

January 5th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Tuesday, 9th January 2024 at 7:00 pm**
in **Church Street, Newtownards.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

 *AGENDA January 2024.pdf*

Page 1

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

3. Draft Corporate Plan

(Report attached)

 *Item 3 - Draft Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 Report.pdf*

Page 3

 *Item 3 - Appendix 1 - Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2028.pdf*

Page 5

4. International Relations Update

(Report attached)

 *Item 4 - International Relations update.pdf*

Page 25

 *Item 4 - Appendix 1 - Virginia Beach photos.pdf*

Page 36

 *Item 4 - Appendix 2 - Summary of the Council's Sister Cities and Town Twinning Relationships .pdf*


Page 44

5. Response to Notices of Motion:

(To follow)

(a) NOM 181 - Naming of a Place or Building in Honour of Queen Elizabeth II

(Report attached)

 *Item 5a - Response to NOM 181 - Naming of a place or building in honour of Queen Elizabeth II.pdf*

Page 47

 *Item 5a Appendix 1 Signage Options (1).pdf*

Page 50

6. Any Other Notified Business

*****ITEMS 7-9 IN CONFIDENCE*****



7. Estimates Update

(Report attached)

 <i>Item 7 - Estimates Report.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 7 - Appendices 2&3.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>240109 Updatev2.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>





8. Extension of Lease to the Royal British Legion, Bangor

(Report attached)

 <i>Item 8 - Extension of Lease to the Royal British Legion, Bangor.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 8 - Appendix 1- Map - Request from the Royal British Legion.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

9. Request from NI Water to Purchase Land at Newtown Bridge, Comber

(Report attached)

 <i>Item 9 - Request from NI Water to purchase land at Newtown Bridge, Comber.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 9 - Appendix 1 - Map.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 9 - Appendix 2 - Council minute.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
 <i>Item 9 - Appendix 3 - updated map.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

2 January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee of Ards and North Down Borough in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on **Tuesday 9 January 2024 commencing at 7pm.**

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Draft Corporate Plan (Report attached)
4. International Relations Update (Report attached)
5. Response to Notices of Motion:
 - (a) NOM 181 – Naming of a place or building in honour of Queen Elizabeth II (To follow)
6. Any other notified business

ITEMS 7 – 9 ***IN CONFIDENCE***

7. Estimates Update (Report to follow)
8. Extension of Lease to the Royal British Legion, Bangor (Report attached)
9. Request from NI Water to purchase land at Newtown Bridge, Comber (Report attached)

Alderman Brooks	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Graham	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor Irwin
Alderman Smith	Councillor MacArthur (Vice Chair)
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Moore (Chairman)

Unclassified

3

ITEM 3**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	09 January 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance
Date of Report	18 December 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Draft Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028
Attachments	Draft Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028

Context

Council will be aware that the current Corporate Plan will end in March 2024 and that preparations have been underway for the development of a new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 to outline the strategic direction of the Council. This work has been progressed by an internal project team, with representation from across all Directorates, a workshop with Elected members, multiple staff workshops, staff feedback and a review of the 2023 Residents Survey.

The Plan is currently in draft format and is attached for your consideration, prior to issuing to the public for consultation. It is expected that the content will be further refined based on consultation responses. The style and format of the Plan, including illustrations and infographics, will also be updated in the final version.

If approved, the Plan will set our course for the next four years. We will only achieve this if we consistently work towards any agreed direction, in our plans, actions and decisions.

Not Applicable

4

It is proposed that the draft Plan will now be subject to wider consultation. The detail of this will be progressed via the project team, though it is likely to include public advertisement, residents focus groups, engagement with community planning partners, our Consultative Panel on Equality and Good Relations, our business community, elected members, and officers. This will progress alongside screening with resulting amendments incorporated in a final draft for Council approval.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the progress to date and agrees the draft Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, enabling progression to consultation and screening, prior to consideration of the final draft.



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

5

**Ards and North Down Borough
Council**

DRAFT Corporate Plan
2024 - 2028

TOWARDS
A SUSTAINABLE BOROUGH

Introduction and Contents

This is the third Corporate Plan for Ards and North Down Borough Council.

This Corporate Plan serves as the Council’s strategic framework for 2024-28, setting out our Council’s values, priorities and commitments to work towards our vision to be **A Sustainable Borough**.

This Corporate Plan mirrors the Community Plan (The Big Plan 2017-2032), as the overarching framework for the Borough, with a focus on the outcomes we want to work towards achieving. The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a range of strategic and operational plans, which set out in more detail how our vision and priorities will be delivered and resourced.

Our Corporate Plan will be driven by three strategic priorities: economic, environmental and social. The Plan will have a focus on sustainability at its core. We recognise that these priorities are ambitious and go beyond the life span of the Corporate Plan.

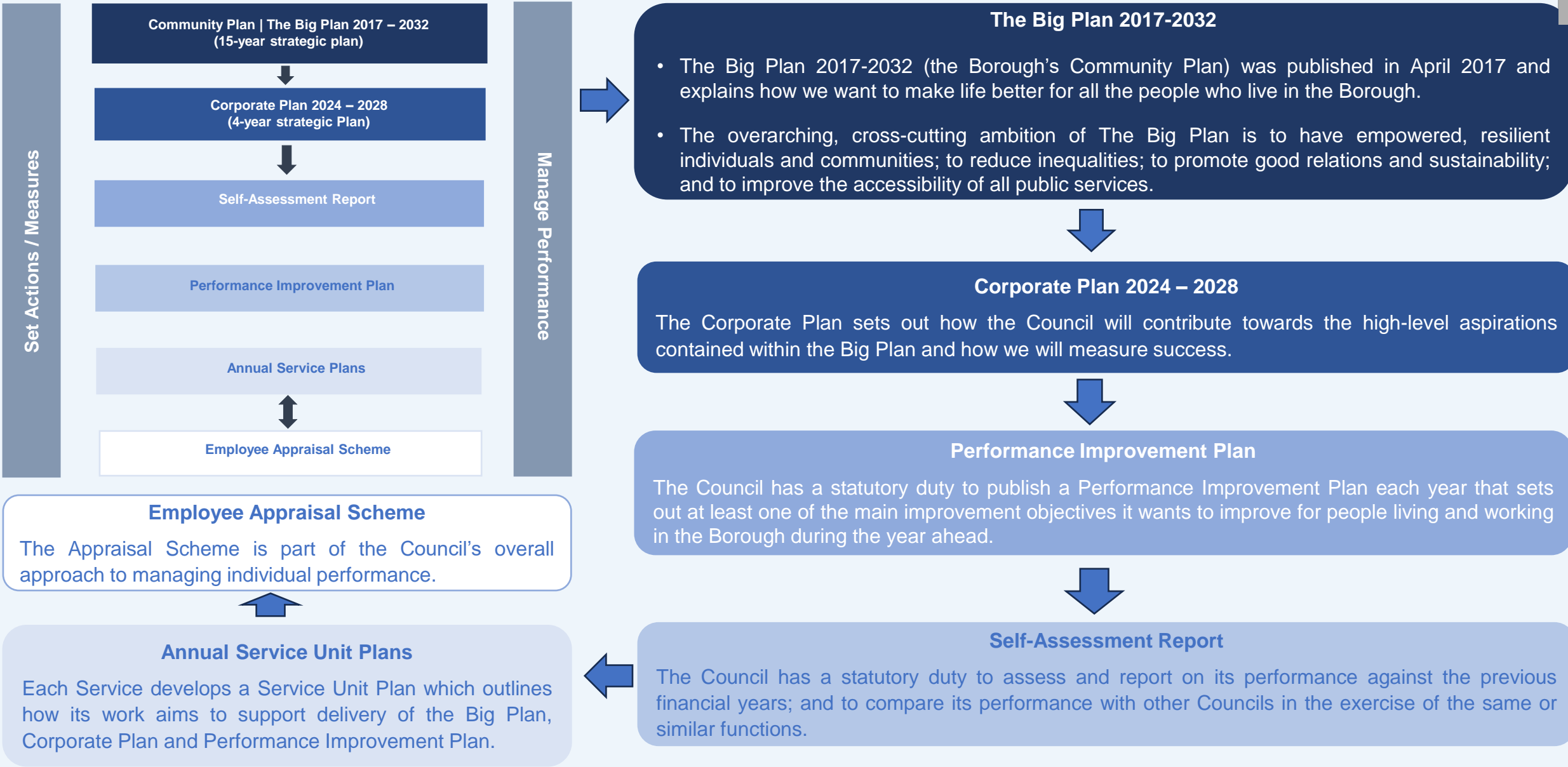
Seven outcomes have been identified to drive the three priorities, with commitments detailing how we will achieve these outcomes. We have also identified measures that will demonstrate if we have been successful.

The Draft Corporate Plan was informed through a range of sources including research undertaken by an internal working group, a workshop with Elected members, multiple staff workshops, staff feedback, and a review of the 2023 Residents Survey.

Contents of Draft Plan	
Strategic Context	3
Our Vision	4
Our Three Corporate Priorities	5
Economic Priority	6
Environmental Priority	7
Social Priority	8
Our Seven Outcomes	9
Our Commitments and Measures of Success	10
Outcomes 1 - 7	11 - 17
Our Draft Corporate Plan on one page	18
Your Opinion Matters	19

Strategic Context of Corporate Plan

7



Our Vision of A Sustainable Borough

The vision of our draft Corporate Plan for Ards and North Down 2024-2028 is to be **A Sustainable Borough.**

What does our draft vision mean?

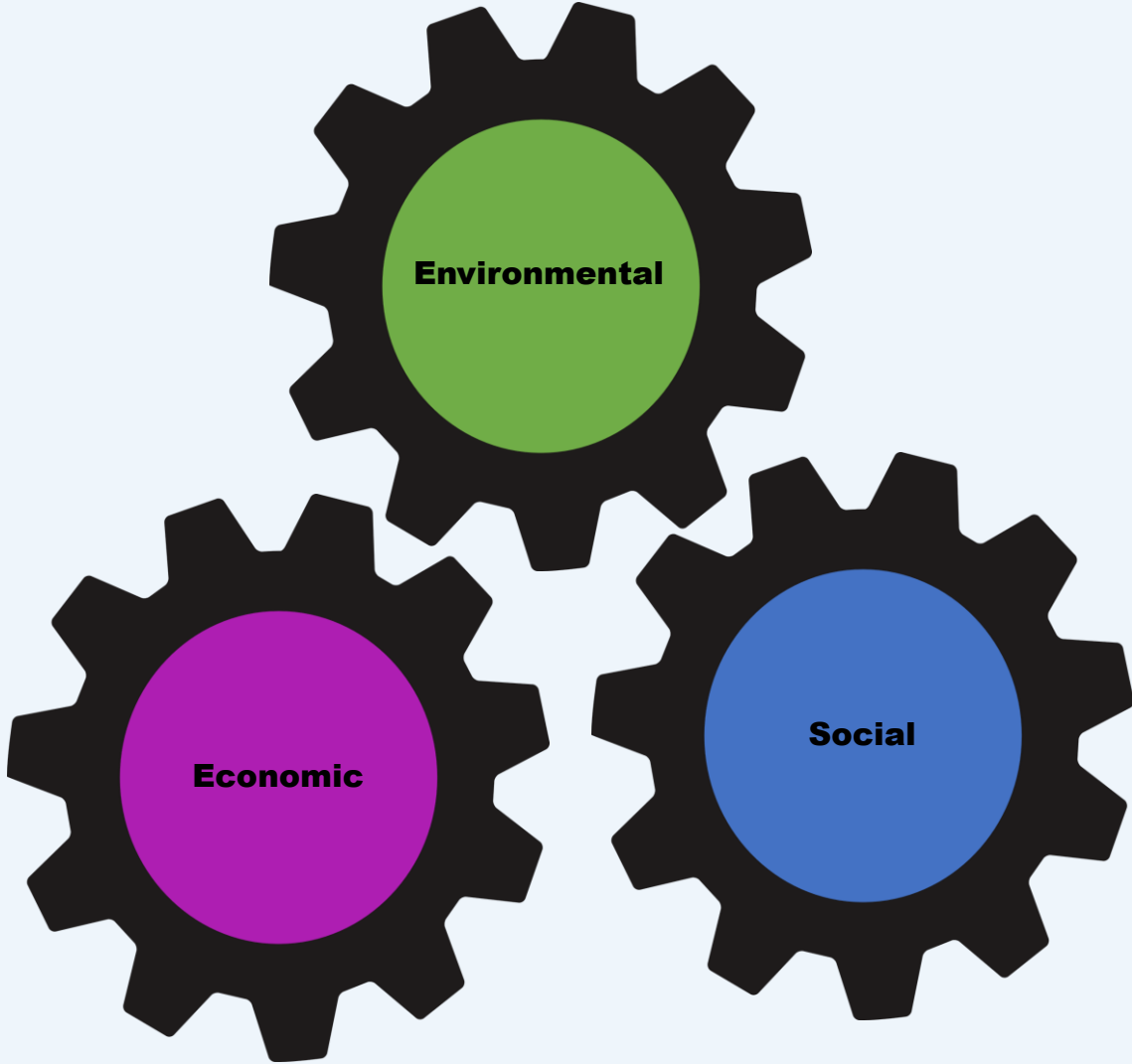
A **Sustainable Borough** is one where economic, environmental, and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well balanced and equitable.

Putting sustainability at the core of our Corporate Plan means considering the implications of a changing climate alongside shifting economic and social needs.

The identification of priorities, outcomes, commitments, and measures of success are based on putting in place the conditions needed to become a sustainable Borough.

Questions for consultation?

- Do you agree with our proposed vision?



Our Three Corporate Priorities

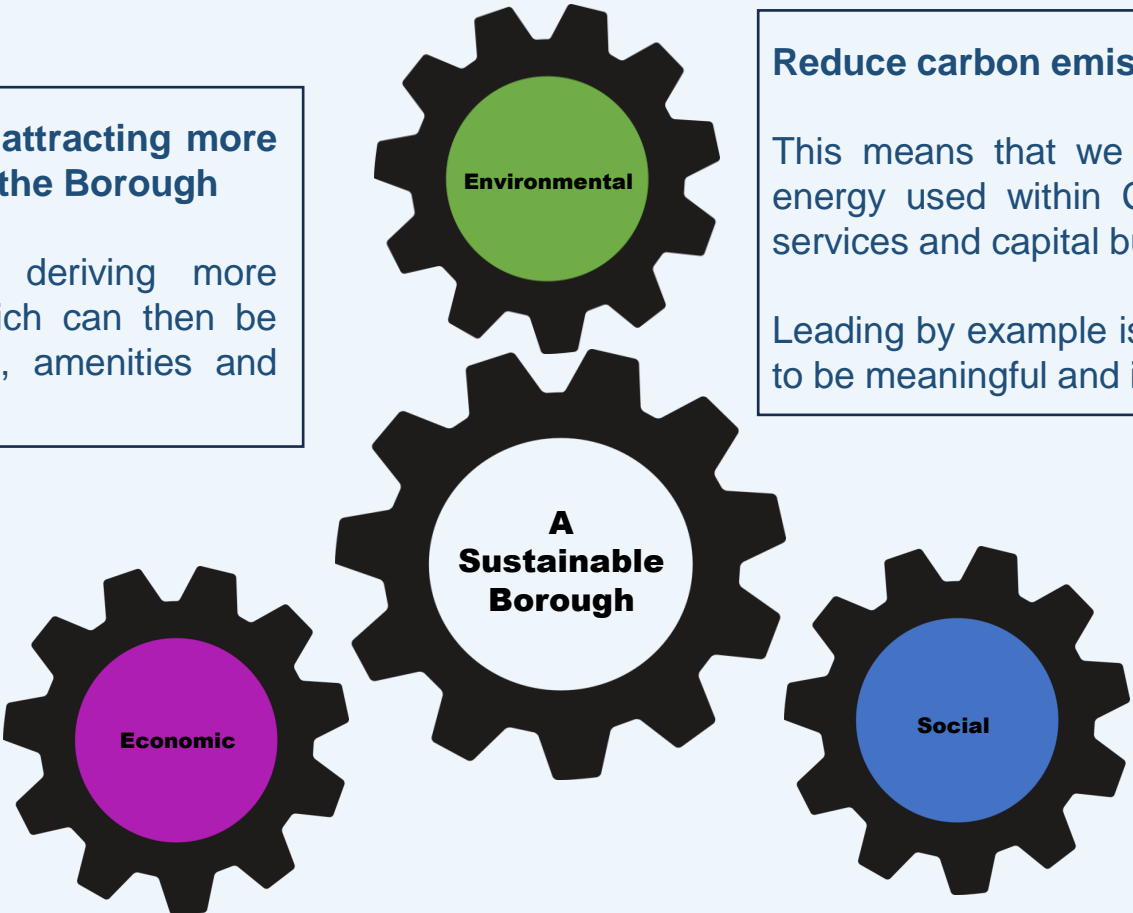
To become a Sustainable Borough, **three Corporate Priorities** have been identified that align with the three pillars of sustainable development. The three priorities are ambitious, and we will need to work in partnership with other organisations to achieve them. The priorities mean we will need to consider how we equitably invest our money and resources. **Greater focus is needed to increase the money received from the non-domestic rate base** which will then enable us to sustainably reinvest in appropriate social and environmental commitments that align with our vision to be **A Sustainable Borough**. This will mean taking challenging, but necessary, decisions to reduce activity and expenditure in some areas while increasing it in others.

Economic Growth to focus on attracting more businesses and more jobs into the Borough

A growing economy includes deriving more income from business rates which can then be invested in vital public services, amenities and programmes.

Consultation

- Do you agree with our three Corporate Priorities?
- Do you think they will help achieve our vision of a Sustainable Borough?



Reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero

This means that we will focus on reducing the amount of energy used within Council buildings and fleet, delivery of services and capital build projects.

Leading by example is important if the transition to net zero is to be meaningful and inclusive of the whole Borough.

Social inclusion and reduced inequalities

This means that we will focus on the root cause of social exclusion and disadvantage by promoting wellbeing and creating equitable access to resources, opportunities, and services across our Borough that benefit everyone.

Economic Priority

Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses

- ❖ The Council receives over 80% of its funding through the local property tax. Rates are paid by householders (domestic rate) and businesses (non-domestic rate). The more ratepayers there are, the less each will have to pay, and the more money is available to invest in our communities.
- ❖ The Council must focus investment on activities that will increase economic growth, or risk funding being unavailable to achieve the other two corporate priorities.
- ❖ Economic growth is a measure of the increase in the value of goods and services produced by the economy over time.
- ❖ Increased economic growth will help achieve our vision of a sustainable Borough as the increased revenue it generates via the non-domestic rate can be used to help off-set the cost of transitioning to low carbon future, which will require considerable investment in renewable energy sources and infrastructure.
- ❖ Economic growth is important because it can lead to higher living standards, better employment opportunities and greater economic security for all.
- ❖ Sustained and inclusive economic growth is a prerequisite for sustainable development, which alongside our transition to net zero and reduction of inequalities will help to improve livelihoods of people across the Borough.
- ❖ Over the course of history, sustained rises in GDP have been shown to improve health, wealth and happiness. BUT it must be sustainable and inclusive to ensure that it benefits everyone and does not come at the expense of the environment or future generations.
- ❖ Economic growth can help create jobs and reduce poverty, which is essential for ensuring that everyone benefits from the transition to a sustainable future.

Why is this priority important?

- The non-domestic (business) rate base has decreased year-on-year since 2015.
- 4,815 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in AND (2023) with 63% of these businesses with turnover over £100k and 19% with turnover over £500k.
- The GVA per head at current basic price was £13,327 in AND, continuing to be lowest among all NI Local Government Districts (2021).
- 23.6% of AND working age population (16-64 years) were economically inactive (2021).
- The median gross weekly earnings for AND residents working outside the Borough was £464 and only £394 for those working within the Borough, both below the NI average of £498 (2022).

Consultation

- Do you agree with this priority?
- Have we adequately explained why focusing on economic growth will help us transition to net zero and reduce inequalities by creating jobs and attracting new businesses to the Borough?

Environmental Priority

Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero

11

- ❖ Net zero is a term used to describe when the amount of greenhouse gases (carbon, methane etc.) released into the atmosphere is equal to the amount that is removed.
- ❖ To achieve net zero, we must reduce our emissions to as low as possible and then offset any remaining emissions by removing carbon from the atmosphere.
- ❖ We can reduce our carbon emissions by increasing the amount of renewable energy we use. We can also cut our energy use by being more energy efficient and making our equipment less energy intensive.
- ❖ Carbon can be removed from the atmosphere by planting trees and managing natural spaces that help to capture and store carbon e.g. wetlands, peatbogs and forests.
- ❖ We have several initiatives already underway including our tree planting strategy and policies to reduce waste being sent to landfill, which all contribute to this priority.
- ❖ The Council will need to provide strong Civic Leadership and will need to work in partnership as we transition to net zero. We will focus on reducing the amount of energy used within Council buildings, fleet, delivery of services and capital build projects. Leading by example is important if the transition to net zero is to be meaningful and inclusive of the whole Borough.

Consultation

- Do you agree with this priority?
- Have we adequately explained why we need to take action to meet our net zero obligations?

Why is this priority important?

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 for Northern Ireland, along with interim targets including an at least 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030.

ANDBC Carbon Footprint
Council Building: Electricity- 1,003,272tCO₂e (2022/23)
Council Building: Gas – 1556.04tCO₂e (2022/23)
Council Fleet: 1592 tCO₂e (2022/23)

AND Area Carbon Footprint
Carbon Dioxide Emission: 875ktCO₂e (2021)
Total GHG Emission: 1208ktCO₂e (2021)

AND Municipal Recycling Rate - 51.7% (2020/21)

In Ards and North Down, it is predicted summer heatwaves will become more common. Winters will be warmer and wetter, and sea levels could rise by almost 20cm by 2050.

Social Priority

Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

12

- ❖ The Council will improve wellbeing by creating equal access to resources and opportunities, and services across our Borough for everyone.
- ❖ To help get to the root causes of societal issues it is important that we give everyone the best start in life and work hard to raise aspirations. Social inclusion and reduced inequality are essential for creating a just, inclusive and sustainable Borough for everyone.
- ❖ Social inclusion and reduced inequalities are important to improve people’s wellbeing, health, education and provide protection for people who are vulnerable.
- ❖ Inequality and exclusions are often linked to increased community tension and conflicts. By prioritising these as part of our agenda to improve wellbeing we help to reduce anti-social behaviour while also increasing aspirations.
- ❖ Parks and open spaces are associated with health and wellbeing and can help increase social cohesion and interactions, increase volunteering and opportunities for more creative ‘play’ among children, as well as better educational performance.
- ❖ Wellbeing, social inclusion and equality help to enhance economic growth, productivity and innovation by tapping into the potential of diverse talent, skills and resources.
- ❖ Improved social wellbeing will help prepare people for some of the unavoidable consequences of a changing climate. People who are socially excluded are often those who suffer most from the impacts of severe weather events.

Consultation

- Do you agree with this priority?
- Have we adequately explained the link between wellbeing, social inclusion and reduced inequalities?

Why is this priority important?

Living in **greener areas** is associated with **less income-related health inequality**, weakening the effect of deprivation on health. Access to outdoor spaces and leisure activities has been linked to improved mental health and wellbeing.

3.6 (male) and 2.5 years (female) - the gap in life expectancy between AND residents living in deprived areas (2019-21).

The **employment rate** of people with disabilities was **37.3% (2022)** compared to **83%** of people without disabilities.

12.2% of young people in AND not in Education, Employment or Training (**NEET**).

Levels of self-efficacy lower in AND (**11.5%**) compared to NI average of 17.6% (2021).

25.8% gap of non-free school meal entitlement school leavers and FSME leavers achieving level 2 or above (2021/22). This is a larger gap than NI average (25.1%).

Our Seven Outcomes



- ❖ To meet our three corporate priorities, we have identified seven outcomes to become **A Sustainable Borough**.
- ❖ Using an outcomes-based approach will help us identify what we need to happen (the outcome) and then work backwards to determine the commitments needed to reach them.
- ❖ This approach is known as Outcomes Based Accountability. Collective progress towards all seven outcomes is what will help us become a sustainable Borough.
- ❖ An outcome is written to express the future we want to see rather than being a statement about the present situation. Outcomes are aspirations that the Council will work towards achieving over the four years of the Corporate Plan.
- ❖ Our outcomes are numbered 1-7 but these are NOT in order of priority.

Consultation

- Do you agree with our seven outcomes towards A Sustainable Borough?
- Have we adequately explained how our outcomes will help us achieve our three Corporate Priorities?
- Have we missed something essential?

Our Commitments and Measures of Success

14

Each Outcome holds ways of measuring success that will allow us to measure whether we have been successful. Progress against our commitments will be monitored and reviewed regularly through the Council's individual Service Unit Plans. Overall progress on delivering the Corporate Plan will be reported on a regular basis through the Performance Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment Plan. An annual performance review will be published on the Council's website.

Commitments

- Our seven outcomes can be broken down into 17 commitments. These are smaller steps that will help ensure that progress is made towards our goal of becoming **A Sustainable Borough**. Alongside the three priorities, the commitments will provide the route to help us work towards the outcomes.
- In addition to the 17 commitments, we are also committed to delivering all our statutory functions.

Measures

- While the commitments outline how we will implement the plan, we have identified measures of success that will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of our Corporate Plan. By tracking progress, we can assess if we are on track to meet our agreed outcomes and goal to be **A Sustainable Borough**. Measures of success are both quantitative and qualitative.
- Separate plans for each service unit area within the Council are agreed annually and progress is reported every six months. These Service Unit Plans contain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and provide more detail about how services will be delivered to meet the Corporate Plan Outcomes, Priorities and vision to be **A Sustainable Borough**.

Outcome 1 - We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Having a Borough in which citizens and businesses are consulted and engaged, will result in the provision of responsive and better designed services. By considering how we engage and talk with people, and how different stakeholder groups and issues require different methods of engagement and/ or consultation, we will be better equipped to take decisions that enhance economic growth, reduce our carbon emissions and improve wellbeing by reducing inequalities.

We will commit to:

1. Proactively broadening our community, business and stakeholder engagement approach to include co-design and participation where appropriate.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Developed Partnerships that result in shared activities and involve democratic, evidence-based decision making (for example, Community Planning, Labour Market Partnership, etc.)
- ❖ Examples across all our service areas of mechanisms used to consult and engage with residents, community groups, businesses, visitors and other stakeholders.



Consultation

- Do you agree with this commitment?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 2 - We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

16

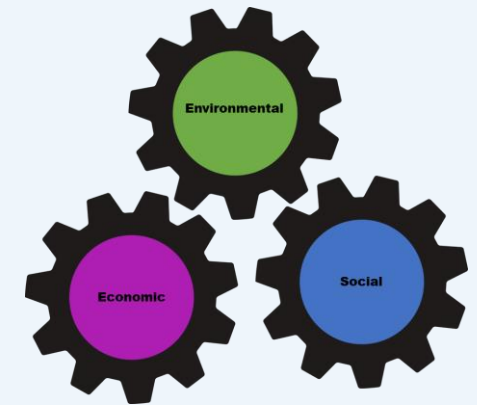
To meet the requirements of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the Council must commit to a range of activities to reduce our carbon emissions to help us to transition to net zero. This is important as energy costs money and by managing our climate obligations responsibly we will help manage our costs and increase our resilience to change. We also need to help citizens and businesses understand the impact of a changing climate and help them prepare and build resilience. To be environmentally sustainable we need to protect and enhance our green and blue spaces for both mitigation (net zero) and adaptation to climate change.

We will commit to:

2. Developing and funding a plan to transition Council operations to implement net zero carbon targets.
3. Promoting responsible behaviours that focus on reducing carbon emissions while enabling resilience to climate change.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Baselined and reduced our carbon footprint.
- ❖ Agreed a plan to transition to net zero carbon and integrated it within our Roadmap to Sustainability.
- ❖ Reduced our energy consumption with a continued focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- ❖ Increased the percentage of waste that is sent for recycling and reduced landfill.
- ❖ Increased the amount of tree planting, to support carbon capture and storage, via implementation of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy.
- ❖ Maximised opportunities to attract external funding and build reserves to support the transition to net zero carbon that reduces the financial impact on the ratepayer.



Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 3 - We have a thriving and sustainable economy

17

By focussing on activities that result in sustainable economic growth, the Council will contribute to a reduction in poverty, higher living standards, better employment opportunities and greater economic security for all. A thriving economy will also encourage greater investment by other businesses into the Borough which in turn will help to increase our non-domestic rate base which will enable us to then support environmental and social wellbeing activities.

We will commit to:

4. Supporting the growth of key business sectors by focusing on business support, employability skills and required infrastructure.
5. Prioritising economic growth within the low carbon sector.
6. Helping people maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability.
7. Participating in partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g. digital) across the Borough.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Grown the Council's non-domestic district rate base.
- ❖ Developed programmes, and participated in initiatives, that help support business growth within Ards and North Down and that help people start their own businesses.
- ❖ Developed and implemented programmes, and worked in Partnerships, that increase people's skills, knowledge and employability.
- ❖ Helped businesses access training, knowledge, skills and innovations that help them transition to low carbon.
- ❖ Maximised opportunities for people to take part in volunteering.
- ❖ Maximised the use of Council-owned assets to generate economic return for the Borough.
- ❖ Reprioritised our capital plan towards supporting a thriving, low carbon, sustainable economy.
- ❖ Partnerships and activities that improve digital connectivity and that benefit local businesses.



Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 4 - We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

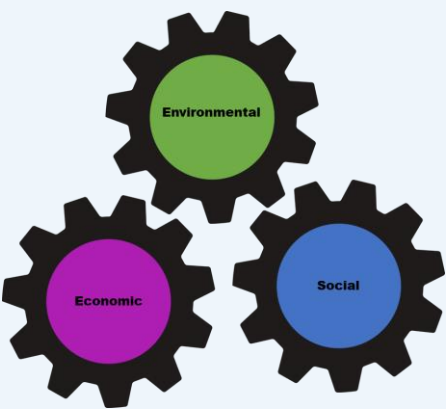
Any activities that result in a vibrant, attractive and sustainable Borough will create social, environmental and economic benefits for all our stakeholders. A focus on developing and enhancing our natural, built and coastal heritage and encouraging others to enjoy the assets within our Borough will help us become a sustainable visitor destination of choice.

We will commit to:

- 8. Developing the culture, and natural and built heritage assets of the Borough.
- 9. Managing, promoting and enhancing the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ A focused Borough programme of events and activities.
- ❖ Started to see delivery of the ambitions within the Belfast Region City Deal projects.
- ❖ Invested in high-quality, low carbon, built infrastructure.
- ❖ Participated in Partnerships that help tourism operators, and visitors, make more sustainable choices.
- ❖ Continued to deliver the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy.
- ❖ Effectively applied the policies within the Local Development Plan, to make well-considered and timely planning decisions.
- ❖ Maintained high standards of cleanliness in our city, towns and villages.
- ❖ Invested in our green spaces to improve biodiversity, increased community growing opportunities and encouraged responsible use.
- ❖ Participated in Partnerships that help protect our valuable natural and coastal assets and enabled us to sustainably use them for recreation and climate adaptation.



Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 5 - We have socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming

19

A sustainable community is one where people feel safe and welcome and where prosperity is shared. The Council must strive to create communities that reduce inequality and increase social inclusion, as prioritising these will contribute to reduced community tension, conflict and anti-social behaviour. The resulting safe communities will lead to improved wellbeing, increased aspirations and enhanced economic growth. This can be achieved through positive placemaking which is a collaborative process to create public spaces that foster social interactions, community engagement and improved wellbeing.

We will commit to:

10. Working in partnership with statutory agencies to promote safe communities and improve good relations.
11. Working with citizens to help them embrace culture and diversity.
12. Achieving positive placemaking with a focus on creating sustainable communities.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Developed and implemented interventions that help reduce anti-social behaviour.
- ❖ Developed and implemented programmes to help create harmonious communities.
- ❖ Developed and implemented a programme to increase community resilience (e.g., in response to the activation of the Emergency Plan that has been agreed prior to an emergency being declared).
- ❖ Developed and implemented programmes that focus on respecting culture and diversity.
- ❖ Provided opportunities for people to add value to their communities through the development, and local management, of community spaces.
- ❖ Used our policies (including grants) to enhance relationships with community and third sector organisations to deliver projects with a focus on safe, connected communities and social wellbeing.



Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 6 - We have active and healthy people

Focussing resources and delivering services which contribute to active, happy and healthy citizens and employees will contribute to better quality of life for all citizens. The wider determinants of health include the diverse range of economic, environmental and social factors that influence a person's mental and physical health. Happiness is also important for health, and it can be cultivated by helping people engage in activities that also take care of their physical and mental wellbeing.

We will commit to:

- 13. Improving physical and mental wellbeing.
- 14. Encouraging active and sustainable travel.



We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Developed and implemented a Leisure Strategy
- ❖ Delivered on our Greenways and Urban Trail Development.
- ❖ Improved the quality of our playparks and implemented a Play Strategy that encourages physical activity in children and young people.
- ❖ Completed Phase 1 of the Whitespots Country Park development.
- ❖ Delivered our services to maximise environmental protection and the wellbeing of people.
- ❖ Delivered an arts and heritage programme that increases opportunities for social inclusion.
- ❖ Supported health and wellbeing initiatives (citizens and employees) that focus on physical activity, mental health and early intervention.
- ❖ Reduced absenteeism and increased wellbeing of employees.

Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

Outcome 7 - Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

When the Council is performing at its most efficient and effective, its staff, citizens, customers and residents will all benefit. Ensuring our resources (physical, human and financial) are fit-for-purpose will be fundamental to the success of the organisation and the Borough.

We will commit to:

15. Delivering high-quality, cost-effective services that meet people's needs.
16. Ensuring that all people have equitable access to Council services.
17. Attracting, retaining, developing and supporting skilled and motivated staff.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- ❖ Developed a digital strategy to facilitate digital connectivity and delivery across all Council services.
- ❖ Implemented a Workforce Planning Strategy which enables us to understand the capacity and capabilities required for a high performing Council.
- ❖ Implemented our Customer Services Strategy to ensure our customers' needs are met.
- ❖ Reviewed our organisational design to ensure our services are delivered in an effective and efficient way.
- ❖ Right-sized the Council's estate to have the right number of staff and buildings to work effectively.
- ❖ Invested in leadership programmes and training that creates and nurtures high performing leaders and teams throughout the Council.
- ❖ Embedded our Behaviour Charter and PRIDE values as part of everyday work by our employees.
- ❖ Increased our financial resilience to safeguard the Council's long-term sustainability.



Consultation

- Do you agree with these commitments?
- Are the ways we plan to measure success appropriate?
- Is there anything we have not captured in relation to this outcome?

A Summary of our Draft Corporate Plan

Three Priorities

1. Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
2. Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality
3. Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses

Seven Outcomes

1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
2. We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
3. We have a thriving and sustainable economy
4. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
5. We have socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming
6. We have active and healthy people
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

17 Commitments

1. Proactively broadening our community, business and stakeholder engagement approach to include co-design and participation where appropriate.
2. Developing and funding a plan to transition Council operations to implementing net zero carbon targets.
3. Promoting responsible behaviours that focus on reducing carbon emissions while enabling resilience to climate change.
4. Supporting the growth of key business sectors by focusing on business support, employability skills and required infrastructure.
5. Prioritising economic growth within the low carbon sector.
6. Helping people maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability.
7. Participated in partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g., digital) across the Borough.
8. Developing the culture and heritage assets of the Borough.
9. Managing, promoting and enhancing the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice.
10. Working in partnership with statutory agencies to promote safe communities and improve good relations.
11. Working with citizens to help them embrace culture and diversity.
12. Achieving positive placemaking with a focus on creating sustainable communities.
13. Improving physical and mental wellbeing.
14. Encouraging active and sustainable travel.
15. Delivering high-quality, cost-effective services that meet people's needs.
16. Ensuring that all people have equitable access to council services.
17. Attracting, retaining, developing and supporting skilled and motivated staff.



Our vision is to be **A Sustainable Borough**.

Your Opinion Matters

23

- ❖ Your feedback is very important to us.
- ❖ You can respond to our consultation on the draft Corporate Plan by completing an online survey, by accessing a hard copy survey (with FREEPOST envelope), by writing to ... or by e-mailing
- ❖ We need to know if you understand why we have chosen our vision, three priorities, seven outcomes and measure of success. Do you agree with these?
- ❖ We also need to know if you think we have forgotten to include something that you feel is important.
- ❖ We will use your feedback to understand what is important to you and to make sure that this is reflected in the final version of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.



Ards and North Down Borough Council

Unclassified

25

ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	09 January 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	23 October 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	International Relations Update
Attachments	<i>Appendix 1 – Photos</i> <i>Appendix 2 – Summary of the Council’s Sister Cities and Town Twinning Relationships</i>

Background

Further to decision taken at the August meeting of the Council to:

(a) Consider the invitation extended to the Mayor, another Member plus one Senior Officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares, with the view to bring a further report back to Council with next step options on Sister City and Town Twinning relationships.

(b) Agree that a further report is brought back to the Council on International Relations including Town Twinning and Sister Cities and agree that Officers respond to the Questionnaire on Town Twinning by the deadline of 8

Not Applicable

26

September with initial thoughts and include a caveat that further consideration on this area by Council is pending.”

This report aims to update Members on both the outcome of the visit to Virginia Beach and the work that has followed, as well as the work that has been done on International Relations in a broader context.

Not Applicable

27

Virginia Beach – 20 September-23 September

At the meeting in August, the Council agreed to accept the invitation from the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach and send the Mayor and the Chief Executive to visit Virginia Beach in September. A breakdown of the itinerary of the visit including who they met and what work has taken place since is outlined in the table below. Some photographs of the trip and subsequent meetings can be found in appendix 1.

<u>Itinerary</u>	<u>Who did we meet with</u>
<u>Wednesday 20 September 2023</u> 7:30pm - Welcome Dinner and meeting.	Met Sister Cities Association Representatives: Jessica Windish, Maria Weissenseel, Carolyn Garrett, Katy Robertson, Ruth Smith.
<u>Thursday 21 September 2023</u> 10:00am - Tour of the City of Virginia Beach, city Council offices and chambers	<u>City of Virginia Beach Elected Members:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor, Councillor Bobby Dyer • Councillor Michael Berlucchi <u>Tallwood High School students with Glenlola Collegiate students and staff:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Windish Meeting and presentation by Chief Executive.
11:45am - Tour of IMS GEAR Manufacturing	Tour of factory and discussion about economic development opportunities with Gunter Weisenseel.
1:00pm – Working Lunch with Virginia Beach Sister Cities Association Committee.	
2:45pm - Tour of Town Center Economic Development Office and team meeting	<u>City of Virginia Beach Council officials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chuck Rigny, Director of Economic Development • Paige Fox, Business Development Manager Presentation by Paige Fox on economic development opportunities between Ards and North Down and Virginia Beach.

Not Applicable

	<p>The group discussed commonalities including plans to develop the Oceanfront area in Virginia Beach and the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Project as well as Exploris and potential links there.</p>
<p>3:30pm – Roundtable with local stakeholders and City Council officials.</p>	<p>Information exchange: Presentation by the Mayor and Chief Executive followed by discussion on opportunities for Sister Cities relationships/co-operation.</p> <p><u>Roundtable attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angeleigh Mitchell, Mayor’s Youth Leader in Action• Dorian Muncy, SCAVB Youth Ambassador• Lynette Andrews Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra• Laurie Skytt, VB Fire Department• Kenneth Pravetz, VB Fire Chief• Bev Anderson, VB School Board• Sara Lockett, Career and Technical Education in VB CPS• Roy Flanagan, VB Agriculture Department• Michael Mauch, Restaurant Association and Green Initiative Committee• Charles MacDowell, VB Economic Development UK (online)

Not Applicable

29

7:00pm - Dinner with Mayor Dyer, Councillor Berlucchi and Sister Cities Association representatives to discuss opportunities.	
<u>Friday 22 September 2023</u> 10:30am - Tour of the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center	Met with Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis of Virginia Beach Aquarium to tour the aquarium and discuss commonalities with Exploris and opportunities to collaborate.
12:00pm - Meeting at City Hall with Mayor Bobby Dyer	Presentation to Mayor Gilmour of the Virginia Beach City Seal and Proclamation – Exchange of Borough Plaque and gifts from Council. Meeting between the Mayors to discuss the Sister Cities relationship. Presentation from the Mayor of Virginia Beach to the Mayor of the Seal of Virginia Beach.
2:00pm - Round table discussion to review and brainstorm current and future mutually beneficial activities between Virginia Beach and Ards and North Down Borough.	To discuss student exchange opportunities between Tallwood High School and Glenlola ahead of Virginia Beach exchange in March 2024. <u>Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Weissenseel, President • Carolyn Garrett • Katy Robertson • Ex-Governor of Virginia Beach, Bob O'Donnell
5:00pm – Visit to Tallwood High School and informal dinner.	<u>Tallwood High School:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Windish • Dr Ryan O'Meara, Principal

Not Applicable

<p><u>Saturday 23 September 2023</u></p> <p>10:30am - Tour of local landmarks that honor our Sister City relationships narrated by the Sister Cities Youth Ambassador:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Japanese Garden (Miyazaki City, Japan)• Statue (Moss, Norway)• Anchor (Olongapo, Philippines)• Peace Pole (includes reference to AND)	<p>Tour by Jessica Windish, Tallwood High School Sister Cities representative and Maria Weissenseel, President of Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach.</p>
---	--

Not Applicable

31

Summary of key actions since the visit

Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach

A number of Zoom meetings have since taken place with the Sister Cities Association and Tallwood High School reps to talk about broad opportunities and the potential of a gift being made by Virginia Beach to ANDBC.

Virginia Beach City Council

Mayoral visit

Next steps are to explore idea of possible reciprocal visit of the Mayor of Virginia Beach in 2024 or 2025. Virginia Beach will hold a Mayoral election in 2024.

Economic Development

A number of Zoom meetings have since taken place to build on the relationship and discuss potential links with the Borough including Denroy who have links to the USA.

Paige Fox, Business Development Manager, Virginia Beach City Council and Charles McDowell, VB Economic Development UK travelled to Northern Ireland on 10 November for a previously planned visit with Invest NI. Following the introductory meetings in Virginia Beach, it was agreed to re-arrange time in the schedule to include meeting with the Mayor and Council Officers including the Chief Executive, Director of Prosperity and Head of Economic Development.

A meeting was held to discuss opportunities for the new year and the VB economic development priorities. The group also toured Artemis Technologies for a demonstration of the e-foiler - a project which Council are partnered in.

Looking ahead and reflecting on the trip in November, plans are now underway for a more substantial trip of the Virginia Beach Economic Development Leadership team to Ards and North Down in March 2024.

This trip will focus around a proposed event in the Borough on Ards and North Down and Virginia Beach new market opportunities looking to progress cross-sector links such as Creative Technologies, Professional Services (Insurance, Finance, Digital), Advanced Manufacturing, and the Agri-Food and Import sector, Defence, Cyber, Marine. This event will be organised in conjunction with Invest NI.

Tallwood High School

Following the trip, a meeting took place with the Mayor, Chief Executive and teachers from Glenlola Collegiate to discuss reciprocal inward visit scheduled for March 2024 of 10 students and 2 staff from Tallwood High School to Bangor.

A request has been made from Glenlola for Council involvement in the visit in terms of practical support e.g. discount on activities in the Borough e.g. Mount Stewart, Exploris, Aurora, Bangor Castle and Walled Garden etc.

Following Zoom meetings with Tallwood High School representatives, some early-stage progress has been made on building connections with the High School on career and technical education who are keen to learn about SERC.

Not Applicable

32

Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra

A number of Zoom meetings have taken place since the visit between Symphonicity, the Sister Cities Association and the Council to discuss and agree practical support for planned tour in June 2025 which will include a concert in Bangor. Work has also been done to link in with the Bangor Ladies Choir, as Ambassadors for the City, to perform at the concert.

Aquarium

Initial connections with the Virginia Beach Aquarium and next steps will be to connect with them with Exploris over a Zoom call to discuss potential collaboration opportunities and benefits of membership with the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Public Services

Following a meeting during the trip, early progress has been made on plans to re-connect with the Virginia Beach Fire Department to explore any potential opportunities or exchanges which previously took place.

International Relations

The Council's current Sister Cities and Town Twinning relationships were outlined in the report considered in August, and a full summary of each can be found in appendix 2.

In the light of the developing relationship with Virginia Beach, the Council are now asked to consider, broadly, their international relationships. Currently, there is no International Relations policy, strategy or framework.

As outlined, several relationships have been dormant for many years, and all are legacy relationships prior to the merger in 2015. Some are potentially no longer fit for purpose. Council should consider what a location has to offer in terms of economic development, tourism, regeneration, and other benefits that Council value.

Each of the current relationships are below:

- **Ards Borough Council and Peoria, Arizona, USA (Sister City)** – commencing in 2001, ties have primarily been in cultural, education, tourism and business, with exchanges also taking place with public services in 2004. The last outward delegation to Peoria was in 2010 and it is unknown when the last inward visit took place. Since 2011 the link has been dormant. The School Exchange trips also ended in 2013 due to budget constraints from Peoria. The Peoria Administration has confirmed that the Sister City relationship no longer exists.
- **Bangor and Bregenz, Austria (Town Twin)** – Bangor has a significant historical connection to Bregenz. In the first 20 years of the relationship, there were numerous civic visits by Mayors from North Down to Bregenz, but there have been no exchanges for a number of years. Plans were in place to visit Bregenz in 2020 to investigate tourism and regeneration in the area, in particular, in relation to the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Project. It was also planned to explore opportunities to re-invigorate the twinning relationship

Not Applicable

33

including the development of a Trans-European Trail from Bangor to Bobbio. This trip was cancelled due to the pandemic and plans have not been revisited.

Bangor has Christian Heritage links with Bobbio, but the relationship is informal only. In 2013 the legacy North Down Borough Council signed an agreement to formalise this relationship with the three becoming founding members of a European Cultural Route, "The Columban Way".

Given the strong connection with Bregenz, there is much potential to explore in terms of re-invigorating and it is recommended that relationship should be maintained.

- **Newtownards and Kemi, Finland (Town Twin)** – commencing in 1969 following a visit to Kemi by a Westminster delegation, based on similarities between the two towns in regard to their geographic position within their country, both had small airports and were mainly industrial towns with similar population sizes. There have been limited benefits due to prohibitive travel route. Benefits to date have primarily been cultural, with limited gains in terms of trading links. The last outward delegation from Ards Borough Council to Kemi was in 2014, and the last inward visit to the Borough was in 2007, with an unofficial visit of the Deputy Mayor. The relationship has been dormant for many years and no longer serves real purpose to the Borough. It is recommended that this relationship is now closed down.
- **North Down and Virginia Beach (Sister City)** – Formal relationship was recognised in 2002, with links primarily being cultural and business/manufacturing focused as well as exchanges with public services. A focal point of the relationship has been its strong education links between schools in North Down and Virginia Beach. The Borough has hosted a number of exchanges over the years with the Mayor of Virginia Beach visiting North Down in 1998, 2003, 2006 and 2012.

In recent years, the Sister Cities relationship has been relatively quiet, until 2023 when the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach have expressed much interest in re-igniting the relationship, including a school exchange between Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, and a visit from the Mayor and Chief Executive to Virginia Beach in September 2023.

Since this visit, plans have been put in motion to re-invigorate the connection with an event in Bangor in June 2025 arranged with Symphonicity (Virginia Beach orchestra) and Bangor Ladies Choir, another School Exchange in March 2024 with Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, as well as promising economic development links with Virginia Beach Council, with an initial visit already taken place in November 2023, and a further, more substantial visit planned in early 2024. It is recommended that Council continue to build this momentum and dedicate resource to this relationship.

The Executive Office/Local Government International Relations Working Group

Since its revival in November 2022, Officers have represented the Council at the Executive Office/Local Government International Relation Working Group. The

Not Applicable

34

Group is chaired by the TEO International Relations and Europe Strategy branch and meets quarterly. The purpose of the Group is to support the implementation of the Executive's International Relations Strategy, first agreed in 2014 and now under review, through co-operation with key stakeholders in Local Government, with a view to inform a revised draft International Relations Strategy for the consideration of the incoming Executive.

These meetings have encouraged Council to review its practice, as well as interact with other Council's – both inside the group forum and 1-to-1 - to share ideas and good practice.

Officers have engaged in discussions with counterparts in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Belfast City Council and Antrim and Newtonabbey Borough Council on their current and historic relationships, as well as seeking information and guidance on internal policies and frameworks/assessment matrices on Sister Cities and International Relations.

Framework

It is recommended that at this stage, a robust assessment process is engaged to ensure Council are working with the most suitable and constructive relationship.

Following some baseline research, it is recommended that Council consider adopting an 'assessment matrix' which can be used to evaluate both twinning requests as well as proactive assessments. This matrix would be broken down into three stages:

Stage 1 – a quantified approach

- Drawing on high level statistics centered on population (scale, density, age structure, and projected changes) and economic conditions (economic activity rate). This is an initial assessment of potential twinning areas, using high level population data to identify 10 areas of similar scale and characteristics, against a baseline.
- Once data is collated, a score will be developed for each indicator (e.g. a score of 5 for any district within +/- 10% of the baseline, a score of 3 for any district within +/- 20% and so forth.
- The output from this stage would be a list of suitable districts and regions.

Stage 2 – combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative measures.

- Following collection of data at stage 1, the second stage would allow for judgement to be exercised on a range of factors such as: Economy, Infrastructure, Environment and Governance.
- This information can then be judged qualitatively. It should also be noted that in addition to areas of similarity, there is merit in considering places that have distinctly different characteristics, which would offer new learning opportunities.
- The second stage is to be treated flexibly, and the characteristics used could be tailored depending on the twinning priorities at that point in time.

Not Applicable

35

Stage 3 – findings and recommendations

Officers would collate all baseline data as proposed in Stage 1 and Stage 2, relating to potential twinning partners and present findings and recommendations to the relevant Committee, expected to be Place and Prosperity Committee.

Council may also wish to consider developing a wider International Relations Strategy in which Sister Cities and Town Twinning would fit within.

In recent years there has been no budget set aside for International Relations or Sister Cities. Without a limited amount of funding, work would not be able to continue. It is recommended that Council consider a small budget initially of £5,000 to support the costs associated with upcoming inward visits in 2024 and 2025.

Next steps

The Council are now asked to agree to close down the formal relationships with Peoria, Arizona and Kemi, Finland, in the light of inactivity and maintain the 'Twin' and friendship relationship with Bregenz and the Sister City relationship with Virginia Beach with the view to develop these relationships in a meaningful way. increase engagement and opportunity with both respectively. In addition, re-form an International Relations Sub-Committee under the Place and Prosperity Committee, using the recommended Assessment Framework outlined above, review the Council's current links to ensure the Council are getting the most from each relationship and identify any future Sister City or Twinning relationships. The Sub-Committee would also be tasked with developing an International Relations policy for Council consideration.

The Council would also consider the inclusion of a small international relations budget of £5,000 in the 2024/25 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the next steps actions outlined in this report.





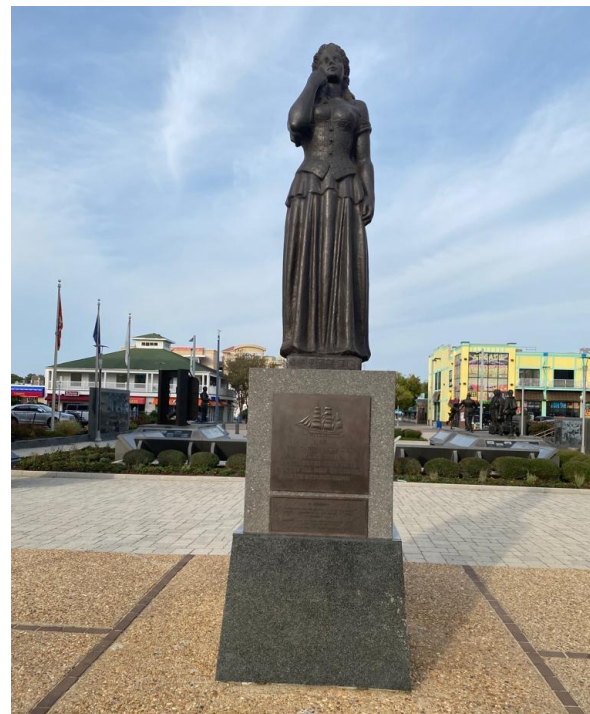
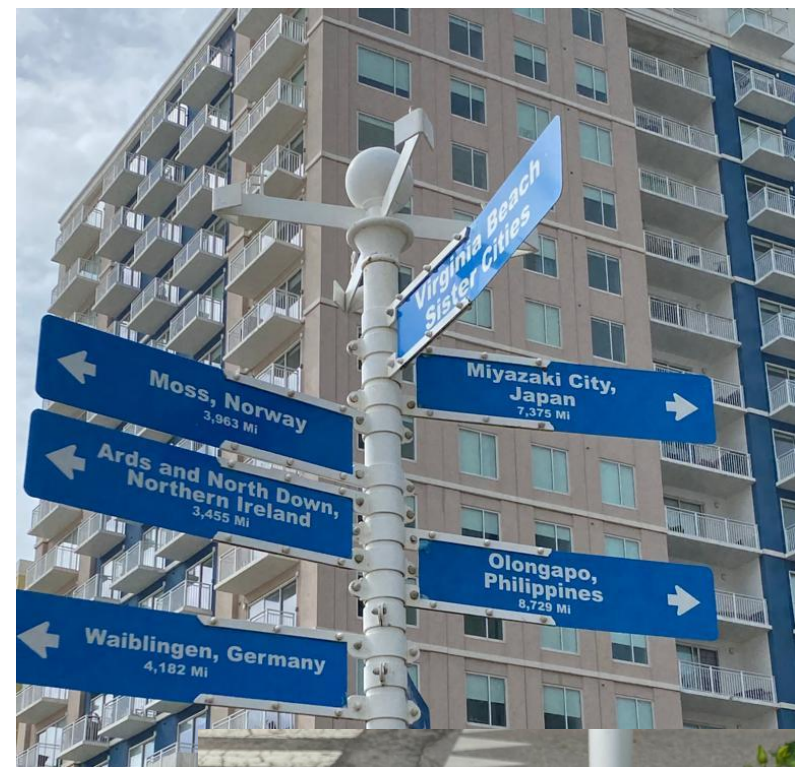












Appendix 2 – Summary of the Council's Sister Cities and Town Twinning Relationships

Bangor is twinned with Bregenz in Austria and North Down Borough Council formed a Sister City link with Virginia Beach in the USA. Newtownards is twinned with Kemi, Finland and Ards Borough Council formed a Sister City link with Peoria, Arizona, USA.

Town Twinning – Bangor and Bregenz, Austria

Bangor's connection with Bregenz stems from St Columbanus and St Gall who worked as missionaries in Bregenz from 610–612. In 1984 North Down Borough Council agreed to present a stone to Bregenz to commemorate the opening of the Church of St Kolumban in Bregenz. The 2 tonne stone was taken from the Long Hole, Bangor and shipped to Bregenz where it was inscribed and installed outside the church and it is now known as "the Columbanus Stone". In 1987 the official town twinning link between Bangor and Bregenz was established.

In the first 20 years of the relationship, there were numerous civic visits by Mayors from North Down to Bregenz, but these did not continue in the latter years of North Down Borough Council, and not at all since Ards and North Down Borough Council was established. However, outside the Council's civic role, there have been many cultural exchanges between the two towns, including through school visits, Churches, football teams and musical performers.

It was agreed to organise a trip in 2020 for the Chief Executive and the Director of Place (then Director of Regeneration and Development) to go to Bregenz to investigate tourism and regeneration in the area and to learn more about the waterfront area, ahead of the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment. At the same time, it was hoped to meet representatives who may help to further the ambition of the development of a trans-European Trail from Bangor and including Bregenz, ending in Bobbio, Italy (where the relics of St Columbanus rest), as well as enabling discussions on how the two could re-energise the twinning relationship between Bangor and Bregenz. This trip was cancelled due to the pandemic and plans have not been revisited.

Recognised European Pilgrimage Route – the Columban Way

St Columbanus's journey from Ireland to Bobbio, Italy, where he set up a monastery, is celebrated as a golden age for Irish influence and learning in Europe.

Former Alderman, Deborah Girvan is the President of the European Association of the Columban Way. On previous visits, the Mayor of Bregenz had indicated that they would be keen to rekindle the twinning of the towns and to get further involved in the Columban Way.

Bangor and Bobbio, Italy

Bangor has Christian Heritage links with Bobbio, but not as a formal Twin Town. In 590, Columbanus departed Bangor Abbey, establishing two of his main monastic settlements in Bobbio and Luxeuil. St. Columbanus is buried in Bobbio.

An informal relationship has existed between the areas for many decades thanks to the legacy of Columbanus with educational and pilgrimage visits between the areas. In November 2013 the legacy North Down Borough Council signed an agreement to formalise this relationship with the three becoming founding members of a European Cultural Route, “The Columban Way” the aim of which is to build on cultural relations and exchanges, resulting in economic benefits to the area through development of the Cultural Route.

Whilst the initial “Way” involves the three areas mentioned, the hope is that once established other areas related to Columbanus such as Bangor’s Twin Town of Bregenz, Austria and St Gallen in Switzerland etc. will see the “Way” expanded to include a number of European partners along with others in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland where there have been expressions of interest to date. There have been Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral visits to Bobbio on three occasions.

Town Twinning - Newtownards and Kemi, Finland

The link commenced in 1969 following a visit to Kemi of the then Westminster MP for the Ards area, Mr GBH Currie on a House of Commons delegation. Mr Currie felt there were many similarities between the two towns – Kemi was at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia; Newtownards was at the head of Strangford Lough; both had small airports and were mainly industrial with populations approximately similar. Following re-organisation in 1973 Ards Borough Council agreed that the twinning arrangement should continue.

The main economic activity in Kemi is centred on two large paper and woodpulp mills and it has the only chromium mine in Europe. A polytechnic university of applied science is also situated in Kemi. It has the only deep-water harbour in Lapland so it is capable of addressing the needs of the business sector. Several delegations from Ards have gone out to Kemi since 1969, the most recent being in 2014 for the 145th Anniversary celebrations. The visit prior to this was in 2009, for the 140th anniversary. Reciprocal visits have been received with the most recent taking place in 2007 with an unofficial visit of the Deputy Mayor of Kemi. Prior to that, the last official visit was in 1994, to explore the industry and education sectors.

Benefits have been limited due to the prohibitive cost of travel. The main benefits have been cultural and modest gains have been made in terms of trading links.

Sister Cities – Newtownards and Peoria, Arizona, USA

A formal Sister City Agreement was signed in November 2001 between Newtownards and Peoria, Arizona. This was followed up by a delegation from Ards Borough Council in January 2002 to cement the Sister City ties with Peoria, and to commence linkages in the areas of business, education tourism and cultural development.

The Creative Peninsula (Newtownards) and the McCall Visual Arts/Challenger Learning Centre (Peoria) exhibitions have been shown in Arizona and Northern Ireland respectively.

Practical exchanges between golfing businesses including Quintero (Peoria), Kirkistown and Scrabo (Ards) took place in 2003 and 2004.

A school exchange programme was agreed in July 2004 involving local schools. Exchanges have taken place between the Fire and Police Departments in August 2004. A Phase 2 business plan (2004-2006) was developed to take the relationship forward in terms of Economic Development; Tourism, Crafts and Cultural Ties; Education and other key services. This included a Mayoral visit by Ards Mayor in 2005, Sister Cities Young Ambassadors Student Exchange Programme to Peoria and reciprocal visits of students from Peoria in 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011.

There was a final visit by the Mayor of Ards and two Officers in April 2010. Since 2011, the link has not been active. There has also been no contact since the School Exchange trips ended in 2013 due to budget constraints from Peoria.

Sister Cities - North Down and Virginia Beach, USA

The Sister Cities Agreement between Virginia Beach and North Down was formally recognised in 2002, following a visit from the Mayor of Virginia Beach, Meyera Oberndorf to the North Down Borough in 1998. Prior to a formal agreement, a Friendship Agreement was signed in 1999 by the then Mayor of North Down Borough, Marion Smith and the Mayor Oberndorf of Virginia Beach.

Several cultural exchanges have taken place over the years including an exchange with Bangor Ladies Choir performing in Virginia Beach, with the Virginia Beach Orchestral organisation, Symphoncity, planning a tour that will include a visit and performance in Bangor in the near future. Both Virginia Beach and Ards and North Down Borough have had several opportunities to share expertise and community through the exchanges conducted between the Fire and Emergency services. As well, there is a common interest in business and manufacturing services. On one visit to the Borough, the Virginia Beach Delegation enjoyed a tour of the Denman International facility, and they have since offered to a reciprocal visit of a delegation from Ards and North Down to the IMS Gear Factory (production facility of metal and plastic gear and gearboxes) in Virginia Beach. The Borough has hosted a number of exchanges over the years with the Mayor of Virginia Beach visiting North Down in 1998, 2003, 2006 and 2012.

A focal point of the relationship has been its strong links between schools in North Down including Priory College, Holywood, St Malachy's, Bangor, Towerview Primary School, Bangor with partner schools in Virginia Beach.

In recent years, the Sister Cities relationship has been relatively quiet, with the only current active link being between Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, Virginia Beach, which take part in regular exchanges.

Unclassified

47

ITEM 5a**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	09 January 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	18 December 2023
File Reference	NOM 181
Legislation	'-
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NOM 181 - Naming of a place or building in honour of Queen Elizabeth II and Bangor Entrance Signage
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Signage Options

Bangor was awarded City Status as part of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in May 2022.

At the Council meeting September 2022, Members agreed the following Notice of Motion in respect of this honour:

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.

1. Naming of a place or building

Council Officers have been liaising with the Northern Ireland Office in relation to guidance around the naming of buildings after Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Formal guidance was expected from the Palace but has not been released.

Not Applicable

48

Officers in the Lands Team in conjunction with Heads of Service have reviewed the Council's land portfolio in Bangor and surrounding area and advised that no suitable locations are immediately obvious. There are many locations named throughout the City which reference the late Monarch and outside the Bangor area there had been recognition of the Jubilee at the time with a park in Ballygowan being renamed to Platinum Jubilee Park.

The next significant investment project in Bangor is the Queen's Parade Development by Bangor Marine. The Marine Garden's section of this project, from the McKee Clock to Pickie Fun Park, will be completed first and would offer an opportunity to name a unique, new feature in the City's waterfront naming it 'The Queen Elizabeth Marine Gardens' subject to equality screening, consultation and approval. If agreed then the Council will submit a formal request to the Cabinet Office for use of the Royal name for this site and await their response before implementation.

2. Signage update

Bangor has five current entrance signs, which are in keeping with all other town gateways signs in the Borough and were funded by DfC.

Planning permission had to be secured for the erection of these signs and if the design were to change significantly (primarily in terms of dimensions) this process might have to be completed again.

To avoid the requirement for a further planning application and to keep the signs complimentary to those in the other towns it is recommended that an update to the current design, rather than a complete redesign, is undertaken. This would allow the existing steel brackets and supporting structures to be reused with just a replacement of the polycarbonate panels – reducing the overall replacement costs.

The new signage design includes the updated City of Bangor logo and reference to the platinum jubilee.

Appendix 1 shows two draft designs (Options A and B), which incorporate the updated logo and A) the official Platinum Jubilee logo without the 'by the Sea' strapline and B) the official Platinum Jubilee logo, plus the wording 'A Platinum Jubilee City'. Members should be advised that the 'by the Sea' strapline was agreed with the Bangor stakeholder group as part of the town and City branding exercise.

Members will also note that the overall height of the sign has been increased to better accommodate the additional elements from the Notice of Motion, but this change does not impact the support structure or require any further planning review.

The costs of the manufacturing and installing the new signs will be £7,600 – there is no existing budget for this work but it has been included in the rate setting process for 2024/25.

Not Applicable

49

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Marine Gardens, Bangor, once redeveloped be named 'The Queen Elizabeth Marine Gardens,' subject to equality screening and consultation; and Officers continue to engage with the Cabinet Office to seek their approval.
2. Signage option A or B is agreed and allocation of budget is made in the current estimates process for 2024/25.

Option B

50



Existing sign type - to be replaced

2 perspex panels with coloured vinyl and clear sections



Proposed replacement sign type

Solid opaque panel - no transparen sections

New city title moves up and all logos increase in size

Repaint fixing locators and posts



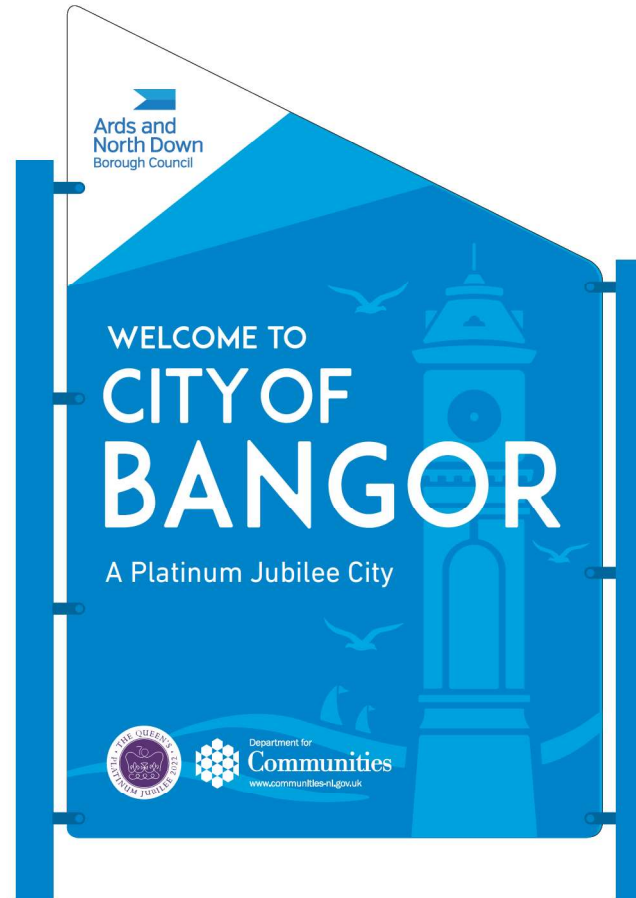
Option A

51



Existing sign type - to be replaced

2 perspex panels with coloured vinyl and clear sections



Proposed replacement sign type

Solid opaque panel - no transparen sections

New city title moves up and all logos increase in size

Repaint fixing locators and posts

