation guidance.

Current position: Royal approval had not been granted for the naming of the square in Portavogie. The Council was required to complete a consultation and then resubmit a final, fully evidenced application before approval could be considered.

Recommendation:

A focused local consultation by way of letter drop was considered a proportionate approach. This had proved successful in the past on renaming of other Council assets, such as play parks. The proposal related to the naming of the square/green area at the existing War Memorial, rather than a wider Borough-wide policy change, and the Cabinet Office had specifically asked that the matter be revisited following public consultation and supported by contextual evidence.

A targeted consultation with residents would allow the Council to test whether there were any adverse equality or good-relations impacts, identify any alternative views or sensitivities, and ensure that the final application to the Cabinet Office was supported by direct community feedback.

On that basis, a local consultation was capable of being a proportionate and evidence-led next step, provided the Council remained open to all responses and records how the evidence had been assessed. Following this consultation officers would revisit the equality screening process to ascertain if anything further was required before a decision was taken.

Renaming of Marine Gardens, Bangor

In January 2024, Council agreed that the redeveloped Marine Gardens be named 'The Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens', subject to equality screening, consultation and continued engagement with the Cabinet Office.

The rationale linked the proposal to the Platinum Jubilee, the grant of City Status to Bangor, the redevelopment of Marine Gardens and the wider Bangor Waterfront project.

The Council wrote to the Royal Names Team in May 2024 and followed up subsequently. The Royal Names Team confirmed that it did not object to the proposed use of the protected title 'The Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens'.

Permission concerning the protected title did not remove the need for the Council to complete its own equality assessment, consultation and final decision-making process.

Current position: The Royal Names Team had raised no objection to use of the protected title. The remaining work is the Council's own equality, consultation and final approval process.

Bangor had a long-established tradition of Royal associations being reflected within its streets and public places. Existing examples include Queen's Parade, King Street, Princetown Road and Princetown Avenue, together with place names such as Albert Street, Alexandra Gardens and the Balmoral group of streets.

Of particular relevance to the present proposal was Bangor's direct and enduring civic association with Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Bangor was awarded city status through the 2022 Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition. The UK Parliament recorded that Her Majesty The Queen commanded that Bangor, together with seven other successful locations, be granted city status to mark her Platinum Jubilee. The Government described these civic honours as Royal honours and the

competition itself required applicants to highlight, among other matters, their Royal associations and cultural heritage.

This connection was subsequently formally marked at Bangor Castle when The Princess Royal conferred city status and unveiled the Letters Patent issued by King Charles III confirming Bangor's status as a city.

In considering the proposal to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II within Bangor. A permanent commemoration would sit within an existing tradition of Royal-associated place naming in Bangor while also recognising the distinctive relationship between Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and Bangor's elevation from town to city. It would provide an opportunity to acknowledge, in a visible and enduring way, the Royal honour that represents an important milestone in Bangor's civic history.

Recommendation

In light of the evidence currently available, (revised) screening had determined a full EQIA was not required for the proposed renaming of Marine Gardens. The proposal sat within an established local context in which Royal-associated names already existed in the surrounding area with no adverse equality or good-relations impacts identified to date. There was also a direct civic connection between Bangor and Queen Elizabeth II, as Bangor's city status was awarded. Taken together, this evidence suggested that the proposal may be capable of being addressed through a proportionate consultation process rather than a full EQIA, provided the Council documents its assessment, considers any updated equality and good-relations information, and remained open to alternative views before making a final decision. Following this consultation officers would revisit the equality screening process to ascertain if anything further was required before decision taken

Permanent memorial sculpture at Marine Gardens

In March 2024, Council agreed to consider a permanent memorial to Queen Elizabeth II at the redeveloped Marine Gardens and requested options and costs.

An options paper considered a landmark sculpture, a simple stone memorial, a plaque and a horticultural installation. Council subsequently selected a landmark sculpture as the preferred option.

The Council wrote to the Royal Names Team in October 2024 seeking advice on a landmark sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II.

In July 2026, the Royal Names Team clarified that anyone may create and display an unofficial statue or portrait, subject to normal planning regulations and approvals. Formal approval was not required unless the project had a commercial element.

For a large-scale, public-facing project, the guidance suggested that the organisation may write to the Private Secretary's Office at Buckingham Palace as a courtesy.

Current position: Cabinet Office/Royal approval was not required on the information available, provided there was no commercial element. The proposal remained subject to the Council's equality process, planning and other normal approvals.

Members would also be aware that the Marine Gardens project had generated considerable public interest and excitement but has also experienced delays; it would therefore be prudent not to add further complexity to the project at this stage.

Recommendation Defer progression of the memorial sculpture project until Marine Gardens had been handed back to Council in its entirety. This would allow the existing artwork and public realm improvements to settle in, provide time to understand how the completed space was used by residents and visitors, and assist the Council in determining the most appropriate location for any sculpture.

Officers would then report back to the Council with options on how best to take forward the creation of a landmark sculpture and any associated consultation requirements, which could also be informed by the learning and outcomes from the Marine Gardens consultation.

Next Steps

The below table highlighted the current council position, the external advice/status and the decision that was now required.

Request	Council position	External advice/status	Decision now required
Portavogie Square	Council agreed to name the green/square at the War Memorial "Queen Elizabeth Square".	Cabinet Office asked that the application be revisited after public consultation and supported by the required contextual evidence.	Undertake a consultation with the residents in Portavogie by way of a letter drop
Marine Gardens	Council agreed that the redeveloped gardens be named "The Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens", subject to equality screening and consultation.	The Royal Names Team advised that it does not object to use of the protected title.	Undertake a consultation with the Borough residents (Officers to work with Communications dept to determine most effective consultation methods)

Request	Council position	External advice/status	Decision now required
Memorial sculpture	Council selected a landmark sculpture as its preferred form of permanent memorial.	A statue or portrait may be created without formal Royal approval unless commercial; usual planning approvals apply. A courtesy notification to Buckingham Palace may be appropriate for a large-scale public-facing project.	To defer progression of the memorial sculpture project until Marine Gardens has been handed back to Council in its entirety.

RECOMMENDED that Council Agrees to the following:

A -Naming of the area at Portavogie War Memorial – The Council undertakes a consultation with the residents in Portavogie, considers the impact of this on the equality screening process and provides the outcome to the Cabinet office.

B - Renaming of Marine Gardens, Bangor - The Council undertakes a consultation with the residents of the Borough, considers the impact of this on the equality screening process.

C - Permanent memorial sculpture at Marine Gardens - The Council to defer progression of the memorial sculpture project until Marine Gardens has been handed back to Council in its entirety.

The Director of Corporate Services guided Members through the report, highlighting the salient points within it.

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

The proposer Councillor W Irvine welcomed the progress report adding that he was content with the approach which had been adopted. He acknowledged that the need for planning permission for any potential sculpture could have an impact on any potential timelines. Continuing he stated that he was also mindful of the public interest there would be in these proposals and as such he believed that it was important for the public to have its say. Councillor Irvine also welcomed the light touch in respect of consultation, adding that not having to go through a full EQIA would also be helpful.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Gilmour was mindful of how long ago the original proposals had been put forward back around the time when Bangor had

been awarded City status. She stated that she had no issues with any of the options as laid out in the report adding that the sooner progress could be made the better. In terms of the sculpture itself she reiterated that she would not be keen on a portrait type sculpture given that she was aware of how wrong they could go. She was therefore hopeful that the designer could create something symbolic taking into account the length of the late Queen Elizabeth II's reign and the fact that she had bestowed the city status upon Bangor.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. POLITICAL LITERACY (NOTICE OF MOTION 722) RESPONSE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Council agreed a Notice of Motion arising from the deputation from pupils of Rathmore Primary School and Strangford College. The motion recognised the importance of ensuring that children and young people were included in decisions that affected them and acknowledged that political literacy was fundamental to a healthy democracy and to preparing the next generation for active civic participation. The motion requested that officers engaged with relevant partners and brought forward a report setting out realistic and deliverable options for how Council could support political literacy for children and young people, including associated resource, capacity and cost implications.

In addition, the motion referenced the importance of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provided that children and young people should be able to express their views freely in matters affecting them.

Key Issues
Political literacy helped children and young people understand how democratic decisions were made, how government and elected representatives operate, and how they could participate in civic life.

Political literacy was already supported through a range of established programmes across Northern Ireland, including:

- **Statutory education curriculum**
  Political literacy themes were embedded within the Northern Ireland Curriculum through Learning for Life and Work (LLW), particularly the Local and Global Citizenship strand at Key Stage 3 and the wider statutory LLW requirements at Key Stage 4. Those included learning relating to democracy, active participation, human rights, citizenship and the role of government in society.

- **CCEA, Electoral Commission and Assembly programmes**
  A range of organisations provided curriculum-linked resources and engagement opportunities to support political literacy. Those included CCEA's *Ready to Vote?* programme, developed with the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, and the Electoral Commission's *Welcome to Your Vote* initiative, both of which help young people understand elections, voting and democratic participation. The Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service also provided educational visits,

classroom resources and engagement activities focused on how laws were made and the role of elected representatives.

- **Youth Assembly and Youth Voice programmes**
  The Northern Ireland Youth Assembly and Northern Ireland Youth Forum's *Youth Voice* programme provide opportunities for young people to engage directly with democratic processes. Participants had opportunities to discuss issues affecting young people and engage with consultations and public decision-making processes. Those programmes were designed to build confidence, leadership skills and understanding of decision-making processes.

- **Youth work and community-based provision**
  Political literacy was also supported through youth work delivered by the Education Authority, voluntary organisations and community groups. Programmes delivered by organisations such as Youth Action NI, Include Youth and local youth services promoted active citizenship, leadership, advocacy and participation, helping young people develop the skills and confidence to engage in civic and community life.

- **Local initiatives within Ards and North Down**
  Ards and North Down Borough Council already supported elements of political literacy through its Good Relations Programme. A recent *Getting to Know Your Councillors* event, delivered in partnership with Youth Voice, provided a structured opportunity for young people to meet elected members, ask questions on issues important to them and learn about local decision-making. Follow-on activity included planned visits to Stormont and further engagement opportunities to strengthen young people's understanding of democratic institutions and representation.

While the Department of Education and CCEA were undertaking wider reviews of curriculum and qualifications, civic participation, citizenship and democratic engagement continued to form part of the current statutory curriculum framework and associated educational resources available to schools.

Given the range of existing provision, any future role for Council would need to be carefully considered to ensure it complemented current programmes, addresses identified gaps and provided additional value rather than duplicating activity already delivered by educational, statutory or community organisations.

Engagement and Findings
Officers engaged with a range of relevant stakeholders, including the Education Authority, Electoral Commission, local youth participation groups, community and voluntary organisations, and other stakeholders involved in youth engagement and civic participation.

Overall, engagement confirmed that substantial political literacy and citizenship provision already exists across Northern Ireland through schools, youth services and statutory organisations. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of complementing existing provision and identified the greatest opportunity for Council as supporting participation and engagement at a local level, particularly through opportunities for

young people to interact with elected representatives and contribute to decisions affecting their communities.

Considerations for Council
In considering its response to the Notice of Motion, Members should note that responsibility for the delivery of formal political and citizenship education rested primarily with the education sector and associated statutory bodies. Given the extensive provision already available across Northern Ireland, any Council intervention should be proportionate, evidence-based and designed to complement existing activity rather than create duplication.

Members should also consider the extent to which any response aligned with the Council's wider ambitions to strengthen the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them, including through community planning, consultation and civic engagement activities.

Finally, any enhanced role for Council would have staffing, resource and financial implications. The scale of those implications would vary depending on the level of involvement Members wish Council to undertake.

Options for Consideration

Option 1 – Information, Promotion and Facilitation
Under this option, Council would adopt a facilitative role, focused on raising awareness of and promoting existing political literacy, citizenship and democratic engagement opportunities available to children and young people.

Recognising that substantial provision already existed through schools, youth services, the Electoral Commission, the Northern Ireland Assembly and a range of community and voluntary organisations, Council would not seek to develop or deliver additional programmes. Instead, the emphasis would be on increasing awareness, improving access to information and supporting connections between existing providers and local groups.

Activity under this option could include:
- Promoting existing opportunities through Council communication channels.
- Signposting schools, youth organisations and community groups to available resources and programmes.
- Raising awareness of opportunities for engagement with local democracy and decision-making processes.

This option represented the most proportionate and least resource-intensive response to the Notice of Motion. It would support increased visibility of existing opportunities while avoiding duplication of established provision.

Resource Implications
- Could largely be delivered within existing resources.
- Required officer time to maintain relationships with relevant organisations, coordinate information and support communications activity.
- No additional budget requirement has been identified at this stage.

Option 2 – Targeted Support for a Defined Initiative
Under this option, Council would work in partnership with relevant organisations to support the delivery of a defined political literacy or democratic engagement initiative aimed at children and young people.

The initiative could focus on increasing understanding of local democracy and public decision-making through practical engagement opportunities. Potential activities may include workshops, engagement events, learning visits, mock elections, councillor engagement sessions or other participation-based initiatives.

Any activity would be developed in partnership with existing providers and designed to complement, rather than duplicate, the political literacy and citizenship programmes already delivered across Northern Ireland. This option would provide a more visible Council contribution and create additional opportunities for young people to engage with democratic processes at a local level. However, it would require dedicated capacity to design, coordinate and oversee delivery.
There were two potential delivery options to consider.

Option A – Existing Officer Resource	Option B – External Provider
The initiative could be coordinated through existing Council resources. However, there is currently no dedicated officer capacity within the Community Planning Service to undertake this work. Progressing this option would require the reprioritisation of existing work programmes or re-direction to another service areas. Potential cost would include staff time plus delivery costs estimated at £5,000 to £15,000.	The initiative could be commissioned and delivered by an external organisation with expertise in youth participation, democratic engagement or civic education. This would provide specialist expertise and dedicated delivery capacity but would require additional budget provision. Additional officer time would be required to scope, coordinate, oversee and evaluate the initiative and no dedicated budget has been identified for this work. Potential costs could be approximately £15,000 to £40,000, depending on the scale, duration and scope of the initiative. Appropriate partnership, governance and evaluation arrangements would need to be established.

While this option would provide a more proactive response to the Notice of Motion, careful scoping would be required to ensure that any activity added value to existing provision. Consideration would also need to be given to the sustainability of the initiative and the availability of future resources should Members wish to continue activity beyond an initial pilot phase. No provision currently existed within approved budgets for this work.

Option 3 – Development of a Youth Participation Framework

While political literacy focused on understanding democratic processes, engagement with stakeholders highlighted that meaningful participation in decision-making was also an important component of developing civic knowledge and active citizenship.

Under this option, Council would commission a review of existing arrangements for engaging children and young people and develop recommendations for a future Youth Participation Framework aligned with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The review would assess current engagement mechanisms, identify strengths, gaps and opportunities, consider examples of good practice from other councils and organisations, and engage children, young people and stakeholders in the development of recommendations. The purpose of the review would be to determine whether a more structured approach is required to support the participation of children and young people in Council decision-making and broader civic life.

Potential models for consideration could include:

- Youth advisory groups linked to Council priorities.
- A Youth Citizens' Panel.
- Deliberative engagement exercises on specific issues affecting young people.
- A broader Youth Participation Framework bringing together a range of participation mechanisms.

This option would not commit Council to implementing a specific programme at this stage. Rather, it would provide Members with an evidence-based assessment of options, together with governance, resource and financial implications for future consideration.

Resource and Financial Implications (Phase 1)

- External consultant or specialist provider: £20,000 to £40,000.
- Stakeholder engagement and consultation activities.
- Development of recommendations, delivery options and implementation plan.

The outcome of phase 1 would be a Youth Participation Framework and implementation plan for future Member consideration.

Potential Future Implementation (Phase 2)

Should Members subsequently decide to implement recommendations arising from the review, further resources would be required.

Officer-led model	Externally commissioned model
• Dedicated officer resource (including on-costs): £40,000 to £55,000 per annum • Programme and engagement costs: £10,000 to £20,000 per annum • Total indicative cost: £50,000 to £75,000 per annum	• Programme delivery contract: £30,000 to £60,000 per annum • Facilitation, events and engagement activities: £10,000 to £20,000 per annum • Total indicative cost: £40,000 to £80,000 per annum

A future programme could also include the use of deliberative engagement approaches, such as youth citizens' panels or citizens' assemblies, to enable young people to consider evidence and make recommendations on specific issues affecting their communities.

Indicative market costs for comparable deliberative engagement exercises were estimated at:

- £20,000 to £40,000 for a small-scale youth deliberative panel.
- £60,000 to £120,000 for a formal youth citizens' assembly, depending on participant numbers, duration, facilitation and recruitment methodology.

No provision currently existed within approved budgets for this work.

All costs cited in this report were indicative and had been informed by market testing and examples of comparable participation and engagement programmes.

Summary
The review found that a wide range of political literacy and democratic engagement programmes already operated across Northern Ireland.

Engagement with stakeholders indicated that the most appropriate role for Council was likely to be one of enabling, supporting and facilitating participation, rather than acting as a primary provider of political education. Any enhanced role beyond signposting and promotion would require additional officer capacity and financial resources.

RECOMMENDED that Council Considers the options outlined within this report and determines its preferred approach

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Council proceeds with Option 1 – Information, Promotion and Facilitation.

The proposer, Alderman McIlveen, took the opportunity to thank officers for the report, commenting that it dealt with the issues really well. He noted that this was something there was not a lack of as there was already lots taking place and as such he felt adding to that may not be useful. However he believed it would be useful to provide information for promotion purposes.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Gilmour agreed that officers had done a good job with this. She recalled during her term as Mayor that she had visited many schools throughout Democracy Week and agreed that Option 1 represented the best way forward.

At this stage Councillor McBurney advised that she had brought the original Motion on this following a deputation made to Council by two schools. She thanked officers for the report which was before them adding that her Motion had focussed on the consistency of what information young people were currently getting. It had been noted that around 50% had not received any form of democratic education. As such it was evident that this was not being delivered consistently to young people and she

believed that it was important for them to have that education. Councillor McBurney indicated that she was content to proceed with Option 1 to include facilitation to progress this forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Council proceeds with Option 1 – Information, Promotion and Facilitation.

7. STRATEGIC BUDGET REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing this was the first strategic budget report for the 2026/27 financial year and set out the income and expenditure variances for the first five months.

In addition permission was sought to reallocate anticipated capital underspends for other projects.

Key Issues Revenue
The revenue budgetary surplus to date was £1.1M as set out in the table below.

	YTD Actual £'000	YTD Budget £'000	YTD Variance	Annual Budget £'000
Service Income	8,045	7,356	690	16,942
District Rates and General Grants	30,458	30,458	0	72,899
Other Income	470	467	3	425
Total Income	**38,973**	**38,281**	**692**	**90,266**
Payroll	18,597	19,168	(572)	44,536
Waste Disposal	3,369	3,246	123	7,431
Energy	1,644	1,389	255	3,549
Maintenance	1,671	1,788	(117)	4,597
Capital Financing	4,347	4,395	(48)	10,788
Other Expenditure	7,706	7,749	(42)	19,366
Total Expenditure	**37,334**	**38,302**	**(402)**	**90,266**
Surplus or (Deficit)	**1,640**	**545**	**1,094**	**0**

Commentary

Service Income

- Service specific grant income was showing a surplus largely to match expenditure by £370,000.
- In addition cemetery, community centres, wind turbine and property certificate income were all ahead of budget, collectively by around £110,000.

Payroll

- The NJC pay agreement had come in 0.7% lower than budgeted for, creating a £300,000 underspend for the full year.
- Vacancies continued to run higher than budgeted for.

Energy

- Diesel expenditure was running 22% over budget due to the very high fuel costs.
- Gas was around 13% over budget.
- Although electricity costs were on budget, this was expected to worsen over the remainder of the year.

Key Issues Capital

The total capital strategy presented to Council when setting the district rates in January, set a capital expenditure budget for 2026/27 of £18.4M. Expenditure was currently was sitting at £3.4M, with a further £10.9M committed. Leaving an early projected underspend of £4.1M. Historically, capital expenditure had by underspent by 50% and therefore management feel it would be prudent to use some of the underspend to facilitate bringing forward some works from future years to be completed during 2026/27.

On this basis the following projects were proposed for the Committee's consideration:

1. **Carparks**

   The three lowest scoring car parks by condition as outlined in reports previously taken to the Environment Committee were John St Newtownards, Old Cross East Newtownards and Church Street in Bangor. The approximate costs for those works were £56,000, £34,000 and £60,000 respectively. In order to future-proof those works a further £8,000 per site would allow foundations and ducting to be constructed to allow for the future installation of EV infrastructure.

   This totalled £174,000. Existing budget had been identified through savings in other maintenance projects of £50,000, so an additional £124,000 was required.

2. **South Pier Toilets**

   Extensive refurbishment works were ongoing to the South Pier toilets to aligned with the Marine Gardens opening to include: new roof, full refit and extensive energy and water saving initiatives. The facility could also be fitted with "changing places" compliant room, where persons with severe disabilities could safely use the facilities in comfort and privacy. An additional £153,000 was required to complete the project to the desired specification.

3. **MUGAs**

The Parks & Cemetries Team were currently developing a 10 year replacement plan for MUGAs. In lieu of that strategy being finalised, there was an opportunity to take forward resurfacings for the two MUGAs which score worst per the conditions surveys. Those were:

- **Clandeboye** – this site was approximately 14 years old and was installed through an earlier round of PEACE funding. The surface was now approaching the end of its playable life. The recent inspection report highlighted several issues, including:
  - Creasing around the edges of the carpet, creating potential trip hazards.
  - Worn line markings, with one line now completely missing. The only effective remedy was to sew new lines into the carpet.
  - Localised fire damage resulting in singeing of the surface.
  - Debris accumulation and weed growth along the raised and creased edges.

Bowtown – The facility had a polymeric surface installed approximately 20 years ago. However, due to the seasonal weather requirements associated with installing polymeric surfacing, the opportunity to undertake those works this year had now passed. The local community group had been consulted regarding a potential change of surface and were agreeable to a surface similar to that of Clandeboye, which meant it could be facilitated this year.

The total cost for two sites was approximately £160,000.

Summary
Capital underspends to be used to fund the following projects:

Project	Cost
Carparks resurfacing	£124k
South Pier Toilet refurbishment	£153k
MUGAs resurfacing	£160k
Total	**£437k**

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the strategic budget report and Approves the use of capital underspends as noted in the report.

At this stage the Head of Finance provided Members with an overview of the report highlighting the salient points within it.

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

Alderman McIlveen commented that he was pleased to see the proposed resurfacing of the Bowtown MUGA. He was however concerned with the apparent annual Council underspend of 50% and asked if that was considered to be the best approach.

In response the Head of Finance commented that many capital projects took on a life of their own but reminded Members that the Council was working to a 10 Year Capital Plan and therefore that money would not be wasted. He stated that capital revenue would be reviewed in 2027 adding that it was important to plan in advance so that projects could be brought forward more rapidly.

Alderman McIlveen commented that 50% was a very large figure and as such he would not wish for that to remain the case.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Gilmour welcomed the report and the proposals for the resurfacing of the Clandeboye MUGA. Referring to car parks she stated that those needed to be properly maintained once the resurfacing works were completed and noted the need to future proof those with the installation of EV infrastructure. Continuing she indicated that she too would share Alderman McIlveen's concerns around the 50% underspend. Councillor Gilmour welcomed the extensive refurbishment works, particularly the changing places compliant room which were ongoing to the South Pier toilets to align with the Marine Gardens.

At this stage the Head of Service advised that the Council's Head of Estates had reviewed current car park infrastructure and was content there was adequate provision currently. He agreed that it was important to prepare for future expansion adding that it would also be important to ensure that the grid had the capacity for that.

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

REPORTS FOR NOTING

8. BOOKING SYSTEM FOR REGISTRATION SERVICES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that across Northern Ireland, Councils were increasingly moving towards digital service delivery. Several Councils, including Mid Ulster, Belfast and Fermanagh and Omagh, had already implemented online booking systems for registration services, with others progressing similar solutions.

In Ards and North Down Borough Council, the current process for booking appointments within Registration Services was a manual approach that was heavily reliant on phone calls and email. Between May 2025 and May 2026, the service received 7,525 phone calls and 6,094 emails, demonstrating the high level of demand being managed through those channels.

This approach was no longer aligned with customer expectations and places significant pressure on staff, who must manage large volumes of enquiries alongside delivering a front-line service.

Issues
Operational inefficiencies were a key issue under the current system:

- Appointments were scheduled manually in Outlook, which did not effectively manage capacity or prevent overlapping bookings, increasing the risk of over-allocation.
- Missed appointments occurred regularly, requiring staff to spend further time attempting to contact customers and rearrange bookings, placing additional pressure on resources.
- The absence of automated reminders contributed to a high number of “no shows” and repeat contact from customers seeking confirmation of appointment details.
- Customers were required to complete paper forms on arrival, often due to lack of access to printers at home, which added approximately 10–15 minutes to each appointment. This reduced the number of appointments that could be accommodated each day.

Solution
Online systems implemented in other Councils had demonstrated clear benefits. For example, Mid Ulster reported a reduction in phone calls by 32% and email enquiries by 40% following implementation. Those systems also enabled customers to input required information in advance, improving data accuracy and reducing appointment duration.

The Council engaged Tailwind Digital in July 2026 to develop and implement a modern, efficient and customer-focused online booking system for Registration Services.

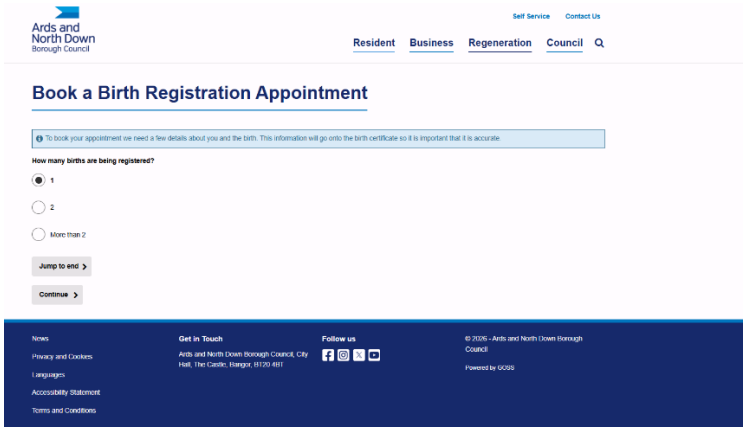
The key objectives were to:

- **Improve accessibility to services**
  Enable residents to book appointments for registration services online, 24/7, at a time that suited their needs.
- **Enhance customer experience**
  Provide a simple, consistent and user-friendly booking process, with clear guidance on requirements and automated confirmations and reminders.
- **Increase service capacity through more efficient appointments**
  By enabling customers to input required information in advance and reducing administrative steps during appointments, the average duration of appointments can be reduced. This would allow the service to increase the number of appointments available each day.
- **Reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency**
  Minimise manual handling of bookings, reduce phone and email enquiries, and streamline appointment scheduling processes.
- **Improve service management and planning**
  Provide better visibility of appointment demand, utilisation and trends to support more effective resource allocation and service delivery.

- **Support digital transformation**
  Contribute to the Council's Digital Strategy by introducing a digital solution that modernised service delivery and aligns with resident expectations.
- **Reduce avoidable contact**
  Lower the volume of routine enquiries (e.g. booking, cancelling or amending appointments).
- **Improve data collection and accuracy at the point of booking**
  Enable residents to input all required registration information in advance of their appointment, ensuring that details required for official records (e.g. birth certificates) were captured accurately and in a consistent format. This would reduce data entry duplication, minimise errors, and allow appointments to be completed more efficiently.

Progress

Overall, the Online Registration Booking project was progressing well. The birth registration form had been completed, tested and was ready for implementation. See sample screenshot below.



Next Steps

Final sign-off ahead of the target go-live date of 7 October 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

The seconder Councillor Gilmour noted the system had been due to go live on 2 October 2026 and she sought some feedback on how its implementation had been going. She also asked if members of the public could still make appointments in person.

The Head of Corporate Governance advise that initial feedback had been positive and confirmed that a manual option still remained in place. She added that currently the new service was only available for the registration of births, noting that wedding bookings were due to go live shortly.

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

9. EDRMS CORPORATE FILE PLAN PROJECT EVALUATION (PHASE 1)

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that following the adoption of its Data Strategy, the Council embarked on a project to transform corporate information management across the organisation.

The aim was not simply to migrate legacy information to SharePoint Online, but to establish a consistent information architecture, strengthen governance, improve compliance, and maximise the benefits of Microsoft 365.

At the outset, information was dispersed across network drives, SharePoint, OneDrive and email, with no consistent approach to storage or records management.

This resulted in

- Duplication (typically a Council stores and manages 75 – 80% of redundant, obsolete and duplicated data).
- Multiple versions of the same document stored in multiple locations
- Redundant data which had exceeded its retention date
- Difficulty finding and searching for records for compliance, analysis, service redesign or process improvements.
- Heavy use of OneDrive which was a risk in terms of compliance and business continuity as permissions were confined to the employee as opposed to controlled managed by Digital Services
- 1,033 SharePoint Sites deployed, unmanaged data with employees knowledge and use of SharePoint was sporadic, dependent on technical ability

The project sought to address those challenges by implementing a Corporate File Plan, reducing duplicated and obsolete data, and supporting staff to adopt new ways of working. Internal assessments identified that over 80% of information held within existing drives was redundant, highlighting the need for a structured and organisation-wide approach to information management.

Update

Working with LG Improve and Michele Noad, officers developed and implemented a Corporate File Plan in SharePoint Online aligned to the Local Government Functional Classification Scheme (LGFCS).

The project combined information governance, data cleansing, migration and staff engagement to deliver sustainable change across the organisation.

Success relied on active participation from all Council services, Information Governance, Digital Services, Transformation and management. Rather than adopting a pre-designed solution, teams helped shape their own information structures, retention requirements, access permissions and sensitivity classifications before implementation.

Communication and training
Recognising that information management could be a dry and technical subject, the programme was supported by a staff communications campaign featuring the Council's popular intranet mascot, ANDi, and friends. The campaign used a light-hearted storyline in which ANDi moved from a large, cluttered house full of unnecessary items to a smaller, organised home where everything was easier to find and manage.

The story provided a simple and engaging way to explain the benefits of data cleansing, records management and the new Corporate File Plan. The campaign was well received by staff, who welcomed the use of humour and creativity to support what might otherwise have been viewed as a highly technical change programme. It helped maintain engagement throughout the project and reinforced key messages in a way that was accessible, memorable and fun.

The attached appendices showed the communication campaign that accompanied Phase 1 and teaser for phase 2.

The communications issued to managers confirmed that each team’s transition would follow a structured end-to-end process of approximately six weeks, including manager and team overviews, file plan workshops, permissions work, mapping sessions, overnight migration, post-migration training and drop-in support. Managers were asked to brief their teams, complete information request sheets, start cleansing files early and ensure their staff attended training.

As the rollout progressed, additional topic-specific training was introduced in response to staff needs. The training programme covered practical SharePoint skills such as quick access to files, bulk tagging for personal information and sensitivity, creating and managing files and folders, saving emails and attachments into SharePoint, sharing files and managing access, and moving or copying files.

Key Outcomes and benefits realised to date
The project was a large ambitious one and future benefits would be realised as new ways of managing information are adopted. Cultural change was and would continue to be the key to its success. The benefits could be categorised as follows:

Data
Unstructured, high-risk data reduced from 10.9TB to 5.9TB of structured data. 50% Reduction.

SharePoint

- 1,033 legacy SharePoint sites reviewed

- 441 SharePoint Sites had been deleted.
- 525 were under review for deletion.
- 67 sites would remain for external sharing.

Compliance Benefits

- Automated compliance with legislation/regulations embedded within the system.
- Updated Retention and Disposal Schedule (visible within the system).
- Protection of rights of individuals and the public.
- Improved protection and preservation of corporate and societal memory (Public Records Act 1923).
- Record of Processing Activity (ROPA) had been created for every team.
- Increased information integrity as duplication had been reduced.
- Personal and Special Category data was easily identified for compliance to Data Protection Act 2018.
- Compliance audits would be achieved more easily as the information architecture would demonstrate compliance.
- DPA, FOI and EIR request for information would be easier to find.

Employee Benefits

- Information was accessible to everyone and easy to find.
- Employees could work flexibly and have access from anywhere.
- Clear signposts for storing information (My, Team, Business, Project).
- Improved communication and collaboration.
- Easy intuitive processes.
- Skills and competency were improved.
- Increased visibility and search.
- Sharing information and collaboration was easier – increased team building.
- Reduction of silo culture of working.

A key factor in the programme's success was staff engagement and training, which remain essential to sustaining the benefits achieved.

The attached Appendix showed the staff feedback.

Corporate Benefits

- Improved transparency and accountability.
- A solid foundation for decision making.
- Business continuity in the event of a disaster.
- Improved management of business risks.
- Protection and support in litigation.
- Improved ability to demonstrate corporate responsibilities, including sustainability.
- Improved customer service delivery.
- Process improvements.
- Increased collaborative working.
- Decision making and transparency is supported by accurate reliable information.
- Reputational damage is safeguarded against enforcement notices and fines.
- Business intelligence and analysis of data is supported by excellent records.

Technical Benefits

- Removal of 50% duplicated, redundant and obsolete data. This benefit will continue to be realised as the system will automate deletion.
- Improved disaster recovery (Cloud technology).
- Improved permission management and control.
- Risk reduced in terms of unstructured data held within the drives.
- Management of information and access is more transparent for ICT.
- Improved technical support.
- Improved configuration as SharePoint is highly configurable.
- Improved MS365 competency

Those benefits aligned and support the following Council information governance:

- The Digital Strategy
- The Records Management Policy
- The Retention and Disposal Schedule

Next Steps (Phase 2)

Looking ahead, the focus would be on embedding the new arrangements across all services, reinforcing records management responsibilities, and promoting SharePoint as the Council's corporate repository for information. This included reducing reliance on OneDrive and email as storage locations, recognising that email was a communication tool rather than a long-term records repository.

Officers would continue to build on this progress by promoting good records management practices, supporting adoption of the Corporate File Plan and ensuring information remained accessible, secure and well governed over time.

Summary

The information management transformation programme had delivered a significant improvement in how the Council stored, managed and governed corporate information. The implementation of the Corporate File Plan in SharePoint Online had reduced unnecessary information, improved consistency, strengthened compliance and supported staff to work more effectively within Microsoft 365.

This programme had been a significant step forward in how the Council managed, governed and used its information. It was never about moving documents from one place to another; it was about taking the opportunity to reduce duplication, improve consistency, strengthen information governance and support staff to work in a more structured and collaborative way.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Committee notes the progress made in delivering the Council's information management transformation programme, the establishment of the Corporate File Plan in SharePoint Online, and the associated improvements in governance, compliance, staff adoption and future digital readiness.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. RESIDENTS SURVEY 2026

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the Council had committed to undertaking a formal survey of residents every two years to gain an insight into satisfaction levels with the organisation and the services it delivered. The information gathered was shared across all service areas and used to inform a number of performance improvement measures including its annual service plans, performance improvement plan and financial statements.

A procurement exercise was undertaken to secure a market research company to deliver a survey that would provide:

- an insight into how the Council was perceived by the community it served
- satisfaction with the local area
- satisfaction with 'key' Council services
- the responsiveness of the Council
- how informed residents felt
- their perception of the value for money the Council provided.

Social Market Research Ltd (SMR) was successful in the procurement exercise and commissioned to undertake the survey. The research was conducted in line with all survey procedures in accordance with the ISO20252:2019 Standard.

The survey was based on a representative sample of 1,000 residents aged 16 plus, with quotas applied for age, gender, social class and location within the Borough.

The survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and focus groups. All interviews were conducted by telephone, while focus groups were held via online meetings. Interviewers were fully briefed before fieldwork commenced.

An Executive summary of the headline findings was attached in the Appendix.

Key Findings

Overall satisfaction
Residents continued to report a high level of satisfaction with the Council, with 72% expressing positive views. This did however represent a decrease from the 83% satisfaction level recorded in 2023. This downward trend was similar across local authorities in Great Britian, and Ards and North Down's percentage remained significant higher that the comparative figure for local authorities in Great Britain (51%),

Service Satisfaction
Importantly, residents' direct experience of Council services remained very positive. Among residents who had recently used a Council service, 91% rated their most recent interaction as excellent or good. This indicated that, while wider perceptions of the Council may have declined, satisfaction among those who had directly engaged with Council services remained consistently high.

Value for money/ Borough as a place to live
The survey also identified downward trends in perceptions of value for money and satisfaction with the Borough as a place to live. Focus group feedback suggested that wider perceptions of Council performance were strongly influenced by visible, everyday issues, including cleanliness, recycling, grass cutting, traffic congestion, parking and local infrastructure. Some of those matters extended beyond the Council's direct responsibility but had a significant effect on residents' day-to-day experience and their overall view of the Borough.

Alignment
The survey findings demonstrated strong alignment between resident priorities and the Council's existing strategic objectives. Economic growth, social wellbeing and inclusion, and progressing towards net zero were identified as key priorities. Residents also expressed majority support for several significant Council initiatives, providing reassurance that the Council's strategic focus reflected the issues that matter most to local communities.

Opportunities

Many residents held a neutral view of the Council—neither positive nor negative. This suggested there was scope to improve overall satisfaction through increased awareness of Council services and investments.

While residents generally found it easy to access information about Council services and initiatives, participants expressed a desire for greater visibility of Council activity, clearer explanations of decisions and spending, and more meaningful engagement. Consideration would be given to the above by all Services in the upcoming service planning process. The findings had been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service and would be used to inform annual service plans, the Performance Improvement Plan and other corporate publications. The results demonstrated continued high levels of resident satisfaction, whilst also identifying opportunities to strengthen understanding of the Council's role and achievements.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the results of the 2026 Resident Survey, which will be shared across all service areas and used to inform a number of performance improvement measures including our annual service plans, performance improvement plan and financial statements.

Alderman Graham proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Graham acknowledged that satisfaction levels had dropped from previous surveys while those who engaged directly with the Council appeared to be well satisfied with the level of service provided. He added however that while those levels of satisfaction were good that the Council should not ‘rest on its laurels’ and instead needed to continue to improve its perception of its services. Alderman Graham thanked officers for the level of service which they offered.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor W Irvine agreed that continuous improvement was important as was the trust in democratic institutions, adding that it was the public facing services which the public noticed the most.

(The Director of Environmental Services joined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 8.03pm)

Councillor Moore acknowledged that some of the responses were not what the Council would have wished them to be, adding that it should be noted that not everything was within the Council’s control. She also acknowledged that public institutions along with public figures were open to criticism however the Council needed to be in listening mode. The culture within the Council as an organisation needed to try to understand what was causing the dissatisfaction and consider how that could be addressed going forward.

At this stage the Director of Corporate Services stated that it was important to stress that while the overall satisfaction levels were less it was more a case of people moving from satisfied to neither satisfied or dissatisfied. He added that there were very low levels of people being dissatisfied and the approach to addressing that would be through the Council’s Service Plans.

At this stage the Chairman stated that he had been perturbed to read that Comber had come out as one of the worst areas both for satisfaction with the Council and as for a place to live. As such he sought some further clarity around that.

In response the Director agreed that did appear to be an outlier in relation to the sample which had been conducted. As such officers believed that a small additional piece of work needed to be carried out to consider the Comber DEA again.

Alderman McIlveen noted that the level of dissatisfaction was very small being only 2% and that he stated was very laudable. On reading the report it could clearly be seen were those levels of dissatisfaction were for example frustrations with the Household Recycling Centre's booking system and the Council's Planning service. As such he believed that the Council's public facing services could do better however added that overall the report was not a 'doom and gloom picture'.

The Chairman further noted that 91% of recipients had rated their experience with the Council as good or excellent an increase on previous figures.

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

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

11.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers

The Chairman advised that the item had been withdrawn.

NOTED.

11.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Hollywood

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that this Council:

Condemns Michelle O'Neill's participation in and endorsement of the memorandum agreed in Cardiff by Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, which calls upon the British Government to prepare for, plan and facilitate constitutional change in each jurisdiction;

Rejects the memorandum's assertion that "Westminster's time is coming to an end" and its attempt to present constitutional change as inevitable;

Affirms that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

Reaffirms the principle of consent, under which Northern Ireland's constitutional status can change only with the consent of a majority of its people;
Rejects any attempt by Sinn Féin to portray its objective of removing Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom as the position or collective voice of the people of Northern Ireland;

And accordingly calls upon the Chief Executive to write to the First Minister:

1. Expressing this Council's condemnation of her participation in and endorsement of the Cardiff memorandum;
2. Reminding her that the jurisdiction in which she holds office is Northern Ireland, whose present constitutional status is as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and
3. Reaffirming that Northern Ireland's constitutional future will be determined by the people of Northern Ireland in accordance with the principle of consent, and not by declarations agreed between Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

This Council further reaffirms its support for Northern Ireland's continued place within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The proposer, Councillor Wray, stated that he along with his colleague Councillor Hollywood brought this motion because the principle of consent around the constitutional status of Northern Ireland was something that impacted every resident of the Borough. He indicated that he did not wish to create division, adding that he had respect for those with other political beliefs and aspirations, and stated that everyone would note the tone of what he was going to say was not one of vectorial or provocation. Instead, it was around accepting democracy, and encouraging civic leaders to conduct themselves in a way that promoted the best interests of Northern Ireland and all its people.

When taking up office as First Minister Michelle O'Neill had said that she wanted to be a First Minister for all, yet last month she attended a summit in Cardiff to endorse a memorandum calling upon the British Government to prepare for, plan and facilitate constitutional change in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Electoral results pointed to the fact that she was speaking for a minority of people who shared her opinion. Her intervention was divisive, and driven by her own political ideology and not by the wishes or best interests of those she claimed to represent. As a Council Councillor Wray stated that he believed it was correct that it should be condemned.

He noted that Ms O'Neill had said Westminster's time was coming to an end and that change was 'inevitable'. He indicated that he would file that along with Martin McGuinness's claims of a United Ireland by 2016, Gerry Adam's prediction of a border poll by 2024, and Mary Lou McDonald's prediction of 2025. The only thing that was 'inevitable' was their everchanging timetable.

Continuing Councillor Wray stated that he completely respected that people in Northern Ireland, including people in the Borough, may not share his own views on Northern Ireland's position in the UK. Some of those people he added were personal friends and people he had deep regard for. Councillor Wray stated that he was happy to debate and discuss this, adding that furthermore, he would defend their right to have those views heard and expressed in a safe and shared space. His Party leader had offered to have such a debate with Michelle O'Neill, because he wanted to positively promote the Union and having spoken with him that morning he could confirm that he was still waiting on her reply. A debate was fine, it was healthy, but to

behave in this way, claiming to represent the people of Northern Ireland, was anything but fine.

In his day job Councillor Wray stated that he often hosted experts in post conflict societies from across the world, and at times he had also visited them. The Belfast Agreement and the peace process was lauded across the world and held as a model for good practice. At the heart of that agreement was the principle of consent and the resolution that Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. Unless it was the will of the citizens of Northern Ireland, that would remain the case. The actions of Ms. O'Neill and Ms. McDonald trampled over that. He stated that they were not speaking as the collective voice of the people of Northern Ireland, and therefore the Council was correct to call this out and reaffirm the principle of consent.

Councillor Wray noted that it was easy to talk about border polls, stating that he could spend his ten minutes just touching on some of the benefits of Northern Ireland remaining in the UK. The economic benefits, security benefits, mutual aid, and the National Health Service. That he stated would be much easier to do than spending time analysing the performance of every Stormont department and scrutinising what Committees were doing. It was also much easier talking about a border poll than analysing the performance of local Councils. Furthermore it was much easier talking about border polls than examining the intricacies of spending on schools, roads, policing, SEN provision and how to fix waste-water infrastructure. Those subject areas required work and intellectual investment. Continuing Councillor Wray recalled how a man had stopped him in the Kilcooley estate last week and said 'Tell our politicians at Stormont that we don't care about Bobby Sands statues in West Belfast, we don't care about people who want to speak Irish, and we don't want to see our politicians poke each other in the eye. We care about our schools, we care about our children being able to get a house, and we want to see our politicians actually delivering for us.'

Continuing Councillor Wray stated that the purpose of him bringing this motion was to say that this matter was settled. As stated in the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement this matter was settled. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was explicitly clear on the terms for calling a border poll. The Northern Ireland Secretary of State had the power to call a referendum ONLY if: *'……it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to become part of the United Kingdom'.* (Constitutional Issues, Annex A, Schedule 1, Paragraph 2). So, as such he encouraged everyone to get on with the work of delivering for everyone in Northern Ireland regardless of their background or cultural identity.

He believed it was fair, correct, and in the best interest of the people of this Borough that the Council write to the First Minister:

1. Expressing this Council's condemnation of her participation in and endorsement of the Cardiff memorandum;
2. Reminding her that the jurisdiction in which she holds office is Northern Ireland, whose present constitutional status is as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and

3. Reaffirming that Northern Ireland's constitutional future will be determined by the people of Northern Ireland in accordance with the principle of consent, and not by declarations agreed between Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

Councillor Wray thanked Members and stated that he was happy to take questions or make points of clarity when summing up.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Hollywood stated that he was very pleased to be able to support this very important motion and concurred with the points made by his colleague. He stated that there was something quite extraordinary about Sinn Fein's position as for generations it had lamented and continued to lament the partition of this island. Yet here they were enthusiastically advocating the effective partitioning of its neighbouring island into three separate nations. So effectively partition on this island was a historical injustice but was to be celebrated when it concerned Great Britain. The hypocrisy he stated was staggering, albeit unsurprising. Continuing he agreed that Ms. O'Neill was perfectly entitled to her political aspirations, however as First Minister she was required to recognise that Sinn Fein's ambitions did not represent the collective voice of Northern Ireland. The vast majority of which wished to live in peace without a constant sowing of division. He stated that no Memorandum signed in Cardiff would change that and Northern Ireland's constitutional future would be decided by the people of Northern Ireland. He added that everyone's background should be cherished.

Councillor Moore indicated that she would be speaking on her Party's position, stating that the Alliance was a cross community party and represented people from a broad range of backgrounds. She added that it did not define itself by the constitutional question and was firmly committed to the principle of consent. The Party also recognised the constitutional aspirations and commitment to parity of esteem. She recognised that the Ulster Unionist Party was perfectly entitled to challenge this but suggested that this was done on its own time. She suggested that the motion was party political positioning with a fundamental contradiction at its heart. While it criticised Ms. O'Neill promoting one constitutional position it was asking the Council to collectively endorse the other. As such she indicated that she found that deeply confusing adding that it was not the business of local Government. Regardless of any constitutional change the priority should be about making Northern Ireland work for everyone who called it home. Ratepayers expected the Council to focus its time on the provision of services and as such Councillor Moore stated that the Alliance Party would not support the Council being used to support one constitutional aspiration over another. She reiterated that her Party could not support the Motion which was reaffirming one position over another, adding that it had also been used to criticise the First Minister.

(Councillor Chambers joined the meeting online via Zoom at this stage – 8.22pm)

Councillor Boyle stated that it was no secret that Unionism in general, and for many reasons, was not in a good place, potentially united on this issue but that would inevitably fall apart as we approached the May 2027 Elections. He stated that he was not so sure that the break up of up of the UK was all that important in the context of a new Ireland. The SDLP did not share its assertion of support for Northern Ireland's continued place within the United Kingdom. Instead the SDLP

believed the future was best secured through an agreed new Ireland, brought about peacefully and democratically through the principle of consent.

Councillor Boyle commented that there was nothing inherently wrong with political parties or administrations engaging with others who shared similar political objectives or considerations of how constitutional change might be managed. The principle of consent was fundamental and Northern Ireland's constitutional status could only change with the consent of a majority of people here. A principle he stated that should be respected by everyone.

However Councillor Boyle stated that consent did not mean silence until the day a border poll was called. It did not prevent political parties advocating constitutional change, seeking to persuade people of their case or undertaking serious preparation for what that change could involve. In fact, he stated that if constitutional change was ever to command lasting legitimacy, the work had to begin well before any referendum. Councillor Boyle stated that was what the SDLP was currently doing. People deserved to understand what change would mean, how institutions and public services would operate and how the identities, rights and traditions of those who did not support change would be protected. Questions about future relationships mattered and cooperation between nations was important in this respect.

Continuing Councillor Boyle suggested that were a level of caution was added would be in treating the constitutional questions facing Ireland, Scotland and Wales as though they were the same. However they were not as Northern Ireland had a specific, internationally agreed and codified mechanism for constitutional change through the Good Friday Agreement and the principle of consent. Scotland and Wales shared a landmass and borders with England. Ireland was a separate island with an existing international border. A simultaneous or wholesale break-up of the United Kingdom would raise substantial practical and constitutional questions about how separate processes could operate alongside one another. Therefore he believed that it was reasonable to ask whether parallel constitutional processes were realistic rather than assuming that they were.

Councillor Boyle stated that the SDLP's objective was to build a new Ireland, not necessarily to work with others to dismantle the UK as they were different things. Its priority should therefore be the work that needed to happen on this island. There were significant conversations still to be had about health, education, the economy, public services, identity, rights and governance; about what a new Ireland would actually look like; and, critically, about how people who cherished their British identity could see themselves reflected and protected within it. Continuing he commented that the SDLP's objective was to build something better. An agreed new Ireland capable of attracting broad consent and sustaining that consent afterwards.

As such that was why he could not support the motion. The SDLP did not condemn the First Minister for participating in a discussion with parties elsewhere who shared similar constitutional objectives.

Councillor W Irvine rose in support of the motion stating that he agreed that the First Minister had a responsibility to represent all sections of the community, including those who supported Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom. As

such he believed what had taken place was purely a distraction tactic and was more about trying to improve Sinn Fein's polling ratings. Continuing he suggested that her time would have been better spent agreeing a budget to enable the delivery of public services. Councillor Irvine commented that it had provided a glimpse of what a new Ireland could look like, adding that confidence had never been as low across the Unionist community. Particularly as in recent weeks the First Minister appeared to have been encouraging law breaking with unlawful processions on the Garvaghy Road, Portadown. Anyone else involved in such actions would have been swiftly removed from office and he added that the rule of law needed to apply to everyone. Councillor Irvine suggested that a new Ireland would never be united and the principle of consent would remain.

Alderman McIlveen recognised that what had taken place in Cardiff had been a stunt with no value other than to gain headlines. The principle of consent was an international law and enshrined in many conflicts around the world. He stated that it was interesting to hear Councillor Boyle's comments around the SDLP respecting those who cherished their British heritage and identity, when at last month's Council he had accused Unionists of being half naked without a flag while clenching their fists. As such he welcomed the more measured tone during this debate. In respect of the First Minister attending an event such as this, he stated that it was not possible for her to do without the permission of the Deputy First Minister and it had been clear that she had not had that. Continuing Alderman McIlveen also commented that it was illuminating that the Alliance Party had taken a view on this as during the first referendum he recalled how the Alliance Party then had taken a constitutional view campaigning to stay within the United Kingdom. He remarked how much the Party had changed under Naomi Long clearly favouring Nationalism more than Unionism, clearly demonstrated at a debate which had taken the previous evening by the Northern Ireland Assembly. It came as no surprise to learn that they would not be supporting this motion as they would not want to be seen to be criticising Michelle O'Neill. He added that the DUP would be supporting the motion adding that once again the Alliance Party had exposed themselves for who they truly were in terms of supporting Nationalism.

Alderman Graham rose to express his support for the Motion from a personal point of view. He spoke of his time as Mayor in 2002 with the legacy North Down Borough Council during which he realised the debt of gratitude he had for his country and the United Kingdom. He spoke of his children who both had reason to be admitted and treated in hospital at a young age and had received care that he could not have afforded to pay for. Continuing he stated that he believed there was room in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom for people of goodwill to live together. He marvelled at how many people risked their lives to get into the United Kingdom by getting into a rubber boat and travelling across the English Channel. Yet here there were people trying to get out of the United Kingdom, something he did not understand. Alderman Grahan stated there were good neighbours on the other side of the border and he had no animosity for them adding that he loved them. By way of example he regaled how he had holidayed in Bantry and met a good friend from the Alliance Party, someone he considered a good friend. He believed there needed to be a stepping back adding that if there was continuous talk of a Border Poll there would be decades of uncertainty and trouble once that happened. The Alderman suggested that it was a pipe dream and needed to be put to bed. He recalled how in 1998 the

IRA had used the Belfast Agreement as a stepping stone to a United Ireland and now Sinn Fein had realised that was not going to happen they were getting uptight about that.

At this stage Alderman McRandal rose to challenge some of the predictable comments made by Alderman McIlveen. He reiterated what Councillor Moore had already said about the Alliance Party's position which was that it was constituently neutral and as such did not have a position on this. Continuing Alderman McRandal indicated that he could not support the Motion as on one hand the proposer was saying that he supported the principle of consent and on the other hand he was reaffirming that position. Those two things did not sit well together and that was why his Party was not supporting this. He also reminded Members how they had been lectured at Council last month about wasting Council's time on things which were not the business of Council. How the First Minister conducted herself was not the business of the Council and instead was the business of Stormont, adding however that he agreed that what she did was a stunt. However he also believed that this Motion was also a stunt and political posturing and those were the reasons his Party would not be supporting it.

Alderman Smith noted the Motions in recent months at a number of other Councils in Northern Ireland, support by Parties calling for a Border Poll. As such he was mindful that other Parties were bringing forward different versions of this. Personally he stated that he believed it was entirely legitimate for the matter to be discussed by the Committee as he did not think there was an issue which was more important or more impactful on the people of the Borough.

By way of summing up, Councillor Wray thanked Members for their comments. He referenced Councillor Moore's comments around her Party's position noting that she supported the principle of consent and supported everything with the exception of the last line. He stated however that the last line of his Motion reaffirmed the situation as it currently was particularly as the Belfast Agreement recognised there was agreement for Northern Ireland to remain as part of the United Kingdom. He therefore found that somewhat complexing. Continuing he welcomed that Councillor Boyle accepted the principle of consent adding that in his initial speech he had indicated that he had no issue with the matter being debated. Councillor Wray acknowledged the supportive comments of Councillor W Irvine, Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Graham. At this stage Councillor Wray expressed his thanks to Members for the tone in which the debate had been undertaken adding that it demonstrated that they could all have a sensible conversation together in the Council Chamber. As such he believed that Unionists should not be scared to have any form of debate on such matters. Continuing he expressed the belief that society should be shared and not sanitised and everyone should be proud of who they were and what they believed in. That he added was were he respectfully disagreed with the Alliance Party which had taken no position on this. The constitutional future of Northern Ireland would play into everyone's lives that lived in Northern Ireland. Finally he reiterated his thanks to Members for the tone of the debate adding that it had been worthwhile.

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

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, with 9 voting For, 0 voting Against and 5 Abstaining that this Council:

Condemns Michelle O'Neill's participation in and endorsement of the memorandum agreed in Cardiff by Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, which calls upon the British Government to prepare for, plan and facilitate constitutional change in each jurisdiction;

Rejects the memorandum's assertion that "Westminster's time is coming to an end" and its attempt to present constitutional change as inevitable;

Affirms that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

Reaffirms the principle of consent, under which Northern Ireland's constitutional status can change only with the consent of a majority of its people;
Rejects any attempt by Sinn Féin to portray its objective of removing Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom as the position or collective voice of the people of Northern Ireland;

And accordingly calls upon the Chief Executive to write to the First Minister:

1. Expressing this Council's condemnation of her participation in and endorsement of the Cardiff memorandum;
2. Reminding her that the jurisdiction in which she holds office is Northern Ireland, whose present constitutional status is as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and
3. Reaffirming that Northern Ireland's constitutional future will be determined by the people of Northern Ireland in accordance with the principle of consent, and not by declarations agreed between Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

This Council further reaffirms its support for Northern Ireland's continued place within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE – REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

13. REQUEST FOR LICENCE AT PARKWAY, COMBER
(Appendix VI)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE.

Council was asked to approve a request from St. Mary's Primary School to renew their licence for use of Council Land at Parkway, Comber.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

14. LAND AT AMBLESIDE (Appendix VII)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE.

Council was asked to approve the acceptance of an absolute prohibition on residential development.

The recommendation was adopted.

15. REQUEST FOR LICENCE – CONLIG COMMUNITY CENTRE NOTICEBOARD (Appendix VIII)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION – RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUISNESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

Council was asked to grant a Licence for a Notice Board at Conlig Community Centre

The recommendation was that the recommendation be approved.

16. REQUEST FOR LICENCE – BLOOMFIED PLAYING FIELDS
(Appendix IX)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - EXCEMPTION – RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

Council was asked to approve a request for a licence at Bloomfield Playing Fields.

The recommendation was adopted.

17. LAND AT BALLOO ROAD, BANGOR (Appendix X)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION – CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

Council was asked to consider a request in relation to land at Balloo Road, Bangor

The recommendation was adopted.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at this stage 8.56pm and resumed at 9.07pm.

NOTED.

(Having declared an interest in the next item Alderman McIlveen left the Council Chamber at this stage – 9.07pm)

18. WHITESPOTS – LAND ACQUISITIONS (Appendix XI)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE.

The recommendation was that Council agreed to the request.

The recommendation was to acquire plots of land required to enable the development of the Whitespots Country Park.

(The Director of Environmental Services left the meeting at this stage – 9.09pm)

(Alderman McIlveen re-entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 9.10pm)

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

19. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR PENSION VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS SERVICES

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

Council were asked to consider the award of a contract for pension AVC services.

The Council agreed the recommendation.

20. ABSENCE ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS PAPER
(Appendix XII)

**** IN CONFIDENCE ****

Council were asked to consider options for absence reporting.

It was agreed to continue with absence reporting to Council in committee, but to publish absence statistics on the Council website quarterly. It was also agreed that officers would consider options for commissioning a review of Council absence performance over the previous 4 years.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.36pm.

ITEM 8.4

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, 14 October at 7.00pm.

Present:

In the Chair:	Alderman Cummings	
Alderman:	Brooks (Zoom)	
Councillors:	Ashe (Zoom)	Kerr (Zoom)
	Boyle	McBurney
	Chambers (Zoom)	McClean
	Cochrane	McKee (Zoom)
	Douglas	Moore
	S Irvine (Zoom)	Quinn
	W Irvine	

Other Elected Members in Attendance: Alderman McRandal

Officers in Attendance: Director of Active and Healthy Communities (A Faulkner), Head of Community Services (A Barton), Head of Leisure (A Cozzo) and Democratic Services Officer (J Alexander)

Others in Attendance: Chris Kelly – NCLT (Zoom)

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

Councillor Chambers – Items 14 & 15.

NOTED.

Reports for Approval

3. EVAWAG TASK & FINISH GROUP
(Appendix I-II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, in June 2026, Council agreed Terms of Reference for an Ending Violene Against Women and Girls (EVAWAG) Task and Finish Group and appointed six elected members to produce a local Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

The evidence led local Strategy would be developed for 2027-2031 and aligned to The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2024-2031) launched by the Executive Office in 2024.

The local Strategy should identify gaps in EVAWG programmes in the Borough and analyse the information collected to identify any areas not receiving targeted information or support. This in-depth research should map local VAWG incidents, highlight gaps and high-risk areas to ensure that the EVAWG message was clear to all. The research should enable the full Action Plan for 2027-2028 to target resources to areas most at risk, while working closely with VAWG specialists to ensure the plan was relevant and sustainable.

Six members were appointed to the dedicated advisory and co-design forum in June 2026. The Group had no decision-making powers and reports through Active and Healthy Communities Committee.

The first meeting of the Group was held on 16 September 2026. At the meeting members agreed that it would be beneficial to invite relevant specialists onto the Group to assist with the preparation of the local Strategy. Their expertise in current and future needs was paramount in ensuring the Strategy was relevant to the Borough.

It was agreed that all members of the South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership should be members of the Task and Finish Group. Current SEDSVP membership includes staff from the following organisations:

- Ards and North Down Women’s Aid (Chair of SEDSVP)
- South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
- Kilcooley Women’s Centre
- PSNI
- Ards and North Down Borough Council (PCSP)
- Men’s Advisory Project (MAPNI)
- NI Housing Executive
- County Down Rural Community Network
- Assist NI

It was also noted that advice and guidance may be required from experts who were not members of SEDSVP and that the group would like to be able to call on relevant experts, if required in the development of the Strategy.

A specialist consultant had been appointed to assist with the production of the Strategy which should be complete by January 2027.

The EVAWAG Task and Finish Group requested approval to amend its Terms of Reference to include all members of the SEDSVP and to be granted approval to invite relevant experts to attend meetings of the Group as and when required to assist with the production of the Ards and North Down EVAWAG Strategy.

The Working Group would like to continue meeting after the production of the Strategy to enable it to monitor the targets and outcomes set but a further report on the this would come to members in due course, once work on the Strategy had been undertaken.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the amendment to the Terms of Reference of the EVAWAG Task and Finish Group.

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

Reports for Noting

4. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 680 - SWIMMING
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that Notice of Motion 680 was agreed by Council on 24 September 2025 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.

An officer report to the 15th June 2026 Committee provided an update as to the intended next steps by Leisure officers to work towards the completion of this NoM. As detailed in that report the following approach was implemented;

1. Baseline Audit of swimming lesson provision
    - 1a; An audit of swimming lesson programmes at the Borough's leisure centres and private pools

- 1b; Analysis of class capacity, utilisation, and any waiting lists
- 1c; Review of instructor resources and pool availability
- 1d; Overview of pricing structures and concessionary access

2. Baseline Audit of Water Safety Provision Review
   - 2a; An audit of current water safety and open water awareness programmes
   - 2b; Identification of partnership opportunities either within Council departments and / or other providers

3. Demand Assessment
   - Analysis of demand through engagement with schools, clubs, community stakeholders and swimming lesson providers

4. Analysis of findings
   - 4a; Identification of capacity shortfalls and service pressures
   - 4b; Assessment of barriers to access (cost, availability, location, timing)
   - 4c; Consideration of equality and inclusion factors

5. Development of Options
   - Based upon the results from points 1 – 4 the development of options that may inform a potential strategy.

Key findings

1. Baseline Audit of swimming lesson provision

1a. Children's swimming lesson provision within the Borough can be categorised into two groups: leisure centre provision and private pool provision.

Leisure Centre provision

Ards and North Down Borough Council had two Leisure centres with swimming pools.

Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC)

ABMWLC had two swimming pools used for swimming lessons. The Main Pool was 25 metres in length, had six lanes, and had a maximum depth of 2 metres. Two lanes had a permanent depth of 2 metres with a moveable wall separating the static lanes from the 4 lanes that had a movable floor, adjustable to a maximum depth of 2 metres to 0.8 metres to accommodate the various swimming lessons and other pool uses that take place. Access into the pool was via steps, hoist and a modern deck level platform to allow access without using steps or via a wheelchair.

The Minor Pool was 21 metres in length, has 4 lanes, and had a maximum depth of 2 metres. The Minor Pool was located separately from the Main Pool with its own private gallery which was purpose built for swimming lessons. The entire pool floor was adjustable between the depth of 2 metres and 0.8 metres to accommodate the

various swimming lessons and other pool uses that take place. Access to the pool was via steps, hoist and a modern deck level platform lift to allow all to participate.

ABMWLC taught the 'Waves Learn to Swim Programme', this programme was delivered 48-weeks of the year in 4 x 12-week terms, teaching participants from 3 months old up to adult lessons, the programme had a capacity of 1,750 spaces for swimmers to swim in weekly lessons.

Over the summer in addition to the weekly Waves learn to swim programme crash course weeks were delivered in a weekly 4 x 45-minute group lessons in format. These intensive lessons accommodate people that were unable to commit to the once-a-week lessons and enable a greater capacity equal to an additional 200 participants in these lessons.

In addition to the full Waves programme 20 private lessons were delivered weekly, priority was given to the most in need of these lessons i.e. swimmers with a disability or additional needs and this could cover anything including a fear of water, or participants already enrolled on swimming lessons that need additional support.

ABMWLC also delivered the majority of the Borough's School swimming lessons programme teaching 44 schools delivering lessons to 77 classes of children, 1,185 school children swim weekly during term time. This included 5 SEN schools and 1 adult day centre.

ABMWLC delivered pan-disability courses which included weekly swimming as part of this programme throughout the year.

Bangor Aurora Aquatic & Leisure Complex (Aurora)

Aurora had three main swimming pools. The Main Pool was a 10-lane, 50 metre FINA-standard pool used for lane swimming, club training sessions and long course galas. This pool could be divided 3 x 25 metre pools; pools 1 & 3 had movable floor depths to accommodate shallow water activated with the middle pool remaining as a 10 lane 25 metre pool 2-metre-deep pool.

Aurora taught a continuous year-round programme delivering the Swim Ireland Aquatic Academy; Learn to swim, Learn Lifesaving Skills, Learn Aquatic Skills for Life.

Similarly to ABMWLC, movable floors, pool platforms and hoists were available for ease of access to the pools for people with mobility issues.

Private Pool provision

From research it had been found that there were 10 private pools offering swimming lessons in the Borough. The information that could be gleaned, mainly from their booking sites, shows that there was availability on these programmes and that the operators tought classes with smaller capacity than the Council run swimming lessons.

1b. Analysis of class capacity, utilisation, costs and waiting lists

Class capacity

ABMWLC provided capacity for over 2,900 swimming lesson places per week through its Waves programme. This total comprises of the following;

- School swimming places capacity = 1,185
- Pre-school lesson in a Baby wave and Toddler wave programme = 500
- Ripples lessons for school age children in the minor pool = 800
- Ripple 6, Personal Survival and Stroke & stamina classes delivered in deep water in the gala pool = 375
- beginners, improver, and advanced learn to swim lesson spaces = 75

Aurora providedd capacity for over 3,000 swimming lesson places per week through its various programmes. This total comprises of the following;

- 2,180 places in the weekly Swim Ireland lessons these included;
    - Adult with Child Lessons
    - Pre-School Swimming Lessons
    - Children's Swimming Lessons
    - Teenage Swimming Lessons
    - Adult Swimming Lessons

The remainder of the weekly spaces, approximately 800, were part of the following classes School Swimming Lessons Programme attended by 22 schools.

1b. Utilisation

Swimming was a statutory component of the Northern Ireland Physical Education curriculum at Key Stage 2 (P5-P7), ensuring all children had the opportunity to develop basic swimming and water safety skills during their primary education. Furthermore, although swimming was not a compulsory element of the Key Stage 3 (Years 8-10) curriculum Physical Education itself remained a statutory subject and many schools continue to use swimming as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Based on the this, it was reasonable to expect that the vast majority of school children through either Key Stage 2 and/or 3 have the opportunity to participate in swimming lessons. It was worth noting that several schools using either ABMWLC or Aurora avail of swimming lessons during the Key Stage 1 (P3 – P4) further giving confidence that the majority of children had access to swimming lessons during their Key Stages.

ABMWLC facilitated 44 schools swimming lessons on a weekly basis with these schools ranging from locations in Newtownards, Holywood, Comber, and several from the lower peninsula (Kircubbin, Portaferry, Portavogie, and Greyabbey for example).

Aurora facilitated 22 schools swimming lessons on a weekly basis with these schools ranging from locations in Bangor, Holywood, and the wider North Down part

of the Borough. The lesson programmes at both ABMWLC and Aurora operated at between 80-90% capacity depending on time of year

Analysis of unmet demand through waiting lists

The swimming lesson software used by both ABMWLC and Aurora helped manage waiting lists on both sites. This software indicated that current swimming lesson provision was sufficient to meet demand, as spaces remain available across the majority of classes and ability levels. There was a managed waiting list function on the software which was primarily used so a parent / guardian could be notified if a space opened in a class at their preferred day time. Both centres adjust their timetables according to demand i.e. additional beginner level spaces at the more popular entry times between September and January.

1c. Review of instructor resources and pool availability

Staffing had previously been a limiting factor in the delivery of large swimming lesson programmes however both ABMWLC and Aurora had on site Swim Instructors and staffing structures that supported the delivery of both programmes. Pool availability in both Centres during ‘peak’ swimming lesson time may be a limiting factor, however this was not deemed to be significantly prohibitive to customers.

1d. Cost of Swimming lessons

Leisure officers and NCLT staff had sought to harmonise swimming lesson and casual swimming prices where possible, while recognising differences in class sizes, pool facilities and operating models. There was alignment in several swimming prices between the two Centres, for example adult, concession, schools, and under 4’s prices are all the same.

It should be noted that it was challenging to find the same information in section 1 from the private pool operators. As before, research indicated that the majority of private pool operators had capacity within their programmes albeit their pools tend to be smaller in size, facilitate a smaller number of spaces on each class, and were generally independently operated and therefore these lessons tended to be more expensive than Council operated swimming lessons.

2. Baseline Audit of Water Safety Provision Review

Water safety were elements of both ABMWLC and Aurora’s swimming lesson programmes and school learn to swim programmes. ABMWLC teaches three levels of personal Survival as part of their Waves programme and Aurora offer Rookie Lifeguard programmes. Both Centres deliver National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) training and courses, and both deliver the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) prevention of drowning programme to the schools.

2a. Open Water Safety programmes

Two established open-water safety programmes currently had a connection to the Council. The Get Wet Stay Safe programme delivered practical open-water safety sessions from Council-managed coastal sites including Donaghadee, Millisle, Crawfordsburn and Ballywalter. The RNLI and Swim Ulster Open Water Safety

education initiatives were promoted by the Council and aim to support the safe use of these coastal assets. Collectively, these programmes help improve participant awareness of open-water risks, self-rescue techniques and safe participation in open water activities.

In addition to Council-supported initiatives, the Borough benefits from the presence of other established open-water safety programmes operating within the Borough. Examples included the Bangor-based Safer Waters charity which provided safety boat support and accredited training for water users, and the nationally recognised programmes delivered by RLSS UK, which develop competencies in water safety, rescue and risk management.

2b. Identification of partnership opportunities

It was hoped that the open water safety programmes would encourage and enable greater participation in open water activities and therefore contribute towards wider health, wellbeing and active lifestyle objectives in the Borough's 'Blue Spaces' aligned the KPIs from the Getting Active, Staying Active Leisure Strategy 2025 – 2034. However, given the Borough's extensive coastline and growing participation in open water activities there may be opportunities for the Council to further develop partnerships with established organisations including Get Wet Stay Safe, RNLI, Swim Ulster, RLSS UK and Safer Waters. Such partnerships could support the delivery of open water safety education, open-water awareness training, rescue skills, and community engagement initiatives.

Partnership opportunities were being discussed between Leisure Services and Environmental Health officers exploring how potentially Water Safety could be incorporated into the 2027 BeeSafe campaign. Earlier this year the campaign had a reach of over 1,700 P7 children from over 40 different schools in the Borough.

Demand Assessment

The Borough had approximately 44 primary schools and 22 post-primary and specialist educational establishments as detailed in 1b, every one of these schools was accommodated in one of the Centres swimming lesson programmes. It was worth noting that three schools from Dundonald which was outside the Borough were also accommodated in ABMWLC.

Demand for swimming lessons outside the school swimming programme fluctuated as participants progress at different rates, requiring periodic adjustments to capacity and lesson provision. However, from a review of the software used at both ABMWLC and Aurora it was clear that both Centres operated at between 80% and 90% of their total swimming lesson capacity. This was a positive percentage indicating cost, timing, locations, and standard of instruction were all well received by customers. Additionally, those percentages indicate that demand was being meet whilst some capacity continues to exist, this was further evidenced by the fact that waiting lists were only used as a mechanism to change a child's swimming lesson to a preferred day or time.

While it was reasonable to assume that some of the estimated 10-20% of children not attending swimming lessons at either centre were enrolled in lessons at private pools, this could not be verified through the limitations of the research undertaken.

Analysis of Findings

4a. Identification of capacity shortfalls and service pressures

Through the monitoring of capacity levels and waiting lists neither Centre was demonstrating a capacity shortfall. It should however be noted that in response to evolving trends in service pressures, for example an increased demand for weekend swimming lessons, both Centres had evolved their swimming lesson programmes to meet this demand as much as feasibly possible.

4b. Assessment of barriers to access (cost, availability, location, timing)

The ability for a child to participate in swimming lessons was influenced by a range of potential barriers beyond the cost of the lessons alone. While swimming lesson fees may be relatively affordable, the total cost to families and schools could be significantly higher when transport expenses and the duration required to achieve swimming competency were considered.

Whilst not specific to children's swimming lessons, the extensive engagement process undertaken as part of the development of the Leisure Strategy identified cost as a key barrier to participation, with both activity charges and transport costs affecting access. This may be evidenced by the fact that there appeared to be an increase in the number of local schools walking their pupils to the Centres for their swimming lessons.

Mentioned previously within this report was the harmonisation of pricing between ABMWLC and Aurora swimming activities. While full harmonisation between ABMWLC and Aurora's swimming and swimming lesson activities was challenging, efforts to align pricing and minimise annual price increases whilst reflecting inflation and rising operating costs helped reduce affordability barriers for residents as far as feasible.

Location also presented challenges whereby residents living in rural communities and areas of deprivation often experience additional barriers due to distance from facilities and the associated travel costs. These groups may be among those who would benefit most from increased participation in swimming and physical activity but may have the least ability to access opportunities.

Future actions identified through the Leisure Strategy include targeted engagement within rural communities and areas of deprivation to raise awareness of leisure opportunities and support participation. Whilst the development of additional swimming facilities within the peninsula or other areas within the Borough was considered unlikely, there may be opportunities to improve accessibility for example through engagement with transport providers.

The swimming lesson timetable was reviewed quarterly to respond to trends in capacity, participation levels and customer feedback, ensuring swimming lesson provision was optimised to maximise opportunities for children to participate.

4c. Consideration of equality and inclusion factors

ABMWLC and Aurora had implemented a range of measures to improve accessibility to swimming pools and lessons including programmes for different age groups, specialist disability provision, accessible equipment, SEN sessions and lessons, and initiatives aimed at supporting participation amongst those minority groups who may otherwise be unable to participate in swimming lesson or casual swimming opportunities. Those positive inclusions to swimming facilities and lesson programmes had proved popular and were included in the review process of both Centre's swimming timetables.

5. Development of Options Based upon the findings from points 1 – 4 the development of potential options informing a strategy.

Members would be aware that the second element of this Notice of Motion requested the development of a strategy to ensure that no child was denied access to swimming lessons or water safety programmes due to cost or capacity constraints.

The evidence gathered through the review did not indicate a requirement for a swimming strategy specific to Ards and North Down Borough. Current swimming lesson provision appeared sufficient to meet demand, with no significant capacity shortfalls identified. While opportunities existed to enhance participation and water safety initiatives, many of the challenges identified were regional in nature and may be more effectively addressed through a coordinated Northern Ireland-wide approach involving councils, schools, governing bodies and other key stakeholders.

Furthermore, the Council's Leisure Strategy already provided the strategic framework through which participation in physical activity, health and wellbeing outcomes, accessibility and inclusion could be advanced. Swimming provision and water safety initiatives could therefore continue to be considered and developed within the broader objectives and delivery plans of the Leisure Strategy, removing the need for a separate Borough-specific swimming strategy.

Attendance at the Swimming for Life: A Call to Action for Northern Ireland event, held at Stormont Parliament Buildings on 21 September 2026, reinforced that position. Discussions highlighted a number of province-wide issues affecting swimming participation, including transport costs, reporting arrangements and accessibility challenges. The event also identified opportunities for collaborative working between Councils, the Education Authority, the Department of Education and community partners to remove barriers to swimming education and improve access for all children.

Summary

The review found that current swimming lesson provision within Ards and North Down Borough was meeting demand and that no significant capacity shortfalls existed. While some barriers to participation remained, those related primarily to wider issues such as transport, geography and affordability rather than a lack of swimming lesson capacity.

Consequently, the evidence did not support the development of a standalone swimming strategy for the Borough at this time. Instead, swimming participation, accessibility and water safety initiatives could continue to be progressed through the Council's Leisure Strategy and associated action plans, while wider systemic issues were more appropriately addressed through regional partnership working involving Councils, schools, governing bodies, the Education Authority, the Department of Education and other relevant stakeholders.

Officers would continue to monitor swimming lesson provision and participation levels across the Borough and contribute to regional discussions and collaborative initiatives arising from the Swimming for Life event and other sector-wide forums. Based on the findings of this review, officers considered this to be the most proportionate and effective course of action.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor Cochrane began by thanking Anton Cozzo and his predecessor for their work regarding the full analysis and assessment of swimming lesson provision. He welcomed the harmonisation between the Ards Blair Mayne centre and other leisure centres in terms of swimming lesson pricing which addressed any inequalities in swimming lesson provision, and the continuation of the open water safety initiatives.

Councillor Boyle advised that he found the report very informative and echoed Councillor Cochrane's statement regarding the continuation of the open water safety initiatives.

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

5. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

(Appendix IV-V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing the Community Development Annual Report provided Members with an overview of the key areas of delivery, outcomes achieved, emerging issues and proposed next steps.

The Community Development Section delivered a broad range of direct provision, partnership support, grant funding and capacity-building activity across Ards and North Down. That included play clubs, activities for adults with additional needs, over 50s provision, summer schemes, community festivals, Christmas festivals, Neighbourhood Renewal, Youth Voice, support to the three Community Networks through Service Level Agreements, Community Advice Ards and North Down, social supermarket provision and wider support to community and voluntary organisations.

Context

The work of the Community Development Section was delivered in line with the current Community Development Strategy, "The Game Plan", which structured activity under six agreed outcomes. During 2025-2026, the Section continued to

support communities to connect, engage, develop skills, access funding, address local need and deliver services within local neighbourhoods.

Community Development worked closely with other Council services, including those within Community and Culture, to avoid duplication, support joined-up delivery and maximise the impact of available resources. The Annual Report demonstrated the breadth of that work and evidenced the continued role of Community Development in enabling strong, inclusive and sustainable communities across the Borough.

Overview

Key delivery highlights during the reporting period included partnership working through the Community Networks, continued support for advice services, facilitation of Neighbourhood Renewal activity, delivery of direct provision clubs and summer schemes, volunteering recognition, community training, information sharing through the Community Information Register and administration of a significant range of grant programmes.

What's New in 2025-2026

- Consultation and development of a 10-year Community Strategy, September 2026
- Pilot of Stay Connected Stay Active, in partnership with Community Halls
- Pilot of Connecting Families
- Pilot of Young Leader programme
- International Women's Day

Grants

During the reporting period, Community Development administered 150 individual grant awards. Event-based grant programmes contributed to the delivery of activities and festivals attended by 67,272 participants across the Borough. Demand for grant funding remained high and available budgets were not sufficient to provide full funding to all successful applicants across some schemes. Officers continued to support groups to identify alternative sources of funding and make use of third-party funding opportunities.

Community information and capacity building

The Community Development weekly information email continued to provide a valuable route for sharing Council grants, third-party grants and community information. The team continued to expand membership of the Community Development database to increase access to funding and community information, provide targeted support and capacity-building opportunities to improve the success rate of community groups applying for third-party funding and use survey feedback to shape future information sharing, advice and support for community and voluntary organisations.

Programmes

Community Development direct provision remained well used and valued by participants. Term-time programmes, including play clubs, the over 50s club and the Hub additional needs disco, recorded 3,665 attendances. Monitoring information and

participant feedback demonstrated that those programmes supported social connection, confidence, inclusion, wellbeing, independence and skills development. The team would continue to explore opportunities to establish or strengthen community delivery partnerships, review programme delivery models and consider how provision could be extended or adapted to meet needs across the Borough.

Summer scheme provision continued to experience high demand. In 2025, 1,024 places were provided across Council-led, community partner-led and facilitator-led delivery. The introduction of an additional Council-led scheme in Comber and a facilitator-led pilot in Millisle provided useful learning on alternative delivery models and cost-effective approaches to increasing access.

Mae Murray Accessible Beach Initiative

The Mae Murray Accessible Beach Initiative at Groomsport continued to provide inclusive beach access through the specialist equipment loan scheme. The 2025 season marked the fourth anniversary of the programme and the wider inclusive beach, and family fun days attracted more than 1,962 people. The team would continue partnership working with the Mae Murray Foundation to identify barriers to participation, promote the scheme, review operational arrangements and consider options to improve usage where feasible.

Stay Connected, Stay Active

The Stay Connected, Stay Active pilot engaged 83 participants aged 65 and over through a six-week programme delivered across five Council community centres. The programme combined light physical activity with social time and information sessions delivered by partner organisations. Feedback from participants highlighted the importance of opportunities to connect with others, improve wellbeing and access local support.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the Community Development Annual Report.

Councillor Douglas remarked on the positivity of the report and the worthwhile activities taking place across the Borough year after year, and thanked the officers, community teams and volunteers for the ongoing commitment to the residents of the Borough – children, teenagers, adults and seniors. She highlighted firstly the training taking place including safeguarding, first aid and marshal training, and secondly, the great success of the summer schemes which filled all 768 places. The Councillor offered her congratulations to all the women who received recognition at the International Women's Day event in March, and particularly Rhonda McIlveen of the District Community Association who received an accreditation. She noted the positive comments from attendees, some of which were very moving. As the pilot scheme had been extremely successful, Councillor Douglas asked if it could be made a permanent programme.

The Head of Community Services advised that her team was looking at the action plan for the coming year, with particular focus on a pilot scheme for over 50s which would encompass the over 65s. They would take learnings from this year's pilot scheme with a view to perhaps combining it with the over 50s scheme.

Councillor Moore echoed Councillor Douglas' comments and remarked that the depth and breadth of what the funding delivered was incredible. In particular, she noted the work of Community Advice Ards & North Down which was addressing inequalities and providing a very high quality of advice, governance of the organisation and training to their advisors.

Councillor W Irvine thanked the officers for a very detailed report. He noted that funding through the Department for Communities had been delayed due to the lack of an Executive Budget, resulting in some groups not receiving full funding. He asked if any plans were in place to ensure that established community associations could function and give the necessary support to the people in their areas.

The Head of Community Services advised that, in terms of the Department for Communities Community Support Programme, the Council had only received Quarters 1-3 and were awaiting Quarter 4. Community festival funds had also been affected but letters of offer had been sent out to groups. In terms of the community associations and their running costs, she advised of a successful meeting earlier in the week and assured the Committee that the Communities Team would be looking at those costs and how to apportion existing funds. In addition, the Communities Team was working with all the communities groups to ensure that they could pre-empt the receipt and apportioning of funding.

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

6. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 697 – MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

(Appendix VI-VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, at the Council meeting on 11 February 2026, Members agreed Notice of Motion 697 requesting that the Council write to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and the Minister for Communities in relation to delays experienced by people living with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) in accessing home adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process. The Notice of Motion sought details of current timescales for completion of adaptations for people living with MND and requested consideration of a fast-track process for those vital and time-sensitive works.

Correspondence was issued to the NIHE and the Minister for Communities on 21 May 2026, seeking information on the time taken to deliver DFG-funded adaptations for people living with MND and asking that urgent consideration be given to arrangements that would allow such cases to be progressed more quickly.

A response dated 15 June 2026 was received from Catherine McFarland, Interim Chief Executive of the NIHE, and was attached at Appendix 1. The response acknowledged the significant challenges faced by people with progressive and life-limiting conditions and recognised the importance of delivering timely home adaptations that support safety, independence and dignity.

The NIHE advised that it did not hold waiting lists for DFGs by medical diagnosis and therefore did not record waiting times specifically for people living with MND. Instead, cases progressed through a structured nine-stage process from receipt of the Occupational Therapist recommendation through to final payment of grant aid.

The NIHE also advised that it was working with the Department for Communities and the Department of Health on the Review of Administered Grants, including DFGs. The review was focused on improving access to grant funding, creating a more user-friendly customer journey and using customer feedback to inform service improvement.

NIHE advised that it was not currently in a position to introduce a fast-track process based solely on a specific medical diagnosis. However, it acknowledged the need for a more responsive approach in urgent or complex cases and confirmed that it was working with Health and Social Care Trust Occupational Therapy services to pilot an accelerated process for exceptional cases where urgency was critical.

A response dated 19 June 2026 was received from the Department for Communities and was attached at Appendix 2. The Department confirmed that it was working with the Department of Health and the NIHE on a wider review of Private Sector Grants, aimed at improving the efficiency of the grants process and reducing waiting times. Further proposals to improve the grants process were expected to be brought forward for public consultation in 2026.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the responses received from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department for Communities.

Councillor Douglas remarked that she was content to note the responses received from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department for Communities by way of progressing concerns regarding waiting times for adaptations, particularly for those with progressive and life-limiting conditions such as Motor-Neurone Disease. She welcomed the collaboration between the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the HSC Occupational Therapy Service to pilot and accelerate a process for exceptional cases where urgency is critical. She reminded the Committee that she had brought this Notice of Motion with Alderman Cummings earlier in 2026 regarding the time delay in having adaptations made and the resultant added stress for those living with Motor Neurone Disease and their families. She was keen to support and assist in this regard, given her personal family experience.

Councillor McBurney advised that, in her professional working life, she worked with people with long-term neurological conditions and she saw the impact caused by lack of support and services. She welcomed Council’s action in stepping forward and speaking up for this particular community and commended Councillor Douglas for bringing the Motion forward.

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

7. PCSP ANNUAL REPORT

(Appendix IX-X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that The Code of Practice for the Exercise and Functions of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) stated that Council must receive a copy of the PCSP Annual report each year.

The report included general information on the exercise of functions, both in terms of policing and community safety.

The PCSP Annual report for 2025 – 2026 which was approved by PCSP at its meeting held on 14th September 2026, was attached in Appendix 1.

Summary
A summary of achievements from the report was presented below;

Strategic Priority 1: Effective Engagement, Consultation and Awareness

- Reached over 28,000 residents through social media, communications and awareness campaigns.
- Delivered 9 community consultation events across all DEAs to inform the PCSP Action Plan and Strategic Review.
- Facilitated regular multi-agency engagement through 36 partnership meetings addressing anti-social behaviour and community safety issues.
- Supported youth participation through Youth Voice, engaging 23 young people and developing leadership, advocacy and citizenship skills.

Strategic Priority 2: Improving Community Safety

- Engaged over 3,000 children and young people in programmes addressing anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, personal safety and positive decision-making.
- Delivered 135 Voluntary Safety Warden patrols and targeted interventions in ASB hotspot areas.
- Secured 137 homes through the 4-Tier Home Secure Scheme, supporting vulnerable residents and victims of crime and domestic abuse.
- Removed 11,642 drug items through RAPID Bin initiatives and provided substance misuse interventions to over 1,200 young people.
- Delivered hate crime, domestic abuse and cyber safety programmes, improving awareness, support and access to services.
- Installed 6 Speed Indicator Devices and delivered road safety initiatives reaching over 2,500 residents and 700+ sixth-form students.

Strategic Priority 3: Building Confidence in Policing

- Held 4 Policing Committee meetings and a public meeting involving PSNI and local communities.
- Delivered community engagement initiatives with PSNI, including Operation Safer Season, engaging over 200 local residents.
- Maintained a Neighbourhood Watch network covering 1,628 households across the Borough.

- Participants reported increased awareness of policing priorities and greater confidence in engaging with PSNI.

Financial Performance

- Total expenditure of £323,413 against a budget of £330,333, representing 98% budget utilisation.
- Investment focused on community safety, crime prevention, youth engagement, road safety, vulnerability reduction and confidence in policing.

Headline Achievements

- 28,000+ residents reached through awareness and engagement activity.
- 3,000+ young people engaged in prevention and education programmes.
- 137 homes secured through crime prevention measures.
- 11,642 drugs disposed of safely through RAPID Bins.
- 135 safety patrols completed by community wardens.
- 1,628 households supported through Neighbourhood Watch.
- 98% of available funding invested in local community safety outcomes

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

Councillor Moore welcomed this positive report and advised that she had been a member of PCSP for several years and that the PCSP comprised community representatives from across the Borough, with diverse voices and different perspectives which had resulted in an incredibly useful model for delivering such projects. She noted that PCSP had addressed some very tough issues such as road safety and the EVAWAG agenda. The Councillor advised of an earlier public meeting with the Education Authority and a group of young people. It was encouraging to hear the thoughts of the young people.

Councillor Boyle remarked that, although PCSP purported to be inclusive, he was of the opinion that sections of the community within the Borough were actually excluded.

Councillor W Irvine recognised the work that PCSP had done over the past year and the good work of Community Officers who had built good relationships within the community. He noted that it would be a shame if that were to stop because of decisions made at a higher level. He urged everyone to remain calm and lawful at this time of increased tension due to the banning of a lawful procession along the Garvaghy Road

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

8. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS UPDATE Q2 2026/27

(Appendix XI-XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, on 26 August 2015, Council delegated authority to the

Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £90,000 had been allocated within the 2026/2027 revenue budget for this purpose.

During July, August & September (Q2 2026/27), the Forum received a total of 117 applications: (4 Anniversary, 7 Coach Education, 22 Goldcards, 1 Seeding and 83 Individual Travel/Accommodation).

A summary of the **102 successful** applications was detailed in the attached 2026/27 Successful Anniversary, Coach Education, Goldcard, Seeding and Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

2026/27 Budget £90,000	Annual Budget	Awarded to Date	Committed Funding Awarded in Q2	**Remaining Budget**
Anniversary	£3,000.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	**£1,500.00**
Coach Education	£2,500.00	£1,787.50	£1,037.50	**£712.50**
Equipment	£28,000.00	£7,814.21	£0.00	**£20,185.79**
Events	£13,000.00	£11,345.46	£0.00	**£1,654.54**
Seeding	£2,000	£924.00	£924.00	**£1,076.00**
Travel and Accommodation	£38,500.00	£30,756.64	£16,066.15	**£7,743.36**
Discretionary	£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	**£1,000.00**
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£2,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	**£2,000.00**
17 Goldcards Awarded in Q2 2026 **(24 Goldcards in total during Q1 and Q2 2026/27)**				

Budget remaining

Please note that the following budget remaining breakdown was subject to receipt of all outstanding information required to process payments, such as proof of travel, accommodation or equipment purchases. In the rare event that committed funding is not awarded, the budget would be returned to the relevant funding stream.

The remaining budget for Anniversary of **£1,500** was based on a proposed award for Q2 of **£1,500.**

The remaining budget for Coach Education of **£712.50** was based on a proposed award for Q2 of **£1,037.50.**

The remaining budget for Seeding of **£1,076.00** was based on a proposed award for Q2 of **£924.00**

The remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£7,743.36** was based on a proposed award for Q2 of **£16,066.15.**

Remaining budget allocations not awarded during Q2:

- Equipment Fund: **£20,185.79**
- Events Fund: **£1,654.54**
- Discretionary Fund: **£1,000.00**
- Schools/Sports Club Pathway **£2,000.00**

The remaining budget for 2026/27 is **£35,872.19** (i.e. 60% of the 2026/27 budget has been committed).

The report outlined the Q2 (July – September 2026 inclusively) of grants that had been administered and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum and was for noting purposes only. That was in line with the Council's Grant Policy and the Council ratifying delegated authority to the Sports Forum on 12th November 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

Councillor Boyle commended the excellent reports from officers and congratulated the Sports Development Team and the administrator who processed 285 applications over two quarters. He voiced his appreciation for the additional funding received which, at £80,000, was the highest ever received by the Forum which would help them with their work.

Councillor W Irvine commented that the previous week's Sports Forum meeting had been well attended and that there were 95 groups within the Forum. He noted that the new Sports Development Officer would continue the good work of his predecessor and that the funding would benefit athletes and clubs greatly.

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

9. CORRESPONDENCE FROM EVAWAG – REPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION 723

(Appendix XVIII-XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Notice of Motion 723 was agreed by Council in June 2026.

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 was primarily resourced to support prevention activity, rather than provision of services. While investment in prevention was essential, it was 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 did not cover the cost of one additional member of staff.

Secondly, the letter should propose the establishment of a dedicated Emergency Fund in Northern Ireland to support women who were fleeing domestic abuse but faced immediate financial barriers to accessing safety. Many women, particularly those who were working or had limited access to benefits, were 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 were often forced to remain in unsafe environments or face homelessness. The fund would provide flexible, rapid financial assistance to cover emergency costs, refuge stays, and access to long-term housing, ensuring that no woman was prevented from leaving an abusive situation due to a lack of financial resources.

Progress Update
Letters were sent to Minister for Communities and The Executive Office on 16th September 2026, attached as Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

A response had been received from Geraldine Fee, Director of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Team and was attached at Appendix 3.

A further response was awaited from the Minister for Communities and would be reported back to the Committee once received.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the correspondence.

Councillor McKee noted the correspondence and that the proposer and seconder of that Motion were disappointed by the response from the Executive Office and Department Heads. It appeared that they had not understood what was being requested of them and the importance of funding refuges for people who were suffering violence in their own homes.

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

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

10.1 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN MCRANDAL AND COUNCILLOR QUINN

That this Council acknowledges the financial costs that it incurs in dealing with and disposing of litter and in seeking to take enforcement action. That this Council acknowledges that it needs to take further action to positively influence the attitude of some people towards littering. This Council therefore resolves to consider what additional actions it can reasonably take both to inform the public about the various harms that result from littering and to seek to change people's attitudes towards littering.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Quinn, that the Notice of Motion, be adopted.

Alderman McRandal raised the issue of litter, particularly during good spells of weather in places such as Seapark, Helen's Bay and Ballyholme. Visitors brought with them all manner of food, drinks and disposable barbeques and left them behind.

Most people acted responsibly but it was left to Council staff and volunteers to clear the litter left by the irresponsible visitors. Waste disposal was a major expense for ratepayers and clearing litter was a significant element of that expense. Alderman McRandal advised that he had been regularly cleaning beaches for over five years and, in that time, he had seen a positive change in people's attitudes towards litter in general, with many taking the view that it was each person's responsibility to dispose of their own litter properly. He remarked that Council's role in terms of litter management was clearing the litter at the expense of ratepayers, enforcement by way of fines which did not appear to reduce littering and influencing behaviours in education. A little of that was done through Project Ella where beach cleans and beach education was undertaken with schools.

However, this Notice of Motion was to propose more serious action to be taken by way of partnership and collaboration with Government departments, other councils and interested parties; to look at best practice elsewhere and implement it within the Borough. He asked that consideration be given to implementing a formal Litter Action Plan to bring focus to the issue. The only expense would be officers' time. Litter was a significant and largely unnecessary expense to the Borough's ratepayers and vexes many residents and visitors, particularly when it is concentrated around the Borough's beauty spots during good weather.

Councillor Quinn supported the Motion and commented that, due to climate change and global warming, summers were likely to become longer and hotter and the requested report would be invaluable.

Councillor Chambers supported the Motion as he abhorred litter as much as dog fouling and believed that harsher penalties and education may help reduce the problem. He acknowledged that changing attitudes and behaviours would not happen overnight and so a long-term approach in terms of education and consistent

messaging would be essential. He remarked that, during a visit to Denmark and Sweden 20 years ago to watch a football match, he had noticed the cleanliness of the city centres and the locals taking empty cans off football supporters. He learned that there was a financial incentive for returning containers for recycling. In South Korea and Japan, football supporters cleaned up the stadiums after football matches and the teams left the changing rooms clean and tidy. That evidenced how policy could positively change behaviours. The Council needed to move beyond cleaning up after people to focusing on building a culture where people took pride in their surroundings. People needed to understand that it was everyone's responsibility to keep their communities clean.

Councillor Boyle supported the Motion and remarked that litter was a greater problem in some areas of the Borough than others, largely because of tourism as the more popular areas would naturally accumulate more litter. Portaferry was popular with visitors, and he paid tribute to the Council workers who always kept it clean. He remarked that when he ran his food business, he cleaned the external area after closing time to ensure that his business did not cause littering. Broughshane was another example where business owners cleaned the area outside their businesses every day before opening time. It was a matter of pride. He stated that he hoped for some new ideas from the officers – something that everyone could buy into.

Councillor McKee supported the Motion and remarked that he welcomed anything that Council could do to inject new ideas and new initiatives from elsewhere to address the problem. The Council should not lose sight of the importance of education in general and should continue to support and expand Project Ella and whatever action plan comes from the report.

Councillor Brooks supported the Motion and noted that, like Councillor Boyle, he had been in the food industry and took great pride in his business and the area around it. Many businesses were not showing any pride in their surroundings; some allowed weeds to grow out of their doorsteps. The Council should encourage local businesses to keep their storefronts clean and tidy.

Councillor McClean supported the Motion and noted that it complemented his Motion regarding dog fouling. He recognised the limitation of trying to change behaviours but stated that he would like to see more rigorous action and signs that littering may result in prosecution. His colleague, Michelle McIlveen, had raised a question in the Assembly about a Northern Ireland-side litter strategy but it was not a priority for the Minister in this mandate. He advised that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had been asked in May to detail a proposed timeline on the delivery of a litter strategy across Northern Ireland. The Minister had responded that he and his department were and remained committed to developing Northern Ireland's first litter strategy, but due to resource constraints and a reprioritisation of departmental targets and objectives in line with identified priorities, work on the development of the litter strategy had been paused. He asserted that if Councils, Government Departments and MLAs focused on bins, litter, dog fouling and potholes, much of the negative attitude toward them would dissolve. The Council was trying to rejuvenate the high street and entice businesses into the Borough but it felt like a losing battle,

so anything that could be done to give officers the power and the authority to deal effectively with the issue would be welcome.

Alderman McRandal thanked Committee members for their support for the Motion and noted their various comments. He noted that he would like to see a cohesive approach to bins, disposal and littering. He hoped a Deposit Return Scheme would be in place in the near future together with effective, targeted messaging to the public.

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

10.2 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DOUGLAS AND ALDERMAN CUMMINGS

That officers are tasked with engaging with boxing clubs and groups in Comber to explore how the Council can assist those clubs and groups and encourage growth of the sport in the town and further that officers look at a feasibility study into the development of the sport.

Proposed by Councillor Douglas, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the Notice of Motion, be adopted.

As the Chairman, Alderman Cummings was seconding this Motion, Councillor Cochrane (deputy Mayor), took the Chair.

Councillor Douglas advised the Committee that Gloveworks Boxing Club opened their doors in the Community Centre Parkway in Cumber back in October 2019. It was an inclusive, community-based, nonprofit organisation. Their main aim was to tackle the growing mental health issues within the Comber community and surrounding areas by providing a focus for children (12+) and adults.

Activities included boxing but also a place to meet and train with friends in a fun and safe environment. Training was on Tuesday and Friday nights and their six-week programme for ladies was resuming at the end of October. This was a female fight fit course to help build confidence, improve fitness, learn boxing skills, and have a bit of fun along the way.

Councillor Douglas advised that the Endler Amateur Boxing Club in Comber opened in October 2024 attracting 50 members. This immediate response demonstrated the strong demand for an accessible community focused boxing club in Comber.
She noted that the club welcomed boys and girls from the age of 6 as well as adult members. Within only three months of the club opening, it achieved its first major competitive success. Three boxers entered a championship with two of them bringing home gold medals and since then, the club had continued to exceed expectations, winning 30 titles including one All-Ireland title within its first 18 months, an achievement that is virtually unheard of for such a young club. These successes also included three Ulster titles, four International Boxing Cup titles and 21 County titles. The club already had a representative selected for an Irish panel that travelled to America to compete. Another young boxer was currently involved in selection for

the County Antrim squad, while two of the club's female boxers had earned places on the County Antrim female squad.

Councillor Douglas remarked that, in addition to boxing training, the club provided ladies boxercise and keep fit classes every Tuesday and Thursday. The club's membership extended across a 15-mile radius, with people travelling from Ballynahinch, Killyleagh, Carrowdore, Millisle, Bangor, Newtownards, Ballygowan and further afield. Despite operating with limited facilities, the club had already achieved more than anyone could have expected in such a short period of time. However, the club currently lacked essential amenities, including adequate changing rooms, toilets, and heating. She noted that the club was going from strength to strength and its aim and ambition was to develop a purpose-built boxing club for everyone which would require funding.

Councillor Douglas explained that the Council could help by tasking officers to engage with the club and other groups in Comber to explore how it could assist them, and to undertake a feasibility study into the development of the sport. She commended the trainers and leaders in the clubs for their commitment to the younger generation and thanks them for giving their time to support amateur boxing across the Borough. She asked members to support the Motion.

Alderman Cummings commended Councillor Douglas for raising this Motion which was a great opportunity to show how the Council could help the emerging sport of boxing to become a key element of the Council’s Getting Active and Staying Active Strategy. He noted that the Endler Amateur Boxing Club was engaged in the competitive side of the sport and was governed by the Ulster Boxing Council. It had, in his opinion, become the epitome of inclusiveness and diversity. It had created accessibility, given the challenges of its location and had drawn large numbers of young people, boys and girls, from across the Borough into the sport. He commended the dedicated team of volunteers from all the clubs mentioned. It was their dedication, time, and enthusiasm that had delivered this homegrown success.

The Alderman acknowledged that his focus was on Comber but stressed that there was a much wider appeal across the Borough and noted that Council should do all it could to harness the success of these boxing clubs and help them become a permanent feature of sporting success, and an outworking of the Strategy, in the Borough.

Councillor Moore advised that she had visited the Enler Boxing Club and had met with Johnny Hunter. She witnessed the vibrancy within the club but could see the shortcomings of their premises, with flimsy walls and toilet facilities that children could only reach by crossing a busy garage forecourt, which had created safeguarding and safety issues. She noted that he could see both the value in what the club did and the limitations imposed by their current situation. She advised that there was an opportunity to collaborate with Comber Rec in relation to a dedicated space and that could be a capital project that the Council could consider.

Councillor S Irvine commented that Zack Foster boxed for the Enler Club and held a few titles. He acknowledged that the Motion was focused on Comber, but advised that any findings, recommendations, or feasibility studies should have the potential to

benefit all boxing clubs throughout the Borough and he was aware that the Ards Boxing Club was also struggling.

Councillor Boyle asked for clarification around whether the Motion was focusing on one or more boxing clubs and noted that he was content to support the Motion and looked forward to the report.

Councillor W Irvine supported the Motion and expressed the hope that a feasibility study would look at boxing across the Borough as he considered boxing as a vital sport for young men in terms of discipline, mental health, fitness, and strength. He also noted the rise in women's boxing. He acknowledged Sandy Rice, a great boxing teacher, who had led the Abbey Boxing Club in Bangor for many years, and Ray Close, a lightweight boxer who fought Chris Eubank twice for the World Championship. He had passed away and Councillor Irvine sent condolences to his family.

Alderman Brooks advised that, through his involvement in boxing, he was aware of many small boxing clubs across Northern Ireland that received very little support, aside from a few grants from their local councils. On the whole, facilities were poor, but these clubs served their community through training and wellbeing activities. He noted the references to capital and reminded the Committee that Donaghadee had been waiting for 15 years for its sports funding which had been promised but had not been received. He noted that it was important to help local clubs where possible and gave his support to the Motion.

Councillor Douglas thanked Alderman Cummings for seconding her Motion. She clarified that the Motion was not specifically to ask for funding but to explore other avenues to help the clubs. She thanked the members for their support and looked forward to the report and working with officers to help the clubs in Comber.

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

10.3 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BOYLE AND COUNCILLOR MOORE

That officers bring back an options paper as to how Council could assist the Portaferry Gala Fest Committee & Community, to recognise the forthcoming very special occasion within the Borough involving the 60th anniversary of Gala Week taking place in July 2027.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Moore in the absence of Alderman McAlpine, that the Notice of Motion, be adopted.

Councillor Boyle advised that he was bringing this Motion forward because 2027 represented a significant milestone, not only for the Portaferry Gala Festival, but also for the generations of people who have volunteered to sustain it. The Portaferry Gala Festival was widely recognised as Northern Ireland's longest - running community led festival. Portaferry already valued and appreciated the annual relationship and support that its Gala Festival received from Council. However, a 60th anniversary

would come around only once. This was an opportunity to consider whether Council could do something additional and special to recognise six decades of community volunteering and contribution.

Councillor Boyle gave a potted history of the Gala Festival. Before the establishment of the Gala Committee in 1967, Portaferry had a strong tradition of community celebration surrounding the Town Regatta. Sailing was central to the town, but the celebrations extended well beyond the water. Local people organised entertainment and activities. Businesses offered support. Families participated, and visitors were welcomed into the town. In 1967, a dedicated committee was established to develop the entertainment and community side of those celebrations. That became Portaferry Gala Festival. So, in 2027, the celebration would be focused on much more than the age of an organisation. We would be recognising 60 years of organised community volunteering built upon an even longer tradition of local people coming together to make things happen.

Councillor Boyle commented that the real story of the Gala was the people behind it. For six decades, generations of volunteers had given their time to organise events, raise funds and create experiences for others. Many people who attended the Gala as children later became volunteers themselves. The festival had, therefore, passed from one generation to the next. He noted that organising a festival today was very different from organising one in 1967. Today's volunteers had to deal with licensing, insurance, safety planning, safeguarding, traffic management, road closures, security, and a wide range of regulatory requirements. Despite this, the festival remained community-led and volunteer-driven. That voluntary contribution represented an enormous investment in Portaferry and its wider community.

The festival's history was also significant because of the period through which it had survived and developed. Portaferry Gala continued through decades of profound social and political change in Northern Ireland. Throughout those years, the festival continued to welcome visitors, families, performers, and community groups. People from different backgrounds participated in shared celebrations. The Gala Parade became an occasion involving local organisations, performers, and bands from different traditions. Portaferry Gala did not claim to solve the wider divisions facing Northern Ireland. But it did something important at a local level. It created opportunities for people to meet, work, and celebrate together. Today, we might describe that as good relations, shared space, and community cohesion. For Portaferry, it was simply about opening the town, welcoming people, and giving everyone an opportunity to take part.

Councillor Boyle remarked that the festival had survived because it had adapted. New generations brought new ideas. Some traditions have disappeared while new ones took their place. Yet the fundamental principle remained the same: a community creating something for itself and sharing it with others. That is not something we should take for granted. Running a major community festival had become increasingly difficult for voluntary organisations. The demands on volunteers continued to grow, while the financial and practical challenges of delivering large public events increased. The community would continue to play its part—as it had done for generations.

He advised that the 60th anniversary provided an opportunity to explore whether Council could provide additional support for this exceptional, one-off occasion. He was not asking the Committee today to agree to a particular financial commitment. Nor was he asking Council to take over a community-led festival. He was asking Council Officers to consider what options might be available. Those options could include additional financial assistance, practical support, event programming, marketing, or opportunities to involve the wider Borough. The options paper would allow officers to assess what is realistic and achievable and allow the Committee to consider the available choices and decide what level of support, if any, was appropriate.

He also noted that the 60th anniversary could become an opportunity for the wider Borough. Portaferry would always remain at the heart of the festival, but this milestone had the potential to attract and involve communities from across Ards and North Down and across Northern Ireland. It could celebrate our shared heritage, volunteering, culture, and community spirit while also showcasing Portaferry as a destination. This was an opportunity to bring additional visitors into the town and encourage wider participation in a celebration that has been sustained by local people for six decades. Most importantly, it would allow us to recognise the people who have made that possible.

Councillor Boyle asked that the Committee support the Motion and gave Officers the opportunity to explore how this significant community milestone might be recognised.

Councillor Moore stated that she was delighted to second this Motion and to support the recognition of a significant milestone for Portaferry as its Gala Festival approached its 60th Anniversary. She noted that during her time as Mayor, she had the pleasure of meeting the Gala Committee on several occasions. They put their collective heart and soul into providing incredibly high-quality, community-focused events. An enormous amount of time, energy and commitments went into organising Gala Week and other community events throughout the year. These events brought generations together, strengthened community spirit, created local pride, and supported local businesses; it was a wonderful example of what a community could achieve when people came together. This 60th anniversary presented an opportunity to recognise not only the current committee, but the generations of volunteers who had sustained the gala over those six decades. The Councillor noted that it would be important for the Council to work with the committee to understand their ambitions for the anniversary and how Council could best support them.

Councillor Douglas thanked Councillor Boyle for the booklets about the festival and voiced her support for the Motion. On behalf of herself, Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund, she congratulated Portaferry Gala Festival on their 60th anniversary success in 2027. She noted that it was a wonderful cross-community festival showcasing the best of Northern Ireland and commended the Gala Committee and volunteers for their hard work and dedication year on year.

Councillor McKee added his support for the Motion and also congratulated the Gala Committee. He noted that galas had been popular in the past along the Ards

Peninsula, and it was great to see that the Portaferry Gala Festival was still going strong.

Councillor S Irvine declared his support for the Motion and noted that the Gala Festival brought people in from everywhere, generating economic benefits and showcasing all that Portaferry and the Borough had to offer. Supporting the Gala Committee in making this anniversary special was entirely appropriate. At the same time, he advised that the Council should be mindful of the many other successful festivals, pageants and community events held across the Borough, which also attracted substantial footfall, promoted tourism and made a valuable contribution to the local community. He advised that any support framework should, therefore, be fair, transparent, and capable of recognising significant milestones and achievements across the Borough. That having been said, he supported the Motion and commended Councillor Boyle for bringing it forward.

Councillor Boyle thanked Councillor Moore for seconding the Motion in the absence of Alderman McAlpine and thanked the members for their support of the Motion and their comments. He reiterated the Gala Committee's appreciation of the funding it received from the Council, and he assured the Committee that it was well used and accounted for during the Gala Festival Week.

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

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

Reports for Approval

12. LEISURE STRATEGY PILOT CAPITAL FUNDING

(Appendix XXI-XXX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, as part of the implementation of the Council's Getting Active, Staying Active Leisure Strategy 2025-2-34, officers were considering options for the future development of a capital investment programme that would support the provision and improvement of leisure and sports infrastructure across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the use of a specific project as a pilot of the proposed grant-based capital investment model for leisure and sports infrastructure; and Approves a capital grant of £80K to the club towards the project, subject to completion of an internal business case and a formal letter of offer setting out the agreed outcomes, monitoring and reporting requirements, staged payment arrangements and appropriate clawback provisions.

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

The Director asked members to vote on the officers' recommendation to agree to funding and to progressing with the Capital Leisure Grant Fund Pilot. The Motion was carried with a vote of For: 9. Against: 3.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor McBurney, with 9 voting FOR and 3 voting AGAINST, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. PEACEPLUS MINUTES & UPDATE

(Appendix XXXI-XXXII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that the PEACEPLUS Partnership co designed a PEACEPLUS Action Plan for the Borough under the following three themes:

- Theme 1 - Local Community Regeneration and Transformation
- Theme 2 - Thriving and Peaceful Communities
- Theme 3 - Building Respect for Cultural Identities

Attached were minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership meeting held on 25 June 2026 for approval.

A further update would be provided in due course.

RECOMMENDED that Council Approves the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 and Notes the update in relation to Theme 1.

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

14. NCLT Q1 2026/27 PERFORMANCE REPORT UPDATE

(Appendix XXXIII-XXXV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, as part of the Leisure Services management contract,

the Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) provided Officers with quarterly reports on performance. These reports contained information pertaining to participation, key performance indicators, marketing, sports development, health and safety, customer feedback, and technical issues.

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with a high-level update on NCLT's performance for Q1 2026 - 27. It was noted that the intention was to bring this report to September's Committee however the scheduling of the NCLT Board Meetings and Council's reporting deadlines caused a slight delay resulting in this report being submitted to this month's Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the report.

(Having declared an interest in this item, Councillor Chambers withdrew from the meeting at 8.36pm. Chris Kelly from NCLT joined the meeting at 8.37pm.)

The Head of Leisure advised that Leisure Arts were exploring the social value tool that NCLT used as it was very keen to provide Council and residents of the Borough a collective picture of the social value that leisure provided. He thanked Chris Kelly and his colleagues for their help.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine seconded by Councillor Brooks, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. LEISURE PROVISION MODEL UPDATE

(Appendix XXXVI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing that, the project team had progressed the leisure provision project in line with the decision taken in September 2025 that, when the current outsourced contractual arrangements ended in March 2028, leisure services would continue to be delivered through a hybrid operational model. Under that approach, Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex and Queen's Leisure Complex would remain within the outsourced element of provision, while the sports grounds and associated outdoor facilities currently included in the existing contract would transfer back into in-house management.

Following Council approval in July 2026, the project team progressed the pre-market engagement stage, which went live on 20 August 2026. An online information session for potential operators was held on 2 September 2026 and the process closed on 11 September 2026. The responses received indicated a positive level of market interest in the opportunity and confirmed interest in the proposed contract. At this stage, none of the core commercial principles tested through the pre-market engagement process appear to represent a barrier to market participation. There was also broad consistency in the feedback received.

The findings from the pre-market engagement exercise informed the Participation Stage Questionnaire, which is now live and due to close in early November 2026.

A high-level overview of the indicative project timeline was provided.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the progress made on the leisure provision project.

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

16. PCSP MINUTES

(Appendix XXXVII-XXXVIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Active and Healthy Communities detailing the work of the eleven Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) in Northern Ireland and providing the minutes of Ards and North Down PSCP meeting of 1 June 2026.

PCSPs were local bodies in Northern Ireland that aimed to enhance community safety by addressing policing and safety issues through collaboration between elected officials and community members.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) were established under the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and were set up in 2012. They consisted of Councillors and Independent members from each Council area, working together to make communities safer by focusing on local policing and community safety issues that matter most to residents.

There were 11 PCSPs across Northern Ireland, one for each Council district, ensuring that local voices were heard in the decision-making processes.

Summary

A meeting of the Ards and North Down PCSP was held on 14 September 2026. At that meeting the minutes of meeting held on 1 June 2026 were approved. The minutes were attached as Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that Council Notes the Minutes of the PCSP held on 01 June 2026.

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9:38pm.

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

28 September 2026

Our ref: C184.26

By Email:

Dear/A chara Chief Executive

Council at its September meeting carried the undernoted motion following a vote with 25 Members voting in favour of the motion and 12 against.

> That this Council becomes one of the first local authorities to formally condemn the scheduling of the upcoming UEFA Nations League fixtures between Ireland and Israel, due to take place in September and October 2026.
>
> The members note and support the massive public outcry and recent fan protests at the Aviva Stadium, which reflect the deep-seated anger of the Irish public regarding these fixtures.
>
> We strongly support the sentiments of Irelands captain Seamus Coleman, who rightly highlighted that this moral dilemma should never have been landed “on the toes of the players”, and that the footballing authorities need to show leadership. The burden of international diplomacy and human rights advocacy must not be forced onto individual athletes, and no Irish player should be put under pressure or left exposed to career threatening sanctions by taking a standalone personal position.
>
> Therefore, this Council calls directly on the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) to take full institutional responsibility, show true moral leadership, and withdraw the Ireland team from the match.
>
> While the FAI highlights potential UEFA sanctions and estimates a disputable financial impact of €5.5 million to €10.3 million, claiming a boycott would cause lasting harm, this Council firmly asserts that while the FAI may fear financial cost by standing up for human rights, that is absolutely no excuse for being morally bankrupt as they are now.

/ While the FAI…..

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Magherafelt Office
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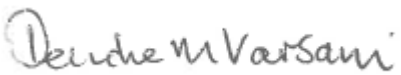
While the FAI abdicates its moral duty by hiding behind its UEFA 'obligations' and claiming they have “no choice” but to play, they completely ignore the people of Palestine who truly have “no choice” as a genocide continues to be carried out against them.

Moving the fixtures to neutral venues behind closed doors, such as shifting the October 4th match to Serbia, fails entirely to address the ethical issue at hand. The FAI must be prepared to accept whatever regulatory or financial consequences UEFA may impose, rather than forcing our players and hoping our fans participate in fixtures that run entirely counter to the ethics, heart, and conscience of the Irish people.

If passed, the Council agrees that the motion will be forwarded immediately to the Chief Executive of the FAI, the 26 County Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport as well as to every other local authority in the country, North and South asking they support this motion.

I would request that you bring this motion to the attention of your elected members.

Is mise, le meas



Councillor/Comhairleoir Deirdre Varsani
Chair/Cathaoirleach

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	28 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	
Report title	Queen's Parade Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Bangor Marine Phase 1A plan
File Reference (if applicable)	RDP 63
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Staffing and Contractual Narrative: None
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 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple:

Background
At the meeting of the Council held on 30 September 2026 members were advised that due to several issues only the area shown on appendix 1 as 1A would be completed and returned to the Council by the end of October.

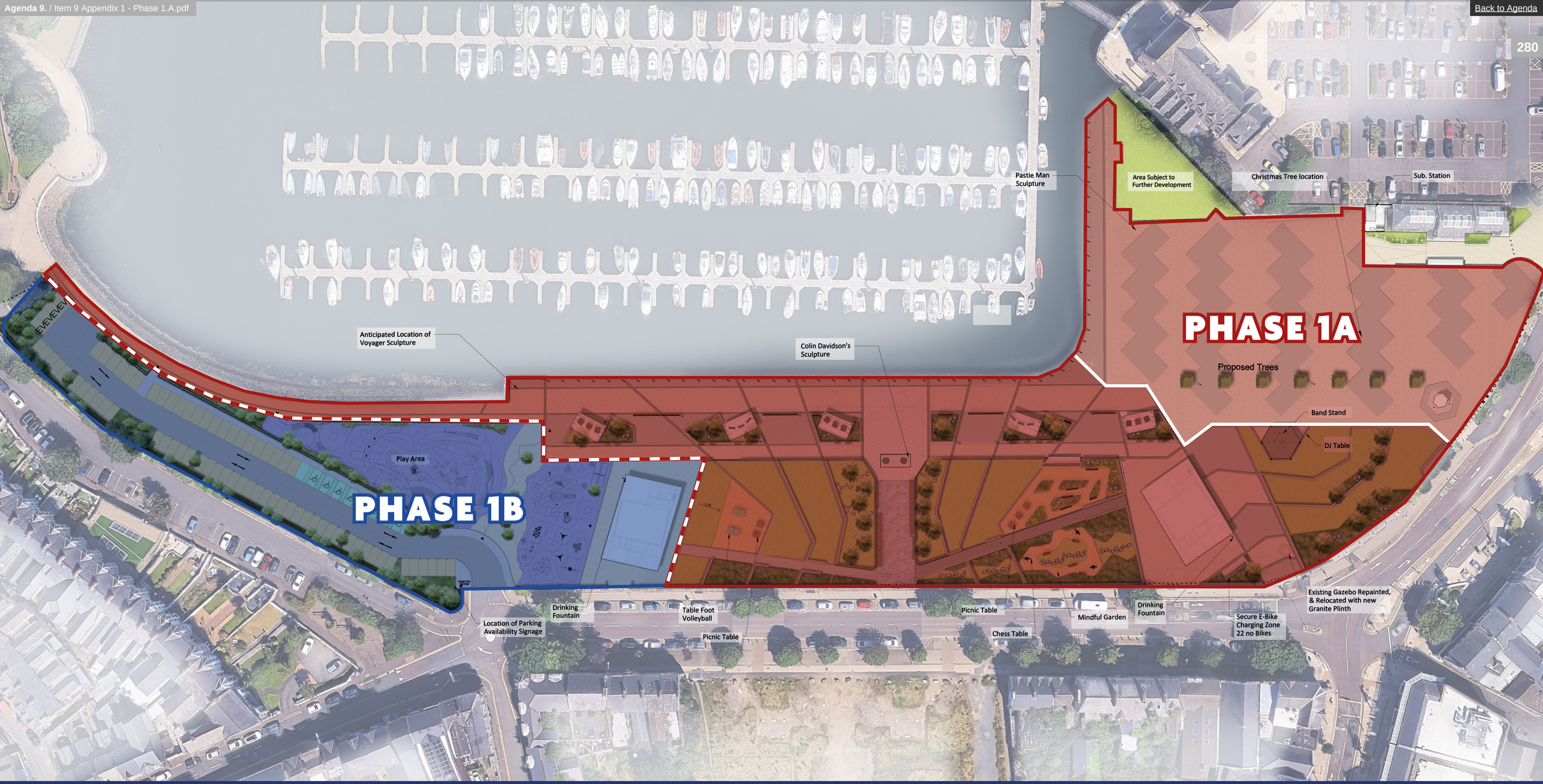
Since the Council meeting work has been progressing well and a provisional hand over date has been set as 30 October 2026. The Council's Integrated Consultancy Team has been working closely with Bangor Marine and their contractors to ensure the work undertaken has been completed to the agree technical specification and that all commissioning certificates and warranties are in place. The ICT has confirmed they believe that hand over on 30 October is achievable, thus enabling the Christmas actives and other animation to proceed.

The Council's solicitor in conjunction with the solicitors for the Department for Communities and Bangor Marine are finalising a further Deed of Variation to ensure the legal process for the hand over is completed. This document will only be signed and sealed once the Council's officers and ICT have confirmed the works have been completed in accordance with the agreed technical specifications.

Summary
It is positive that the works to the McKee Clock arena will be completed by 30 October and that the Christmas activities can proceed on this site. The Council's ICT is monitoring the works and checking that all specifications have been met.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Agrees** this report and signs and seals the Deed of Variation on obtaining confirmation from the ICT that all works have been completed to the agreed specifications.


PHASE 1A
PHASE 1B
Proposed Trees
Band Stand
DJ Table
Pastie Man Sculpture
Area Subject to Further Development
Christmas Tree location
Sub. Station
Anticipated Location of Voyager Sculpture
Colin Davidson's Sculpture
Play Area
Location of Parking Availability Signage
Drinking Fountain
Table Foot Volleyball
Picnic Table
Picnic Table
Chess Table
Mindful Garden
Drinking Fountain
Secure E-Bike Charging Zone 22 no Bikes
Existing Gazebo Repainted, & Relocated with new Granite Plinth

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Council
Date of Meeting	28 October 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 proposal has been presented to them. Council is awaiting their decision, which will be brought back to Council as soon as it is available.	Director of Active & Healthy Communities	
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. Recruitment ongoing. Update to November A&HC Committee.	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.	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 August 2026 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee Oct 2026 - Report presented to Oct Corp Committee	Head of Corporate Governance	

564	Active & Healthy Communities	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 to be brought to March 2027 EC Report back when EA confirms its intentions Officers still awating response from EA at June 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.	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. August 2026 - Advice now recieved on other requests, update report to be presented to Corporate Committee Oct 2026 - Report presented to Oct Corp Committee	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	July 2026 update - Conditions of transfer now recieved and consultation in progress. August 2026 update - Further report in September 2026 Oct 2026 - Report presented to Oct Corp Committee	Head of Corporate Governance	
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 November 2026 A&HC Committee	Head of Community and Culture	

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 May 2024 Community & Wellbeing January 2025 Environment Committee January 2026	Agreed at October 2026 EC that further development of the Greyabbey MUGA Project, as a joint Village Renewal and Parks Project, continues as informed by the findings of the Borough-wide Leisure Facilities Audit, the priorities identified through the adopted Greyabbey Village Plan and the Council's Play Strategy for the delivery of older children's facilities across the Borough. Furthermore, agrees that funding opportunities continue to be sought for the project. 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.	Head of Parks and Cemeteries	To be removed following October Council meeting
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	July 2026: Update report at July Council meeting September 2026: NIHE has now approved the business case for the freehold sale of the land. As part of its normal procedures, it must first carry out a consultation with other public bodies to determine whether there is any interest in the site. This consultation is due to conclude on 15 October 2026. Oct 2026: Continuing to progress	Head of Corporate Governance	

632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland. Amendment agreed at September 2026 Council: That this Council agrees that pedestrian access at Holywood HRC is included for consideration within the 2027/2028 rate setting process.	Council September 2026 Council September 2024 Environment Committee October 2024 Environment Committee May 2025 Environment Committee December 2025 Environment Committee April 2026 Environment Committee September 2026	Report to be brought to November 2026 EC Amendment agreed at September 2026 Council that this Council agrees that pedestrian access at Holywood HRC is included for consideration within the 2027/2028 rate setting process. Agreed at September 2026 to defer to November EC in order to reconsider data from the 2025 Pedestrian Access Trial 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	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)	Report brought to 7 May P&P Committee 2026 and ratified by May Council - report and move to Stage 2 agreed. Follow-up report to future Cttee and consideration of a public Council-managed list of long-term vacant/derelict properties list to support public input/expressions of interest. 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	

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 February 2025 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2025	Options agreed with stakeholders – report to be brought to November 2026 EC 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	Head of Parks and Cemeteries	
658	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	Update brought to Sept P&P and ratified by Council Update brought to P&P 11.6.26 as part of LAG Minutes 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.	Director of Place & Prosperity	
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 future 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 June 2025 Environment Committee September 2025 Environment Committee December 2025 Environment Committee February 2026	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	Head of Waste and Cleansing	
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 October Committee. Will be removed after call in.	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. July 2026 update: Report will be brought to Committee as soon as possible. Octt 2026 update: Event likely to be in Autumn 2027	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 October 2025 Environment Committee November 2025	Agreed at October 2026 EC to progress directional signage as an immediate low-cost pedestrian safety measure and improved lighting, subject to planning approval and confirmation of funding. Agreed to adopt NOM at November EC 2025 - ratified at November 2025 Council Assigned to November 2025 EC Agenda	Head of Estates	To be removed following October Council meeting
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. The introduction of Ruby's Law in Northern Ireland; and 2. Them to work in partnership to deliver a cross-departmental collaboration with Causeway Coast Dog Rescue charity, and other animal welfare and domestic abuse organisations as required, to ensure the development of robust and enforceable provisions, taking a multidisciplinary approach to identify key stakeholders and government agencies to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and coercive relationships and the protection of their pets. 3. Promote public awareness of the connection between domestic abuse, coercive control and animal abuse, in collaboration with statutory agencies and animal welfare organisations. 4. 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 September A&HC Committee. Re point 3. Arlene to engage with the EVAWG Working Group. Report to November Committee.	Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services	

687	Active & Healthy Communities	16.10.25	Councillor McCollum and Councillor Wray	That this Council recognises the valuable work undertaken by the Community Safety team in tackling anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough. That this Council also acknowledges the significant and increasing pressures on those officers to meet the growing and complex demands of their workload. Furthermore, that Council notes the recent review of the criminal legislative framework to help tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the greater powers which may devolve to Council, and tasks officers to prepare a report which outlines the needs of the Borough in relation to community safety and the resources currently available, details a range of measures appropriate to address those needs, including recruitment of additional officers, and identifies requisite funding requirements and opportunities.	Council 29.10.25. AHC	Deferred to December A&HC Committee. Report to March A&HC Committee. Further report on completion of re-structure. Update to December 2026 A&HC Committee.	Head of Community and Culture	
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). On agenda for October PCSP. Update to November A&HC Committee.	Head of Environmental Health & Regulatory Services & Head of Community and Culture	
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 Oct 2026 update - Investigations ongoing	Head of Corporate Governance	
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	This work is still being undertaken
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. Letter sent 21 May 2026. Response to October A&HC Committee. Will be removed after call in.	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. Report to November 2026 A&HC Committee.	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 Oct Update - Report scheduled for Nov Corp Committee	Community Planning and Climate Manager	Report going to Corporate Services Committee November 2026
705	Place & Prosperity	06.02.2026	Alderman Adair & Cllr Edmund	That Council recognises the huge benefits to the Ards Peninsula and wider Borough of greater connectivity in terms of tackling isolation, boosting local business and enhancing tourism. Furthermore, that Council is concerned about the increased traffic travelling along Ards Peninsula roads which could be better served by a fixed crossing between Portaferry and Strangford village and which may help in addressing congestion in other parts of the Borough and assist in improving road safety in roads within the Peninsula. Council, therefore, agrees to write to The Minister Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.	P&P Oct 2026 P&P March 2026 Council February 2026	Response reported to P&P 8 Oct 2026 - subject to ratification by Council Response received from DfI Minister - 6.7.26 CEx issued letter - 15.4.26 Agreed at March P&P 2026 that Council writes to DfI Minister	Director of Place and Prosperity	

706	Environment		Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings	To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen trees over the Enler River, Comber, which has been there since Storm Eowyn.	Council September 2026 Item 7.1 Environment March 2026 Item 14.1 Council February 2026 Item 15.2	Further report to be brought back in 2027 Matters Arising from September 2026 Environment Committee Minutes: Council agreed that officers should provide a further report outlining the level of risk associated with the trees, including potential mitigation measures, and seek appropriate advice on the Council's role in addressing public safety risks on accessible third-party land. Agreed at September 2026 EC to note the update report NOM agreed at March 2026 EC Referred to EC at February 2026 Council	Head of Parks and Cemeteries	
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 March 2026	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	Head of Parks and Cemeteries	To be removed following October Council meeting
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	Update report to October P&P 2026 - subject to ratification by Council Agreed at April P&P and ratified at April Council Ratified by March 2026 Council and referred to April P&P	Director of Place and Prosperity	Officers working with SEFF to identify a suitable date and location for mounting the quilt.
714	Environment	25.03.2026	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.	Council April 2026 Environment Committee May 2026 Environment Committee September 2026	Agreed at September 2026 EC to note the response from Translink CX Letter sent to Translink 05.06.26 - acknowledgement rec'd 08.06.26 Agreed at May 2026 EC Referred to EC at April 2026 Council	Director of Environmental Services	To be removed following October Council meeting
715	Active & Healthy Communities	1.04.2026	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.	Council April 2026 - Referred to Active & Healthy Communities Committee May 2026	Report to November 2026 A&HC Committee.	Head of Community and Culture	

716	Environment	2.04.2026	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	Council April 2026 Environment Committee May 2026	Agreed at October 2026 EC to note the update report Agreed at May 2026 EC Referred to EC at April 2026 Council	Head of Estates	To be removed following October Council meeting
717	Planning	13.04.2026	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.	August Planning Committee 2026 May Planning Committee 2026 Council April 2026 - Referred to Planning Committee May 2026	Follow-up report to August Planning Committee agreed that Council writes back to the Minister objecting to the lack of infrastructure investment in the 2028–33 price control period. Council to ask Minister to review how granted but unbuilt planning permissions are considered, including differences between Councils. Council to seek confirmation that infrastructure investment will be prioritised to protect the future viability of town and urban centres. Amendment ratified by August Council. Report went to May Planning re invite to meet with DfI Minister. Agreed and ratified by May Council.	Director of Place and Prosperity	
719	Active & Healthy Communities	21.04.2026	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 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.	Council April 2026 - Referred to Active & Healthy Communities Committee May 2026	Report to November 2026 A&HC Committee.	Head of Environmental Health and Regulatory Services	
720	Environment	24.04.2026	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.	Council May 2026 Environment Committee June 2026	Update report to be brought to future EC TBC Agreed at June 2026 EC Referred to EC at May 2026 Council	Head of Estates	

721	Environment	14.05.2026	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.	Council May 2026 Environment Committee June 2026	Update report to be brought to November 2026 EC Agreed at June 2026 EC Referred to EC at May 2026 Council	Head of Parks and Cemeteries	
722	Corporate Services	17.05.2026	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.	Council May 2026 - Referred to Corporate Services Committee June 2026	Agreed at June 2026 CS	Community Planning & Climate	To be removed. Report to October 2026 Corporate Service and option agreed
723	Active & Healthy Communities	18.05.2026	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.	Council May 2026 - Referred to Active & Healthy Communities Committee June 2026	Agreed at June 2026 AHC. Letters sent 10 September 2026. Report to October Committee. Will be removed after call in.	Head of Community and Culture	
724	Active & Healthy Communities		Councillors Cathcart and Gilmour	That this Council condemns recent anti-social behaviour witnessed in Bangor and the North Down coast and commits to reviewing our own resources, as well as working with relevant agencies to tackle this problem. Whilst grateful for police action taken, this Council recognises that the officers need additional powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and expresses disappointment that the Justice Minister has ruled out passing relevant legislation during this Assembly mandate. This Council therefore agrees to write to the Justice Minister, calling for action on anti-social behaviour legislation, more police officers for the Borough, the reopening of Bangor custody suite and the rejection of any lowering of the age of criminal responsibility.	Council - June 2026 - Referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee	Letter being drafted by Head of Community. Letter sent by Chief Executive on 12.10.26, awaiting reply.	Head of Community and Culture	

725	Environment	04.06.2026	Councillor Cochrane and Bangor East and Donaghadee EM	That this Council notes the publication of NICCAP3 and recognises the need for practical measures to address coastal erosion, flooding and infrastructure resilience in Northern Ireland. Further to this, Council notes that the delivery of the associated Adaptation Delivery Plan would 'designate responsibility to a NICS department to oversee coastal management and bring forward policy and legislation on managing coastal change' and believes this designation must be supported with associated Executive funding. Recognises that coastal councils, including Ards and North Down Borough Council, are increasingly exposed to the impacts to coastal change, while lacking the statutory powers and resources to respond effectively; Further notes that Ards and North Down has the longest coastline of any council area in Northern Ireland and is therefore particularly affected by these risks, further notes that the coast and coastal walks are arguably the 'jewel in the crown' of our community and tourism assets; acknowledges the increasing evidence of coastal impacts within the Borough, including flooding, storm damage, and pressure on public infrastructure. Accordingly, this Council calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to: 1. Designate a lead department or agency with statutory responsibility for both coastal flooding and coastal erosion and clarify its relationship with Councils in delivering improved intelligence, monitoring and protection; 2. Introduce a framework for long-term coastal planning, such as Shoreline Management Plans or a Northern Ireland equivalent; 3. Establish a dedicated coastal protection and resilience funding to support councils and relevant agencies in delivering necessary infrastructure and adaptation measures; 4. Bring forward proposals, within a defined timeframe, to address governance, funding, and delivery of coastal protection in Northern Ireland. The Council further agrees to: Write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and relevant Executive Ministers, outlining this position; Engage with the NI Local Government Association (NILGA) and other coastal councils to seek a coordinated, regional approach to this issue; Support efforts to ensure that coastal communities are adequately protected from flooding, coastal erosion and other environmental pressures.	Council June 2026 Environment Committee September 2026	Email sent to NILGA by Director of Envrionmental Services 14.10.26 - response received from NILGA 22.10.26 advising that they will ensure the matter is considered by the NILGA Executive at its November meeting and will recommend that NILGA takes forward the requested action. Letters sent by Chief Executive to DAERA, DfI and NIE 9.10.2026 Agreed at September 2026 EC Referred to EC at June 2026 Council	Head of Estates	
726	Place & Prosperity		Alderman Smith and Councillor Chambers	That Council writes to the Department for Communities requesting a review of their current policy that stops businesses located outside of town centre core boundaries from applying for grant support.	Council - June 2026 - Referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee	Agreed at Sept P&P that NoM is adopted - ratified by Sept Council	Director of Place and Prosperity	
727	Active & Healthy Communities		Alderman McRandal and Councillor Harbinson	That this Council acknowledges the financial costs that it incurs in dealing with and disposing of litter and in seeking to take enforcement action. That this Council acknowledges that it needs to take further action to positively influence the attitude of some people towards littering. This Council therefore resolves to consider what additional actions it can reasonably take both to inform the public about the various harms that result from littering and to seek to change people's attitudes towards littering. Council should furthermore consider developing and implementing a formal litter action plan, where all actions relating to the handling and disposal of litter, enforcement and education and prevention are brought together in one place. A report should be brought back to the Committee with recommendations in respect of the above.	Council - June 2026 - Referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee	Report is scheduled to January Committee	Gareth Kinnear	
729	Place & Prosperity	17.07.2026	Councillor Cathcart and McClean	That this Council recognises that our city, towns and villages in our Borough are a summer destination for many. Therefore the Council agrees to bring an officers' report back on revivig the annual 'Dressing Town' budget which was previously provided for banners and bunting and other decorative measures during the summer months. the aim of such a budget would be to rpvide visiotrs and residents with a summer welcome to our Borough, especially our seaside destinations.	Council - July 2026	Agreed at Sept P&P that NoM is adopted - ratified by Sept Council	Director of Place and Prosperity	

730	Active & Healthy Communities	29.07.2026	Councillor Douglas and Alderman Cummings	That officers are tasked with engaging with boxing clubs and groups in Comber to explore how the Council can assist those clubs and groups and encourage growth of the sport in the town and further that officers look at a feasibility study into the development of the sport.	Council - August 2026 Referred to Active & Healthy Communities Committee	Report to January Committee	Head of Leisure	
731	Corporate Services	14.08.2026	Councillor Wray and Councillor Newman	On the night of 15th-16th April 1941, as the Luftwaffe attacked the city of Belfast, fourteen bombs also fell in the town of Bangor, killing 5 local residents. During the course of the raid, 35 Bangor residents sustained injuries. Carnegie Library was set up as a temporary morgue for the fatalities. As part of the current Cathedral Gardens redevelopment, there will be a fitting memorial to those who lost their lives in the Belfast Blitz. The casualties in Bangor will not be named. On the basis, that there appears to be no knowledge of any memorial to the people who lost their lives here in Bangor. Officers are tasked with a report on the potential for a memorial or suitable plaque within Ward Park, Bangor (with the inclusion of the Carnegie Library), marking the local loss of life.	Council -August 2026 Referred to Corporate Services Committee	Report will be brought to committee	Head of Corporate Goverance	
732	Active & Healthy Communities	15.08.2026	Councillor Boyle and Alderman McAlpine	That officers bring back an options paper as to how Council could assist the Portaferry Gala Fest Committee & Community , to recognise the forthcoming very special occasion within the Borough involving the 60th anniversary of Gala Week taking place in July 2027.	Council - August 2026 Referred to Active & Healthy Communities Committee	Report to December Committee	Head of Community and Culture	
734	Place & Prosperity	14.09.2026	Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman	In line with the Council's Corporate plan to support economic sustainability within the Borough, the recent business start up and growth figures are extremely encouraging. However, in the context that Ards & North Down has the lowest GDP/head in Northern Ireland, the lowest GVA growth, has 9% of NI's population yet only 3% of its exports and less than 1% of R&D spend, yet historically has received the least Invest NI support of any council area, that Council requests a deputation from Invest NI to hear directly on how they are supporting the Council's ambitious business growth targets, including what resources and programmes they are dedicating to the Borough. Furthermore, Council also writes to the Economy Minister to request a meeting to discuss how her Department can provide a fair share of resources to support business investment and employment growth in our Borough.	Council - September 2026 Referred to Place and Prosperity Committee	Added to P&P agenda 8.10.26	Head of ED and Regeration	

735	Corporate Services	18.09.2026	Councillor Wray and Hollywood	at this Council: Condemns Michelle O'Neill's participation in and endorsement of the memorandum agreed in Cardiff by Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, which calls upon the British Government to prepare for, plan and facilitate constitutional change in each jurisdiction; Rejects the memorandum's assertion that "Westminster's time is coming to an end" and its attempt to present constitutional change as inevitable; Affirms that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Reaffirms the principle of consent, under which Northern Ireland's constitutional status can change only with the consent of a majority of its people; Rejects any attempt by Sinn Féin to portray its objective of removing Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom as the position or collective voice of the people of Northern Ireland; And accordingly calls upon the Chief Executive to write to the First Minister: 1. Expressing this Council's condemnation of her participation in and endorsement of the Cardiff memorandum; 2. Reminding her that the jurisdiction in which she holds office is Northern Ireland, whose present constitutional status is as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and 3. Reaffirming that Northern Ireland's constitutional future will be determined by the people of Northern Ireland in accordance with the principle of consent, and not by declarations agreed between Sinn Féin, the SNP and Plaid Cymru. This Council further reaffirms its support for Northern Ireland's continued place within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.	Council September 2026 - Corporate Services Committee		Director of Corporate Services	