

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

20 June 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 26 June 2024 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 June 2024 (Copy to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 29 May 2024 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Annual Council Meeting dated 5 June 2024 (Copy attached)
8. Minutes of Committees
 - 8.1 Planning Committee dated 11 June 2024 (Copy attached)
 - 8.2 Environment Committee dated 12 June 2024 (Copy attached)
 - 8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 13 June 2024 (Copy attached)
 - 8.3.1 – Item 4 – Matter Arising – Nominations to Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group (Report attached)
 - 8.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 18 June 2024 (Copy attached)

- 8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 19 June 2024 (Copy attached)
9. Requests for Deputation
 - 9.1 Deputation Request from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (Report attached)
- 10.1 Resolution - NIPSA pay and grading review of non-teaching staff in the education sector (Correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council attached)
- 10.2 Letter of Support from Council (Report attached)
11. Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 (Report attached)
12. Sealing Documents
13. Transfer of Rights of Burial
14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
15. Notices of Motion
 - 15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council tasks Officers to bring forward urgent proposals for ground maintenance to address the poor and unkept condition of Millisle Beach Park in order to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-kept to welcome visitors to Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further Council bring forward a report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage.

- 15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers

That the Council, following the 80th anniversary of D-Day, recognises the service of US regiment(s) stationed in Donaghadee and our Borough prior to D-Day and tasks officers to bring a report back looking at ways in which our Borough could provide a lasting memory to them.

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

16. Tender Award and update on Greenways Construction (Report attached)
17. Review of cross Council mutual aid protocol (MOU) (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Harbinson
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Brooks	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman Graham	Councillor Irwin
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McRandal	Councillor Kendall
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor Martin
Alderman Smith	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKee
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Cathcart (Mayor)	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Chambers	Councillor Moore
Councillor Creighton	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Rossiter
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Smart
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Wray

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 29th May 2024 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour)	
Aldermen:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter Cummings Graham	McDowell McIlveen Smith
Councillors:	Ashe Blaney Boyle Cathcart Chambers Creighton (8.07 pm) Douglas Edmund Harbinson Hollywood S Irvine W Irvine Irwin (8.02 pm)	Kendall Kerr (7.15 pm) Martin (7.51 pm) McCollum (8.07 pm) McCracken (7.55 pm) McKee McLaren McRandal Moore Morgan Rossiter (8.02 pm) Smart Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. PRAYER

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

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman Brooks, Alderman McAlpine, Councillor McKimm and Councillor Cochrane.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Kerr, Creighton, Irwin, Rossiter, Martin, McCracken and McCollum.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alderman McIlveen and Councillor S Irvine declared an interest in Item 16 - Request to use Council Land at Londonderry Park for demonstration field 12th July 2024.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor was pleased to welcome Susie McCullough in her new role as Chief Executive. She remarked that Susie had been a great Director and was confident that she would continue that ethos in her new role and wished her well. The Mayor thanked the Members who had been involved in recruitment panel, along with the Local Government Staff Commission and the Council's HR department.

The Mayor thanked those Members that had attended her Charity Concert the previous Thursday evening which had been a wonderful evening raising money for her charities.

The Mayor reminded Members that the Sea Bangor events were being held that weekend and if Members could advise Democratic Services if they would be attending the D-Day Commemoration Service on Sunday 2nd June if they had not already done so.

NOTED.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2024

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of May 2024.

The Mayor paid tribute to the work of Jim and Roberta Gorr, Poppy Appeal Organisers whom had recently retired for their work and the money raised for poppy appeal.

Alluding to further highlights in the month, the Mayor referred to the Pipeband Championships which had been a successful day with bands attending from across the UK. Portaferry RNLi had held a service to mark 200 years of the lifeboat and had since written to the Mayor thanking the Peninsula Councillors for their contribution and in particular Councillor Boyle for his advice and assistance. Another highlight of the month, was that she had visited Ballyboley Farm and been fortunate to witness 3 dexter calves being born.

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

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 24 APRIL 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Planning Committee dated 7 May 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

7.2 Environment Committee dated 8 May 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

In respect of Item 9 – Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, October to December 2023; Alderman Smith welcomed that progress had been made on the statistics. However, wished to raise an issue regarding the HRC's, which was being encountered when residents had booked a slot however upon arrival had found the HRC temporarily closed due to servicing. He recognised that servicing was an essential service, however that had occurred on a number of occasions and residents were frustrated. Alderman Smith asked if slots could be booked out for servicing to take place.

The Director of Environment stated that one of the benefits of the booking system was that servicing could be pre-planned, that was occurring and had significantly improved the situation. However, it was impossible to completely guarantee that servicing would not need to occur at short notice. At this time of year, particularly at smaller sites where there was a limited number of skips, green waste may require an unscheduled servicing. He took the comments on board and the booking system would be maximised to ensure the situation did not occur as much as possible.

Alderman Adair highlighted an issue with the booking system that there were a small number of addresses of properties in the Ards Peninsula whereby their addresses were not recognised despite being able to use other online outlets. He had previously contacted the department regarding the issue and had been assured that issue would be rectified however the situation was still occurring in particular for one property. That particular home had been there for some 20 years and could use any other similar booking systems. Although a small number, it was an important number of residents that were being dis-served. Also, residents were having to wait a long time to get through on the phone to book a slot with some residents having to

C.29.05.24 PM

7

wait 20 minutes. Alderman Adair raised another issue whereby a resident had booked two slots via the phone at 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm and when they turned up for their second booking they were turned away as there was no record of the second booking. Alderman Adair highlighted the need to rectify the issues in a timely manner and ensure the system was fit for purpose.

The Director of Environment outlined that Officers were aware there was a very small number of addresses that were not recognised on the system. Officers were going through the system to identify properties that were not on the system. He assured Members that when an address had been brought to their attention, they would assure it was put on the booking system as soon as possible. In terms of the telephone calls, the Council had been migrating to a new telephone system and there had been general delays for people getting through on the phone while that occurred. They had not been receiving a significant number of complaints regarding telephone delays, that was not to say it did not occur and the Director encouraged residents to contact the team. The Director assured Alderman Adair that he would follow up in relation to the specific property he mentioned.

Councillor Boyle congratulated the new Chief Executive on her position and wished her well. He was shocked to read in the local media potential closure of 7 of the 9 HRC's highlighting that had caused a lot of concern amongst residents. Members had received a level of explanation from the Director and Communications. However, he questioned if a statement had been issued to correct the information.

(Councillor Kerr entered the meeting – 7.15 pm)

The Director expressed his disappointment with the article highlighting the headline and the content was completely inaccurate and did not reflect the report or the debate that occurred. Officers had expressed their dissatisfaction to the local press as to how that matter was covered. The Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing was still in dialogue with the local press in relation to the matter.

Councillor Boyle highlighted the need for the matter to be corrected and felt that should have already occurred with an article in the paper this week. He expressed his disappointment that talks were still ongoing.

Alderman McDowell advised that he had been contacted by an irate resident, when they had tried to book at slot for an HRC on the system their account had been frozen as the person had used the site too many times and when they had rang the number to try and rectifying the issue there was no answer. Alderman McDowell asked if staff were in place to take calls on a Saturday and did the staff contact the residents when they were approaching their limit using the HRC. The Director advised that calls were not taken on Saturday. There was a trigger built into the system which was essential, as someone could keep using a residential address bringing waste into the HRC's not only household waste that could be commercial/trade waste. A frequent usage pattern was one of the biggest indicators that there was a problem. The trigger figure was 15 visits. In the first four months of the system the average number of visits per household was 1 ½ visits equating to 6 visits per year. Therefore, the trigger figure was not viewed as unreasonable. The Director explained that when a person reached the trigger a polite message

C.29.05.24 PM

8

appeared on the screen asking them to make contact with Council, a Recycling Officer would have a discussion with that person to discuss their requirements. If the Recycling Officer was satisfied the ability to book could be reactivated. Over the period from 1 January 2024 – 31 March 2024, approximately 42 people had reached the trigger, had made contact and in every one of those instances, after requirements were discussed, the possibility to book online had been reactivated. The Director explained there would be a significant cost to have Recycling Officers available to answer the phone on a Saturday and he did not feel it was reasonable or justifiable. A cost could be brought to the Committee for provision on a Saturday if Members wished.

Alderman McDowell felt it would be useful to have an email/text sent to the person as they were approaching the trigger.

(Alderman Smith withdrew from the meeting – 7.26 pm)

The Director undertook to check with the software provider if such an alert could be provided.

Councillor Cathcart congratulated the new Chief Executive and wished her well. Referring to the issue raised by Councillor Boyle, he expressed his disappointment with the inaccuracy. He stated that discussion had occurred at the Environment Committee regarding service plans into the future, potential rationalisation of HRC's and he had raised a concern regarding the word rationalisation which meant items were surplus to requirement, that was not the case and he had suggested the word transformation as an alternative. He clarified that the DUP were happy to look at the transformation of every service and if it led to a better service for the ratepayer then that could be considered. There would be no changes in HRC's until there was an enhancement to services for the residents of this Borough.

Councillor Kendall referred to the point raised for larger glass collection vehicles. She referred to narrow streets in Holywood, including Trevor Street, Spencer Street, etc with residents in those streets having reported that their glass collections had been missed. She asked what the long-term plan and solution for those types of streets was. As part of the services, transformation and improvement programme, the Director explained the plan was to expand the offering at the kerbside to include old textiles. In order to facilitate that, they would be collected on the same day and time as the glass collection and larger vehicles with a separate area for textiles would be in operation. That was a work in progress and work was occurring on the contingency arrangements for the less accessible narrow streets and roads.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that she had previously raised the matter of data protection within the booking system.

(Councillor Blaney withdrew from the meeting – 7.32 pm)

She had received an enquiry asking if the information used in the booking system was in any way shape or form sold to a third party. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter sought assurances in that regard.

C.29.05.24 PM

9

The Director confirmed that could not occur under the agreement and standards with the Service provider.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter requested the Director to provide that assurance in writing to allow her to respond to the enquiry. Data protection was of utmost importance and there was a need for people to know that the Council had taken all steps to ensure protection of residents' information.

Councillor Morgan noted that the Committee had been provided with a lengthy report on the waste statistics and had spent significant time debating that. She encouraged errors, hiccups and possible improvements to be brought forward. Councillor Morgan felt it was important to note the substantial improvement in the handling of waste, a positive result for all and encouraged for the work to continue.

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

7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 May 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 14 May 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

In respect of Item 3 – Sustainable NI – Request for Funding:

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Council does not commit to Accelerator Plus membership and instead investigates all possible alternative providers before making a final decision.

(Alderman Smith re-entered the meeting – 7.36 pm)

Alderman McIlveen referred to the debate that had occurred at the Corporate Services Committee when he had asked if a process had been undertaken to find a provider. Sustainable NI ran conferences, prepared consultation responses and undertook various items required under the Climate Change Act. The Council had used Sustainable NI for several years. The Director had advised that no exercise has had been undertaken to see if there were any organisations that provided a similar function and there was a vague assumption that Sustainable NI was the only organisation of its type. Sustainable NI was a lobby group, pursuing its own political objectives and Alderman McIlveen was concerned that public bodies were funding an organisation that was pursuing alternative objectives. Previous consultation responses completed by Sustainable NI had to be significantly amended by Council

as they did not represent the voice of the Council. He would like all of the alternatives explored and a further assessment to be provided.

(Councillor Blaney re-entered the meeting – 7.37 pm)

Alderman Adair concurred and believed the Council should not be funding a political lobby group. The proposal was sensible to allow Members to make an informed decision going forward.

Councillor McRandal asked the Director's view, if there were any other potential service providers, the anticipated timescale for the process and if the alternative proposal would have a detrimental effect.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the recommendation within the report was for Members to consider the membership. Whilst no specific research had been undertaken, it was felt that the alternative suppliers would likely be consultancy firms that would charge substantially more, however research could be undertaken if the Council wished. In relation to timelines, the Director stated that the services of Sustainability NI could be used relatively quickly if the membership was approved. In terms of undertaking further research into potential other suppliers, it would likely be the Council meeting in July before a report could be brought forward.

(Councillor Kerr withdrew from the meeting – 7.42 pm)

In response to a further question from Councillor McRandal, the Director outlined the potential process and he envisaged that would take a couple of months before a provider was in place.

(Councillor Kerr re-entered the meeting – 7.43 pm)

Councillor McRandal asked if the delay would adversely affect the Council. The Director was unsure how services were planned to be used. However Sustainable NI membership ran from April and therefore Council would lose out on the first part of the subscription.

Whilst recognising the points made by Councillor McRandal, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that she had grave concerns that Council policy was not being shaped by impartial information provided by Council and was being shaped by an external body.

Councillor W Irvine referred to the Council's internal expertise regarding sustainability. The Director stated that he had previously raised the Council's resource in relation sustainability and the Council currently had one Sustainability Officer. As part of restructuring, the plan was to increase that however that was a future plan and would cost substantially more than £15k.

Alderman Graham had reservations regarding the perceived conflict of Sustainable NI and them not being completely impartial. He noted that were many competing interest groups finding the common view was difficult. The cost was an important element ensuring value for money. He urged caution to ensure the advice received

in respect of Climate Change was sound impartial advice and not driven by ideologies.

Alderman Smith shared Alderman McIlveen's concerns to some degree, Sustainable NI were lobbyists as well as service providers. He noted that there had been issues in the past in respect of consultation responses that had been prepared on behalf of Council but had been contrary to the Council's view. He asked the Director if the matter was a single tender action.

The Director confirmed that as correct.

(Councillor Martin entered the meeting – 7.51 pm)

Alderman Smith referred to the increasing burden of work in relation to the Climate Change Act and that more internal resource or third-party support was required. Both were costly and the value for money element needed to be considered. He explained that his main concern was in relation to the practicalities, ensuring speed and the best quality service. He raised a question regarding the process of researching alternative suppliers. The Director advised that Officers initially would look at alternative providers in the same region of cost. He wished to do that before looking at the potential procurement strategy.

Alderman Smith stated that any response from Sustainable NI required Council approval. He was open minded regarding the proposal and his concern was in relation to the practicalities and if the research could be undertaken during the summer then the impact could be minimal. If Sustainable NI was the best option going forward, processes would need to be put in place to ensure Members were comfortable.

The Director stated that anything that Sustainable NI contributed to would come to Committee for approval.

(Councillor McCracken entered the meeting – 7.55 pm)

In principle, Councillor Moore did not have any objection to the alternative proposal to look at other potential suppliers and if Sustainable NI was the outcome, the Council had trusted the process and its robustness. At the core of everything, was to bear in mind what the Council needed.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Council does not commit to Accelerator Plus membership and instead investigates all possible alternative providers before making a final decision.

In respect of Item 12 - Capital Projects – Land Acquisition: Alderman McIlveen wished to raise the item in the exclusion of the public/press.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the minutes (with the exception of Item 12) be approved and adopted.

7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 15 May 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

In respect of Item 7 - Play Provision in Loughries; Alderman Adair advised that himself and Councillor Thompson had previously brought a Notice of Motion to the Council seeking play provision in Loughries. Referring to a piece of land in the area adjacent to Alexander Park that had been used by children. He had learnt that the lease on that land had been revoked and he questioned when that decision had been taken and when it had come before the Council for consideration.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing undertook to investigate the matter.

In respect of Item 18 – Comber Greenway Alternative Route; Councillor Ashe advised that she wished to raise the item in the exclusion of the public/press.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the minutes (with the exception of item 18) be approved and adopted.

Matter Arising from Item 11 of the Community and Wellbeing Committee (File CW74)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a report at item 11 of the Community and Wellbeing Committee on 15th May 2024 provided updates to members on a number of capital projects, in response to a motion agreed by Council on 28th February 2024, which read as follows.

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

As a result, the Community and Wellbeing Committee had agreed to recommend to Council the following in relation to future reports.

That Council task officers to prepare monthly project planning reports incorporating the traffic light system in respect of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry 3G Pitch and Portaferry Sports Centre projects to present to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

Officers had discussed the request to alter the format of the report that was presented to Committee in response to the original motion and would seek the endorsement of the proposer of this before presenting it to a future committee meeting.

However, with reference to Standing Order 26, no motion to rescind any resolution passed within the preceding 6 months shall be proposed by a member unless notice was given and was signed by at least 15% of members of the Council. Therefore, the proposal to ask in May 2024 for an updated report every month, therefore rescinding the decision to provide one every other month as per the decision in February, if ratified would be in contravention of Standing Order 26.

In order to move forward, officers were content that a change to the format of a project update report was possible under the wording of the original motion agreed in February, but that could only be provided every other month, unless the original decision was rescinded in accordance with the process set out in Standing Order 26, or a new motion was brought and agreed after 28th August 2024 concerning the frequency of future reports.

RECOMMENDED that Council, in line with Standing Order 26, amend the recommendation at item 11 of the minutes of the Community and Wellbeing Committee meeting dated 15th May 2024 to retain the previous Council decision of 28th February 2024.

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

(Councillors Rossiter and Irwin entered the meeting – 8.02 pm)

Alderman Adair explained that his issue was to ensure that the reports that were brought to Council were of a high standard to ensure a quality provision was provided. He was happy with the recommendation and he looked forward to the RAG system being the future process before bringing the reports to the Community and Wellbeing Committee to be able to oversee and securitise those.

Councillor Wray highlighted the need to have transparency in the process and to ensure that that if there any barriers that Members be advised immediately.

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

8. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATION

8.1 From Kircubbin & District Community Association – Kircubbin Harbour

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching deputation request form. A deputation request had been received from Kircubbin & District Community Association.

RECOMMENDED that Council accepts the requires for a deputation from Kircubbin & District Community Association and refers it to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

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

8.2 From Conlig Community Regeneration Group – War Memorial

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching deputation request form. A deputation request had been received from Conlig Community Regeneration Group.

RECOMMENDED that Council accepts the request for a deputation from Conlig Community Regeneration Group and refers it to the Corporate Services Committee.

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

9. RESOLUTIONS

9.1 From Derry City and Strabane District Council – Waiting times for autism assessment (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence from the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council regarding waiting times for autism assessments.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the Council supports the resolution.

Councillor Boyle noted that the issue affected constituents in all Council areas. Autism was a part of society and Council should be doing everything it could to bring a resolution and recognise how important autism was.

Councillor Moore stated that the matter was a hugely important issue for children, young people and adults who were still waiting an assessment. She understood there were finite resources and budgets were a huge constraint across all services.

(Councillors McCollum and Creighton entered the meeting – 8.07 pm)

She had attended an event along with other Councillors in Ballyhalbert with parents of children and young people who had a range of educational needs. She highlighted the huge knock-on effects on family life, educational attainment, mental health and ability to socialise.

(Councillor Kendall withdrew from the meeting – 8.08 pm)

Councillor Wray supported the resolution and believed the waiting times to be unacceptable. He believed the resolution sought for a tangible outcome with everyone working collaboratively.

Alderman McIlveen stated that the resolution was about having the right information to have the right interventions in place to improve the outcomes for children living with autism. It was a key issue that needed to be addressed by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health.

(Alderman Smith withdrew from the meeting – 8.10 pm)

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Council supports the resolution and replies to Derry City and Strabane Council advising them that the Council supports the resolution regarding the unacceptable waiting times for autism assessments in Northern Ireland.

(Councillor Kendall re-entered the meeting – 8.11 pm)

Councillor Boyle was content with the amendment.

RESOLVED, that the Council supports the resolution.

10. COURSES, CONFERENCES, INVITATIONS ETC

10.1 80th D-Day Anniversary Wreath Laying Service

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching email invitation. The report detailed that the RBL Bangor Branch have extended an invitation to Members to a wreath laying service to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, at the War Memorial Ward Park on the 6th June 2024 at 18.30. Those taking part in the service should meet at the War Memorial Ward Park at 18.15.

Members were asked to contact Democratic Services if they wished to attend.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

The Mayor reminded Members to advise Democratic Services if they were attending to allow for their robe to be taken to the event.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted.

10.2 Somme Commemoration Wreath Laying Service

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching corresponding invitation. The Royal British Legion (Bangor Co Down Branch) wished to invite the Members from Ards and North Borough Council to the annual wreath laying service to be held at the War Memorial Ward Park Bangor at 2.15pm on Sunday 30th June 2024 to commemorate the Battle of the Somme.

Members were asked to be in position at the War Memorial by 2pm.

Members were asked to contact Democratic Services if they wished to attend.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

The Mayor reiterated that if Members wished to attend this event that they contact Democratic Services for their robe to be taken to the venue.

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

10.3 Attendance at APSE National Council

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Interim Chief Executive detailing that the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) was owned by its members and working on their behalf, maintained and developed a network of local government officers, managers and councillors from local authorities across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Working on a not-for-profit basis, APSE was dedicated to promoting excellence in the delivery of frontline services to local communities around the UK. Through the extensive APSE network, more than 300 local authorities and organisations were able to share information and expertise on vital frontline services, ask for advice and innovative solutions, and develop new, viable ways forward in an effort to help one another.

APSE provided a united national voice for these authorities, supporting them in the development of strong and sustainable public services.

Members of APSE had access to many excellent benefits that help local authorities to grow. Those included regular briefings on the latest policy developments and operational issues, access to groups and forums that allow authorities to come together to share information and collaborate, and the ability to anonymously ask for, and give advice on a range of service issues.

One of the most important benefits APSE membership offers was the opportunity for local authority service providers to have their views voiced and represented at a national level. APSE carefully developed this voice by collaborating with members, and supports it using research, extensive campaigns and consistent media activities. APSE conducts research, publishes reports, and campaigns to create a positive role for local government, helping them to deliver high quality, effective and efficient public services. APSE's targeted training programme, regular briefings and inclusive events strive to keep council officers and elected members updated on the latest public service issues. There was also APSE Solutions, an in-house team that works closely with individual authorities, offering high quality consultancy and interim management support for members and other relevant organisations. APSE had also developed

the innovative Performance Networks Service, which was the largest national voluntary local government benchmarking service.

APSE National Council Workshop 13-14 June 2024

Alderman McDowell was one of the Council's representatives on APSE and Vice Chair of the Northern Ireland Region. Alderman McDowell was nominated by the NI region of APSE to be the National Chair of a Strategic Forum Group at the last AGM and was a member of the National Council of APSE. The National Council was the Management Body for all of APSE UK. The National Council met quarterly, rotating the location of the meeting across the country to London, York, Bristol and Belfast.

The next meeting was in York on the 13 and 14 June 2024, and Alderman McDowell was requesting permission to attend this meeting, and the other meetings of the National Council throughout the year. The flight and train costs to York were approximately £100, and APSE would be paying for the hotel accommodation. Those costs could be covered within existing budgets.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve attendance by Alderman McDowell to the four APSE National Council meetings as outlined within the report.

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

Councillor McRandal highlighted the benefits of APSE and made particular mention of the Absence and Illness report that APSE had brought forward.

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

11. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME PILGRIMAGE 2024 (CX181)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that the Council had participated annually in the commemorative events and wreath laying at the Thiepval Monument, Ulster Memorial Tower and the Memorial at Guillemont, to mark the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July.

At the Council meeting on 27 March 2024, Council agreed the attendance of the Mayor, Councillor Hollywood and an Officer at the commemoration events this year, departing on 29 June and returning on 3 July 2024.

The trip required significant travel each day between numerous sites, the majority of which require a guide to share their historical significance. This role had been the responsibility of the former Chief Executive who had knowledge of the history and was familiar with the itinerary, having acted as both the guide and driver on previous trips.

Hiring a local guide as other councils had done would be a substantial additional cost to Council. However, the former Chief Executive had offered to accompany the group to share his knowledge so that could be utilised by the accompanying Officer

on future trips. It was understood that this approach was previously adopted by Council and proved successful in knowledge sharing.

There would be no charge for the former Chief Executive's time, Council would only be required to cover flights, accommodation and subsistence. That would allow knowledge transfer for future visits and therefore would be a saving to Council in both the short and long term.

Option 1:

Approximate cost to bring a guide from NI, including flights, accommodation and subsistence (at the time of writing this report):

Total cost to Council = circa £1,100

Option 2:

Approximate cost to hire a guide in France to stay with the party for the duration, including accommodation and subsistence (at the time of writing this report):

Total cost to Council = circa £3,800

RECOMMENDED that Council approve Option 1, and that the former Chief Executive accompanies the Interim Chief Executive, the Mayor and Councillor Hollywood on this trip.

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

Having previously attended the commemoration event, Councillor Thompson advised that the previous Chief Executive had provided a knowledgeable tour around the sites and was pleased to read that he would be attending to pass on that knowledge.

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

12. ITEM WITHDRAWN

13. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (REMOTE MEETINGS) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2024 FINAL DRAFT (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching letter received from Department for Communities with the final draft of The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Council Chief Executive were asked to examine the draft regulations and respond by 17 May 2024 with any comments. On examination, it was deemed that it was not necessary to make any comments.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the attached final draft regulations.

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

14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching letter received from the Local Government Commissioner for Standards and Commissioner for Standards Annual. The Commissioner requested that this brought to the attention of Members.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the appendices.

(Councillor Harbinson withdrew from the meeting – 8.17 pm)

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

15. PROPOSED DILAPIDATION BILL

(Appendices V - VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching report to Committee 2016, DEARA Synopsis of 2016 Consultation and letter from DEARA to SOLACE (May 2024). The report detailed that in 2016, the Department of the Environment as part of its review into legislation that was to be adopted by the new Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, made a proposal concerning the consolidation and enhancement of legislation that dealt with dilapidated or dangerous buildings and neglected sites. It issued a policy consultation, which if adopted intended to introduce a new legislative regime that would increase powers and provide consistency across all Council areas in dealing with the problem.

This area of work was currently carried out by Building Control (Dangerous Structures), Neighbourhood and Environment (including minor elements of fly tipping) and Environmental Health (Ruinous and Dilapidated buildings that are seriously detrimental to amenity).

One of the reasons the Department stated for considering this area of responsibility, was the narrow scope of the existing provisions which allowed Councils to act on serious or high-risk situations only.

Council welcomed the proposal at the time and responded to the consultation as indicated in Appendix 1. Three particular points from that were worth highlighting as follows.

1. Council, Environmental Health NI, and the Building Control officers group, BCNI, requested engagement with the Department so that operational matters and guidance could be considered.
2. One of the many functions of the Councils Neighbourhood and Environment Team involves dealing with sites that have been blighted with minor instances of fly tipping. More significant fly tipping and illegal waste disposal was the responsibility of DEARA, and this must remain the case in any new regime.
3. Council raised the matter of resourcing and central government financial support for transferring and enhancing the existing functions.

The Department published the outcome of the consultation exercise in 2016, and this was attached at Appendix 2. To date there has been no further engagement and Council Officers are yet to see a draft of any proposed Bill, however officers remain in supportive of the need for it.

As highlighted at the time, without central government funding to accompany the new legislation it was unlikely any new Bill would result in increased enforcement activities and would only serve to place increased pressures upon already limited Council resources. Conditions for central government funding may be more challenging now that in 2016, but without dedicated budget and resource, new powers will not make the impact that the proposed initiative was intended to deliver.

In a letter dated 9th May 2024, SOLACE was asked by DEARA if Councils remained supportive of the introduction of a Dilapidation Bill to the assembly. (Appendix 3). The letter stated that the bill if made into legislation would not impose any new statutory duties on Councils but give them greater discretionary powers. The execution of such powers however if required in order to remedy an issue as expected by communities would clearly still need to be adequately resourced.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and through SOLACE the Department is informed of the Councils position as outlined above.

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

Councillor McRandal believed that the Minister was keen to progress the legislation as part of the 2024 legislative programme and asked that the Minister to consider the financial challenges at the appropriate time.

Referring to the background of the issue, Alderman McIlveen paid tribute to Minister Atwood for the work that he had undertaken. The piece of legislation had been drafted and had been sitting for some time so he was pleased to see it being progressed.

(Councillor Harbinson re-entered the meeting – 8.19 pm)

Alderman McIlveen had a concern in circumstances where a limited company had been struck off and the assets became ownerless and the circumstances that applied. That was an issue that he would like to bear in mind.

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

Having previously declared an interest in the item, Councillor S Irvine withdrew from the meeting. Alderman McIlveen declared an interest at this stage and withdrew from the meeting.

16. REQUEST TO USE COUNCIL LAND AT LONDONDERRY PARK FOR DEMONSTRATION FIELD 12TH JULY 2024

(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching map. The report detailed the Council had received a request from the Newtownards District Orange Lodge No.4 (the 'LOL No.4') to use Council Land at Londonderry Park (the 'Park') on 12th July 2024 as a demonstration field. The LOL No. 4 had requested to use the Park to host around 2,500 – 5,000 to parade with 20,000+ spectators between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:00 pm on the 12th July 2024. The event would allow the participating orange lodges to enter at the entrance close to the play park on the Portaferry Road and then march through the park to the green area on the opposite side of Londonderry Park, where the staging would be located.

The LOL No.4 had proposed setting up a temporary lorry/platform to be parked at the football pitches. There were also several infrastructure elements as part of the event which included inflatables, a quarter pipe cycling structure, food vendors, stalls selling products, live and recorded music being played via a PA system, diesel generators and portaloos for the attendees.

The Park would remain open to the public and the event was open to those who wish to attend.

Council officers contacted the Londonderry Estate, which had the Freehold interest in the Park, for permission in the first instance, as the Park was held under a long lease by Council, and contained a number of restrictive covenants and terms. The Londonderry Estate had given their approval, and the request was now being processed in line with the Council's Land and Property policy, which could be found at [Council Land and Property - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

Council officers were consulted and advised that pitches 4 and 7 would be in the middle of their summer renovation/rest period. So consideration would need to be given as to the suitability of these areas for large volumes of footfall and / or any vehicles, as the cricket square had previously sustained damage at larger events and would therefore need to be cordoned off from use/access. As a result of those

comments, a site visit was arranged on 20th May 2024 for the requestor and relevant officers to agree the site layout. A further site visit has been arranged for 24th June 2024 to assess the ground condition and finalise the arrangements.

In accordance with Council policy the use would be subject to the following terms and conditions.

The Applicant must:

- i. Ensure that the use of Council land or property is limited to a demonstration field on 12th July 2024 from 6am to 6pm.
- ii. Pay a bond of £1000, with all monies to be paid at least 14 days in advance of the event.
- iii. Provide a risk assessment and event management plan at least 14 days in advance of an event.
- iv. Provide a list of all traders attending the event and paying the appropriate fee in line with the prevailing Council rate - £10 per trader.
- v. Provide a risk assessment for the inflatables including its power supply.
- vi. Ensure any inflatables are securely fixed to the ground (the determination of how many weights and the minimum weight per inflatable should be as per manufacturer's instructions for use) and use a vane anemometer to ascertain wind speeds.
- vii. Display public notices for at least 14 days before an event to notify the public that said event is due to take place in the area. Signage to be agreed in advance with the appropriate Council Officer.
- viii. Public notices must be removed after the event within seven days.
- ix. Provide evidence of relevant insurances at least 14 days in advance and fully indemnify Council against all risks, including injury to persons and/or damage to land or property, associated with the use of the land or property.
- x. Employ enough stewards to efficiently and effectively protect the premises as well as to attend to the control of entrances and side gates/doors with a view to ensuring the comfort and safety of the public/audience/spectators etc. and /or to prevent any anti-social/ rowdy or obnoxious behaviour.
- xi. Provide appropriate welfare facilities at own cost.
- xii. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage is present.
- xiii. Make good any damage caused during the use and pay to the Council the cost of any repair work the Council is required to undertake or items the Council considers necessary to replace as a result of the usage.
- xiv. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the usage e.g., staging or fencing (timescale for removal to be agreed with Council Officers).
- xv. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all litter and other debris from the main event and adjacent areas during the event, as well as once the event has concluded. However, should the Council have to do any additional cleaning the costs will be recovered from the applicant.
- xvi. Put in place measures to ensure that all litter generated during the event by the organisers, their contractors or by attendees is recycled to the full extent possible. Applicants should consider how to minimise any waste produced and ways in which they can make the event more sustainable.

- xvii. Agree to provide maps or any other document deemed appropriate by Council Officers.
- xviii. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the event. Any plans to fence off or exclude the public from any areas should be agreed in advance with Council Officers.
- xix. Accesses to adjacent properties or businesses must be maintained during the event.
- xx. Ensure that where appropriate, the car parking facility at the location remains available for use by the general public and that contractors/attendees do not park on grass areas.
- xxi. Where electric supplies are being used this must be agreed in advance with Council Officers. Additional costs may apply depending on the services required.
- xxii. No petrol generators are to be used. Where other generators are being used, ensure appropriate spill provision is in place.
- xxiii. No chemicals, oils or other substances should be poured down drains and where cooking oil is being used, appropriate spill provision should be in place.
- xxiv. Ensure any statutory or regulatory permissions, licences or permits are sought and obtained in advance or usage.
- xxv. Comply with any other relevant legislative provision including byelaws and have due regard to the Disability Discrimination Order.
- xxvi. Comply with the Council's Safeguarding Policy where children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable will be in attendance.
- xxvii. Where animals will be used as a part of any event, the Council's officers must be notified so that checks to ensure that welfare arrangements are in place can be undertaken, and the Animal Welfare policy must be adhered to.
- xxviii. Ensure that only the designated area, or areas specified by Council Officers are used for the event and for the purpose agreed.
- xxix. Provide the Council with a list of any suppliers/food providers for the event at least six weeks in advance of the event taking place.

The Council:

- i. Shall not be responsible for any loss, damage or injury to any property or person(s), including the applicant's entities suffered by reason of act, neglect or default of the Council, its agents, servants, or workmen.
- ii. Accepts no responsibility as regards loss or damage to property belonging to persons using the premises.
- iii. Does not guarantee the suitability of the premises being used for any purpose whatsoever and the applicant shall in all events be deemed to have satisfied themselves as to the suitability and safe condition of the premises as no liability shall attach to the Council in respect of same.
- iv. [if an open space such as a park] Cannot guarantee exclusive use of the land and is not responsible for the actions of any other users of the space.
- v. Shall always have the right to have a duly authorised Officer of the Council present and have access to all parts of the premises for the purposes of inspection.
- vi. May require a pre-event and post event inspection to be carried out in conjunction with a Council Officer.

- vii. Reserves the right to cancel the booking at any time if the applicant does not comply with the Terms and Conditions.
- viii. May withdraw or change permission to use Council land or property at short notice due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances.

RECOMMENDED that Council accedes to the request from Newtownards District Orange Lodge No. 4 to use Council Land at Londonderry Park on 12th July 2024 as a demonstration field, subject to the terms and conditions outlined above.

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

17. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

Lease of premises at Dakota Avenue, Newtownards to Little Doves
 Deed of Surrender – Mortgage of Greyabbey Village Hall
 Car Parking Contract - Service Agreement between Council and Marston (Holdings) Limited
 Acquisition of land at Balloo Wetlands from Radius Housing (revised)
 Public Path (Killinchy Road, Comber) Extinguishment Order
 Burial Papers - D40461 – D40495.

18. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Brown - Movilla cemetery
 Section 14 grave 156

Gray - Comber cemetery
 Section 21 grave 374

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the transfers be approved.

19. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT (Appendix IX)

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

In respect of NOM 564 – Bloomfield Playing Fields; Councillor W Irvine noted that there had been delay with the Education Authority and he sought an update regarding the motion. The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the Chief Executive and himself had a meeting with the Department of Education regarding another matter that morning. From that meeting he had been able to seek a point of contact, it was hoping a lease arrangement could be arranged and he would come back to the Committee when more information was available.

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

20. NOTICES OF MOTION

20.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson

That this Council notes with concern the temporary closure of Groomspout 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Notice of Motion be referred to referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

20.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor Morgan

'That this council recognises the importance of ensuring that our parks and open spaces are inclusive and accessible to those with speech, language, and communication needs and that it recognises the positive role of communication boards in achieving this. That it commits to working with relevant organisations to bring back a report regarding communication boards considering, but not limited to, the following points:

- How communication boards would integrate with the required existing signage;
- Identifying possible locations for the communication boards, such as a specific Tier of park; and
- An indicative budget.'

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

20.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Cathcart, Councillor W Irvine, Councillor Blaney, Councillor McCracken and Councillor Harbinson

That this Council recognises the need of Bangor Central Integrated Primary School to secure a new school build and expresses its shock and disappointment at the withdrawal of previously ring-fenced funding for it to proceed towards construction. This Council therefore resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to reinstate the funding and honour its commitments to shared and integrated new build education projects in the Fresh Start Agreement. Furthermore, whilst welcoming the decision of the Education Minister to move the Fresh Start projects into the Department's Major Capital Works Programme, the Council writes to the Education Minister, that given Bangor Central Integrated Primary School's considerable need and the fact that it has secured planning permission, that the scheme proceeds to construction as soon as possible.

The Mayor had intended to hear the motion however circumstances had changed.

Councillor Cathcart advised that a decision had been made and was delighted that the Minister for Education would proceed with the funding for the new build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School along with Crawfordsburn Primary School. He paid tribute to the pupils, Governors and the staff for their campaign.

Councillor Cathcart withdrew the Notice of Motion.

WITHDRAWN.

20.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and Councillor Martin

"8th May 2025 will be 80 years since VE Day- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process."

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

(Alderman Smith re-entered the meeting – 8.27 pm)

20.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall, Councillor 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.

This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project.

This Council therefore reiterates its commitment to financial and practical support for the Conlig war memorial project, tasking Officers to bring back a report exploring costs of planning permission, site ownership transfer, and any associated legal fees, that will be required to enable the memorial to be completed and installed.

Furthermore, Council agrees to add the Conlig Memorial to the existing list of war memorials across the Borough that are maintained by Ards and North Down Borough Council.”

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

Circulated for Information

- (a) Copy correspondence from DoJ - Vehicle recovery storage and disposal statutory charges review
- (b) Department of Justice Launch of Calls for Evidence - Foundational Review of Civil Legal Services

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the information be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

7.4 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE **CONTINUED....**

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

In respect of Item 12 - Capital Projects – Land Acquisition

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – 4. EXEMPTION: CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS

The Council was asked to consider the options to acquire land for the Greenways project.

7.5 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE CONTINUED...

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

In respect of Item 18 - Comber Greenway Alternative Route:

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing providing an update on two new routes for an extension to the Comber Greenway.

The report recommended that Council agree to one of the routes and proceed with next steps.

21. OPEN HOUSE TO USE COUNCIL LAND AT THE SEAFRONT BANGOR - SEASIDE REVIVAL FESTIVAL

(Appendix X)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to grant permission to Open House for the use of land at Bangor Seafont. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

22. LEASE OF GREYABBEY OLD CEMETERY CAR PARK

(Appendices XI - XII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Report for noting only and provided an update to members with regards to the Lease to Council of Greyabbey old Cemetery Carpark.

23. WAR YEARS REMEMBERED

(Appendices XIII - XVII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

A report was presented to Council to update on progress and funding.

The report recommended that Council notes the advice and attachments contained in the report and agrees to the award funding as requested, subject to the conditions set out in the attached agreement.

The recommendation was adopted subject to the establishment of an officer-led oversight committee to ensure the conditions attached to this funding are satisfactorily addressed.

24. BANGOR WATERFRONT: BALLYHOLME YACHT CLUB AND COUNCIL'S LEGAL AGREEMENT (RDP22/56)
(Appendices XVIII - XX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - SCHEDULE 6:4 – CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS

The report recommends Council progress with the Legal Agreement and addendum to the BYC lease in line with the OBC and Contract for Funding for the BRCD Bangor Waterfront Project.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

In relation to the items detailed as in confidence, the Mayor reminded Members that the information contained without those reports should not be shared.

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.50 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Bangor on Wednesday, 5 June 2024 commencing at 11.00 am.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour)

Aldermen:

Adair	McAlpine
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
Brooks	McIlveen
Cummings	Smith
Graham	

Councillors:

Blaney	McCollum
Boyle	McCracken
Cathcart	McKee
Chambers	McKimm (11.07am)
Creighton	McLaren
Cochrane	McRandal
Douglas	Moore
Harbinson	Morgan
S Irvine	Rossiter
Irwin	Smart
Kerr	Wray (11.23am)
Martin	

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community & Wellbeing (G Bannister), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Communications & Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officers (P Foster, H Loebnau & S McCrea)

1. PRAYER

The meeting commenced with the Chief Executive reading the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour) sought apologies at this stage.

AM.05.06.2024

31

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ashe, Hollywood, W Irvine, Kennedy and Kendall.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors McKimm and Wray.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S REVIEW

At this stage the Mayor undertook her Mayoral review of her year.

Councillor Gilmour stated that it had been a massive honour and privilege for her to hold the position of Mayor. She had really enjoyed what had been an extremely busy role and one which had enabled her to meet so many wonderful people along the way, people who had left her with memories that she would never forget.

Since 7 June last year, she reported that she had attended more than 600 engagements, too many to name them all but they had taken her to every corner of the Borough and further afield. The oldest resident she had met was 105 years old and her youngest was three days old. The year had included events such as being Chieftain for the day at not one, but two Pipe Band Championships. Portaferry had the most inventive welcome for her when the dolphins came up the Lough to greet her. The warm welcome though was certainly challenged on her second visit where she had thought both her and Councillor Boyle would have needed Noah's ark to get round the town for the Gala festival as it was so wet.

Memorable visits and events had included:

- 1 July Somme visit to pay respect to the fallen.
- Business Awards- celebrating the Borough's many great businesses
- Chilli Festival including a UTV interview in Bangor Castle Walled Garden. She added that she did not think that Ryan Wallace had forgiven her for suggesting all that was missing from the Chilli Festival was a life sized chilli and before he knew it one of his colleagues produced a chilli costume for him to wear.
- NIO Minister Baker had visited Bangor where he tried Sailing at Ballyholme Yacht Club. His enthusiasm to try sailing on a wasp had him spending more time in the bay than onboard "This is a very significant time for Bangor with the Queen's Parade and Bangor Waterfront redevelopments offering the promise of £120M+ of investment into the area over the next 10 years. We very much appreciate Minister Baker's keen interest in our plans and his support for the regeneration of Bangor is very much appreciated by all partners involved."

- Comber Earlies Potato Festival had her back to her roots while Portavogie Seafood Festival had her whipping up a storm in the SERC kitchen.
- Event recycling stations had proved to be a great success at all Council events this year with excellent recycling rates across all events.
- Christmas Lights Switch-Ons had allowed her to bring her girls along with her to share in the year as Mayor. However she stated that it had also almost broken her as she had a trip to the dentist for suspected toothache only to discover she had strained her jaw muscles from too much smiling.
- A visit to Virginia Beach in September to renew and explore Sister Cities connections was very informative. She had since had the pleasure of hosting students from Tallwood High School, Virginia Beach (the first time since 2019 that students had visited the Borough)
- Ards and North Down Job Fair
- Sports Awards- celebrating sporting excellence
- The most bizarre photo op of the year had to be AND Experiences PR shoot in the pouring rain in Helens bay with two alpacas and a Viking!
- May Day in Holywood had been a fantastic day.
- Upgrade of accessible toilets to become stoma friendly. It was fantastic to be able to have Ards and North Down Council leading the way with its Stoma Friendly toilets. She took the opportunity to pay tribute to local resident Graeme Henderson who had contacted her as soon as she had become Mayor to push the issue. She also thanked Sian the Council's Disability Officer who had secured the DfC funding and had been able to make it happen.
- Launch of new play parks after substantial investment in the square Kilcooley, the Glen and Kircubbin.

Continuing the Mayor added that there had also been many awards ceremonies to recognise the pride and passion in the local community. With Britain in Bloom, Ulster in Bloom, Amenity Council Awards and Live Here Love Here Awards being received for the work carried out in towns and villages across the Borough- there really were too many to mention. She commented that there were some amazing people in the local community who had such pride, passion and a can do attitude.

The Mayor then referred to the spectacular past weekend with Sea Bangor and expressed her thanks to the Tourism team for another very successful event with thousands coming to enjoy the two days of events and local businesses engaging in the passport programme. She added that she was victorious in the omelette challenge against Kevin Baird the Marina Manager.

(Councillor McKimm entered the meeting at this stage – 11.07am)

Events such as this had been attended by thousands of people and whilst they had been very successful she did want to pay tribute to the professionalism of the team when things could take an unexpected turn. Continuing she stated that her thoughts had went out to the family of piper Alec Brown, who had passed away at the Pipe Band Championship at Ards airfield noting that it was a very difficult time for all of those who knew him.

On a brighter note, the D-Day commemorations the previous weekend had been a wonderful tribute to those service personnel who played such a vital role in the D-Day landings and the allied victory in WW2 which followed. The excellent band of the Royal Irish Regiment never failed to disappoint and to be able to award the soldiers from 591 Squadron their Op Tosca service medals in their home city with their friends and family watching was incredible.

Councillor Gilmour stated that she was immensely proud to have been the Mayor of Ards and North Down, adding that it had given her the privilege to see up close and personal many of the great groups and organisations from right across the Borough. Being a Councillor for Bangor West, she already knew of many of the wonderful people and groups shaping her own area but had now got an insight into the areas that would have been less familiar. She added that volunteers were worth their weight in gold, and thanked all of those people across the Borough who selflessly gave up their time for the good of their community. She had hosted many receptions and thank you events for the many volunteers without whom so many clubs, activities and facilities would not happen. A hard bunch to thank she commented as they often said that really they did not do much, however like Jigsaws they were useless with pieces missing.

During her Mayoral year, she reported that she had built upon her theme of volunteering and tried to focus on those who stepped up in service for the good of others. With that in mind, she had chosen to support three charities during her term - K9 Search and Rescue, the Royal British Legion in Ards and North Down, and the RNLI in Ards and North Down. The final charity fundraising totals were still being counted however she believed they had managed to raise in excess of £13,000, which would be split between the charities. She added that thanks must go to everyone who had made that possible, for all of those who donated or helped with collections or organising events.

Councillor Gilmour stated that it went without saying that she had really enjoyed the role which had enabled her to meet some wonderful people who had left her with many memories that she would never forget. At this stage she took the opportunity to say thank you to a number of people who had helped her throughout the year. To all the Steves (and there were many!) Steve, her diary secretary who had had the challenging role of organising her schedule and trying to get her in two or three places at the same time and not forgetting rising to the challenge of stepping in when our Viking pulled out.

Steven, Colin and Will the Mayor's drivers without whom she would not have got anywhere this year. She stated that without fail they had got her in the right place at the right time and without them she would not have been able to cover anywhere near as many engagements as she had.

She had also hosted many groups in the Castle and it would not be possible without Town Hall Supervisor and all round legend Gary. He was a wealth of knowledge about the history of the building and those who had lived and visited the Castle over the years. She stated that it had been lovely to be able to add to his repertoire of stories over the year with the chance meeting with the nephew of Lady Maud's granddaughter confirming episodes of Upstairs Downstairs were based upon the

experiences of the family had who lived here and more recently the discovery from a retired prison officer that the Chamber had previously been used as a court room when Bangor courthouse was undergoing work.

Councillor Gilmour also took the opportunity to thank the Corporate Communications team for all of their support this year, particularly Jonathan, adding that you never knew what the next request was going to be. For those of you who did not know Jonathan she stated that he was a giant of a man, recalling how one day she had been standing on top of a park bench and he was still towering over her.

Continuing, she also expressed thanks also to her chaplain, Reverend Nigel Parker, who had provided great support and guidance and had the Borough and Council in his prayers. She also thanked her Deputy Mayor, Councillor Hannah Irwin, adding that it had been great to work with her to try and make sure duties were covered when everything was happening at the same time. Councillor Gilmour thanked those across the Chamber for their support throughout the year, adding that she had enjoyed getting to know some of them all a bit more. She also thanked her DUP colleagues for giving her the opportunity, former Chief Executive, Stephen Reid, for rising to the challenge when she would come up with an idea or suggestion. And also thanks to the newly appointed Chief Executive, Susie McCullough, who had always been so helpful. Councillor Gilmour also thanked those members of the Democratic Services Team for all of their help and guidance throughout the year. She also thanked members of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and staff across the Council departments who she had met this year.

Finally, biggest thanks to her family, who had come along with her where appropriate and enjoyed being part of the experience, however they had also been frustrated at times when she had been really busy and was not at home as much. She thanked her girls for sharing her with the Borough this year, and Rodney her husband for keeping things running smoothly at home. She added that it would also not have been possible without her mum, dad and sister helping with the babysitting and not forgetting the one and only Auntie Tom, always willing to step in at short notice.

Finally, Councillor Gilmour commented that as the Council moved forward, she wished the incoming Mayor, every success in the role. She recalled how 11 years ago working in Peter Weir's office on Abbey Street when a fresh faced young lad who had just returned from Scotland and graduated with his masters walked through the door of the office looking to do some work experience or an internship. He lived just up the Belfast Road at that time and she often wondered had Domino's next door to the office been open that morning would a different career path have mapped out before him. What started as an initial trial, he quickly proved his capabilities moving on from shredding duties and filing to press statements and constituency work where his passion and enthusiasm for getting things done in Bangor quickly became evident and he went on to join Council, initially co-opted to fill vacancy in Ballyholme and Groomsport before being elected in his own right in Bangor central. She of course stated that she was using the opportunity to say all this whilst she still had the Chair. Continuing she stated that she had no doubt he would put his best foot forward and be dancing his way through the year and make a great Mayor of the Borough. It was lovely to be handing the chain over to another graduate of the Weir academy, noting that Lord Ballyholme was in attendance. She knew he would have

a busy year ahead, with the small matter of a wedding to the lovely Ashley making him the first Mayor of this Council to be married in office, but aware that she would make an excellent Mayoress to support him through the year.

(Councillor Wray entered the Chamber at this stage – 11.23am)

She also congratulated Councillor Chambers as he embarked on his year as Deputy Mayor. Finally she expressed her thanks to everyone for letting her be Mayor of this great Borough, stating that her time had now come to an end.

Councillor Boyle commented that he had little else to add to the Mayor's comprehensive summary of her Mayoral term. He recalled how he had met her on many occasions throughout the Ards Peninsula and acknowledged that during her term she had been a very inclusive Mayor, visiting all parts of the Borough. Referring to her three chosen charities he noted they were well represented throughout the Borough. Finally he wished her well on her return to normal life and also expressed his thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Hannah Irwin on her year in office.

On behalf of the DUP Group, Alderman McIlveen echoed the comments of Councillor Boyle, adding that she had enjoyed a fantastic year which had fulfilled everyone's expectations. He noted the tremendous list of engagements which she had fulfilled during the year and for that he wished to pay tribute to her and her family for their support. Alderman McIlveen noted that she had also guided the Council through the appointment process of a new Chief Executive of the Council and as such he offered his congratulations to Susie McCullough on her appointment. Continuing Alderman McIlveen noted that Councillor Gilmour had been a very inclusive and fair Mayor and for that he thanked her.

On behalf of the Alliance Party Group, Councillor McRandal, commented on her busy year and congratulated her on that and for carrying out her role with the utmost distinction. He added that he was sure her family would be glad to have her back home. Continuing he noted how well she had worked with her Deputy, Councillor Irwin, adding that she had done herself proud as well.

On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, Alderman Smith added his congratulations to the Mayor on her year, adding that to have attended 600 events was tremendous. He recalled how she had been welcomed to Comber on many occasions and he hoped she would reflect upon on her year with much pride. Alderman Smith also took the opportunity to congratulate the Deputy Mayor on her year.

At this stage Councillor Irwin offered her congratulations to the Mayor echoing the comments which had already been made. She added that they had worked well together as the only all-female Civic Leadership team in the country. In summing up she stated that it had been an honour to undertake the role of Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Gilmour thanked everyone for their kind comments.

NOTED.

5. APPOINTMENTS TO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY (FILE CX210) (APPENDIX I)

- 5a Appointment of Mayor and Deputy Mayor and**
5b Appointments to Other Positions of Responsibility

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive stating that appointments to Positions of Responsibility were governed by Part 3 and Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. In accordance with the Act, the Council agreed at its Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023 a list of 91 positions to be appointed as Positions of Responsibility, and that such appointments would be made using the d'Hondt method. Party Nominating Officers and Independent Members thereafter proceeded to select Positions of Responsibility in the order determined by the d'Hondt calculation.

Where Positions of Responsibility were not for the full four-year term of the Council, Party Nominating Officers were only required to specify the individual Party Members taking Year 1 (2023/24) Positions. Year 2 – Year 4 Positions were allocated on a Party basis and individual Party Members were appointed to those by the Nominating Officers at the Annual Meeting in the relevant year.

Year 2 Positions of Responsibility to be appointed

Party Nominating Officers should identify the Members to be appointed to the year 2 (2024/25) Positions of Responsibility as follows:

Position	Year 2
Mayor	DUP
Deputy Mayor	UUP
Corporate Services Committee - Chair	Alliance
Corporate Services Committee – Vice Chair	DUP
Place and Prosperity Committee - Chair	DUP
Place and Prosperity Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance
Planning Committee - Chair	DUP
Planning Committee - Vice Chair	UUP
Environment Committee - Chair	Alliance
Environment Committee - Vice Chair	UUP
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Chair	UUP
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Vice Chair	SDLP
Audit Committee - Chair	UUP
Audit Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance

Please note: Members of the Audit Committee should not hold the position of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of Committee or Chair of Sub Committee, with the exception of the Audit Committee.

Should any Party or Independent not wish to avail of a Position of Responsibility to which they were entitled, the Position would be allocated using d'Hondt to the next Party in line for making a choice, which at present was the UUP (see list attached at Appendix).

RECOMMENDED that the following Party Nominating Officers confirm the Members to be appointed to the Positions of Responsibility as outlined in the table above:

- Alderman McIlveen (DUP)
- Councillor McRandal (Alliance)
- Alderman Smith (UUP)
- Councillor Boyle (SDLP)

The Chief Executive commented on behalf of not only herself but the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and all staff that it had been a pleasure and privilege to work with Councillor Gilmour.

At this stage she explained that there was a report which had been circulated to members outlining the process of appointing to Positions of Responsibility which was set out in legislation. The process of nominating to the position of Mayor fell to the Nominating Officer of the Democratic Unionist Party, Alderman Stephen McIlveen.

At this stage, Alderman McIlveen rose to nominate Councillor Alistair Cathcart to the office of Mayor for the incoming year. He stated that Councillor Cathcart had been a member of the Council since 2015 and was renowned for his dedicated constituency work for Bangor Central DEA. He worked hard on many matters but a particular passion had been the desilting works carried out at Ward Park as well as the Queens Parade redevelopment. He noted his many valuable contributions in the Council Chamber and offered him his congratulations adding that he would be a fantastic Mayor.

At this stage the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to make a few remarks.

Firstly, he commented that while he had been a Councillor, in the Chamber for over a decade, it now felt different sitting in the Chair, not in the sense of the weight of the office, just in a practical sense that he could actually see for the first time everyone in the Chamber. He stated that he was genuinely humbled to be given this opportunity, adding that it was an immense honour to become Mayor of his hometown and Borough. The greatest honour of his life and professional life although he was conscious that his fiancé was in the public gallery, so the greatest honour of his life would of course be marrying her on their wedding day.

He expressed his thanks to his group leader, he also thanked his DUP colleagues for nominating him. Councillor Cathcart also thanked members for their warm words of thanks from across the Chamber from all parties and members of the public. Continuing he also thanked the people of Bangor Central DEA who had seen fit to continue to return him to this place and as such they had his gratitude and determination to fight for them. Finally, he expressed his thanks to his family for their continued support, adding that his mum and dad were both in attendance. Councillor

Cathcart thanked his fiancé Ashley, the Mayoress of Ards and North Down, for allowing him to take this post in the year of their wedding. He commented that she seemed remarkably ok with the fact that he would be less involved in the wedding planning. Finally he thanked Lord Weir of Ballyholme, who was here today also, and while he was slightly annoyed that he had taken his title when he would be elevated to the House of Lords, he would be forever grateful that he had urged him to run for Council. He had discovered his passion for public office and like others he would always be a proud graduate of the Weir Academy.

At this stage Councillor Cathcart indicated that he wished to pay tribute to his predecessor, Councillor Gilmour who had had a fantastic year in the role. He also paid tribute to the outgoing Deputy Mayor, Councillor Irwin. He commented that he had had a great deal of people mention to him throughout the year how wonderful the Mayor was and this was obvious to him as they had been friends for a long time, he knew how wonderful she was and he was glad that others had now seen this. He was also glad that Elizabeth, Victoria and Amelia would now have more time with their mum. Councillor Gilmour had now handed over the chain, and while he was also expecting a ceremonial handing over of the Standing Orders he knew that she would keep a copy at hand, ready. He also knew that their friendship would not prevent but would indeed actively encourage her to embarrass him at some stage with some obscure point of order that he was not prepared for.

As Mayor, he would look forward to working with the Deputy Mayor and congratulated him and wished him well, adding that he would be grateful for his support throughout the year ahead. He added that he would also look forward to working with all members across the Chamber. Councillor Cathcart stated that he recognised that all Councillors were elected to the Council to do good for their community and despite different views on matters, he had been encouraged by the general tone of debates and discussions within both Council chambers during the past year. He added that he hoped this would continue as respectful debate and exchange of ideas was a good thing, as it challenged fixed positions and could lead to better decision making. Ultimately, he stated that was their job, to be decision makers and to make the Borough a better place to work, live and visit, whilst working within the confines of budget and legal requirements. Councillor Cathcart stated that it would not have gone unnoticed to members that in society, there was a general apathy, many had lost faith in public institutions to deliver for the public good. This he stated was not just a local issue but instead was an issue across the UK and beyond.

Councillor Cathcart indicated that he did believe in the power of government generally and at a local level to enable positive change. Whilst the many challenges that were often highlighted by members of the public were outside of the Council's remit, it could he stated however play a role in providing good governance and lasting improvements to the Borough. He acknowledged there were challenges ahead, and as elected members they should not shy away from tough choices. Taking the populist line on issues was certainly easier but that was not leadership, instead to govern was to choose. There were he stated consequences to indecisions and blocking necessary reform. As such whenever decisions were taken, especially on significant matters, the Council must do so with more transparency, communication and consultation to bring the public with it. He suggested that it must

get better at explaining decisions, listening to feedback and finding the best way forward. This would improve implementation and enable everyone to work together to achieve the outcomes everyone wanted to see. The public, like everyone else just wanted to see delivery, improvements on the ground and in their daily lives. As a Councillor for Bangor Central DEA he stated that he was quite frankly fed up of just talking about regeneration and instead he wanted to see real action. That was what needed to be done and as such he would challenge both himself and all members to work together to deliver for the Borough. He did have genuine optimism to believe that a better Borough could be built because during his time as a Councillor he had seen so many amazing people, community groups, church groups, charities and volunteers that everyone was blessed to have in place. People motivated either through their faith and/or community spirit to improve this place. On a daily basis there were also those that cared for others, those that reached out to kids left behind, those who put on events for others to enjoy, those that took their litter pickers to a beach to protect the environment, to name just a few examples. He added that he looked forward during his year as Mayor to visit and to highlight those who were playing their role in building a better Borough.

Councillor Cathcart stated that as he had said earlier he believed that the Council needed to communicate more and that was because he knew that it had hundreds of employees in the organisation from the new Chief Executive down to staff at all levels, that were committed to public service and to the effort to improve the Borough on a daily basis. Certainly, he indicated that he would receive positive can do responses often out of hours to the endless service requests that he would send through. He knew that all Mayors said when they were in the role, that they were taken aback at how much the Council actually did, as it was much more than parks, cemeteries and bins. It put on some many amazing events, festivities and initiatives and his diary was certainly filling up rightly already with those. As such he felt the Council undersold itself at times. He added that he looked forward to meeting so many more staff in my year ahead and highlighting the work that did go on.

Councillor Cathcart noted that the Council was looking to the future too, with the Queens Parade development, the various projects of the Belfast Region City Deal, Greenways, Town and Village plans, to name just a few. Huge opportunities, which if got right could really transform this place for the better. As such he encouraged everyone to all work together to secure the potential that everyone knew the Borough had.

In summing up, he stated that he would be announcing events and initiatives he wished to undertake, as well as his Mayoral charities in due course. Councillor Cathcart indicated that he was looking forward to the year ahead, meeting with the communities, organisations and people that made this such a wonderful Borough to live, work and visit. He planned to be a pro-active advocate for the Borough and would listen and work with all to improve it for the better.

On behalf of the UUP Group, Alderman Smith wished Councillor Cathcart every success for his year ahead. At this stage he then proceeded to propose Councillor David Chambers for the position of Deputy Mayor. He commented that this would see Councillor Chambers following in his father's footsteps, Alan Chambers, who had been appointed to the very same role some 30 years ago. Councillor Chambers

he stated was a tremendous advocate for his constituency of Bangor East and Donaghadee and he also acknowledged his passion for all matters leisure related. He again congratulated Councillor Chambers on his appointment and wished him well for what would undoubtedly be a busy year ahead.

The Mayor, Councillor Cathcart congratulated Councillor Chambers on his appointment and invited him to wear the chain of office and to address the Council.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, acknowledged the outgoing Mayor and congratulated her on the tremendous year she had enjoyed, adding that she had carried out her role with dignity and professionalism. He added that she had been an excellent role model for the Borough and he also took the opportunity to express his thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Irwin and commended her on how she had conducted herself throughout the year, adding that she should be very proud.

Continuing Councillor Chambers offered his congratulations to the new Mayor and offered him his best wishes. He added that he was only too well aware that the role of Deputy Mayor was generally second fiddle to that of Mayor but regardless he remained mindful of the responsibility attached to the role and the privilege it was to hold it. Councillor Chambers stated that he would do his best not to let anyone down and thanked his family and party colleagues for their encouragement.

Councillor McRandal commended the Mayor on his installation as Mayor and wished him well for the year ahead on behalf of the Alliance Party. He also offered his congratulations to Councillor Chambers on his appointment as Deputy Mayor.

Alderman McIlveen also took the opportunity to congratulate both Councillors Cathcart and Chambers on their appointments to the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor and wished them well for the year ahead.

Rising to also offer his congratulations Councillor Boyle wished them both well for their incoming year in office.

The Mayor invited Party Nominating Officers to make their nominations to the positions of Chair and Vice Chairs of the Committees as per the report.

- Alderman McIlveen (DUP)
- Alderman McDowell (Alliance)
- Alderman P Smith (UUP)
- Councillor McKee (Green Party)

Position	Year 2	Member
Mayor	DUP	Councillor A Cathcart
Deputy Mayor	UUP	Councillor D Chambers
Corporate Services Committee - Chair	Alliance	Councillor H Irwin
Corporate Services Committee – Vice Chair	DUP	Councillor J Cochrane
Place and Prosperity Committee - Chair	DUP	Councillor J Gilmour

Place and Prosperity Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance	Councillor R Ashe
Planning Committee - Chair	DUP	Alderman S McIlveen
Planning Committee - Vice Chair	UUP	Councillor P Wray
Environment Committee - Chair	Alliance	Alderman L McAlpine
Environment Committee - Vice Chair	UUP	Councillor R Smart
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Chair	UUP	Councillor M Brooks
Community and Wellbeing Committee - Vice Chair	SDLP	Councillor J Boyle
Audit Committee - Chair	UUP	Councillor S Hollywood
Audit Committee - Vice Chair	Alliance	Councillor G McCollum

RESOLVED, that the nominations be noted.

6. ELECTION OF ALDERMAN (FILE CX210)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that Section 4 of the Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 provided for the appointment of Aldermen to Councils. The Council may elect up to one quarter of the total number of Members as Aldermen (i.e. up to 10). Appointments normally took place in election year only and were for the full four-year term of the Council. The only exception to this was in the case of a casual vacancy in the office of Alderman, in which case the vacancy was to be filled by an election at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

At the Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023, Council appointed the following 10 Members as Aldermen for the four-year term:

Alderman Graham
Alderman McAlpine
Alderman McIlveen
Alderman K Douglas
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
Alderman Brooks
Alderman Cummings
Alderman Smith
Alderman McDowell
Alderman Adair

Vacancy to be Appointed

In September 2023 Karen Douglas' position as Alderman became vacant when she resigned from Council. As above, this position fell to be filled by election at the Annual Meeting on 5 June 2024.

At the Council Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023 nominations were sought for the allocation of positions for Alderman, in line with Section 4 of the Local Government

(Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Outlined as follows:-

- 1) The ordinary election of Aldermen shall be held every fourth year, being an election year (except in the case of a casual vacancy), with the election to take place, at the Annual Meeting of the Council.
- 2) The number of Aldermen shall be such number as the Council may determine but shall not exceed one quarter of the whole number of Councillors.
- 3) If the number of Councillors nominated as a candidate for the position of Alderman did not exceed the number determined by the Council and the Council so agrees, those nominated Councillors may be deemed to be elected to the position of Alderman.
- 4) A Councillor shall be a candidate for election as an Alderman if:
 - i) He was nominated as a candidate by one other Councillor as proposer and another as seconder; and
 - ii) He assents to the nomination
- 5) Any nomination may be made, and any assent may be given, either in the course of the meeting or by a document signed by the Councillor or Councillors in question and delivered to the clerk of the Council before the beginning of the meeting.
- 6) A Councillor entitled to vote at a contested election of an Alderman shall do so by signing and delivering at the meeting to the clerk of the Council a voting paper containing in order of preference the full names of the candidate or candidates for whom he votes.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree to nominate an Alderman to replace the position vacated by Karen Douglas in accordance with the provisions made in the Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Alderman McDowell offered his congratulations to the newly appointed Mayor and Deputy Mayor and proceeded to nominate Councillor McRandal for the position of Alderman.

Councillor McCollum indicated that she was content to second the proposal.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that Councillor McRandal, be elected as an Alderman.

7. APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-GROUPS, WORKING GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES (APPENDIX II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that at the Council's Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023, appointments were made to Sub-

Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies by way of nomination. Some of those appointments were for a one-year term only. Those one-year appointments were outlined in the tables attached at the Appendix, including any further changes to the composition of the groups since then.

Nominations were now sought to fill the one-year appointments as outlined in Appendix 1 for the year 2024/25. It had been normal practice to fill those positions using single transferrable vote where the number of nominations exceeded the number of places available.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to appoint Members to the Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies listed in Appendix 1 by way of nomination.

The Chief Executive guided members through the report and then sought proposals. The following nominations were made:

CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Body: Diversity Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Irwin	Councillor McCollum
2	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Hollywood
3	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Body: Arts and Heritage Advisory Panel – 5 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor MacArthur (resigned 15.4.24)	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
4	Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Harbinson
5	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

Body: Billiard Room Trustees – 7 Places (1 Year Appointment) (Newtownards Town DEA Members)

Although nominations were initially for a 1 year period, as these places are for Newtownards DEA Members, therefore the current membership should be retained for the Council term.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/27
1	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Moore	Councillor Moore
4	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
5	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
6	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
7	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

Body: Community Development Grants Working Group – 5 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
2	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
4	Councillor L Douglas	Councillor L Douglas
5	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee

Body: Age Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor MacArthur (Resigned 15.4.24)	Councillor Thompson
2	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine

3	-	
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Body: North Down Coastal Path Working Group – 15 Places (1 Year Appointment) (First Meeting 23 January 2024)

This Working Group currently has 15 members, however Council may wish to review this in line with the size of other Working Groups.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Alderman Graham	Alderman Graham
2	Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Cochrane
3	Councillor Creighton	Councillor Creighton
4	Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Harbinson
5	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Hollywood
6	Councillor Irwin	Councillor Irwin
7	Councillor Martin	Councillor Martin
8	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor W Irvine
9	Councillor McCracken	Councillor McCracken
10	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
11	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee
12	Councillor McKimm (Chair)	Councillor McKimm
13	Councillor McLarnon	Councillor McLaren
14	Councillor McRandal	Alderman McRandal
15	Councillor Rossiter	Councillor Rossiter

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Body: Kerbside Working Group – 11 Places (1 Year Appointment)

It should be noted that this was a task and finish working group, and although nominations were initially for a 1 year period, it was recommended that the current membership was retained for the lifetime of the working group.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Alderman Adair	Alderman Adair
2	Alderman Graham	Alderman Graham
3	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine
4	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
5	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart

6	Councillor Irwin	Councillor Irwin
7	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm
8	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Morgan
9	Councillor Rossiter	Councillor Rossiter
10	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
11	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS

Body: North Down and Ards Road Safety Committee – 7 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor McRandal	Alderman McRandal
2	Alderman K Douglas (Resigned 18.09.23)	Councillor Thompson
3	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Morgan
4	Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Cochrane
5	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray
6	-	
7	-	

Body: Northern Ireland Amenity Council – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Edmund	Alderman Adair
2	Councillor Ashe	Councillor Ashe

Body: Percy French Management Committee – 4 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Creighton	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor McCollum	Councillor McCollum
3	-	
4	-	

Body: Bangor Alternatives Advisory Committee – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor W Irvine

Body: Portaferry Regeneration Ltd – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Boyle	Councillor Boyle

Body: Northern Ireland Drainage Council – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Kerr	Alderman Graham
2	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

Body: All Party Group on Climate Action – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Rossiter	Councillor Rossiter
2	Councillor Woods (Replaced by Councillor Kendall)	Councillor Kendall

Body: Ards Community Hospital – Multi Agency Forum – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
2	Councillor Creighton	Councillor Creighton

Body: Community Advice Ards and North Down - 4 places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Moore	Councillor Moore
2	Councillor McKee	Councillor McKee
3	Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Smart
4	-	Councillor McCollum

Body: Somme Heritage Centre Management Committee - 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor MacArthur (Resigned 15.4.24)	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
4	Alderman Cummings	Alderman Cummings

Body: Community Resuscitation Group – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Creighton	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

Body: Kilcooley Neighbourhood Partnership – 1 Place + 1 Substitute (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2024/25
1	Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Gilmour
Sub	Councillor Martin	Councillor Martin

Additional positions to be nominated:

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING

Body: Aurora Pool Joint Management Committee – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

This position was set out in the leisure contract but had been vacant. Council had a responsibility to nominate one Member and two staff members to attend as a requirement of the contract. Staff members would be nominated by the Director of Community and Wellbeing.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/24	2024/25
1	-	Councillor Blaney

Body: Aqe North Down and Ards Management Committee – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

In 2023, the Chief Executive sought permission to nominate an extra member to the Management Committee, a total of four places. One of those positions was now vacant due to the resignation of Janice MacArthur.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/27	2023/27
1	Councillor MacArthur <i>(resigned 15.4.24)</i>	Councillor Thompson
2	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

3	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm
4	Alderman McAlpine	Alderman McAlpine

8. CLOSE OF MEETING AND PLAYING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

The Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, thanked members for attending, officers for supporting the meeting and to all of those who had been watching the livestream. He advised that the meeting would now be closed with the playing of the National Anthem. Members were asked to stand if able.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 12.18pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 11 June 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Councillors: Cathcart Kendall
Creighton Morgan
McCollum Wray
Kerr (7.02 pm)

Officers: Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Senior Professional & Technical Officer (C Rodgers) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Aldermen Graham, McDowell and Smith and Councillors Harbinson, Martin, McLaren and McKee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 7 MAY 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

NOTED.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2022/0965/F - Sites 56-93 Gowland Hollow, Portavogie - 21 Dwellings - change of house types and positioning (planning approval X/2003/0144/F). (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to the officer's recommendation.

Proposal: 21 Dwellings - change of house types and positioning (planning approval X/2003/0144/F).

Site Location: Sites 56-93 Gowland Hollow, Portavogie

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) outlined the detail of the application. The proposal would form the next phase of the Gowland development in Portavogie which remained under construction. The application sought alternative house types to those previously approved under the original planning permission X/2003/0144/F.

(Councillor Kerr entered the meeting – 7.02 pm)

The site was located within the settlement limit of Portavogie and in a Housing Policy Area designated by the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The wider area was primarily residential and included a mix of different house types.

The Planning Appeals Commission granted permission for 86 dwellings in the wider area following a non-determination appeal. The proposal did not seek any increase in the density previously approved. The overall layout of the proposed development, in terms of the central area of open space and the internal roads network, was broadly in line with the original approval.

The principle of residential development had already been established and the planning history of this site was an important material consideration in the determination of this application. Many of the houses in the Gowland development had been constructed and were now occupied.

The Officer displayed a number of visuals, including the view towards the existing dwellings to the north of the site; a view towards the existing area of open space associated with Lawson Gardens to the south-east of the site, and a view across the application site from the existing housing development, known as Portview Heights, which was located immediately to the south-west.

A range of different house types were proposed which closely reflected the design of house types previously approved. The proposed finishes, including red brick or painted render with white uPVC windows, were in keeping with the wider area.

The amended proposal did not increase the number of units previously approved but incorporated a greater number of detached dwellings. The dwellings were modest in scale and massing. Almost all were 1.5 storey except for one pair of two storey semi-detached dwellings to the southeast of the application site.

In terms of landscaping, the existing mature planting to the north of the site was to be retained and augmented. The central area of open space would be landscaped to create an attractive focal point and would include paths to maximise its useability. Planning conditions would ensure that the open space was provided, and subsequently managed and maintained by a management company on behalf of the residents.

The layout showed ample private amenity space to the rear of each dwelling in excess of recommended standards.

The development had been carefully designed to prevent any unacceptable harm to existing residential amenity. The proposed two-storey dwellings back on to an existing area of open space to the south-east of the application site and would not, therefore, harm the amenity of any neighbouring properties. All other dwellings were modest 1.5 storey buildings. The only first floor openings to the rear of these dwellings were velux windows which would prevent any direct overlooking towards adjacent existing dwellings.

The site would be accessed through the existing Warnock's Road access - in accordance with the original approval. DfI Roads had provided no objection to the proposal - subject to conditions, and the streets had been determined for adoption. A Drainage Assessment had been submitted in support of the application and DfI Rivers had provided no objection to the proposal in terms of drainage and flood risk. Furthermore, NIEA had provided no objection to the proposal in relation to natural heritage interests.

The Council received 11 separate letters of objection and issues raised had been considered in detail in the Case Officer's Report.

In summary, the site was located within a Housing Policy Area, as such the proposed development was in accordance with the development plan, and there was planning history on the site for similar residential development. All consultees were content with the proposal. Having considered all material planning considerations, it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Wray stated that the residents and the elected members had previously highlighted the potholes along the road. He noted that Warnock's Road was a single access and there had been a number of objections referring to the quality of that road and that it had badly deteriorated. Councillor Wray asked if there was any requirement whereby when a development reached a certain size another access would be required. The Planning Officer advised that the access was in accordance with the original planning approval which would have been determined under the policy considerations of PPS7 and PPS3. In terms of the quality of the Gowland Road, the development remained under construction, the intention was for DfI to adopt that road and maintain it going forward.

Councillor Wray noted that the responsibility of that road had not yet passed onto DfI and was a matter for the developer. The Planning Officer stated that would be a matter for the developer outside the planning process. The long-term management and maintenance of the road would be carried out by DfI.

Referring to the management company and the open space, Councillor Wray was of the understanding that it would be compulsory to sign up to the management company and he questioned if that was requirement for just new residents. The Planning Officer stated that matter was for the developer outside the planning process. There was a condition attached to the planning application to require the long-term management of the open space to be carried out by a management

committee. The details of that arrangement were to be submitted to the Council prior to the occupation of any dwelling.

Councillor Morgan referred to the biodiversity elements noting that a new 1.8m high close-boarded timber fence was to be erected along the boundary of the site. She referred to the applicant's ecologist having noted that the proposed planting schedule for the augmentation of the existing hedgerows included Field maple, Wych elm, Oak, Hornbeam, Larch, or Spindle.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the landscape plan had been updated to show the native species planting along the northern boundary. The existing hedgerow would be retained and augmented with native species. Along the southeast there was an existing 1.8m high fence. The landscape plan proposed softened elements.

Councillor McCollum referred to the issues raised referred to by Councillor Wray. She alluded to condition 3 – *No dwelling(s) shall be occupied until that part of the service road which provides access to it has been constructed to base course; the final wearing course shall be applied on the completion of the development.* She wondered if that was delaying a fully finished more fit for purpose road.

The Chair stated that issue would be dealt with as part of the road bond and agreement between the developer and DfI in terms of phasing.

The Planning Officer stated that the condition only related to the red line boundary and not to the existing road that extended from Warnock's Road.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, and that planning permission be granted.

Councillor McCollum sympathised with the residents in terms of the concerns regarding the surrounding roads. However, she noted that the application met planning policy.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, and that planning permission be granted.

4.2 LA06/2023/1922/F - 11 Ballyhaft Road, Loughries, Newtownards - 1 No. replacement dwelling and 1 No. new dwelling (comprising demolition of existing dwelling, access and associated site works).

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to the officer's recommendation.

Proposal: 1 No. replacement dwelling and 1 No. new dwelling (comprising

demolition of existing dwelling, access and associated site works).

Site Location: 11 Ballyhaft Road, Loughries, Newtownards

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located within the development limit of the small settlement of Loughries where planning policy operated a presumption in favour of development. The site was also within Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The area was primarily residential with a mix of housing, including lower density detached and semi-detached dwellings to the north, and higher density terraced dwellings to the south of the site. The site itself comprised a single storey dwelling and outbuilding positioned along the north-western boundary and a large garden area.

Referring to the visuals, the Officer displayed an image showing the site and roadside boundary hedge on approach from the south-east and the second image was on approach from the north showing the existing dwelling in the context of the adjacent two storey dwelling. She also displayed images of the existing dwelling and views into the site from the existing access.

The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing buildings within the site and the construction of two detached dwellings fronting the Ballyhaft Road. A paired access was proposed in a central position which would involve the removal of the existing roadside hedge to create improved visibility.

The proposed density of the development of 15 dwellings per hectare was comparable to the average density of the settlement which equated to 14.5 dwellings per hectare. Ample provision was made for private amenity space to the rear of the proposed dwellings in excess of Creating Places guidance. The building line along this side of the road would also be respected with the dwellings positioned no closer to the road than other existing dwellings.

The proposed dwellings would be two storey with a ridge height of 7.6m and a roughcast render finish with grey interlocking roof tiles. The height, scale and massing of the buildings were in keeping with other two storey dwellings in the immediate vicinity.

In total, eight separate objections to the proposal had been received. The main concerns included:

- Loss of privacy
- Disruption to traffic along the road during construction
- Increased traffic and impact on road safety
- Impact on character

All of those matters had been considered in detail in the Case Officer Report. Ample separation distances had been provided to neighbouring dwellings, in accordance with recommended standards and that would ensure the proposal would cause no unacceptable adverse harm to existing residential amenity. The orientation

of the proposed dwellings relative to the existing dwellings would further minimise any potential for direct overlooking.

The dwelling on Site 1 would be between 11.5m and 14m from the southern boundary with Alexander Park and between 22m and 24m from the rear elevations of the closest dwellings in this development. There were no windows on the side elevation of the existing dwelling to the south of Site 2 and the proposed dwelling was sufficiently set back from this property to prevent any unacceptable impact on its residential amenity. The design was simple with a linear form and pitched roof and the overall scale and massing respects the character of the surrounding area.

In terms of traffic impact, any disruption during construction would be temporary. DfI Roads was consulted and raised no concerns in terms of road safety. The existing access onto Ballyhaft Road was significantly substandard with only approximately 2m x 5m visibility clearance available in both directions resulting in poor visibility and road safety issues. The new paired access would result in a substantial betterment with enhanced visibility splays of 2m x 29m and 2m x 33m. The proposed boundary wall would be set behind the new visibility splays. The proposal would therefore improve road safety and visibility for those entering and exiting the site.

In summary, the proposal was considered to comply with the development plan and all relevant policy requirements. The proposal would cause no demonstrable harm to the character or appearance of the area: the density of development and the height, scale and massing of the buildings would be similar to the established built form in the area. Adequate private amenity space and parking would be provided, and there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of adjacent properties. All consultees were content with the proposal. On this basis, it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted.

There were no questions for the Planning Officer.

The Chair invited Colin McAuley (Colin McAuley Planning) to come forward who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr McAuley referred to the application being before the Committee due to the number of objections submitted and following due consideration of those objections, planning policy and all other material considerations, officers had justifiably recommended the application for approval and he welcomed this recommendation for the following reasons:-

- From a planning policy perspective, the proposed site fell within the development limits of Loughries as defined in the current Ards & Down Area Plan 2015. As members would be aware, inside development limits, planning policy operated a clear presumption in favour of development.
- The SPSS directed that the guiding principle for Council planning authorities in determining all planning applications, was that sustainable development should be permitted, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, unless the development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

- The application was well supported from the outset with a preliminary ecological appraisal and subsequent bat activity survey, supporting design & access statement and planning policy consideration.

Mr McAuley advised that the course of the application a total of eight letters of objection were received, two of which consisted of as few as just two words. The issues raised by objectors could be summarised into the following categories; overlooking, sewage network capacity issues, road safety concerns and disruption caused by the construction phase.

Overlooking – As noted by officers in their assessment, the location, orientation, design, floor plan layout and separation distances achieved from adjoining dwellings both along Ballyhaft Road and Alexander Park to the rear of the site, all combined to ensure the proposed development did not have any adverse impact in terms of overlooking. The development also adhered to supplementary planning guidance in relation to separation distances achieved between neighbouring dwellings and the proposed development.

Sewage network capacity issues – Members would be aware that there were some areas within the Borough which were suffering from a lack of capacity at various receiving wastewater treatment works, however Loughries was not one of those. NIW's consultation response confirmed there was a foul sewer available to serve the development, and furthermore, affirmed there was available capacity in the receiving WWTW. It was therefore erroneous of third parties to state that there was a network capacity issue in this area.

Road safety concerns – The established vehicular access to the existing dwelling on site was completely substandard in terms of visibility with only 5m available in both directions. The re-location of this access to a position centrally within the site as proposed, substantially enhanced road safety by providing visibility to the required standard of 29m & 33m respectively. DfI Roads had also responded with no objections. Whilst it was acknowledged that this section of the Ballyhaft Road was indeed narrow and utilised by schoolchildren, creation of the new paired vehicular access delivered full visibility for vehicles emerging onto this section of road, substantially increasing levels of road safety and delivering betterment over the existing situation. While the development does not propose a widening of Ballyhaft Road, it did deliver a 2m wide roadside verge which did not previously exist. This proposed road verge would naturally function as a pedestrian refuge in the event of passing vehicles. For these reasons, the proposed development does not prejudice road safety, by contrast it actually enhanced the level of road safety over the present sub-standard situation.

Disruption during the construction phase – that was not an issue to which determining weight could be afforded in any reasonable planning assessment. The developer would of course act responsibly at all times in delivering the development, but that was not a matter which would result in the refusal of planning permission.

In conclusion, the proposed development represented a sustainable re-use of a vacant/semi derelict brownfield site within the settlement of Loughries. As endorsed

in the officer’s report, the development proposals were compliant with the general policy requirements set out in the Ards & Down Area Plan, the SPPS, traffic & transportation issues covered by PPS 3, and policies governing residential development as established in PPS 7. Mr McAuley endorsed the Case Officer’s recommendation to approve this application and commended the development proposals for positive consideration by the Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Wray stated that the proposal was policy compliant, there were no issues raised by statutory consultees and the application enhanced road safety.

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

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS
(Appendices III -VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching 2023/A0056 PAC decision, 2022/A0161 PAC decision and 2023/E0006 PAC decision. The report detailed the undernoted:-

Appeal Decisions

- 1. The following appeal was dismissed on 24 April 2024.

PAC Ref	2023/A0056
Council Ref	LA06/2020/0483/O
Appellant	Mr John Gracey
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of outline planning permission for 2no. dwellings and detached garages
Location	Land immediately adjacent to and NE of No. 9 Corrog Lane, Portaferry

The application above was called into the Planning Committee meeting of June 2023 from the 09 May delegated list. The Council refused the above application on 23 June 2023 for the following reasons:

- i. 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 was essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 8 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 loss of an important visual break in built development and the creation of ribbon development along Corrog Lane.
- iii. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 14 criteria (a), (b), (d) and (e) of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the development would if permitted, be unduly prominent in the landscape, result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing buildings, create a ribbon of development and the impact of ancillary works would damage rural character which would therefore result in a detrimental change to the rural character of the countryside.
 - iv. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 13 criteria (a), (b) and (f) of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the development would, if permitted, result in prominent features in the landscape, the site would be unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the buildings to integrate into the landscape, would fail to blend with the landform and therefore would fail to integrate into this area of countryside.
 - v. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy NH 6 of Planning Policy Statement 2, Natural Heritage, in that the siting and scale of the proposal would not be sympathetic to the special character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in general and that of the particular locality.

The Commissioner agreed with the Council that the agricultural shed and No. 7a to the north of the appeal site take entry and egress onto Corrog Lane via two separate access laneways that converge to a single point circa 20m wide. An access does not constitute frontage for the purpose of Policy CTY 8 and therefore these buildings cannot form part of a substantial and continuously built-up frontage.

He also agreed that the appeal buildings would create a linear ribbon of development along Corrog Lane, removing an important visual break, and would result in a suburban-style build-up of development when viewed with existing buildings at nos. 7 and 9 Corrog Lane. In this respect the Council's first and second reasons were sustained.

The Council's fifth reason was also sustained, however, the Commissioner considered that proposed ancillary works taken in isolation would have a damaging impact on the overall character and appearance of the area, not sustaining that element of refusal reason three. He further disagreed with refusal reason four in respect of integration, noting that compensatory planting/landscaping conditions could mitigate.



Site Location Plan Corrog Lane

2. The following appeal was dismissed on 12 April 2024.

PAC Ref	2022/A0161
Application ref	LA06/2021/0975/O
Appellant	Arlene Aston
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for a single dwelling (equine business)
Location	Land adj to and to SW of 3 Castle Meadows, Carrowdore

The Council refused the above application on 10 August 2021 for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY 10 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside as it has not been demonstrated that the farm business is currently active and has been established for at least six years.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to Policies CTY 10 and CTY 13 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that it has not been demonstrated that the proposed building is visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.
- iii. The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY 1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside as no overriding reasons why this development is essential and could not be located in a settlement have been presented, and the site has not been otherwise allocated for development in the development plan.
- iv. The proposal is contrary to Policy AMP 2 of Planning Policy Statement 3, Access, Movement and Parking in that it has not been demonstrated that the access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

The Commissioner agreed with the Council that the information provided by the appellant did not evidence the use of the appeal site as a commercial equine business, livery and stud farm over the key period of at least six years. Whilst information submitted related to horse passports for example, they could not be linked to the appeal site. The Commissioner stated that the onus is on the appellant therefore to sufficiently demonstrate compliance with policy CTY 10(a) of PPS 21. However, the submitted evidence did not prove that the equine business was active and established for six years.

In terms of CTY 10(c) the Council had stated that the shed being relied upon by the appellant did not benefit from planning permission nor had the appellant demonstrated that it is lawful. As such the Commissioner concluded that it cannot be counted, which left the existing dwelling (No.3 Castle Meadows Drive) as the sole building. CTY 10 (c) refers to a group of buildings. The Commissioner found that there were no verifiable alternative sites within the Appellant's lands and no solutions had been presented. The Commissioner agreed with the Council that the relevant criteria of policy CTY 10 had not been met.

The Commissioner further concluded that criterion (g) of policy CTY 13, which requires a new building to visually link or be sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on a farm had not been met.

Therefore, refusal reasons 1 and 2 had been sustained. The Commissioner further found that policy CTY 1 had not been met and refusal reason three was also sustained.

In terms of the fourth reason for refusal, the PAC detailed that policy AMP 2 (Access to Public Roads) of PPS 3 had been met. Therefore, this final reason had not been sustained and the appeal succeeded on this point.

3. The following appeal was dismissed and the Enforcement Notice upheld on 22 May 2024:

PAC Ref	2023/E0006
Council Ref	LA06/2021/0273/CA
Appellant	Marc George Louis Pedriel
Subject of Appeal	Alleged (1) Unauthorised formation of an access (including gate) and laneway; (2) Material change of use of agricultural field to an area of stone hard standing being used in conjunction with oyster farming; and (3) Unauthorised parking of vehicles, siting of storage container and equipment associated with the oyster farming use.
Location	Land adjacent to entrance to private lane of 49, 51 & 53 Ringneill Road, Comber.

An appeal against an Enforcement Notice could be brought on any of the following grounds:

- a) that, in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by the matters stated in the notice, planning permission ought to be granted or, as the case may be, the condition or limitation concerned ought to be discharged;
- b) that those matters have not occurred;
- c) that those matters (if they occurred) do not constitute a breach of planning control;
- d) that, at the date when the notice was issued, no enforcement action could be taken in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters;
- e) that copies of the enforcement notice were not served as required by the relevant section of the Planning Act;
- f) that the steps required by the notice to be taken, or the activities required by the notice to cease, exceed what is necessary to remedy any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters or, as the case may be, to remedy any injury to amenity which has been caused by any such breach;
- g) that any period specified in the notice falls short of what should reasonably be allowed.

The Enforcement Appeal was taken on grounds (a) and (f). Ground (a) is for the deemed planning application.

The Commissioner noted that the site was located within Strangford and Lecale AONB and bounds Strangford Lough Ramsar, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), which were located within Strangford Lough (with Ards and Down Area Plan silent on all the designations).

The appellant argued that the development represents an expansion of their existing oyster farming business as per policy PED 3 of PPS 4. The Council and a third party do not consider this policy to be relevant with policy CTY 1 of PPS 21 being applicable. Paragraphs 11-13 of the PAC Report sets out the appeal development context in terms of the appellant's case with Ringneill Quay being previously used for the loading of cages from boats (via broad wheel-based tractors) onto waiting refrigerated HGVs until DAERA (who owns the Quay) ceasing the operation due to structural concerns of the Quay.

The Council and third party considered the site to be used solely for parking and storage uses however, the Commissioner concluded that the loading of oyster cages onto awaiting HGVs as evidenced by the appellant was also taking place at the site (although only across the four-month harvesting season).

In terms of policy PED 3 it stated that there should be no major increase in the site area of the enterprise. The Commissioner concluded that the policy appears to be site specific meaning that the increase in site area relates to the core business site, which in this case, was in Downpatrick. As such the proposal offends PED 3.

The Commissioner did not accept the appellant's argument that the development did not harm the rural character or appearance of the local area and therefore the requirements of the first paragraph of PED 3 were not met. Under the fourth paragraph of PED 3 there were three exceptions listed. Whilst the Commissioner accepts that this business made a significant contribution to the local economy, the farmed oysters were not brought directly ashore onto the site from the Lough.

Furthermore, there was no established relationship between the oyster farming and the site and consequently concludes that there is no persuasive evidence to demonstrate why the appeal site is the only suitable location for the loading of oysters onto HGVs from tractors and trailers. The use therefore could not be considered an exception to the policy as it failed to meet the necessary tests as set out under policy PED 2.

Paragraph 38 of the PAC Report sets out that the Commissioner does not find there was persuasive evidence of a detrimental impact on the coast's natural environment and thus PPS 2 policies were not offended.

The PAC also concluded, in agreement with the Council, that PPS 2 policy NH6 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' is offended in that "the siting and scale of the appeal development is unsympathetic negatively impacting on the visual appeal of the coastal landscape and the character in this AONB location."

In terms of the access, post-hearing advice from DfI Roads (not rebutted by appellant) stated that the access does not comply with the requirements of DCAN 15 with the need for sight splays of 4.5m x 45m, with a 6m wide access and a 10.0m radii. From the Commissioner's own observations in addition to this advice, it is accepted that the existing access prejudices road safety and significantly inconveniences the flow of traffic, sustaining the associated reason for refusal.

It was concluded that ground (a) failed and deemed planning permission was not granted.

In terms of ground (f) the removal of the gate and laneway, and the stopping up of the access did not exceed what was necessary to remedy the breach of planning control. Therefore, the appeal under Ground (f) failed.

Finally, the appellant sought an extension of 6 months to comply with the remedial terms of the Notice, should the Enforcement Notice be upheld. The Commissioner concluded that "*...sufficient time should be provided to relocate the storage and maintain continuity for employment purposes. Without amendment, the timing of this decision will result in the compliance period ending during the harvesting season. I find it is reasonable to extend the period from 70 days to four months from the date of this decision to enable the continued use of the site during this upcoming harvesting season only. The ground (g) appeal therefore succeeds to the extent specified.*"

New Appeals Lodged

4. The following appeal was lodged on 17 May 2024.

PAC Ref	2024/A0019
Application ref	LA06/2019/0722/O
Appellant	Michael Cleland
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for 2 no. infill dwellings and garages
Location	Site between 31 and 39 Florida Road, Killinchy

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachments.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report highlighting the salient points.

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

6. UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS & APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT WORKS
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching update information. 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 February 2024 (date of previous report) to 17 May 2024.

The table attached to the report set out the figures from the date of the last report to Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report highlighting that three Orders had been served and six consent for work approvals issued.

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

Councillor Cathcart thanked the Officers for the quick work that had occurred at Ballymacconnell Nursing Home and asked for further information regarding the provisional TPO process.

The Head of Planning outlined the process, Council were notified, a site visit took place and provisional TPO placed on the site, certificates were then processed and land registry advised before the TPO became confirmed.

Adding to that the Director explained that a provisional TPO was served for immediate protection, there was then a period of six months during which the health

and condition of the trees in the site would be assessed. After which Officers would decide, either not to adopt the TPO, or adopt the TPO with/without modifications.

Councillor Cathcart asked if the TPO's were brought back to Committee. The Director advised that the Committee was updated quarterly.

Councillor Cathcart wondered once a TPO was confirmed could residents raise an issue after the Council had made a determination. The Director explained that under the Tree Regulations a provisional TPO allowed for public consultation, therefore during the six months anyone could submit a representation. Once the final decision was made and the TPO was served, that was registered on the land and would not be revisited unless required due to change on site, or planning history.

Councillor Kendall thanked the Tree Officer for the quick response that had been undertaken at Clandeboye Wood. Tree issues could be difficult to address, and she felt that been a good example of a successful response.

The Head of Planning stated that she would make sure that was relayed to the Officer.

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

7. HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching half yearly performance report. The report detailed Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
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Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

Key points to note:

- There were decisions issued on six applications in the major category of development in the second half of the reporting year as follows:

LA06/2021/0061/F – Proposed residential development comprising the erection of 188 No. dwellings, open space (including NS 43), landscaping, children's play area, next phase of the distributor road, internal road network, SuDS Pond, and all associated site and access works and proposed amendment of the section 76 planning agreement. This required detailed negotiation with the planning agent and developer and NIW in respect of drainage issues and amendments to the legal agreement required to ensure that comprehensive development was achieved in line with delivery of infrastructure relating to the distributor road and drainage.

LA06/2023/1500/F – amendment to the Queen’s Parade redevelopment scheme in respect of phasing across the development and associated amendment to the legal agreement (40.5 weeks)

LA06/2021/0118/F – 98no. housing units at St Andrews development, Ballyhalbert (153.6 weeks) – impacted by drainage requirements and NIW

LA06/2023/1959/F – Major investment and upgrade scheme to National Museum’s Ulster Folk Museum (25.4 weeks)

LA06/2022/0873/F – relocation of Bangor Central Integrated Primary School from Castle Park Avenue to Balloo Road, Bangor (81.6 weeks) – affected by further mitigation required by DFI Roads

LA06/2023/2434/F - 95no. dwellings for social housing at Lands South of 37-77 Court Street and 1-11 Canal Row, situated within Bawn Wall and bounded by the canal, Newtownards (17 weeks)

Appeals – there were seven appeals against refusal of planning permission of which three were dismissed and four were upheld. Of the four that were upheld, two appeals were based solely on reasons provided by DFI Roads, and for which issues were resolved prior to the appeal hearings, and therefore the appeals were upheld.

Key achievements:

- The Unit processed 336 applications in the householder category of development of which 226 (67%) were processed within the internal processing target of 8 weeks, whilst 88% were issued within the statutory processing target of 15 weeks for local applications.

Emerging issues:

- Dfl Stats Branch had only recently been able to derive data from the new Portal System in respect of number of enforcement cases brought to conclusion. Data for the second half of the year has been provided and indicates 178 cases brought to conclusion of which 59% were concluded within the target timeframe of 70% of cases brought to conclusion within 39 weeks. Some of these have been impacted by parallel retrospective planning applications being brought to determination.
- Work continued to be undertaken in respect of undertaking health and condition surveys on TPOs and is being assisted on a part time basis within the Unit by the Biodiversity Officer alongside appointed arboriculturist support.
- The Service Unit continued to be affected by long term sick absence and recent resignations/secondments for which recruitment is ongoing.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the report.

In terms of the spend against budget, the Director advised that was not available at the time of writing the report. The target was 95% and the section was slightly over budget at 104%. That was due to legal costs incurred in respect of an ongoing judicial review, employment of agency workers to backfill vacant posts and a £256k shortfall of the projected fee income which the Director hoped would recover.

The Chair asked how the figures related to the departmental statistics. The Director explained that the Committee had previously received an update on Dfl statistics. In respect of major applications, the processing was 84.7 weeks due to legal agreements required and the ongoing issues with NI Water. In respect of local applications, the overall average processing time was 16 weeks. For enforcement cases, the section was slightly below the 70% target as Officers continued to try and catch up on cases, but a number depended on outcome of submitted retrospective applications/appeals.

In relation to the appeals, Councillor McCollum asked if there were any learning to gain from those. The Director explained that the update on the appeals had been brought previously to the Committee. One of those related to a dormer extension, Planning had considered that the dormer would set a precedent in the proposed ATC and the PAC had not agreed. The other application was in Station Road for four apartments, where the Committee had refused that application on the basis of intensification of the site yet the PAC did not consider that to be the case. The outcomes/policy interpretation adopted by the PAC were fed back to Officers and learning taken on board.

Recognising the issues that the section was facing, Councillor McCollum asked if it was envisaged that the situation would have corrected in six months' time. Touching on each of the points in the report, the Director stated that Members were aware of the issues that Planning were facing with Dfl Roads. Dfl Roads were not engaging in pre application discussions and had asked for a list of cases to be prioritised due to

the backlog of consultations it was experiencing. The southern division of DfI Roads also served Newry and Mourne District Council who had recently submitted consultation requests on 300 planning applications at one time. The issues had been raised with the Minister. The Director was optimistic that hopefully additional staff would be recruited and retained. Furthermore, there was continued concern highlighted in respect of the PAC single Commissioner decisions, with few panel decisions being made, providing oversight on policy interpretation. She was hopeful progress would be made on the enforcement cases, as reported previously, there had been a pause on the Building Control cross-checking to free up additional resource. The Director was hopeful the changes approved recently and enacted that week to the delegated list would have an impact. There was a number of major applications in the system in excess of the target processing time, Officers found it difficult to meet the target given that information required was often missing, substantial further amendments were being submitted during processing to address issues, and engagement was difficult with some of the under-resourced statutory consultees.

Councillor McCollum felt it was difficult to watch the continuous red flags and not think something in the system needed amendment. The Director agreed and noted the ongoing issues. Through the Regional Planning Improvement Programme officers continued to work with DfI to address issues, noting that many of the issues raised required legislative change.

Councillor McCollum sought an update on the ongoing judicial review. The Director asked if she could respond to that matter in the exclusion of the public/press.

Councillor Morgan referred to the target figures outlined in the report and wondered if that was best that could be done. The Director stated that it was the best that could be done with the staff there were currently available. The Householder team was a limited team and to ask professional chartered town planners to do year-long stints processing householder applications could be somewhat demoralising. When Officers were rotated into the team they inevitably carried the existing non-Householder caseload with them. The Householder team did make a significant contribution to the Service meeting its processing times. The Director hoped to meet with the Head of Planning now returned, to review the older applications, however she was aware there were many outstanding issues associated with each of those cases, many involving consultee requirements.

Councillor Morgan questioned if it was the Planning Improvement Programme that was not progressing being responsible for the issues raised. The Director stated that the planning legislation introduced at the point of RPA along with the two-tiered system was responsible for many of the issues raised.

The Head of Planning noted that there were applications that could get stuck in the system for a number of issues. Planning Officers on occasions arranged meetings with agents to encourage withdrawal of non-compliant proposals and resubmit when addressed, or to address the issues raised expediently, however they often were reluctant to do so. She had recently attended a Heads of Planning meeting where the Planning Improvement Programme had been discussed at length alongside the issues of lack of engagement with statutory consultees, due to resourcing. The

Head of Planning outlined the frustrations in that regard and the issues being faced with NIEA, which was reluctant to accede to requests for prioritisation of specific cases.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the processing of applications and he asked if the reasons were outlined when an application had exceeded the target processing time. He felt it was useful to find out the range of issues causing delay and look at ways to tackle those. The Director advised that the Department published yearly performance of statutory consultees. Within the Planning Act statutory consultees were required to respond to a consultation within 21 days however there were no penalties imposed for not doing so. The statutory consultees were a component part of the planning process although were not appropriately resourced. Officers did try and outline the reasons for delay when presenting the application to Committee.

(Councillor Wray withdrew from the meeting – 7.55 pm)

Continuing, the Director stated that Dfl had been critical of the number of re-consultations on the same planning application however there were many reasons why an application had to be re-consulted on and she outlined some of those as examples.

Councillor Cathcart felt it would be useful to quantify the delays though he recognised that was difficult to the range of issues.

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

8. UPLIFT IN PLANNING FEES

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching letter from Dfl. The report detailed New Statutory Rule entitled “The Planning (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (S.R. 2024 No.108), came into operation on 31 May 2024.

The Planning Portal had been updated.

The purpose of the Statutory Rule was to apply a one-year inflationary uplift of approximately 4% (based on CPI as at January 2024) across all fee categories. That would mean that for example, the fee for –

- An extension, alteration or improvement of a dwellinghouse would increase from £327 to £340; and
- The erection of a single dwellinghouse would rise from £975 to £1014.

The uplift in planning fees was to help councils and the Department in resourcing the delivery of their development management functions.

Dfl was also updating Development Management Practice Note 11 (Planning Fees), which would be available for viewing following commencement of the Regulations.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report and the attachment.

The Head of Planning presented to the report to Members.

(Councillor Wray re-entered the meeting – 7.59 pm)

The Director advised that the last uplift was in 2019, the fee was not fit for purpose at the point of transfer. She had continually been lobbying that the planning fee was not reflective of the work involved in the processing of a planning applications, and element which was to be addressed as part of the Planning Improvement Programme.

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

Councillor Kendall asked in real terms how much an uplift in fees if they had increased in line with inflation. The Director did not have a figure, that had been calculated previously by DoE using a simplified system. The uplift was approximately 12-14% since 2015. For larger applications, developers did appreciate that the planning fee was a small percentage of the overall development project and would be content to pay more if it meant faster throughput. Central government set the fees.

While that was disappointing, Councillor Kendall stated that was useful to note.

Councillor Cathcart asked if there had been any progress in relation the legislation and ability to charge for processing of certain elements.

The Director advised that Belfast City Council had introduced charging for PADs, however she was not recommending the introduction of such within this Council at this stage. The staff were not available to commit, and some consultees were not engaging, in order to address the statutory requirement of responding to consultations on planning applications. Furthermore, there was the issue of providing detailed advice at pre-application stage then applicants completely disregarding that advice when the final application was submitted.

Following on, Councillor Cathcart asked if Belfast City Council had provided any feedback since it had been introduced. The Director advised that she had discussions with its equivalent Head of Planning and Director however it would not be useful data for a number of reasons, including the type of applications, and as it dealt with consultees in different divisional offices compared to AND.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

9. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

(Appendix X)

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

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

Schedule 6:6a - 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.

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014,

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.15 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Wednesday, 12 June 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McAlpine

Alderman: Armstrong-Cotter

Councillors:

Blaney (7.25pm)	Kerr (7.03pm)
Boyle	McKee
Cathcart	Morgan
Douglas	Smart
Edmund	

Officers: Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Head of Assets and Property Services (P Caldwell), Head of Regulatory Services (R McCracken), Licensing and Regulatory Services Manager (D Brown) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Cummings and Councillors Wray, Rossiter and Harbinson. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Blaney and Kerr.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. ITEM WITHDRAWN

4. APPLICATIONS FOR INDOOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCES

(Appendix I & II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the following applications had been received for the Grant of an Entertainment Licence as followed:

- 1. Cloughey Bowling Club - 17 Main Road, Cloughey, BT22 1JA**

Applicant: Ally McArthur, Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2 Church Street, Newtownards

Days and Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9am to 1am

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

There were no objections to the application.

2. The Ranch - 95 Green Road, Bangor, BT19 7QA

Applicant: Cole Hogg, 51 Donaghadee Road, Millisle

Days and Hours: 14 days, 9pm – 1am

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

No objections had been received to the application.

3. The Nines, Seacliff Road, Bangor

Applicant: Mr Damien Fusco, 3 Downshire Court, Bangor

Proposed days and Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9am to 12pm

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

The application was to vary the existing licence to provide entertainment Monday-Sunday, 9am to 1am

There had been objections to the application from local residents (letters attached).

The objections were:

David and Pauline Flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of life would be made unpleasant if entertainment was granted for each night of the week. Disturbance made by patrons leaving the premises late at night
William and Lynn McAvoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the days of entertainment has the potential disruptions for noise disturbance and anti-social behaviour.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would impact on the neighbourhood's quality of life
David Speers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area is a residential area not commercial. • Concerned of potential that premises will attract more customers and as a result of them sitting outside during the summer will cause additional noise disturbance.
John Thomson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously he has advised that premises is located within a residential area of the town and not in an area predominantly frequented for drinking.

There were no objections received from the PSNI or NIFRS.

Environmental Health had requested a revised Acoustic Report which had been provided. They had no objection to the application provided the following Terms and Conditions were applied to the licence (a copy of their report was attached):

As such, the following conditions should be attached if the entertainment licence was to be granted:

1. Entertainment shall be restricted to Monday to Sunday between the hours of 12pm and midnight.
2. External speakers shall not be used during periods of entertainment.
3. All windows to the ground floor shall be kept closed during entertainment.
4. All external doors to the ground floor shall be kept closed during entertainment.
5. The music shall only be sourced in the bar area.
6. The music shall only be of an easy listening nature with no heavy bass tones.
7. A competent person shall be present during each entertainment event, and he/she will have access to a sound meter device of not less than Class 2 standard, in order to monitor the sound level of the band or entertainment. Readings will be taken mid floor circa 2 metres from the musicians in the ground floor bar at the beginning and thereafter at regular intervals during entertainment.
8. Results of monitoring shall be recorded using a log sheet. The sound levels should not exceed 85dB LAeq (5 minutes). If the sound does exceed this level, then the competent person must ensure that the entertainment provider reduces the music level to the point where 85dB LAeq (5 minutes) is no longer breached.
9. When entertainment is taking place, the ability to talk or to hear what a person is saying should also be used by the competent person to gauge the sound level. If talking or hearing what is said becomes difficult, the sound level is too high.

10. Externally the competent person shall periodically patrol the exterior of the premises and at the nearest dwellings will assess the overall sound levels. Specifically, the bass levels shall be considered and if the sound and bass levels are distinctly audible and likely to cause disturbance then they will ensure that the entertainment providers lower the volume.
11. If, following monitoring of entertainment by the Council's Environmental Health Service, there appears to be unreasonable disturbance, the noise level stated in Condition 8 above may be reduced and/or the licensee may be required to re-engage their noise consultant to propose what further mitigation measures may be required. Any necessary mitigation measures shall be implemented to the satisfaction of the Council officers.

History

The current licensee of those premises was granted an entertainment licence in October 2023 for Saturdays between the hours of 9pm and midnight. There had been objections from residents at that time, but the Council agreed to grant the licence.

There had been no complaints regarding noise from the premise since the licence was granted.

The applicant, Mr Damien Fusco, had requested to make a representation to the Committee.

The objectors also wished to address the meeting and would be represented by one of their number.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The Council grants the licences in respect of Cloughey Club and The Ranch; and
2. In respect of The Nines, Seacliff Road, Bangor hears representations from the applicant and objectors before determining the application.

The Chair suggested that since there was a deputation being made to the Committee on the second part of the recommendation the two parts be considered separately.

On taking part one of the recommendation it was proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

In respect of part two of the recommendation, The Nines, Seacliff Road, Bangor, objections had been received from the neighbouring residents.

David Speers was invited to speak on the application on behalf of the objectors. He began by informing the Committee that the neighbouring residents were not all tenants as the Council had addressed them but six out of the seven were owner occupiers of their homes.

He stated that the Council and the planning system seemed to be more invested in the business community than the needs of local residents. He thought that residents had a right to enjoy their properties in peace and quiet without excessive annoyance. Previously, The Salty Dog had held an entertainment licence for one night only and that business communicated well with the neighbouring residents, but he considered a change from one day to seven as too great and would have a detrimental effect on neighbours' health and wellbeing.

He referred to advertisements promoting acoustic music, DJs and parties and late summer boozy nights at The Nines. There was an area to the back of the property which was open and sound in that place travelled easily to the neighbouring apartments. He believed that sound speakers were acceptable up until 10 pm in the evenings but feared that a change to extend that would place residents in an unreasonable position of having to phone the police or Council to report nuisance. Mr Speers described two incidences when he had needed to get out of bed and get dressed to go and report excessive noise directly to the business. It was noted that The Nines had other interests in Bangor but that they were located in commercial areas.

Mr Speers went on to ask how the set conditions would be managed and monitored. There was already some noise at the front and back of the property with the temporary area covered over and he was concerned that that would get worse. He described how people would often wait outside The Nines for taxis and there was loud talking late at night and bottles left on the steps of the residents' property. He asked members of the Committee to imagine how they would feel if they lived in similar circumstances.

Councillor Cathcart thanked Mr Speers and explained that a similar application had come before the Council previously and at that time residents' concerns had been taken very seriously and conditions were put in place when an entertainment licence was given. He asked if the mitigations had been effective in reducing the noise levels that the residents were experiencing. Mr Speers agreed that the mitigations had improved the situation, but residents were of the view that an entertainment licence being given for seven days would exacerbate the situation. Mr Speers said that he could hear noise but if the frequency of that was restricted it was easy to live with and the concern was that seven days each week would make day to day life more difficult. Residents would also welcome increased communication with the business.

Councillor Boyle thanked Mr Speers for his comments and remembered discussion around these premises previously. He asked how long the business had been trading in that location and in response it was noted that a business had been in that building for the past thirty years, but The Nines had taken over from The Salty Dog a year ago. The business had been operating as a licensed premises over that time but there had been very little entertainment provided over those years.

Councillor Boyle asked Mr Speers to consider if what he was referring to was potentially the worst-case scenario and if there were a list of conditions attached, he asked should that not be of some comfort to the residents. The conditions should prevent disturbance to neighbours and limit the need to complain and where there

were problems Council officers would be required to follow up with investigations. The Member thought that the business would be doing exceptionally well if it was able to provide entertainment every night of the week and while he understood the residents need to live in a normal environment, a licenced premises had been in that place for thirty years. He suggested that there were ways to create a balance and it should not be total rejection.

Mr Mackey, Head of Marketing for the applicant, was invited to speak and he thanked the Committee for the opportunity saying that he was relieved to address the concerns expressed since he believed that there was a degree of uncertainty and confusion about the potential direction of the business and what that could do for neighbours and guests. He explained that he had reached out to the residents in February/March of this year and when he had not heard back from them, he worked on the assumption of 'no news was good news'. He hoped that he could now offer some peace of mind and informed them that the previous premises had run at huge losses and the building had fallen into some disrepair due to lack of investment. While the current business was still being run at a loss it did need investment and plans were in place to open a fifteen-bedroom boutique hotel along with a facility to host intimate weddings and other such events. He described the need to be competitive in the local market.

The application for an entertainment licence for seven days a week was simply to offer the business flexibility, but he did not envisage the need for entertainment every day and neither could it afford to upset its corporate customer base and those who were staying within the hotel accommodation. To reduce noise outside heaters were not provided and restrictions could be put in place at the rear of the property after 11 pm. He was unaware of complaints of anti-social behaviour from customers and the profile for those was affluent families who were out to enjoy a meal with easy entertainment or cocktails and tapas. The hotel would be manned 24 hours each day and was covered by CCTV. The business was located in the city centre, and it was expected that there would be some level of noise in the surrounding area. Addressing lack of communication, he said he would be keen to have open dialogue with all of the residents on a regular basis.

In closing he stated that his business was for the community to enjoy, and he hoped that the community would work with him and not be against the proposition. Development and investment would contribute to making Bangor a more vibrant place to live, work, visit and eat and would help contribute to the rate base.

The Chair thanked Mr Mackey for his presentation and invited Members to ask questions.

Councillor Cathcart asked about the engagement the business had had with the residents and it was accepted that it had been poor in the past but since the second grant of the entertainment licence it had been taken a lot more seriously and he hoped for continued dialogue. He had reached out to the residents in February to let them know that it was not planned to have entertainment seven days each week, but he believed that the imagination of that was more daunting than the reality.

Councillor Boyle had been unaware that the premises would include boutique hotel accommodation and he would expect the business to give consideration to those staying if they were interested in repeat business. The issues around the application for seven days entertainment had been addressed and he was satisfied that it was not the business' intention to offer entertainment every day of the week but rather it offered the option to expand the business offering. He believed that there were conversations to be had but he was confident that they could be addressed if cooperation was shown.

Mr Mackey was thanked, and he returned to the public gallery.

Councillor Morgan asked officers if the conditions set in such applications were robust and wondered what happened if they were not complied with. Members were informed that Council officers would be proactive in managing those if problems arose and there was potential for the Council to suspend or revoke a licence. Complaints from the public regarding alleged breach of entertainment licence conditions were taken extremely seriously. The Member asked if staff work at weekends, and it was confirmed that inspections were often made outside of normal office hours.

Councillor Edmund asked the Director about noise monitoring and Members were informed that this would form part of the process for assessing compliance with licence conditions. Officers could attend premises unannounced after receiving a complaint and where necessary use a noise metre to take readings. The Member asked if sound proofing could be added to the premises, but the Director stated that whilst that may be necessary and appropriate in some cases, it was evidently not deemed necessary by officers in this instance and did not form part of the proposed licence conditions for The Nines.

It was noted that noise complaints generally were a matter for the Council rather than the police.

It was proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the entertainment licence for The Nines be granted, subject to inclusion of the additional conditions listed contained in the officers' report.

Councillor Boyle had listened to the two presentations and in light of the conditions attached and the business including a boutique hotel he thought that it was suitable and hoped that more open communication could be made between the business and the residents.

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

FURTHER AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Blaney, in relation to the second recommendation that the entertainment licence be granted to The Nines, subject to inclusion of the additional licence conditions set out in the report.

5. STREET NAMING REPORT – CLANDEBOYE COURT, BANGOR

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a development comprising of 20 apartments within three individual apartment blocks was currently under construction on lands at 116 Clandeboye Road, Bangor.

The developer had requested the name Clandeboye Court for the new development.

The name was appropriate for the site location and was in keeping with the general neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree to adopt the street name Clandeboye Court for this development and delegates acceptance of suffixes to the Building Control department.

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

6. REQUEST FROM LIDL REGARDING SUNDAY TRADING (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Lidl Northern Ireland Limited had written to express its gratitude for the support during the Covid pandemic when the Sunday opening hours were relaxed by the Council.

The company was now requesting that the Council considers designating Newtownards and Bangor (Holywood Exchange sites outside the Borough) as 'seasonal towns' in order that they could benefit from extended Sunday opening hours.

Under the Shops (Sunday Trading &c) (NI) Order 19997 a Council could designate an area as a holiday resort which would permit extended Sunday trading hours in large shops between 1 March and 30 September each year.

Currently large shops with a retail space over 280 square metres could only open on a Sunday between the hours of 1pm and 6pm excluding Easter Sunday or Christmas Day; with a few exceptions including petrol stations, pharmacies and motor suppliers.

Under the Order a Council could designate an area as a Holiday Resort which would remove the Sunday restrictions on up to 18 days between March and September. The term holiday resort was not defined in the Order.

Ards Borough Council had previously designated Donaghadee and Ballywalter as Holiday Resorts.

The designation process was set out in the Order.

Before making any designation, a Council must first consult persons appearing to be or likely to be affected by the proposed determination (whether as the occupier of shops or as local residents) or persons appearing to the Council to represent such persons.

If the Council subsequently made a designation, it must publish a notice of the designation.

RECOMMENDED that the Council considers the request from Lidl Northern Ireland.

Councillor Cathcart proposed an alternative recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Smart.

‘That this Council engages with both Bangor and Ards Chambers of Commerce, along with relevant unions to seek views regarding the request from Lidl to extend Sunday opening’.

Councillor Cathcart said that the Council had looked at this previously and had decided, like Belfast, not to proceed. He did not like the way the legislation was being used. It had been intended for seaside resorts when it was introduced such as Ballywalter and Donaghadee and the Unions were also opposed to using it in this way.

However, he thought it would be useful to engage with the Chambers of Commerce, although he suspected the move would not progress because there was a big concern over workers’ rights. It would be useful to have initial engagement before the longer term was considered.

Councillor Smart was in agreement and thought that discussions would be useful and there may be a risk in taking this action which could be giving poorer treatment to smaller businesses and therefore he supported the amendment.

Councillor Edmund also gave his support for the amendment and while it would be fair to have that discussion, he would not be in favour of extending the opening hours. The hours of 1 pm – 6 pm had been agreed for a reason and that was to protect small retail businesses and to limit the monopolies. More importantly in his view was to protect family time for those who worked in retail. He urged Members to think of constituents and the quality of their work and family life. Covid had been a different time and holiday resorts were also different, families often went to them on Sundays for recreation so he would not support an extension as requested.

Councillor McKee was also opposed to the change in those hours and did not expect engagement to lead to anything different and agreed with Councillor Edmund that workers’ rights were at the forefront of this. There were many hours in a week for the big businesses to make profits.

Councillor Boyle supported the amendment and was passionate about giving a lifeline to small businesses which needed all the help they could get to survive. Agreeing to this offered the multinationals further dominance and while such

businesses were welcome the Council had a duty to also give protection to small businesses.

Councillor Morgan was happy to support but felt that the discussions needed to be consistent and suggested that Bangor as a whole might wish to be considered a holiday resort so Members should be mindful of that.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter remembered this being a legacy Ards consideration and Donaghadee was designated as a holiday resort at that time since it was a small town and the Council wished to encourage growth and investment there. During Covid there was a purpose to extended opening, but she believed that smaller businesses needed support more. She had worked in retail as a student and there was pressure to work on Sundays for minimum wage and that also needed to be considered by the Council. It was not essential to have these large shops opened 24 hours per day and while Bangor and Newtownards could be considered tourist destinations Lidl did not want to open for tourists only and it was important to recognise that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Smart, that this Council engages with both Bangor and Ards Chambers of Commerce, along with relevant unions to seek views regarding the request from Lidl to extend Sunday opening.

7. Q3 AND Q4 SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORTS

7.1 Assets and Property Services (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

Key points to note:

- The action plan accompanying the sustainable energy management strategy was delayed as the strategy took longer to develop than first anticipated. The document had strong linkages to several other key documents including the Corporate Plan, the roadmap to sustainability and green fleet feasibility study, all of which were only recently developed. The strategy was before the Council for approval this month.
- As stated previously the biofuel trial had to be put on hold due to significant cost increases invoked almost immediately after the Council agreed the trial, making it unfeasible. HVO remained a potential short-term fuel to be explored in the Council's forthcoming "Roadmap to Green Fleet" document.
- The timescales for completion of jobs remained an ongoing problem due to workload, staff absences and difficulty recruiting for vacant posts.
- We were underspent by 19% largely due to fluctuation in utilities costs.
- Several items of planned maintenance of public areas could not be completed due to wet weather preventing painting.

Key achievements:

- Refurbishments included Whiterock toilets, Clifton Road car park, Balloo ERC cladding replacement and Balloo HRC kiosk replacement.
- Over 5400 maintenance jobs completed this year.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Councillor Morgan commented on the refurbishment of the toilet facilities at Whiterocks and thought they looked very smart in such a beautiful setting. She thanked everyone involved.

Councillor Boyle referred to painting projects which had been delayed due to rainy weather and if there was an alternative plan for those. The Head of Assets and Property Services reported that last summer had been exceptionally wet, and the teams were trying to catch up on the work required. The Member thanked the work crews for the other projects that had been completed.

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

7.2 Regulatory Services (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government

Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
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- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

Key points to note:

- The budget overspend was due to reduced Car Parking income. The percentage overspend figure reflected the significance of the car park income budget as a proportion of the Department’s overall budget, and the Departmental overspend was largely a consequence of that reduced income stream rather than an increased spend in services.

Key achievements:

- The successful introduction of a new carparking contract, Dogs on Leads scheme and the introduction of increased fixed penalty fine limits had been important developments for the service moving forward.
- The maintenance of extremely high levels of online applications and satisfaction levels was a credit to the teams.

Emerging issues:

- Due to the new method of appraisals, further work was required to maximise employee engagement moving forward.

Action to be taken:

- Car parking income to be reviewed in light of current car park usage levels.
- Staff attendance to be more closely scrutinised.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report.

Councillor Morgan was concerned about car parking usage and the altered income targets, and she felt that the reduction reflected on the viability of the town centre. She wondered if this could be considered in a more holistic way and this Committee work with Place and Prosperity to look at footfall and more collaborative working.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had received complaints from the drivers of large vehicles who had been ticketed, they believed incorrectly, because they were over the space allocated for a car. She called for common sense in that and appropriate training since those people had said they would never park in the town centres again.

In response the Director did not personally believe that was a reason for lower car park occupancy rates in town centres and highlighted that any resident could lodge an appeal against a penalty notice if they felt that they had been ticketed incorrectly. The Director explained there parking spaces were marked out in accordance with accepted standards, which were used commonly across most car park facilities.

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

7.3 Waste and Cleansing Services

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
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- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

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

Key points to note:

- While the aspirational 60% recycling target was not met, the annual recycling rate increased by almost 3% from the 22/23 rate to 55.5%.
- The LEAMS Cleanliness Index surveys were re-established for the 2nd half of the year.

Key achievements:

- The recycling rate at the Council HRCs has increased to almost 70% for the 2nd half of 2023/24.

Emerging issues:

- The textile recycling market in NI, was currently experiencing severe difficulties meaning that it may be necessary to delay the launch of the kerbside collection service to ensure that a viable market existed for collected materials.

Action to be taken:

- None

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report.

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

8. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

(Appendices VII & VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council's Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan set out the Council's commitment to effective energy and carbon management and outlined the next steps on the Council's journey toward achieving net zero emissions in its estate, addressing the critical challenges and opportunities in the transition to a sustainable future.

The document focused purely on the Council's estate and was to be read alongside the Council's "Roadmap to Sustainability", our Corporate Plan (2024 to 2028) and the forthcoming "Roadmap to Green Fleet".

The strategy was designed to direct the Council's policies, investments, and initiatives over the coming years, ensuring that it met environmental targets while fostering economic resilience and social well-being.

The Council had an aging estate and achieving net zero by 2050 would require significant commitment and investment. It would only be possible by taking radical steps to maximise energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, improve governance arrangements and committing the human and financial resources required to carry out all of those measures.

At the same time customer expectations and budgetary limitations with the need for sustainable investments needed to be balanced.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the draft strategy and action plan attached.

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McKee welcomed the report and the framework to implement change and lay the direction of the journey that needed to be made. Investment was needed to decarbonise, and he looked forward to the changes which would follow.

Councillor Morgan was pleased to see progress in this important area of work and asked if, in the short term, the Council had the resources to deliver it. In response the Director stated that the Council had established a substantial Sustainability Fund, and much cross departmental discussion had taken place on this area. Officers were cognisant of the need to invest to save, and the Sustainability Fund would provide a source of upfront investment funding that could deliver savings over time. An Energy Efficiency Officer had also been appointed to support the work in this area.

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

9. PROPOSED CORPORATE RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON “RETHINKING OUR RESOURCES: MEASURES FOR CLIMATE ACTION AND A CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN NI”
(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Consultation was launched on 7 March 2024 and set out proposals aimed at improving the quantity and quality of household waste and business waste of a similar nature recycled in Northern Ireland ([Rethinking Our Resources - Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk)).

Further to a report that was brought to the Committee on this last month, it was agreed that the Elected Member Kerbside Collections Review Working Group should convene to agree a draft response to the consultation document.

The draft response agreed by the working group was attached.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the attached response for submission to DAERA.

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

Councillor Cathcart considered that it was good to have the discussion and it reflected the concerns he had about making responses when the Council did not know the future needs.

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

10. ANDBC WASTE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015-2024

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that nine years into the life of Ards and North Down Borough Council April 2015, and with just under 6 years until the 70% recycling target laid down in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the purpose of this report was to set out a strategic review of the Council's sustainable waste resource management performance.

Strategic Significance

Waste disposal costs represented one of the Council's single biggest categories of expenditure and therefore had a very significant impact upon ratepayers. Secondly, that aspect of service delivery hugely impacted the standard of the Council's environmental governance. Thirdly, waste management was one of, if not the most, heavily regulated of all Council functions; some of the most significant statutory duties were listed below.

- Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 – duty to promote the achievement of sustainable development in the exercise of functions.
- The Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 and The Waste Regulations (NI) 2011 – duties to apply the waste hierarchy priorities when planning waste collection and disposal services.
- The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 established a waste recycling target of 70%, to be achieved by 2023.

Strategic Prioritisation

For the financial, environmental and statutory reasons set out above, when Ards and North Down Borough Council came into existence in 2015, 'Sustainable Waste Resource Management' was quickly identified and agreed by the new Council as a key strategic corporate priority. In November 2015, the Council approved a Sustainable Waste Resource Management Strategy position, which:

- Set out the challenges ahead,
- Identified the potential rewards accruing from more sustainable waste resource management outcomes,
- Plotted a roadmap of key service development proposals; and
- Established a headline key recycling target of 70% to be achieved by 2030 (that visionary target was agreed by ANDBC some 7 years before it was eventually enshrined in the NI Climate Change Act).

The challenge for the new ANDBC Council was probably one of the most significant facing any of the Northern Ireland Councils. The combined municipal waste recycling rate for the two legacy Councils in the last year of their existence (2014/15) was 40.6%, below the then NI average of 41.4% and some 30% below the new target of 70%.

Transformation of Waste Management Services

Service Transformation Initiatives Already Implemented

Immediately after agreeing its strategic approach towards more sustainable waste resource management outcomes, the Council embarked upon a visionary and ambitious programme of structural waste management services' re-design. The following programme of key service transformations had been progressed:

- New Food Waste Recycling Service (Dec 2015)
- Expansion of Blue Bins Recyclables Range (April 2016)
- New Kerbside Glass Collection Service (June 2017)
- HRC Access Permit System for Vans and Large Trailers (January 2018)
- New Kerbside Trade and Schools Waste Recycling Collection Service
- Rules for General Access and Use of HRCs (December 2022)
- HRC Online Access Booking System (September 2023)

Food Waste Recycling

December 2015 – roll out of new food waste kerbside recycling collection service, involving a ban on any organic food waste being placed into grey bins and provision of kitchen food waste caddies and compostable food caddy liners to every home to support convenient and easy collection and transfer of all household food waste into green and brown wheeled bins for composting.

Landfilled food waste led to very significant greenhouse gas emissions and represented the biggest category of household waste by weight. It was therefore identified as the number one strategic waste resource management priority by the Council due to its impact both financially and environmentally, and the relative scale of potential recycling rate improvement to be gained by capture of food waste through the household recycling services.





- **Expansion of Blue Bin Recyclables Range**

April 2016 – implementation of newly negotiated contractual arrangements for the processing of mixed dry recyclables that were accepted into blue bins. That expanded the range of kerbside recyclable plastics packaging from just plastic bottles, to a very wide and comprehensive range of all shapes, sizes and colours of plastic pots, tubs, trays and containers.

The type of packaging waste was vast in variety and scale, and the Council identified as an early priority the need to capture such materials for recycling as part of the kerbside recycling collections service - and do so in a way that was as all-encompassing and least confusing as possible to householders.



- **New Kerbside Glass Collection Service**

June 2017 – implementation of a new kerbside collection service to every home for recycling of all types of glass bottles and jars, involving provision of collection caddies to all homes. Whilst glass recycling banks had long been available at a number of locations around the Borough, the Council was aware that utilisation of such facilities was somewhat limited across the community and much glass waste was still going into the grey bins.

Moreover, glass was 100% and endlessly recyclable, and the glass

recycling process was highly energy efficient compared to glass manufacture from raw materials.

Due to the relative simplicity of the glass recycling message, and the prevalence and weight of the material in the household waste stream, it was identified as an early strategic service transformation target.



Important changes to your household bin collection service

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Dear Householder,

Following our recent and very successful campaign to remove food waste from grey bins, requirements for how we dispose of ALL recyclable household waste have now changed.

What's changed?

- All glass bottles and jars (of every shape, size and colour) **must** now be placed in a new **glass collection box** that is currently being delivered to every home; they must no longer be placed in the grey bin.
- All recyclable paper/card, plastics and metals **must** now be placed in the **blue bin** for collection every two weeks. The range of recyclable waste items that must now go into the blue bin has been greatly expanded – please check the guide provided along with this letter or use the free Bin-ovation recycling app for full details.
- Only non-recyclable waste items **must** now be placed in your **grey bin**.

- **HRC Access Permit System for Vans and Large Trailers**
January 2018 – implementation of a new permit system for access to Household Recycling Centres using vans or large trailers. That was identified as a strategic priority due to the relatively large amount of both total and landfill waste being received into Household Recycling Centres, with the associated negative financial and recycling rate impacts. The Council identified the abuse of HRCs for trade/business waste purposes as a primary contributor, with this most closely linked to access by vans and large trailers.
- **New Kerbside Trade and Schools Waste Recycling Collection Service**
April 2019 – implementation of a new kerbside recycling collection service to all trade and schools' customers, that matched the kerbside recycling service delivered to residents. Prior to that most trade waste collected was landfilled, and the transformation of the trade and schools' waste service was implemented to ensure a consistent and sustainable approach was adopted across the entirety of the Council's waste management operations. The transformation included a move to free recycling collections for all of the Borough's schools, aimed at incentivising and promoting engagement and education of children on the subject.



- Rules for General Access and Use of HRCs**
December 2022 – implementation of strict rules around general access and use of HRCs, involving a requirement to show ID proving residency in the Borough and an obligation to use sites appropriately for ‘recycling’ as opposed to mere waste ‘disposal’ (e.g. separation of recyclable waste, ban on placing bags of mixed waste in landfill skips).

The move was precipitated by a period of significant deterioration in the Council’s Borough recycling rate (both in absolute terms and relative to other Councils’ recycling rates) during and post Covid period. Inappropriate use of HRCs for both out of Borough and trade/business waste as well as a deterioration in the level of general recycling engagement by residents at sites, were identified as the key contributory factor. At its worst point, the Council was receiving almost 60% more HRC waste per capita than the average for other NI Councils and received the same amount of HRC landfill waste as Belfast City Council, despite BCC having more than twice the Borough’s population.



- HRC Online Access Booking System**
September 2023 – implementation of an online booking system (supported by access to telephone booking where required), for general access into

HRCs. The system, which was now extensively used by many Councils across the UK, was introduced to consolidate and sustain the implementation and ongoing effectiveness of the site access and use rules that had been agreed and commenced in December 2022. Its primary purpose was to ensure that only household and in-Borough waste was allowed into sites and that waste was routinely more effectively segregated for recycling.

The screenshot shows a mobile interface for booking a visit to the Household Waste Recycling Centre. The header includes the council's name and logo. The main heading is 'Book a visit to the Household Waste Recycling Centre'. Below this, there is a section for 'Your details' which includes an 'E-mail address' input field, a checkbox for 'I am a blue badge holder and require assistance during my visit', a dropdown menu for 'Is this a residential or charity booking?' with '(Please select)' as the current option, and a 'Your address' section with a 'Search' button.

Planned Future Service Transformation Initiatives

The Council was currently either working towards the implementation of additional new waste management service transformation initiatives or was planning such measures in the near future, with the aim of delivering further step change improvements in the Borough recycling rate towards the 70% target identified for 2030.

- New Kerbside Textile Recycling Collections Service**
 That had already been agreed by the Council, and new combined glass and textile collections vehicles had recently been procured to replace the original glass only collection vehicles which had reached the end of their working life. Detailed service implementation planning was in progress with the hope of commencing the new kerbside textile recycling service later in the financial year, although a recent slump in the textiles recycling market may necessitate a delay in that.
- Kerbside Bin Collections Review**
 The Council had agreed to a comprehensive review of its kerbside bin collections model, with the aim of ensuring that the configuration of bin collections for different waste streams was optimized to produce the best possible recycling outcomes.

The review, being led by a cross party group of Elected Members, was already well under way. It was anticipated that a review report would be brought to the Environment Committee as early as possible this year, with proposals for a way forward.







- **HRC Estate Review**

The Council had agreed to a full review of its HRC estate, looking at the design and location of HRC sites to ensure that there was a capital plan in place to upgrade its network of facilities in a way that would optimize sustainable waste resource management outcomes. It was anticipated that a draft high level strategy paper would be brought to the Committee after the summer, with proposals for a way forward on that agenda.

Sustainable Waste Management Service Performance Outcomes

Financial, Environmental and Statutory

The following table summarised performance progress over the past 9 years in relation to key financial, environmental and recycling rate outcome criteria – benchmarked against data for 2014/15, after which the two legacy Councils were merged under Local Government Reform.

	2014/15	2023/24	Change
Annual Landfill Disposal Tonnage	52350	32687*	 19663 (38%)
Annual Municipal Recycling Rate %	40.6	55.5	 14.9%
Annual Tonnage of CO ₂ equivalent Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Landfill	15,700	9,800	 5900
Landfill CO ₂ equivalent Greenhouse Gas Emissions Equivalent to Emissions from No. of Average Cars	7400	4600	 2800
Annual Land Disposal Cost @ Present Gate Fee and Landfill Tax Rate	£6.8M	£4.3M	 £2.5M
Annual Landfill Disposal Cost @ Present Gate Fess and New Landfill Tax Rate from April 2025	£8M	£5M	 £3M

* Rolling 12-month period (Jan – Dec 23)

Worthy of highlighting was the fact that were Council still landfilling the same amount of municipal waste as it was in 2014/15, that would represent an additional annual landfill cost burden of £2.5M at current gate fee and landfill tax rates.

The tables below illustrated how the position had changed since 2014/15 in ANDBC compared to the average for other Councils, in respect of several key sustainable waste resource management indicators:

- The total amount of municipal waste generated.
- The amount of residual waste disposal (i.e. waste either landfilled or otherwise disposed of in ways that are not accredited as reuse or recycling).
- The municipal recycling rate.

	Total Municipal Waste Tonnage 2014/15	Total Municipal Waste Tonnage 2023/24*	Change	Residual Waste Tonnage 2014/15 (Not Reused or Recycled)	Residual Waste Tonnage 2023/24* (Not Reused or Recycled)	Change
ANDBC	96,193	84,244	↓ 12.4%	57,139	37,489	↓ 34.4%
All Other NI Councils	855,230	909,597	↑ 6.4%	501,165	449,341	↓ 10.3%

*Rolling 12-month period (Jan 23 – Dec 23)

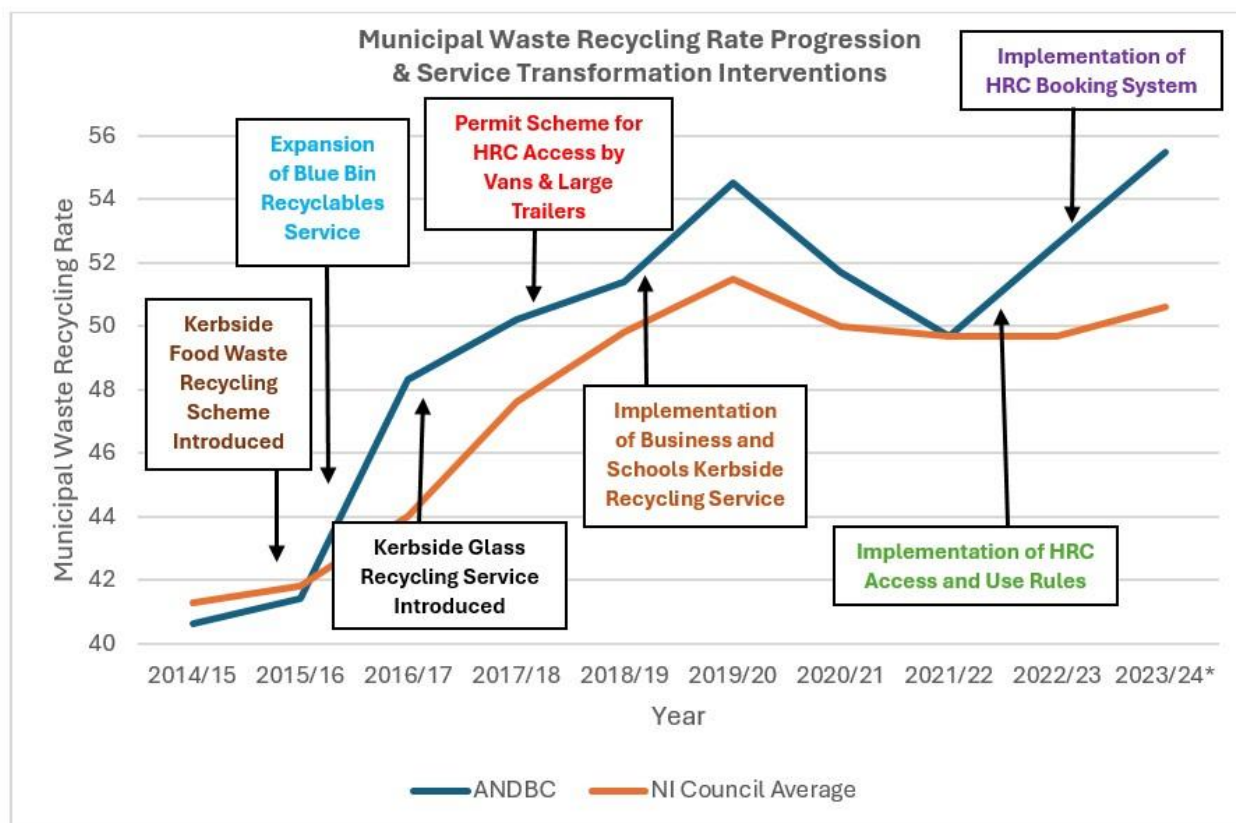
	Municipal Waste Recycling Rate % 2014/15	Municipal Waste Recycling Rate % 2023/24*	Change
ANDBC	40.6	55.5	↑ 14.9%
All NI Councils	41.4	50.6	↑ 9.2%

*Rolling 12-month period (Jan 23 – Dec 23)

The data in these two tables was key to understanding the extent to which the Council had improved its sustainable waste management outcomes over the past 9 years since local government reform, both in absolute terms and relative to the average performance of other Councils in NI.

Impact of Service Transformation Initiatives on Outcomes

The chart below illustrated the change in the Council’s municipal recycling rate year by year, as each of the waste service transformation initiatives had been implemented. The chart clearly illustrated the correlation between each significant service transformation initiative, and the Borough’s Municipal Waste Recycling Rate.



*Rolling 12 months (Jan – Dec 2023)

Summary and Conclusion

This report provides an important strategic overview of the very significant progress made by ANDBC over the past 9 years since the new Council was created in 2015. The Council's sustainable waste management performance had been positive overall, both in absolute and relative terms, and the outcomes achieved were patently a product of the strategic approach adopted by the Council from the outset – with each planned service transformation initiative leading directly to successive step changes in the recycling rate (with associated positive financial and environmental outcomes).

Notwithstanding the above, it was clear from this review that:

- a. The Council could not be complacent, as its recycling progress did suffer a significant reversal for a period, as indicated in the chart above. That demonstrated that it could not take continued upward momentum in performance for granted, and Council must prioritise continuous monitoring and review of its sustainable waste management service outcomes – with corrective actions taken where those were not in line with expectations or requirements.
- b. Further significant step change improvements in the Council's sustainable waste management outcomes was still required to propel us towards the target of a 70% recycling rate by 2030. The Council had improved its rate by almost 15% over the past 9 years and now had almost 6 more years until 2030 to increase that rate by a further 15%. Officers believed that that was

achievable; there was precedent, with some other UK Councils having already reached 70% and indeed more locally the former Banbridge District Council achieved a rate of almost 61% back in 2014/15 just prior to Local Government Reform when the NI Council average rate was then just 41%.

The Council's consolidation of the service transformation initiatives it had already implemented, with further refinement where possible to secure even better outcomes from those, plus determined progression of the planned further service development initiatives, provided the best opportunity to reach the 70% recycling goal by 2030. The Council was fortunate to have an excellent, dedicated and enthusiastic team of officers and staff across the Waste and Cleansing Services Department, whose efforts had contributed significantly to the progress that had already been made and stood ready to similarly support the challenges ahead.

It was worth concluding the report by highlighting that landfill tax was scheduled to rise very steeply in April 2025, by 21.6%. Even at existing levels of landfill disposal, which was highlighted in this report had been reduced significantly since 2014/15, it was projected that that rise would equate to an extra annual landfill tax burden of over £³/₄ M. That added an even greater financial imperative to the sustainable waste resource management agenda.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report.

(Councillor Smart left the meeting at 8.30 pm)

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

Councillor Cathcart was encouraged that the very difficult decisions that had been made over the recent decade had reaped significant benefits in helping to reach targets. He referred to changes being made that were outside the Council's control such as the charges for landfill and the targets for recycling.

Discussion took place about the sticker system on bins and noted that those were generic and did not provide the householder with specific details of their incorrect recycling. It was explained that the stickers went from yellow, to orange, to red and when a red was issued the bin was not collected. Application of alert stickers on bins was followed up by a letter explaining the reason for that and asking the householder to review the contents of the bin and help and support from the Council was offered where it was needed. A copy of the Council's recycling guide was also posted out, which gave full details of all types of recyclable waste items which must not be placed in grey bins. So, on the first and second occasion (yellow and orange stickers) the bin was collected but not the third time (red sticker). When an orange alert sticker was applied to a bin, a recycling officer would also try to arrange a home visit to a resident to chat through any queries or concerns they may have in regard to recycling. It was explained that the Council sent out hundreds of letters to householders each month in relation to misuse of the grey bin for recyclable waste disposal. A visit to the householder could lead to an exemption for a household if officers thought that was appropriate in some exceptional justifiable circumstances.

The Director was questioned on the software used by the HRCs in relation to the booking system and Members were informed that was procured through the G-Cloud procurement framework established by government to provide public sector organisations with cloud-based software data management solutions. This procurement route provided added assurance that data and was appropriately and legally managed, and only companies that meet strict data management criteria were allowed to feature on the framework.

Councillor Morgan was continually thinking of how the Council communicated with its residents and how it could thank them for the great strides that had been taken to meet challenging targets. Those had been new ways of working and the public had engaged overall very well. Although it was clear that there was still a lot more to do encouragement such as message boards at HRCs celebrating the recycling achievements would be a simple way to keep motivation high.

The Director agreed and pointed out that if the Council was not doing what it was in terms of transforming waste services, it would be costing ratepayers millions extra in waste disposal costs. He also highlighted that landfill tax would be going up by almost 22% from April next year, which at the current level of landfilling would require an extra £0.75M to be found during the estimates process. The Director shared the view that the messaging to the public was very important and he thanked the Member for the suggestion.

Councillor Boyle referred to nine years ago when the waste service transformation process had begun, and he had helped to convince the Environment Committee to proceed with the radical changes needed and was delighted to read of the progress to date which would need to continue.

Councillor Blaney reported several phone calls he had received about bin lids breaking frequently recently and wondered if the service was aware of any issues in relation to that. The Head of Service explained that the oldest grey bins were around 44 years old and the green bins had been in place since 2005. When plastic was exposed to sunlight over time and with age it became more brittle and was more prone to splitting with wear and tear, particularly with brown or green bins whose froze more easily over the winter.

Councillor McKee referred to a glitch in the booking system which did not show every address in the Borough. The Director advised that if any resident was having difficulties in that regard, they could email the Council with details.

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

RECESS 9.00 pm

RECOMMENCED 9.11 pm

11. Q2 AND Q3 LICENSING ACTIVITY REPORT (JULY TO DEC 2023)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period from **1 July to 31 December 2023**. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Licensing Service, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance.

Applications Received

The Service dealt with a wide range of licensing functions which required the officers to consult with the PSNI, NIFRS and a range of other internal Council Sections in making their assessment of an application.

	Period of Report July – December 23	Same period last year July – December 22
Entertainment Licence	88	25
Cinema Licence	0	0
Amusement Permits	4	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	1	3
Pavement Café Licence	8	7
Street Trading Licence	0	1
Lottery Permits	5	1

Most of the licences issued were for renewals and hence the workload was constant year on year. Renewing a licence still entailed considerable work to assess the application and consult with the other bodies.

Regulatory Approvals

That was the number of licences, approvals and permits that had been processed and issued.

	Period of Report July – December 23	Same period last year July – December 22
Entertainment Licence	60	4
Cinema Licence	0	0

Amusement Permits	5	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval	2	2
Pavement Café Licence	15	8
Street Trading Licence	1	3
Lottery Permits	0	2

Inspections

The service carried out a range of inspections in connection with the grant and renewal of licences to establish if the premises were suitable. In some cases, they inspected with the NIFRS.

During performance inspections were an important element in ensuring the licensees are abiding by their licence terms and conditions and that they were safe for patrons.

	Period of Report July – December 23	Same period last year July – December 22
Initial/ renewal Entertainment Licence Inspections	57	31
During performance Inspections	50	24
Initial Inspections of Street Cafes	0	0
Initial Inspections of Places of Marriage and Civil part.	0	1
High Hedges Site Investigations	14	16

The Service had an annual planned programme of ‘during performance inspections’ which concentrated on the higher risk premises such as night clubs through the year.

CCTV incidents

Period: 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023

Date	Location	Incident	Action
5 July	Newtownards	Traffic accident	Recorded for PSNI
13 July	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
28 July	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
26 July	Newtownards	Criminal damage	Recorded for PSNI
3 Aug	Bangor	Traffic accident	Recorded for PSNI
12 Aug	Bangor	Assault	Recorded for PSNI
26 Aug	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
8 Sept	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
20 Sept	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
3 Oct	Bangor	Criminal damage	Recorded for PSNI
11 Oct	Bangor	Persons fighting	Noted
19 Oct	Newtownards	Persons fighting	Noted
13 Nov	Bangor	Assault	Recorded for PSNI
18 Nov	Bangor	Drink driving	Recorded for PSNI
6 Dec	Bangor	Criminal damage	Recorded for PSNI
14 Dec	Newtownards	Traffic accident	Footage provided
10 Dec	Bangor	Assault	Footage provided
27 Dec	Bangor	Assault	Recorded for PSNI

Off Street Car Parking

The Council currently operated 22 pay and display car parks in Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards. Ticket sales and usage had not returned to date to pre-Covid levels.

Table 1: Income from Ticket Sales

	Period of Report	Previous year
Income from ticket sales	£390,373	£297,761

Table 2: PCN's Issued

	Period of Report	Previous year
Bangor	764	704
Holywood	622	686
Newtownards	798	740
Total	2184	2030

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Cathcart asked about the speed of issuing entertainment licences and referred to the Court House and how long that had taken. The Director said that a review of delegation was taking place at the moment, which would hopefully address that as it was proposed that authority to grant new entertainment licences would be delegated to the Committee. Councillor Cathcart agreed with that approach.

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

12. HIGH HEDGE LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTATION

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council previously requested an update on the working of the High Hedges Act 2011.

Background

The Act was intended to help persons secure reasonable enjoyment of their property in respect of the loss of light caused by a 'hedge' growing in an adjoining property.

Whilst there was an ultimate legal sanction that the Council could impose, the aim of the legislation was to resolve problems through mediation.

In determining if the Act could help a property owner the hedge must first meet specified rules set out in the Act:

- the hedge (or the portion of the hedge that was causing problems) must be made up of a line of two or more trees or shrubs, and
- it is mostly evergreen shrubs or trees, and
- it is more than two metres above ground level on the hedge owner's side; and
- It is causing a loss of light to the property.

If the hedge met those requirements, then there may be a cause for complaint.

The process

It should be noted that this was normally a long process.

1. Persons who consider that they are affected by a High Hedge should speak in the first instance with the Licensing Services for advice. This advice will be verbal and relating to the above questions and the application process. Officers will not call or inspect the hedge at this stage. A copy of the Council Guidance will be forwarded. Copy attached.
2. The complainant will also be advised of the need for them to take reasonable steps to resolve the matter with the hedge owner and record those interactions. This could take up to a year.
3. If they believe that the hedge meets the definition of a high hedge and they have had a period of interaction with the hedge owner then the complainant can make a formal complaint to the Council. They must also pay the fee of £360.
4. The Council will check the application and review the evidence provided regarding their actions to resolve the complaint.
5. If it is considered that there has been insufficient action taken to resolve the matter the application will be refused and the fee returned.
6. If the complaint is accepted the hedge owner will be contacted and asked for their comments. Once these are received and reviewed arrangements will be made to assess the problem hedge and undertake measurements etc.
7. If the inspection does not agree that there is a loss of light then the complaint will be closed and part of the fee returned.
8. If it is agreed that there is a loss of light then an assessment of the reduced height of the hedge will be calculated.
9. If the reduction is more than one third of the height of the hedge the Council will seek the advice of a tree surgeon. The Council cannot reduce the height unless it is satisfied that the hedge will survive.
10. If it is likely that a Remedial Notice should be served, then the Officers will attempt to mediate with both parties. If the matter is resolved, then part of the

- fee is returned and no further action is required.
11. If mediation fails, then a Remedial Notice will be issued against the hedge owner.
 12. The Notice will explain the reasons for the Notice and the height that the hedge needs to be reduced to. It will also set the timescale for the action to be taken.
 13. The hedge owner can appeal to the Lands Tribunal.
 14. The full fee is refunded to the complainant and recharged to the hedge owner.
 15. The Council can subsequently prosecute the hedge owner for failing to comply with the Remedial Notice.

Action taken 2023/24

Number of general enquiries: 51

Number of formal complaints received: 4

Number refunded: 2

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Edmund believed that the fee of £360 would be off putting to many people and thought that was a weakness in the legislation even though a refund was awarded if the application was successful. It would be difficult to change that since the legislation covered Northern Ireland as a whole.

Councillor Boyle hoped that neighbours would cooperate but felt that people would pay where real problems persisted.

Councillor Cathcart thanked officers for the report and thought the legislation needed to be reviewed fully, but he was encouraged that some applications had been successful.

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

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

14. **RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR CARDBOARD COLLECTED AT THE HRCS**

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report on a contract for reprocessing of cardboard, was considered.

It was agreed that the contract with R Heatrick Ltd T/A Skipway Waste Management and Recycling be extended for a further 12-month period.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.25 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Thursday 13 June 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Ashe

Aldermen: Alderman Adair
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter

Councillors: Creighton
Edmund
McCollum
McCracken
Smart

Officers: Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Economic Development (C McGill), Interim Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Place and Prosperity Committee Vice Chair, Councillor Ashe, advised that she would be chairing the meeting following an apology from the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Gilmour, due to illness.

She took the opportunity to welcome Mr Anton Cozzo to the meeting following his recent appointment to the position of Interim Head of Regeneration.

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from the Chair (Councillor Gilmour), Alderman McDowell, Councillor Blaney, Councillor Hollywood, Councillor McKimm, Councillor McLaren and Councillor Thompson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair sought declarations of interest at this stage.

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. DEPUTATION – KIRCUBBIN AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RE KIRCUBBIN HARBOUR

The Chairman welcomed the deputation which consisted of Mr Brian Bailie and Ms Sandra Henderson, representatives of Kircubbin and District Community Association.

In his address to the Committee, Mr Bailie spoke of the significance of Strangford Lough and Kircubbin Harbour as the only harbour on the Lough shore. Environmental improvements over the years had seen sewage treatment issues addressed, farming run-off had been controlled, and destructive fishing practices had been banned.

The marine flora and fauna continued to repair and re-establish; and there was clear evidence that the lough was returning to a rich natural environment that had not been realised for generations.

There was an abundance of resident and migratory birdlife, alongside very healthy colonies of seals; last year seeing the return of a school of 50 dolphins along with a couple of Killer Whales.

He compared this to Dingle, Co Kerry, which had once had a dolphin that had made the small town a tourist sensation. The dolphin had since died but tourists continued to flock there to have their photo taken beside the statue of the deceased dolphin. He suggested that the Council send a tourism officer to find out what Dingle was doing right with one dead dolphin that this Council could not achieve with 50 live ones.

He believed that there was much untapped opportunity on the Council's doorstep and Strangford Lough only needed a hub, a centrally located harbour, that was easily accessible by road.

Mr Bailie felt that Kircubbin was the ideal location to develop sea safaris and history trips; scuba expeditions, and kayaking and paddle-boarding, and rowing and sailing. It was a safe, natural location just waiting for an entrepreneur to come along and make it all happen.

He explained the option of setting up a limited company and years of building credibility and experience to be successful in acquiring grant funding to develop the harbour. The erosion would not wait that long, however.

Instead, he urged the Council to act now and referred to its track record in securing funding for many regeneration projects. He asked the Council to recognise the advantages of embracing the challenge and realising the benefits and opportunities and pride of place that the restoration of Kircubbin Harbour would bring to the Borough.

In closing, he asked Members to consider what Dingle had done with just one dolphin; and realise that this was a real opportunity to establish a centre for marine pursuits and activities on the shores of the largest Marine Nature Reserve in the United Kingdom.

The Chair thanked the deputation and invited questions from Committee members.

Raising a series of questions, Alderman Adair thanked the deputation and all those attending in the public gallery for all of their hard work to date. He asked how engagement was progressing with other relevant public and private sector organisations and how the regeneration of the harbour would fit in with the Borough's long-term tourism goals and add value to its tourism offer. He also asked for an update on the number of signatures on the petition.

Mr Bailie advised that conversations had been held with NIEA and HED in relation to the historical and structural aspects of the harbour. In terms of the benefits the project could bring to the Borough's wider tourism offer, he referred to Exploris and Mount Stewart and growing visitor numbers at those locations and how the harbour could attract people for overnight stays rather than just day trips. That in turn would have much wider benefits for local businesses in the area.

He added that Kircubbin Harbour continued to be a valuable asset commercially for both fishing and leisure craft and once it was made safe, that aspect would only grow further, attracting high value vessels from Bangor, for example, as it would provide more options in terms of destinations. Ms Henderson clarified that the petition had attracted around 1,700 signatures to date.

Councillor Smart commented that he had been both impressed – at the community spirit and hard work by the group - and conversely, depressed, due to the shocking report and the damage that had occurred to this historical asset. He asked for clarity on the timeframe of the information and it was explained that it dated back to 2016. Councillor Smart queried the impacts that the loss of the shore front had had on residents and asked for an update on a possible transfer of ownership to the Council.

Mr Bailie advised that he had not heard anything back yet in respect of the latter query. He explained that erosion happened suddenly or gradually, and if Kircubbin was on the Irish sea, the harbour would no longer be in existence. However, its location at Strangford Lough offered some protection and the erosion had been slow and gradual. He believed if the Council restored the harbour, it would be a good long-term investment. He referred to a survey undertaken in 2016 and estimated restoration costs of somewhere between £350,000 and £400,000. However, a new up-to-date assessment would require additional funding.

Councillor Edmund asked what was envisaged in terms of future use of the harbour, referring to existing restrictions on fishing in Strangford Lough and indications of solutions being discussed with the National Trust.

Mr Bailie was unaware of a discussion with the National Trust; however, he was aware that the boats currently using the harbour would relocate to Killyleagh and Carrickfergus if the harbour was no longer viable for them. He explained that there was a harbour floor that would require dredging and he referred to local knowledge of coal boats once using the harbour in terms of its historical commercial viability. He believed that the restoration would allow for vessels up to 100 tonnes to use the harbour.

The Vice Chair thanked the deputation for attending and Mr Bailie and Ms Henderson returned to the public gallery.

In line with standing orders for deputations, Alderman Adair indicated he wished to make a proposal for an officer's report to be returned to the Committee on options for the regeneration of Kircubbin Harbour. This was seconded by Councillor Edmund.

Proposing, Alderman Adair felt that Council should look at what it could do to help with the regeneration of the harbour. Members had heard about the work that had been done by the community over the years and it was regrettable that the harbour had been in this state of disrepair for so long, recalling the previous efforts of former MLA Kieran McCarthy in the long running campaign. The seconder, Councillor Edmund gave his support, reflecting on the historical aspects and felt that the Council needed to explore options.

Adding his support, Councillor Smart felt it was right that the Council left no stone unturned in terms of what it could do to help find a resolution. He asked if officers felt that given the varying range of expertise involved in terms of historical, structural and financial matters, if the information being requested could be sourced in-house.

The Interim Director of Place advised that this could be actioned in-house to a point; however, the report would include recommendations on how to move forward.

In summing up, Alderman Adair thanked members for their support and thanked the deputation and supporters of the campaign for their attendance. He felt that this sent a positive message.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council bring forward a report on options on the Regeneration of Kircubbin Harbour.

4. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION ARDS TT RACES 2028 – UPDATE REPORT (FILE RDP14)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that in November 2023, the Place and Prosperity Committee received a report on early discussions regarding the following Notice of Motion:

'That this Council notes that 2028 will mark the centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT Races and tasks officers to prepare a report in relation to options on events to best commemorate this sporting anniversary and celebrate the area's rich motorsport heritage.'

The report highlighted that early engagement had been undertaken with representatives from The Ulster Vintage Car Club, TT Historians, other local vintage car enthusiasts and an initial conversation with the Member who proposed the Notice, to seek their thoughts on how to appropriately mark the occasion. Since that time, a further tentative discussion has also taken place with a potential sponsor facilitated by a race specialist.

The event date of 18 August 2028 and indicative event outline as ‘a motor sport themed weekend similar in style and presentation to Goodwood Revival Festival located at the Ards Airfield’ is still the working context.

Although the event is some years away it is now prudent to begin planning by following up on Council’s approval in November 2023 to form an Ards TT Working Group of Members. As the previous report stated, the group will be supported by Tourism and Heritage Officers and motorsport historians/enthusiasts. It is anticipated that other stakeholders could also be considered at the first meeting of the Working Group if deemed appropriate. It is the intention that a Terms of Reference for the Working Group would be agreed at the first meeting, anticipated to take place in September 2024. In the interim, Officers will engage with relevant contacts as the need arises for planning purposes. Updates on any discussions would be available to members of the Working Group at the first meeting and updates as agreed by the Working Group would be presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

It should be noted that during the budget setting process Council approved a budget of £60,000 per annum which is allocated in earmarked funds during 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 to attribute a potential budget of up to a maximum of £180,000 to cover all planning, delivery and marketing of the event in 2028.

RECOMMENDED that the Council determines an appropriate number of, and nominates, members for the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group and further notes the planning arrangements as set out in the report.

Members welcomed the importance of early planning for such an important event and discussed the potential makeup of the Working Group. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter felt early planning was prudent given the costs involved, although she felt it was a good use of money. This was an exciting event and she recalled the TT in previous years and the buzz that it had brought to the area. She wondered if it was better to appoint members to the working group from the relevant DEAs of Newtownards and Comber.

Adding his support, Councillor Edmund spoke of the importance of the TT and how it was an incredible part of the Borough’s history. Referring to the tourism benefits, the event had worldwide appeal, particularly across Europe where many of the previous competitors and winners had hailed from. He believed that some of their descendants may want to visit and experience the event that their relatives had been involved in.

Concurring, Councillor Smart also referred to the tourism benefits that the event could bring to the local economy but wondered if all of the DEA members suggested by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter would be too many. The Director of Prosperity clarified that a number between six and eight elected members had been suggested given that there would be other members of the Working Group including officers and external representation.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Council notes the planning arrangements set

out in report and that seven elected members be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group at the June meeting of the Council.

**5. COVID RECOVERY SMALL SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
(FILE RDP236)**
(Appendix I - II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Interim Director of Place detailing that Members would be aware a report was presented to the March Place and Prosperity Committee providing an update on the progress of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (CRSSP). It was agreed that Officers would provide a subsequent report giving a detailed update on specific projects within the programme.

Update on specific projects.

1. School Lane, Ballywalter

School Lane was located at the rear of Ballywalter Primary School and connects the main village to the school, sports pitches, play area and residential area.

The current path was not accessible for all and regularly floods, becoming unusable during wet weather. The proposed works would raise, widen, and resurface the path to improve its accessibility and connectivity.

The pathway covered 3no different land folios; the Council, the Education Authority (EA), and a private owner. All potential path designs would entail works on the folio owned by the EA.

The EA was requiring the Council to assume full liability for the pathway during and after the works, which was a concern as it added to the Council's existing obligations and set a precedent for future similar projects.

The Council had previously agreed to write to the Minister for Education, Paul Givan MLA, to request his assistance in encouraging the Education Authority to reconsider its stance and a copy of the letter sent dated 10 May 2024 is attached at Appendix 1. To date no response has been received.

2. Ballygowan Village Improvements

Ballygowan Village had received circa. £181,000 under the CRSSP. As Members would be aware the initial scheme was not in line with the objectives of the funding contract, and it was agreed officers would work with Department for Community officials and members of the Ballygowan & District Community Association to look at alternative options.

Council Officers met with the Ballygowan & District Community Association on 29 April 2024 to discuss three proposals, including two submitted by the Association and one proposed by Council Officers. The Officers presented each proposal with estimated costs, and the Association were asked to indicate their preferred option. The Chair confirmed the Association had agreed to proceed with Option 3 – Moss Road Walk & Cycle Trail.

The proposed Walk & Cycle Trail at Moss Road would create a trail loop through the site which would encourage walkers and cyclists to visit the site from Ballygowan Village and vice versa. The site was approximately 0.5miles from Ballygowan Village Centre. The works would start at the road junction where pedestrians would be able to access the trail and then follow it through the loop as outlined in Appendix 2. The pedestrian access point and part of the works were within the 30mph zone, and the remainder was outside the 30mph zone, linking this area to the village settlement and encouraging residents to walk/cycle.

The project sought to:

- Improve linkages in/out of the village and retail core
- Promote connectivity by enhancing the existing site to create a safe and attractive environment
- New pedestrian crossing which will improve safety and accessibility for all users
- Encourage and support active travel by providing a safe route for people to walk or cycle
- Introduction of seating and picnic benches providing leisure facilities and resting points
- Marked car parking spaces which would improve safety and enhance accessibility
- Promote and support the village centre by increasing footfall, enhancing the aesthetic appeal, and promote a sense of community; thereby attracting more visitors, supporting local businesses, and fostering a stronger sense of place and identity.

Under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme the following targets would be met:

- Encourage people to change from car use to more environmentally friendly choices such as walking and cycling (DfI).
- Increase the land used for active travel and connect people with key services whilst ensuring accessibility for those with disabilities (DfI).
- Encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area (DfC).

The proposed Walk & Cycle Trail would be delivered under the DfI funding stream. The project would provide an accessible and enjoyable route. The trail promoted physical activity, social interaction, and community engagement, ultimately benefiting local businesses and the economy.

The trail offered residents a convenient and accessible option to exercise from their own homes, reducing the need for lengthy drives to other destinations such as the Comber greenway. This would likely encourage people to engage in walking and cycling more frequently, not just at the Moss Road site, but across the village.

The trail will also facilitate social gatherings and group activities, an opportunity for social park run, friends meeting up to exercise together, and then exploring the local village, visiting shops and cafes, thereby boosting local businesses and the economy.

The project proposal had been submitted to the relevant funding officials, Department for Communities (DfC) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and approval had been received for the project to move forward.

Should the Council approve the project, officers would move forward to deliver the project within the approved funding budget and timeframes.

3. Kircubbin Coastal Path

The Kircubbin Coastal Path would welcome improvement works from the play park to the Main Street. Works would include lighting to improve safety and accessibility, street furniture including new benches and picnic tables and incidental tree planting. The scheme aimed to promote connectivity for the village services, playpark, community centre, school, and housing.

Planning approval had now been received for this project and officers were further progressing the project by appointing a measured term contractor, allowing works to commence in the coming months.

New Projects

Officers had been working closely with DfC officials to develop additional projects to be taken forward under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme in line with existing budget allocations.

The following projects had been submitted to DfC, which had approved the projects to be submitted as a formal variance request should the Council approve.

1. Shop Front Improvement Scheme, Portaferry

The proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme was designed to empower local businesses within the Portaferry Public Realm Scheme's boundary to enhance their shop fronts, thereby creating a visually appealing and cohesive public space that compliments the public realm enhancements.

The scheme would provide financial assistance to businesses by offering a grant of up to £2,500, enabling businesses to invest in exterior improvements to their premises, such as façade renovations and signage, which would not only enhance their shop frontage but also contribute to the overall aesthetic appeal of the public realm. The business owners would be expected to pay 10% of the overall costs of the proposed works.

The outcomes of a Shop Front Improvement Scheme could include increased footfall, improved customer perception, enhanced visual appeal, and a sense of community pride, as well as economic benefits such as increased sales and property values.

The proposed launch of the Shop Front Improvement Scheme in July 2024, with a completion of December 2024, would result in a comprehensive transformation of the village, bringing about a cohesive and invigorated appearance that would enhance the overall experience for visitors and residents alike.

The estimated cost of the grant scheme is £75,000 (30no businesses receiving the maximum grant available of £2,500).

It was proposed to reduce the DfC funding allocation for the Portaferry Public Realm Scheme from £985,000.00 to £910,000.00 to enable the delivery of this scheme. This would not affect the completion of the public realm works as was agreed.

2. Animation Grant Scheme

The proposed Animation Grant Scheme aimed to empower local community groups to take an active role in animating and promoting the Small Settlements Programme capital projects, providing a grant of up to £2,500 per village to support their efforts and enhance community engagement, celebration, and awareness.

It was proposed the Animation Grant Scheme would be rolled out following the completion of the capital projects in the following rural areas – Ballygowan, Portaferry, Kircubbin and Greyabbey. The grant could be used to host animation activity in the area of the completed works.

The outcomes of an Animation Grant Scheme, may have included:

- Increased community engagement and participation
- Improved visibility and promotion of the capital projects, showcasing their benefits and successes
- Enhanced sense of community pride and ownership
- Increased opportunities for local businesses and services to benefit from the projects
- Better representation of the community's needs and interests in the development and delivery of future projects

The proposed scheme would have an application period of 2 weeks following completion of the capital works, and each village would have a maximum budget of £2,500 to support community group animation activities.

The deadline for animation delivery would be no later than 01 March 2025, to allow sufficient time for the claim process.

The estimated cost of the grant scheme is £10,000 (4no scheme areas – Portaferry, Greyabbey, Ballygowan and Kircubbin). It was proposed to reduce the Professional Services budget allocation from £35,087.67 to £25,087.67 (DfC Revenue funding stream). This would not affect any other work planned.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the proposed projects as outlined above and officers proceed to submit a formal variance request to DfC.

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

Proposing, Alderman Adair believed that the village plans had been well received. Referring to School Lane in Ballywalter, as an important route to a play area, he noted that the Council had not received a response from the Education Minister and this was also despite efforts from Michelle McIlveen MLA.

He further understood that the Ballygowan village improvement project had been well received by residents and he was delighted to see that project go forward. He particularly welcomed the Shop Front Improvement Scheme in Portaferry and praised the work of John Dumigan of Portaferry Regeneration. He felt it would transform the heart of the town and it was important to ensure that local businesses benefited. He asked for clarity on the coverage of the scheme and the Interim Director of Place advised that it would cover the entirety of the public realm area where work had been completed.

The seconder, Councillor Edmund welcomed the report and felt that the schemes would enhance the sense of community pride within each of those areas. He also spoke of the importance of the small settlements receiving funding and that many of the residents actually identified with their townlands rather than the larger towns and villages of the Ards Peninsula.

For clarification, the Interim Director of Place advised that while the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure had agreed to the projects in principle, there was an outstanding query from the Department for Infrastructure, however he believed the projects would still proceed as planned.

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

6. PROPOSED REGENERATION PROJECTS (FILE RDP152)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Interim Director of Place stating that Members would be aware a budget of £200,000 (£100,000 Rural | £100,000 Urban) was allocated in this year’s Regeneration Unit budgets to work up future projects.

This budget provided the opportunity for officers to develop projects to technical design stage and planning approval (where required). The benefits of working projects up to be ‘shovel-ready’ for funding was that it increased the likelihood of securing capital funding and enabled a rapid deployment once funding was secured.

Working Up Projects 2024/25

Officers were taking a proactive approach to identifying potential projects that could be progressed this year, by reviewing the urban Masterplans, rural Village Plans and engaging with the rural communities to determine which initiatives can be taken forward.

The following projects were recommended to be taken forward:

URBAN
Donaghadee Commons Pump Track Design and Planning Application.
The Donaghadee Commons Pump Track had been selected as one of five final projects to be considered for PeacePlus funding under <i>Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation of Ards and North Down</i> , offering a significant

opportunity to bring this project to life and provide a unique recreational facility for the community, as well as bringing additional footfall to Donaghadee.

The design and planning application would provide a critical foundation for the project, allowing it to move forward with the necessary approvals in place should it successfully secure funding under the PeacePlus programme.

If the project was not successful in securing the funding, officers would proactively pursue alternative funding sources to deliver the project.

The project aligned with the Donaghadee Commons Masterplan.

Approx. Budget: £10,000

Meetinghouse Lane, Newtownards

Design and Planning Application.

The project would seek to develop a design that incorporated resurfacing, improved lighting, decorative archways, and planting, enhancing the overall aesthetic and user experience of this well-used town centre location. It would then be another useable space for markets, fairs and town activities.

The proposed project was supported by Newtownards Chamber of Commerce and directly aligned with the Newtownards Town Masterplan- *Priority C 'A Connected Town' and Priority D 'Streets for All'*. DfI Roads had also accepted this project and would be undertaking most of the works required.

Approx. Budget: £10,000

Pedestrian Walkway (from Bingham Lane to Main Street), Bangor

Design.

The project aimed to develop a design to transform this key connecting laneway into a vibrant and inviting public space. In doing so would enhance the overall experience for both visitors and residents by creating a design that provided a welcoming atmosphere that fosters social interaction, community engagement, and a sense of place.

The proposed project aligned with the Bangor Masterplan – *Priority C 'Making the Streets People Friendly'*.

Approx. Budget: £10,000

Community Enterprise Hub, Comber

Feasibility Study.

The proposed project would conduct a feasibility study to assess the demand for a community enterprise hub and identify suitable locations, gathering data and insights to inform the development of a vibrant and sustainable hub that met the needs of local businesses and residents.

The proposed project aligned with the Comber Town Masterplan – *Priority B 'Making the Most of Valuable Space'*.

Approx. Budget: £8,000

Urban Mapping Exercise
Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards Mapping Study.

Following the recent review of the city/town advisory groups, it was highlighted the need to reinvigorate the Advisory Groups with wider representation. The proposed project sought to appoint consultants to conduct a mapping study that would provide a comprehensive overview of the community and voluntary groups in each town and city, enabling the Council to establish more diverse and representative Advisory Groups that reflect the needs and interests of the local community, providing a more informed and effective decision making process that better serves the community, whilst also fostering improved relationships with groups, organisations and stakeholders.

The proposed project was a direct response to the findings and recommendations of the Advisory Group reviews.

Approx. Budget: £15,000

Dereliction/ Vacancy Study
Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards
Identification of key properties | Identification of appropriate interventions | Explore options for short and long-term use.

The Masterplans for each of the towns and city acknowledged the importance of addressing dereliction and vacancy.

The proposed project sought to appoint consultants to undertake a study in each of the towns and city to identify properties, identify appropriate strategies/interventions to stimulate economic growth and explore options for short and long-term use.

Dereliction and vacancy projects could help grow the local rate base by revitalising underutilised or abandoned properties, increasing property values, and attracting new business and residents, thereby increasing the overall property rate base, and generating more revenue for the council.

The project aligned with the Masterplan for the city and each town centre.

Approx. Budget: £40,000

RURAL
Ballyhalbert Pathway

Design to include required surveys.

Reference to NOM Request re Footpath provision at Shore Road, Ballyhalbert, 15 June 2023.

The proposed project would require officers to work with landowners and the caravan park to explore options to develop a safe pedestrian walkway at this location as a potential village renewal project.

The project aligned with the Ballyhalbert Village Plan, Action 2.5.

Approx. Budget: £20,000

Station Square, Helen’s Bay

Revise existing Environmental Improvement Scheme and Planning Application.

In 2019, the Council appointed consultants, AECOM, to complete a technical design for Station Square, this included preliminary costs. The design includes new paving, lighting, planting, and improved car parking.

Given the time since the technical design was completed, it is recommended to revisit and revise the design to ensure it aligns with the current community aspirations, incorporates updated costs reflective of the current economic climate, and submits a planning application to secure the necessary approvals.

The project aligns with the Village Plan, Action 5.1.6

Approx. Budget: £15,000

Main Street Square, Ballywalter

Design and Planning Application.

The project aimed to create a design for a vibrant public square in the heart of the village, serving as a hub for community events and activities, fostering social connections and a sense of community among locals.

The project aligned with the Ballywalter Village Plan, Action 7.1.

Approx. Budget: £15,000

Environmental Improvement Scheme, A22 Killinchy Road, Lisbane (approx. 700m)

Design and Planning Application.

The project aimed to explore options to design an environmental improvement scheme that addresses safety concerns through a community-led design process. This would involve residents in the development of a design that incorporates their ideas and prioritises safety. Key elements to be considered include widening of footpaths, adding incidental tree planting, and exploring options for a pedestrian crossing.

The project aligns with the Village Plan, Action 3.

Approx. Budget: £20,000

The budget allocated to the rural areas had not been fully utilised as officers continued to work closely with the rural communities to identify projects, allowing for a more targeted allocation of funds.

The estimated costs provided were preliminary and would be refined if the Council agreed to proceed with them.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the proposed projects as outlined.

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

Proposing, Alderman Adair commented on what he felt was a good mix of rural and urban projects, mentioning in particular the path project for Ballyhalbert. He praised officers for having a 'can do' approach and if approved that particular project would address an issue that had been ongoing for more than 20 years. He added that the Ballywalter public realm was a top priority in the Village Plan so the project would be well received. The Interim Director of Place clarified that the Millisle Lagoon, Millisle public realm and the clay pits projects took the total in the Ards Peninsula to five.

Alderman Adair welcomed this and emphasised the importance of having projects ready to go for when external funding became available.

Councillor McCracken felt that it was crucial that the project plans were progressed as quickly as possible in anticipation for funding coming available, he anticipated this would be around March time, so it would require having planning permission in place. He asked what action would be taken in order to meet those funding timeframes and the Interim Director of Place advised that there would be a full staffing compliment in place with a dedicated officer overseeing each project.

While welcoming what he felt was an ambitious approach, Councillor McCracken wondered if it would be prudent to prioritise two or three projects given the potential bottlenecks involved in the planning process. In a separate matter, he wondered if funding could be available to assist each of the TAGs and CAG in order to widen their scope and prevent the danger of them becoming talking shops.

The Interim Director of Place advised that there would be a substantial report to come in the Autumn which would review the future of those groups and potential to widen their membership. He would also be making an application in the rate setting process for each of the reformed groups to have a budget for future projects.

This was welcomed by Councillor McCracken who in a final query, noted that that Queen's Leisure Complex in Holywood was not included despite aspirations from some Members to create a hub, although he recognised that day to day it was

managed by the leisure operator, though it was still a Council owned building. He wondered if there could be scope for community consultation in order to help shape the future of the facility.

The Interim Director of Place advised that while it had been made clear that Council was open to discussion and wanted to help the community develop a vision for future use, it was also important to manage expectations and officers were mindful that there was still four years left to run on the contract with the leisure operator and it was felt that this was too long a lead in time. It also fell under the remit of the Community and Wellbeing directorate.

Councillor McCollum welcomed the Pump Track plans for Donaghadee which would meet a long term need for young people in the town. While she appreciated that the Queen's Leisure Complex was operated externally with four years left to run on the contract, she recognised that the notice of motion had asked for consultation over the long-term future. She noted that it was in the Holywood Masterplan which fell under the remit of Regeneration.

The Director explained the position of the Committee in taking forward any consultation and that it was restricted given that the Community and Wellbeing Committee was the lead on that particular facility. He advised that the Masterplans were aspirational documents but committed to speaking with colleagues in the Community and Wellbeing Directorate and would seek to bring an update report in the Autumn.

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

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2023-24 is attached.

Key points to note:

- The targets for job creation through business start activity were established and agreed with councils when the statutory responsibility for local economic development transferred to councils in 2015 as part of the Review of Public Administration. In 2023 the targets were revised and incorporated into the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2023. Due to the change in delivery of support from the *Go For It* Programme to the Go Succeed service and timescales DfE has proposed that the targets for 2023-24 should be a combination of the 2015 and 2023 Orders. The target therefore for the last year was 117 which was calculated on a pro-rata basis relative to the delivery mechanism. It is anticipated that this target figure would remain for 2024-25 so the ED Annual Service Plan will require adjustment
- The Go Succeed Service, whilst up and running, still had elements that needed to be fully realised to allow correct, appropriate monitoring and full reporting of target achievements. The performance data was therefore not fully available at the time of writing this report. Once collated further updates would be brought to Council.
- The procurement exercise to appoint a new Operator for Bangor Marina resulted in no compliant bids being received. Officers had therefore had to revisit and recommence the process, which was currently live.

Key achievements:

- Despite the delay in receiving the Letter of Offer for funding for the LMP, the team managed to put measures in place to prepare to hit the ground running to deliver a full suite of interventions that have had an immediate and positive impact on individuals needing support to get into employment.
- The outline business case for the AND Innovation Hub received Executive Board approval to proceed to casework which was now in process.
- Despite the challenging economic climate and steep rises in utility costs, especially in the first half of the year, the Operators of our facilities had managed their performance to continue to deliver across all contractual elements, continue to attract visitors and deliver value for Council.

Emerging issues:

- Once again, the Department for Communities had failed to confirm an annual budget allocation for the Labour Market Partnership for 2024-25. This

presented issues in terms of planning and delivery of support and security for staff.

- The Go Succeed Service required intensive input and resources to deliver and only had confirmed funding to March 2025. Given that there were elements which were still being refined it was imperative that the service could continue as envisaged for an additional 3-year period.

Action to be taken:

- Collective action by the 11 Councils, led by Belfast City Council, needed to continue with DLUHC to ensure future funding for Go Succeed.
- Pressure from Councils needed to be maintained to secure future funding for the Labour Market Partnership from DfC.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- 1) notes this report;
- 2) approves the amendment to the jobs target in the Economic Development Annual Service Plan to reflect the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2023

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

**8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT
(ED55)**

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity stating that the role of the Economic Development Service Unit was to promote and encourage local economic growth and to work to develop a pipeline of support from enterprise awareness, business start and business growth, employability and skills and sector development.

To encourage skills development, enterprise, growth and innovation, ED provided a suite of support, projects, interventions, and collaborations. Local businesses and entrepreneurs benefit from 1:1 confidential business advice, a business intelligence service, signposting to other support agencies, workshops, advice sessions, networking opportunities.

This year, the Economic Development Section had worked to launch the new Enterprise Support Service which had now replaced the *Go For It* Programme. The new service now provided flexibility and joined up support for new and aspiring entrepreneurs and established business owners continued to deliver its support, as well as managing the delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan.

The team had worked in conjunction with colleagues across other NI Councils and across other service units to provide timely, crucial advice and support to assist businesses in navigating the issues associated with the cost-of-living crisis and other emerging issues.

This annual report, as in previous years, provided a summary overview of the elements of the support services provided to local businesses between April 2023-March 2024.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

9. TOURISM Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE TO/MAR4/160127)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity stating that Members would be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for Q4 October 2023 – March 2024 is attached.

Key points to note:

- Staffing vacancies which were advertised during this period had been successfully recruited in both the Tourism and Events service.

- Implementation of Joint Advisory Groups pre each Tourism Event was a new working model throughout 2023.
- No event or part event cancellations – weatherproofing key aspects of events remains a focus.
- Return to higher level of ‘out of borough’ visitors, especially out of NI post-Covid at events/experiences has not returned to pre-Covid levels. Also, collecting data from 3rd party event operators had not returned results as anticipated.
- Spend at events was lower likely due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Food and Drink meet the buyer event was rescheduled to autumn 2024.
- One grant aided event was cancelled reducing overall attendee numbers.

Key achievements:

- Launch of Growth Event Fund.
- Digital communications channels were critical to promoting the borough as an appealing visitor destination by growing audience reach. During this period web traffic to the visitardsandnorthdown.com website increased by an exceptional 127% to 272k users and the visitAND social media audience increased by 36% with over 10k followers. Growth was stimulated by the creation of engaging content which showcased the tourism offering across the borough.
- A series of promotional campaigns were delivered including two destination campaigns, experience and Food Festival campaigns. These delivered growth in website traffic and followers.
- Waste service had reported 0% contamination in waste collected at Tourism events where model was successfully applied.
- Tourism Development’s successful collaboration with Parks service to deliver Chilli Fest 2023 which welcomed circa 6,000 attendees over the two days.
- 20 Food and Drink Network Members, supported by Council, achieving 90 awards at national/international food and drink awards.

Emerging issues:

- New models/systems of gathering data from 3rd party operators to be explored.
- Tourism NI (TNI) forecasts cost-of-living crisis will continue to impact NI/ROI market in summer 2024.
- Cost implications of additional health and safety and signage requirements at events for future budget planning.

Action to be taken:

- Monitor funding options to support events and project spend accordingly with new considerations factored into each event at budget planning stage for 25/26.
- Complete all outstanding staff appraisals end of June.
- Monitor Tourism NI consumer sentiment for change in propensity to spend/travel – May 2024 data and forward.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

Proposing, Councillor McCracken expressed disappointment over the external funding challenges within the sector, referring specially to Tourism NI and how funding cuts had impacted venues such as Holywood Golf Club and Bangor Court House. He asked if there had been any developments since the NI Assembly had been restored and the Head of Tourism advised she was aware that NI Tourism's Director of Events believed that the overall budget, in terms of the framework, would flow through as intended; however, there was no indication in terms of the relevant fund that Councillor McCracken was referring to.

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

10. EVENTS AND FESTIVAL FUND 23/24 – TRANCHE 1 UPDATE REPORT (FILE TO/EV67)

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity stating that in October 2022, Council approved the delivery of the new Events and Festivals Fund, a merge between Community and Tourism Events grants, a recommended action of the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2012-2026 (BESD).

Tranche 1 of the Events and Festivals Fund 2023/24 for events taking place from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, opened on 9 January 2023 and closed on 1 February 2023. Tranche 2 was reported to the Community and Wellbeing Committee and to the Department for Communities in line with the required monitoring and evaluation process.

Council approved a report detailing the awards for Tranche 1 2023/24, supporting 12 applications in March 2023.

Out of the 12 successful applications, 8 were administered by the Tourism Team and the remaining 4 by the Community Development Team. This breakdown was based on the Applicant response to the first question within the application form – if the primary aim of the event was to either encourage attendees to the event and enhance local economic benefit OR promote community cohesion/social inclusion.

Final budget

Council approved Tranche 1 Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 awards to the value of £135,806 in March 2023. Due to event cancellations and some events not drawing down the full amount, the actual amount drawn down by applicants was £120,681.04. The underspend was utilised across the overall Events service budget.

- Ards Peninsula Kite Festival's actual eligible expenditure was less than its original grant offer. Therefore, the grant paid out was reduced accordingly.
- The World Darts Federation Grand Prix was cancelled by the Event Organiser.

Appendix 1 summarises the events supported through Tranche 1 with approved awards, plus targets contained within the Letters of Offer, and the applicants' post event evaluation figures.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

Referring to visitor numbers, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted that almost every event had experienced lower numbers than anticipated and she felt it would be more beneficial if organisers were realistic in their applications for funding.

The seconder, Councillor Smart had made the same observation and noted the disparity. He pointed out that ticketed events were easy to determine the numbers; however, questioned how organisers could determine actual visitor numbers to a free public event, such as the Portaferry Gala or the Kite Festival. He asked how officers could ensure there was equality between reporting mechanisms and the Head of Tourism referred to different methods and guidance that organisers were instructed to follow but officers were always clear that organisers needed to be closer to reality and that was encouraged in all aspects of event planning.

Councillor Edmund praised all of the events, paying particular tribute to the Portavogie Tide and Turf Festival and looked forward to the next one taking place. He hoped that parking would be a high priority with alternative parking to avoid the closure of Harbour Road to accommodate coaches. This related to Item 11 however, but the Officer took the comments on board.

Councillor McCollum queried the reported event costs per attendee and noted that the figure was four times the original budget and she wondered if that was due to the disparity between projected and actual numbers of attendees, as referred to earlier in the debate. The Chair advised that the information referred to by Councillor McCollum related to a report at Item 9, already heard.

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

11. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS EVALUATION REPORT 2023
(FILE TO/EV121)
 (Appendix VII - VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that in February 2023, Council agreed the following Tourism Events programme as part of the Rates setting process:

Event	Date (2023)	Budget
May Day, Holywood	Monday 1 May	£10,000
Sea Bangor	Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 June	£75,000
Summer Food Festival including Comber Earlies Food Festival (Saturday 24 June)	Monday 20 June – Sunday 3 July	£65,000
Ards and North Down Pipeband Championships, Ards Airfield	Saturday 22 July	£33,850
Autumn Food Festival incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (Saturday 2 September)	Saturday 10 September – 25 September	£65,000
Bangor Switch On	Saturday 18 November	£15,000
Newtownards Switch On	Saturday 25 November	£15,000
		£278,850

This report presented an evaluation of the seven events delivered in the period from May to November 2023. The 2023 Tourism Events Programme delivered a total of 78,700 attendees against a target of 75,000. An additional 6,400 attendees were recorded at collaborative and experiential events during the two seasonal Food Festivals.

Market research was undertaken at each of the tourism events. Three events had market research undertaken by the in-house team (May Day and the two Switch On events). Sample sizes for each event ranged from 120-266 surveys. Results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary was attached.

May Day – Monday 1 May 2023

Working in partnership with Holywood and District Community Council (HDCC), the event's programme followed the traditional format. Community elements were delivered by HDCC including the Bonnie Baby and fancy-dress competitions, the crowning of the May Queen, recruitment of charity stalls and bouncy castles in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church and two maypole dancing sessions. These were, as always, a very popular attraction with many spectators.

All commercial stalls were set up in the car parks on Hibernia Street. This was a larger area than 2022 incorporating 32 stalls spread over the two car parks. Additional entertainment based at this market area created a festival atmosphere

with the extra space allowing a large seating area and 'Art on the Rails' hosting 30 stalls along Church Street.

Challenges and observations

- Reliance on gazebos – no alternatives are possible for May Day as over 70 traders/exhibitors are in attendance – meaning the event is at risk during weather events.
- More signage required at Hibernia Street car park to direct attendees to both sites.
- Several shops in the town chose not to open on the public holiday.

Successes

- Recycling stations – the new initiative of manning the recycling stations with cleansing staff resulted in zero contamination across the event bins.
- Use of Hibernia Street car park and 'Arts on the Rails' were deemed successful as a new layout.

Ards and North Down Pipe Band Championships – Saturday 22 July 2023

The Royal Scottish Pipeband Association Northern Ireland (RSPBANI) Pipe Band Championships were held at Ards Airfield with a total of 34 bands in attendance. Due to the weather forecast and an imminent major competition, grade one bands withdrew from the competition the day before the event. A Park and Ride service was successfully operated between the site and Newtownards Town Centre.

Challenges and observations

- Cost – the hire charge for the Airfield was significantly higher than previous years or projected at budget planning.
- Traffic Management was challenging at the Comber Road entry for pedestrian access.
- Unfortunately, a sudden death of a competition participant occurred during the event. All partners responded in a coordinated approach to the incident. However, it highlighted the need for more robust procedures for event organisers for this type of rare occurrence. Officers had now implemented procedures which could be put in place for future events.
- RSPBANI feedback from competitors to officers after the event stated that some members, in their view, thought the airfield site was too large and fully open which provided them with very little shelter.

Successes

- Partnership working with RSPBANI
- Recycling stations – the cleansing team manned the recycling stations and sorted 480 kg of dry recycling waste and 560 kg of organic waste at the event with only 16 kg of landfill waste. Another event with zero cross contamination and just over a tonne of waste diverted from landfill.

- Shuttle bus into Newtownards ran throughout the day. The uptake was good resulting in many of the attendees going into the town to shop.

Sea Bangor – 3 and 4 June 2023

An event with very favourable weather throughout, the footprint of this event worked well using a mixture of stretch tents and self-contained trucks which provided weather mitigation. It was proposed a similar layout will be implemented in future years.

A range of food stalls lined Eisenhower Pier with an artisan bar at the far end, encouraging attendees to relax and spend the day increasing dwell time in Bangor. The addition of the military ship, HMS Penzance, was a highlight and was complemented by on-water activities and the rowing races. The family 'rave' was a new and popular addition to the programme and worked well alongside the urban beach.

For note, party composition for families has grown from 38% in 2022 to 65% in 2023, age profile 35-44 has grown from 20% in 2022 to 34% in 2023 but spend at the event decreased from 91% to 55% in 2023. Average dwell time reduced per attendee from 2-3 hours to 1-2 hours although overall total spend increased.

Challenges and observations

- Communication around the recycling station message for bins was acknowledged as not being as effective as required for an event of this scale.
- HMS Penzance closed on Sunday for operational reasons meaning attendees could not board but remained berthed in the harbour. The reserves vehicle remained onsite.

Successes

- HMS Penzance – Ticketing was a successful model to manage attendees.
- Recycling – The cleansing team at the event was praised for its efforts and another event with zero cross contamination with 4 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill.
- Site was cleared and Quay Street carpark was reopened a day earlier than scheduled.
- Rowing Competition was welcomed back and well received by attendees and participants.

Summer TASTE Food Festival 20 June – 3 July Incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival – 25 June 2023

A series of small-scale experiential events delivered by operators and supported by the Tourism team were part of the overall Food Festival. The campaign for the festival delivered 1.3 million digital impressions across coverage on VisitAND channels.

The 2023 festival, after extensive consultation, moved to Comber Leisure Centre car park. This enabled set-up to take place the day before the event and allowed the use of chalets which enabled the event to be 'weather proofed'. Meeting necessary criteria with new programming, the event was successful in securing a NI Regional Food Programme grant at £9,022.

Commentary and advice from members of the stakeholder working group suggested refocussing on the event's authenticity i.e. the PGI status potato and artisan food. To this end, a Producers' tent was added allowing local producers to showcase their produce, this being hosted by Lottie Duncan, a well renowned food podcaster. A podcast of the day had been broadcast. SERC ran a 'Cookery School', showing the best and innovative ways to cook with Comber Earlies.

Other new elements were added on the larger site, including a music stage. The artisan bar returned to the event and was well received, both in terms of numbers attending and feedback from traders. Local suppliers and McBrides on the Square worked with Indie Fūde offering a selection of paired local beers with cheeses. Paula McIntyre was the celebrity chef for the event, supported by SERC, who cooked a range of different dishes featuring Comber Earlies, available to sample by attendees. Anecdotally, it is thought that the addition of new elements hosted at the site increased average dwell time stay to 2-3 hours.

The event was blessed with good weather and record numbers of 11,000 were recorded at the new event location.

The average dwell time of 2-3 hours per attendee increased from 32% in 2022 to 42% in 2023. Overall spend at the event increased by 45% in 2023 compared to 2022.

Challenges and observations

- Traffic Management – while the new location worked well for attendees, it was acknowledged there were issues regarding traffic management in the town.
- Some traders on Bridge Link experienced some difficulties with deliveries and use of their parking spaces. Officers met with this group and had agreed preventative measures.
- Some residents in Bridge Street were unclear about the road closure arrangements. A letter had now been issued outlining plans for the 2024 event.
- The car park closed from Thursday afternoon set up meaning displaced parking was required. The additional car parking would be arranged and clearly signposted for 2024.

Successes

- Partnerships with local businesses.
- Introduction of a producer stage at the new site.
- Increased dwell time.

**Autumn TASTE Food Festival 10-25 September 2023
Incorporating Tide and Turf Festival, Portavogie - Saturday 2 September**

A series of small-scale experiential events delivered by operators and supported by the Tourism team, two key shoulder events of Tide and Turf and a new collaborative Parks led Chilli Fest event in the Walled Garden were part of the overall Food Festival. The event successfully secured £8,800 from the NI Regional Food Programme.

Stargazing at Burr Point – Thursday 31 August

This popular event was organised in conjunction with The Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society (NIAAS). 100 tickets were sold, however due to forecasted poor visibility, the decision was taken to move the event to the following night which unfortunately resulted in some attendees seeking refunds. Transport was provided by bus from Millisle car park to alleviate car parking issues, creating a more sustainable event. Volunteers from NIAAS set up 8 telescopes and offered customers instruction on how best to view the planets. The ticket price included hot chocolate and smores from local companies 'Hotties Chocolate' and Mallow Makers.

Dine at the Dock Friday 1 September

The Fish Market at Portavogie was transformed into a temporary space offering a high-end restaurant quality experience. Officers worked with Paula McIntyre and SERC to devise an attractive menu, showcasing the best of local produce (based on the Tide and Turf theme). Paula McIntyre started preparation with the students preceding the event and whilst the students had only been in college for three weeks, it was a once in a lifetime experience for them all. 75% of the available 100 tickets sold.

Tide and Turf Festival - 2 September 2023

The music stage returned with performances from the String Ninjas and the Florentinas. This area was well attended with many staying at this location for several hours. There were two demo kitchens at the event one 'Tide' and one 'Turf'. Celebrity chef Paula McIntyre and SERC tutors provided demos which were well attended throughout the day. A children's area was created at the entrance of the harbour using 'the urban beach' along with other children's activities. Wooden chalets were provided for traders ensuring trading would be able to take place in most weather conditions. Officers were able to use some of the empty shop units at the harbour allowing some additional activity i.e. model boat display by local enthusiasts. The event was very well attended reaching capacity for the event site.

Traffic management remained an issue at this venue, fortunately officers were able to secure the use of nearby fields for parking. It was encouraging to see the free bus service being used by attendees; however, some routes were at capacity along the route leaving a number unable to access the buses at points at certain stops along the peninsula. The roads around the harbour became very congested which resulted in the bus service being unable to access the original pick-up point. Officers took the decision to close the Harbour Road and move the pick-up point to a less congested area which alleviated the congestion, however it created some difficulties in communicating the new location to the public. Officers were reviewing options to improve the bus service to the event by ticketing at a nominal charge to anticipate demand and enable better planning of this service. Additional work with the

appointed traffic management company was ongoing to find ways to reduce congestion e.g. the introduction of a one-way system.

Challenges and observations

- Free bus service capacity.
- Distance to travel for deliveries, set up, pre-meetings etc adds to planning costs.
- Site management issues re: a working harbour and anecdotally it is thought some anti-social behaviour increased with the favourable weather.

Successes

- Overflow parking – acquirement of field.
- Use of the shop units extended programme of the event.
- PSNI support on site during the event.
- Chalets instead of gazebos weatherproofed the event.

Bangor Christmas Switch On – 18 November 2023

The event was delivered in partnership with Bangor Chamber of Commerce. The vacant TK Maxx building was used for the second year to house an indoor Christmas Market and entertainment space on Saturday and Sunday. This was populated by local choirs and groups.

A 'passport trail' was introduced in partnership with local businesses proving very popular and encouraging attendees to increase their dwell time by visiting local businesses. Additional entertainment and hot food stalls were placed at the McKee Clock, with the finale show by The Real Princesses for the family audience. Sponsorship was provided by a local car company to support the actual timed light switch on element.

Challenges and observations

- Use of TK Maxx means additional resource for health and safety and staffing.
- Road closure cost implication on a very limited budget.

Successes

- The 'passport trail' proved popular.
- Use of TK Maxx – popular with attendees and traders.
- Partnership with the Chamber.

Newtownards Christmas Switch On – 25 November 2023

The event was organised and managed in partnership with Newtownards Chamber of Trade. The event included a switch on finale programme, a community programme throughout the day and a Christmas market showcasing Newtownards and local businesses. The traditional Ards Saturday Market moved to the car park at Kennel Lane. Fortunately, weather was favourable on the day.

New to the programme and like Bangor was the addition of a “passport trail”. The town retailers delivered ‘activity’ in their premises and attendees received a stamp at each venue. 1000 passports were printed, and all were distributed. The feedback from the retailers was very positive and deemed a very successful way of ensuring footfall moved around the town and into the shops.

It was agreed with the Chamber that 20 wooden chalets would accommodate the Christmas market. The chalets were well received by vendors and added a festive look and feel to the event site. To facilitate this a road closure was implemented on Friday night to allow for the four hour build time. The take down was also longer meaning the road did not reopen until midnight on Saturday night, but there were no issues reported around this later reopening time. The Chamber managed and delivered the community entertainment programme also making use of the covered stage.

Challenges and observations

- The weather continued to be a concern at this time of year (for both switch ons) although the provision of a covered stage and wooden chalets at Newtownards mitigated the risk.

Successes

- Community stage programme and engagement.
- Passport trail – 1000 passports were printed, and all were given out on the day.

Event Service Developments in 2023/24

Joint Advisory Groups (JAGs) had been a very beneficial addition to the event planning process. Members of the Blue Lights services, relevant Council Officers and stakeholders attended these meetings to discuss the Event Management Plan and increase partnership collaboration.

Enhanced communication and robust systems were critical during event delivery. It was the intention that all tourism events would now have professional stewarding, radio communications and a control room with a dedicated loggist. This was a consideration for budget planning but deemed essential for outdoor events.

One of the successes for the events team in 2023 was the introduction of ‘manned’ recycling centres. The purpose of this was twofold, offering an effective recycling system to the customer (market research had indicated that attendees felt this was very important) and allowing Waste team colleagues an opportunity to widen their educational outreach. The Council had reported zero contamination at all tourism events in 2023. For this process to be effective, it was necessary to seal up the other bins at the event site. A communication plan along with increased visibility (branding) and uniformed staff who could advise attendees on recycling hope to address this. Costs to deliver this Council corporate priority at events were an additional element to the events budgets.

Emerging Issues Facing Tourism Events Delivery in 2024

Service improvements in line with Council corporate priorities, safety measures and legislative requirements e.g. additional DfI signage for road closures were significantly impacting the overall programming allocation of the budget.

Considerations for budgeting regarding the programming element must be equally considered to ensure events remain a quality experience for attendees.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the above report.

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

Proposing, Alderman Adair praised the events offer in the Borough and felt that the Portavogie Tide and Turf Festival had transformed the village. He spoke of the benefits it had brought to local hospitality businesses, many of which had opted to stay open later in order to maximise those benefits. He believed that the success of the festival, which had grown in popularity year on year, had proved officers wrong. While he recognised the traffic issues on the day, he believed that those had been outweighed by the overall success of the event. Referring to the Star Gazing event at Burr Point, he noted that it had sold out and given that popularity, he wondered if there could be more events held there.

The Head of Tourism pointed to funding opportunities from the Shared Island Fund in relation to Burr Point being the most easternly point on the island of Ireland, along with the extension of taste festivals in the Autumn and opportunities for boat trips.

In a further query, Alderman Adair asked if there could be scope for more animals to be incorporated into the events programme, to recognise the strong rural and farming identity within the Ards Peninsula. The Officer would pass on the comments for future planning but advised that making additions to the existing schedule of events would add cost along with welfare and safety considerations and therefore be problematic at this late stage.

Alderman Adair made a similar suggestion in terms of introducing live music to the Tide and Turf Festival in the evening, recalling it was a suggestion by some of the community who remembered the popularity of a previous event called 'Party on the Pier'. The officer advised that while programming had been set for the forthcoming year the suggestion would be passed on.

Councillor Smart praised officers on the events programme and asked when there would be an opportunity for review. The officer advised that the programme ran from 2021 to 2026 with a midpoint review in terms of Borough Strategic Events Direction taking place this year. This process would be supported by the Council's Transformation team and a report would be brought back with a vision of what the programming would look like going forward.

Providing his reasoning for the question, Councillor Smart felt there was a good opportunity for an event in Newtownards, believing that the town had been overlooked in the past. While he understood events could not be held just to

entertain residents, he appreciated they had to drive footfall and support local businesses, but he believed there was an opportunity to look at developing something for the future and pointed to the strong heritage offering of the town and the boost it would bring to local traders. He felt that was a strong case to start conversations on something for the future.

Councillor Edmund agreed that Burr Point could be utilised more given its landmark location as the most easternly point of the island of Ireland. He believed that other countries would make more of that and have a viewing platform. The officer remained optimistic about the opportunities that could be developed there through the Shared Island Fund in terms of expanding the offering at Burr Point, referring to a previous report presented to Committee.

Referring to Sea Bangor, Councillor McCracken felt that there were many strengths to the festival pointing to the 2023 event which had included the addition of the Royal Navy Warship which had brought an interesting addition.

He believed however that the festival was too constrained within its existing footprint though he recognised 2024 had been compromised due to the D-Day activities, he felt that in general it was quite a small area, noting a cramped experience at the Eisenhower Pier. He wondered if officers could look at the possibility of obtaining a Road Closure Order to allow the festival to spill out on to Quay Street and link up with the Court House and other businesses within that vicinity. It could also allow for more stalls.

The Officer warned of unforeseen additional costs for supporting road closures this year in terms of additional signage and marshalling. This had been a result of changes in guidance and would need to be considered going forward.

She added that Officers had felt that the capacity of the Sea Bangor festival up to now had worked well generally. She appreciated though that the event and how it would look going forward, in relation to the Bangor Waterfront scheme, would need to be considered.

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

12. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 (Appendix IX - X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity detailing that the Tourism Service managed two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in Bangor City and Newtownards town centre. Open daily, Monday to Saturday, servicing visitors (pre and during visit) and locals by answering enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time and spend in the Borough, alongside providing a retail offering and a box office ticket service.

The Service also operated a seasonal centre at Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport and facilitates a local information provision, through a Service Level Agreement, at Exploris, Portaferry.

This report provided an overview of the activity at Bangor and Newtownards Visitor Information Centres from April 2023 – March 2024 along with detail on both Cockle Row Cottages and Exploris sites.

Visitors and Enquiries

Within the VICs, the profile of visitors continued to be dominated by the ‘Staycation’ and ‘Day trip’ market.

The VIC’s were a primary point of contact for tourist information on the Borough and NI, as well as offering local ticket sales relating to Council events, third party events, experiences and tours.

Almost 90% of VIC customers visited the centres in person, highlighting the importance of the team’s face-to-face interaction and ambassadorial function.

Excluding self-service visitors or “browsers”, a total of 20,062 customers were serviced via direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post and email. These enquiries covered a wide range of topics from what’s on in the area, where to stay or eat locally, directions, local history, activities, attractions, and ticket sales across the Borough and NI.

Bangor and Newtownards VICs	April 23 - March 24
Total footfall to the Centres	19,985
ENQUIRY TYPE	
Face to face enquiries	17,882
Self-service visitors/browsers	2,103
Enquiries Post/Fax/Email	386
Enquiries Phone	1,794
TOTAL SERVICED	22,165

This was an increase of 2% on last year, which was indicative of the return of visitors to NI generally post covid, albeit slow for the VIC.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	April 23 – March 24 % of total
NI	82%
GB & ROI	10%
Rest of the World	8%
TOTAL	100%

In comparison to the previous year’s visitor profile, the results indicate little change, with NI dropping 1%, GB & ROI static at 10% and the Rest of the World seeing a small increase of 1%.

Income

Whilst visitor information provision was the core function of the VICs, both permanent centres provide a retail space, comprising mainly of locally produced gifts, souvenirs and books as per customer demand. Both VICs encourage sales via special promotions for residents which were advertised in the local press, for example Christmas, Mother’s Day and Valentine’s Day, with themed displays, and regularly “merchandising” to attract both new and repeat customers.

The VICs actively advertised a box office service allowing third parties e.g. drama/musical productions to be bookable online and via the VisitAND website generating over £1,400 in income.

Retail sales continued to increase year on year, against the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis. This suggested that when on holiday visitors remained willing to spend.

Income increased by circa 11% in comparison to the previous year. Customers using the VICs continued to support the retail element with an average spend per customer of £2.19.

Income type	
Retail sales	£36,390
Ticket sales commission	£1,440
Total income	£37,830 (ex VAT £31,032)

The VIC team continued to engage with local tourism businesses developing effective ‘client’ relationships. The monthly trade ezine distributed in 2023/24, highlighted industry information e.g. training and promotional opportunities, staff’s top picks for places to visit and a reminder of the full complement of support available from the Tourism service.

The VIC team actively supported the wider Tourism team with ‘call outs’ to trade for campaigns, experiences and food and events programming, and the ticketing of the walks, tours, and experiences.

The Centres also participated in seasonal activity with both Ards Chamber of Trade at Easter and Halloween and Bangor Chamber of Commerce at Christmas.

Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO) – Exploris Aquarium

Located in reception, it offers visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Christmas closure). In summer 2023 an advertisement was installed on the slipway bus shelter highlighting the LVIO and with a footfall of circa 99,000 to Exploris throughout the 23/24 season, the exposure to visitors is significant.

The provision consisted of visitor literature, alongside an interactive touch screen highlighting what to explore in the Borough. Exploris staff are trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to address visitor enquiries directly.

Council provided additional visitor servicing support at peak periods during July, August, Halloween and Bank/Public Holidays (14 days outreach).

Exploris LVIO	
ENQUIRY TYPE:	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	8,439
Exploris Phone Enquiries	73
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (14 Peak Days)	1,218
TOTAL SERVICED	9730

This equated to almost 10% of footfall to Exploris and total serviced is circa 19% increase on the previous year.

Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport

Post covid-closure the cottages re-opened for summer 2023 with two visitor servicing staff facilitating information provision, small gift shop and heritage centre. It opened June through August (Thursday–Sunday, 11am–5pm) with additional key dates (Easter, May Day, Hallowe'en and Christmas). A family entertainment programme ran each Sunday afternoon, 2–4pm.

The VIC team worked with Discover Groomsport and the Ulster-Scots Association for support activity across the season. Educational visits also returned with 3 visits (98 pupils) and 3 private group tours.

The Cottages attracted 5,700 visitors and generated circa £2,000 income.

Outreach Activity

An additional 2,868 visitor enquiries were serviced at manned pop-up information stands throughout the season over ten dates. These ranging from Council tourism events to trade shows and sites such as Pickie Fun Park.

Literature

The Tourism service continued to produce VisitAND literature e.g. visitor guide and map which were distributed by VIC staff to external sites. Outlets included Visit Belfast, Bangor Bus and Train Station, Pickie Fun Park, The Ark Open Farm and other tourist 'honey pots'. Within AND almost 20,000 pieces of literature were distributed highlighting the continued demand for print. The VIC's also provided bedroom packs for the accommodation sector.

Online Activity

Digital communication continued to grow as a source of information for the visitor, this was a trend that was likely to continue and therefore a crucial part of visitor messaging.

In relation to “visit” channels (visitardsandnorthdown.com, Facebook and Instagram), the VIC team worked with the Corporate Communications and Marketing service to support these channels. For example, provide content for blogs, a regular rolling review of the site for quality assurance purposes and engagement with tourism businesses to ensure they completed the relevant upload procedure for their business profile.

Ards VIC continued to provide content for the Visit Strangford Lough Facebook page. Through engaging posts, the page had a following of 9,400 (an organic increase, +12%, on last year) with regular positive interactions.

Summary

While new technology had improved accessibility to information, consumers still cited the value of face-to-face interaction with ‘welcome and hospitality’ rated highly among all aspects of a trip by consumers who had recently visited (Tourism NI Consumer Sentiment research). The VIC statistics demonstrated that visitors sought the ‘trusted’ and ‘personalised’ service offered at VICs with face-to-face enquiries dominant at the centres.

Across all face-to-face platforms the Tourism VIC service had engaged with almost 30,000 customers showcasing the Borough’s tourism offering for holidays, short breaks, day trips and events.

Activity - 2024/25

In addition to the service’s business-as-usual activity, the coming year would see:

- Increased business development with local providers through more direct engagement, ezines and site visits.
- A reintroduction of familiarisation visits for out of borough tourism providers/bodies.
- Increased outreach provision at both council and external events and “honeypot” sites including Ulster Folk Museum, Mount Stewart, Castle Espie, Pickie Fun Park, Exploris Aquarium, Council and grant aided events.
- Developed promotion and awareness of the VIC services locally.
- Opening of Cockle Row Cottages as per model applied in season 2023 with entertainment every Sunday during July and August. Continuing collaboration with Discover Groomsport and the Ulster Scots Agency.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Adair praised the staff and services offered at the Visitor Information Centres across the Borough which included interactive screens to help tourists plan their visits. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted that the vast majority of interactions

had been through face-to-face enquiries, and she believed that demonstrated the value of VICs and their accessibility as a front-facing service.

Councillor McCracken took a different view and felt that VICs were part of a declining market as more people desired an online experience. He questioned whether VICs represented good value for money, noting that enquiries to Bangor VIC had decreased by 5% in comparison to 2023. He felt that the £13,953.69 retail income was a minimal amount when the running costs were taken into account and also felt that Bangor VIC was in the wrong location.

The Head of Tourism acknowledged the comments and advised that the location of Bangor VIC was under review as part of the Bangor Waterfront development. Guidance showed it was best for VICs to be located where the highest footfall would be, and it was a similar view in terms of the location of Newtownards VIC as it was felt that Regent Street was not the best location. It was recognised, though, that the VICs had low running costs and there was a lot of outreach work conducted from them.

Councillor Edmund recognised the value of VICs, particularly throughout his own travels where he had experienced excellent service and valuable information during a recent visit to France. He felt that the retail aspect was unique in that they sold items that were not available elsewhere and that revenue should not be overlooked.

Taking the opportunity to sum up, Alderman Adair disagreed with Councillor McCracken and argued that the report spoke for itself and indicated a need for VICs, also noting proposals to relocate the Newtownards VIC to Conway Square. He highlighted the Borough's proximity to Belfast and that was a strength in terms of attracting visitors, particularly with the number of cruise ships visiting these shores.

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

13. REGENERATION H2 PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE 160127) (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Interim Director of Place detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half yearly (H1)	April – September	December
Half yearly (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H2 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Temporary staff had been recruited to help deliver some projects.

Key achievements:

- Small Settlements projects were progressing well and community engagement is supportive of the proposals. Planning permission had been obtained for the scheme in Kircubbin and a new project had been developed for Ballygowan.
- Portaferry Public realm works was ongoing with an estimated completion of September 2024. This project was currently on schedule and on budget.
- The review of the City/towns Masterplans had been completed and projects for development were being considered.
- The Council still had two projects included in the Peace Plus programme.

Emerging issues:

- No further progress had been made in accessing funding from the general Peace Plus streams for regeneration projects. However, the Council would continue to work with EBR on this.
- It was becoming evident that funding for regeneration projects from central government in the next financial year would be limited. Within DfC the budget had not been agreed so no forward work plan could be considered. Also, DAERA had given no indication if any funding would be available for rural projects or if a successor to the Rural Development Programme was being considered.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work with government departments to try and secure funding.
- Work closely with EBR over the development of future projects.
- Work with the various groups to agree projects to be developed in the next financial year.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

Proposing, Alderman Adair praised the Regeneration unit for its work and felt that officer engagement within the villages had been well received. He welcomed that the plans were now produced inhouse rather than through consultants as he felt that the Council's Regeneration officers had better local knowledge and achieved so much with such a small team.

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

14. CAG AND TAG MINUTES

(Appendix XII - XVI)

- 14.1 Bangor CAG – 25.3.24
- 14.2 Comber TAG – 20.3.24
- 14.3 Donaghadee TAG – 26.3.24
- 14.4 Holywood TAG – 28.3.24
- 14.5 Newtownards TAG – 19.3.24

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the above CAG and TAG minutes.

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

15. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION DERELICTION SCHEME (FILE RDP246)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Interim Director of Place stating that at a previous meeting of the Council the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

'Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change. As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC who hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.'

It was accepted at the meeting that it may take some time to finalise a report as there were several key components within the NoM.

Since then, officers have had several internal meetings and met with colleagues from the Department for Communities (DfC). Officers have also examined what legislative powers the Council has in this area and enquired if DfC would wish to partner with it on any project. Both these areas will be fully reported on in the substantive report which is hoped to be present to Council in the Autumn.

Officers have also been in contact with Belfast City Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council regarding dereliction schemes they have initiated. Although these schemes were different in nature, they had the common principle of the Council providing grant aid to property owners of commercial premises in a city/town centre to bring them back into vibrant use.

This type of scheme would enhance the offering in the city/town centre and help to increase the non-domestic rate base which is a key component of the draft Corporate Plan.

It was felt that if the Council was to introduce a scheme of this nature it may be the catalyst to encourage property owners to renovate vacant properties within the centres and bring them back into commercial use and possibly create living accommodation above the premises. This would fit well with the current planning policy of Town Centre First.

However, to take forward this proposal there were several considerations that would need to be addressed before any such scheme could be launched. These were:

1. Staffing – as Members would be aware, staffing within the Regeneration Unit had been reduced for some time. Three posts had now been filled with temporary staff, however the Urban Development Manager retired at the end of April and this post remained vacant. As the Council was undergoing a structural review, it was now prudent to examine the structure within the Regeneration Unit. To take forward key strategic development projects such as this scheme and the development of the former NIE site, consideration was being given to the employment of a Strategic Development Manager and support staff (titles to be agreed). They would be tasked to take forward this work and also seek funding opportunities to deliver other key development projects. A Business Case for a slight re-structure was currently being produced.
2. Corporate Governance – with any scheme proposed by Council, either on its own or in partnership with a government department, a well-defined terms of reference and business case would need to be developed and agreed. Underpinning this was the corporate governance of any scheme which would ensure the protection of the Council and partner. It was acknowledged that in some instances an overly complicated process could put applicants off applying, so a balanced process would need to be developed.
3. Pilot and Budget – once a scheme had been developed and agreed by the Council and any partner, a suitable budget would need to be allocated to the

project. The allocation of funding to any one project would need to be of a level that would attract a property owner to renovate the property and bring it back into use. The property owner's contribution would also need to be realistically set. It was also felt that a scheme of this nature would need to be over a three-year period to permit property owners to apply, obtain statutory consents and then deliver the schemes.

As members would be aware Council had established a Tax Base Development Fund, which as of March 2024 sat at £750k. The purpose of the Fund was to support the growth of the non-domestic rate base, local businesses and jobs. It was envisaged, subject to Council approval, that the proposed Dereliction Scheme and NIE site development would be funded through Council's Tax Base Development Fund, with the potential to also secure funding from partner/other sources.

It was acknowledged that our city and towns had different levels of vacancy and dereliction within them. However, Bangor and Newtownards had the largest share. The latest DfC vacancy survey (31 October 2023) showed that Bangor City Centre had a total number of non-domestic premises of 669 of which 138 (20.6%) were vacant. This was the lowest number since April 2016. Newtownards had 539 premises with 108 (20%) vacant. This was the highest number since April 2016. Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood had the following vacancy rates respectively 12.6%, 14.3% and 10.6%.

Considering this, it was believed that a pilot scheme, once developed and agreed, should be launched in both Bangor and Newtownards. The exact city/town boundaries within both that applicants would be eligible for grant aid would also have to be carefully considered and defined.

Once all these issues had been worked through a further report will be brought back to the Council for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

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

Councillor Smart praised the Regeneration team and welcomed the Interim Head of Regeneration who was attending his first meeting in the role. He recognised that there were many people within the Borough who had a passion to start their own business and the Council had a role to play in that given it reaped the benefits of increased rental income for example. He felt that there needed to be a carrot and stick approach and that Council needed to work with outside organisations including government departments and lobbying for that support would be key. He also expressed great disappointment at the rate of dereliction due to land banking over many years.

The seconder, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter agreed with that feeling that land banking was a blight on the town which otherwise bucked the trend. She looked forward to a further report and action to address the matter. She felt that Newtownards was

attractive to businesses and had great potential, pointing to lower rates and its close proximity to Belfast. She commented that a rising tide would sink all the ships.

The Interim Director of Place explained that this was a holding report and a further report would follow on ways forward. He referred to ongoing work to address vacancies and the former NIE building which would be a jewel in terms of keeping businesses within the Borough and allowing them to expand.

Councillor McCracken believed that retail would not return in the same way and there needed to be some strategic thinking in terms of providing more housing in town and city centres. It was important to have high density in those areas and more housing would support retail and hospitality sectors. He referred to a '15 Minute City' concept and the need for a strategic approach in achieving that.

The Interim Director of Place took the comments on board and he explained that the key was getting help from other public and private sector organisations and Council would do all it could to create those partnerships.

Councillor McCollum noted that the report referred to plans to appoint a Strategic Development Manager and support team and she believed that appeared to be a driving factor. She hoped this would come to fruition.

The Interim Director of Place explained that there was a plan in place to appoint those positions but expected it to be challenging initially, advising that it may involve making a short-term appointment but he recognised it was important to have a strategic team and a general team in place going forward.

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

16. CAPITAL PROJECTS H2 PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE 160127) (Appendix XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for INSERT TIMEFRAME as attached.

Key points to note:

- There continued to be good investment in staff briefings with regular fortnightly team meetings, alternating between Teams and in person.
- Professional development was also continuing as the unit continues to deliver a capital portfolio in excess of £170m over the next 10 years.
- There continued to be a good level of consultation with other Councils and Government departments through BRCD, Community Estates, the Greenways projects, Councils Estates Forum, and individual meetings.

Key achievements:

- Continued to share capital knowledge and allow a holistic approach to all large, small and maintenance capital projects undertaken by a wide range of directorates through CPAG.
- Working with CPD to produce tender documents which took account of social value on all funded project as council policy develops.
- Completion of successful de-silting works in Ward Park.

Emerging issues:

- Council resources to deliver ambitious capital delivery.
- High construction inflation.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to review capital cost estimates.
- Assist in the Estate Strategy development.
- Assist in capital transformation projects.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

Alderman Adair highlighted where things were going well, and felt his need to highlight where things were going badly, referring to the delays caused to capital

projects by the Planning Department and which had nearly jeopardised funding for projects. He pointed to a coastal path scheme in Kircubbin as an example.

In addition he referred to some projects being held up by statutory consultees but advocated a more joined up process to quicken the process by the Planning Department.

Responding, the Director of Prosperity stressed that the delays caused were due to external factors, caused by statutory consultees which were under-resourced. She explained that the Council's Planning Officers were under considerable pressure as a result of that situation and referred to a current approach by some statutory consultees whereby the Head of Planning could request prioritisation on three applications per month. Officers had highlighted those issues and the matter was discussed at length at the Council's Planning Committee meeting earlier in the week.

The Director added that the matters had been raised as part of the Public Accounts Committee report on Planning and also by the NI Audit Office, and for which the Planning Improvement Programme now stemmed, as overseen by the Infrastructure Minister. She stressed that grant funded projects were always prioritised and pointed to a recent special Planning Committee meeting that was held to allow a major social housing development to proceed within funding deadlines. She also highlighted that where there were issues with consultees, Planning required to wait for response in order to ensure officers were making robust planning decisions that would stand up to judicial review challenge.

As a member of the Planning Committee, Councillor McCollum rose to endorse the Director's comments and she was aware of the pressure that planning officers were under. She explained the ongoing frustration over lack of cooperation from the Department for Infrastructure and how easy it was to make the Planning Service a scapegoat as the public face of the planning system. She added that planning officers deserved the Committee's support and understanding that it was not the Planning Service holding up the process.

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

17. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

18. AND INNOVATION HUB OBC (FILE DEV23)

(Appendix XVIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

The Appendix to the report is the detailed Outline Business Case for the proposed AND Innovation Hub in Holywood which is undergoing casework to get approval for BRCD funding. It outlines the 5-case business model: strategic, financial, management, economic and commercial and contains commercially sensitive details which will influence how plans for the Hub will progress and be financed.

19. BANGOR WATERFRONT COURT HOUSE (FILE PCU43)

****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)

SUMMARY

Bangor Waterfront City Deal, Council considers appointment of LPS to enter discussions over the potential acquisition of 12/14 Quay Street to extend the Court House as part of Open House with an update report to be brought back to the Council in due course.

20. LMP UPDATE & 2023/24 ACTION PLAN OUTCOME REPORT (FILE ED123)

****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)

SUMMARY

This report has detailed information about contractors who were appointed to deliver the programmes and the academies, as well as detailed operational information. It is not felt that it is appropriate to release this information to the public.

21. PICKIE QUARTERLY REPORT (FILE 171006)

****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)

SUMMARY

This report details the performance of Pickie Fun Park for the fourth quarter of the 2023/2024 financial year, as operated by Pickie Ltd on behalf of the Council, in respect of visitor numbers and financials.

22. EXPLORIS QUARTERLY REPORT (FILE DEVP3C)

****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)

SUMMARY

This report details the performance of Exploris for the fourth quarter of the 2023-2024 financial year. This report contains commercially sensitive information on the operation of Exploris by a private operator (AEL) under an operating agreement with Council.

23. BANGOR MARINA QUARTERLY REPORT (FILE 141671)

(Appendix XIX)

****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)

SUMMARY

The report details operations at Bangor Marina for Q4 2023-24 covering the entire range of activities undertaken in the Marina as well as commercially sensitive information.

24. KINNEGAR LOGISTICS BASE UPDATE (FILE RDP37)

(Appendix XX - XXI)

****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)**

SUMMARY

Report detailing Council's recently completed Strategic Outline Case for the potential purchase and regeneration of the former Kinnegar Military Logistics Base at Hollywood. The report also provides a copy of the completed D1 Questionnaire and relevant financial information from the MOD.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.57pm.

Unclassified

150

Item 8.3.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	19 June 2024
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	Matter Arising from Item 4 of the Place and Prosperity Committee
Attachments	None

A report at item 4 of the Place and Prosperity recommended:

“That the Council determines an appropriate number of, and nominates, members for the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group and further notes the planning arrangements as set out in the report.”

It was agreed:

“That Council notes the planning arrangements set out in the report and that seven elected members be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group at the June meeting of the Council.”

Not Applicable

151

RECOMENDATION

It is recommended that Council appoint seven elected members to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Irwin

Aldermen: Graham McAlpine
McAlpine
McIlveen

McRandal
Smith

Councillors: Chambers
Gilmour

Kennedy
S Irvine

Officers: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Human Resources (R McCullough), Head of Finance (S Grieve) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

Also in Attendance: Councillor Kendall

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman Brooks and Councillors Cochrane, W Irvine, McCracken, Moore and Thompson.

At this stage the Chairman took the opportunity to pass on her thoughts and those of the Committee to Councillor W Irvine on the recent passing of his mother. She added that their thoughts were with him and his family at this time.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest from members at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATION – CONLIG WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT GROUP (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of PowerPoint presentation.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed John Ballard and Heather Lyons to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Ballard thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and introduced himself as Treasurer of Conlig Community Regeneration Group and undertook a PowerPoint presentation outlining the Conlig War Memorial Project 2024 Proposal. Members learnt of the Vision and Mission behind the Project.

Ms Lyons then proceeded to talk about the impact and loss of WW1 and WW2 on the village of Conlig. She informed members of a large piece of research which had been undertaken of the village at that time and the impact the war had had on many of its residents who had served.

Mr Ballard then guided members through a timeline of the Project's journey so far and summed up by outlining what was being requested. A sum of £8,000 plus was being requested from the Council in the form of financial support. It was noted that figure was based upon today's costs and if those were to increase the Council would be asked to cover any excess. Once the memorial was built it was proposed to gift it to the Council which would become responsible for its maintenance as was the case in other towns and villages throughout the Borough.

Mr Ballard and Ms Lyons thanked members for the opportunity to address them and for their support to date.

The Chairman thanked them both for their presentation and invited questions from members at this stage. The following comments were made.

Councillor Gilmour thanked Mr Ballard and Ms Lyons for their comprehensive report and praised them for the work they had carried out to date. She recalled that she had been involved in the initial discussions about the project many years ago when that those who had served had been identified. She asked if their names appeared on the Church Memorial Stone. Councillor Gilmour added that it was very poignant to have a memorial in the village given its close proximity to Helen's Tower and as such she felt it was a very fitting tribute.

Mr Ballard commented that those who had went to war and were not connected to the Church or the Orange Lodge would have their names recorded on the proposed memorial.

Councillor Chambers stated that what was being proposed was a wonderful idea and asked if a location for the memorial had been selected and whether or not fundraising efforts would continue after the Council had provided its financial contribution.

In response Mr Ballard confirmed that a site for the memorial had been identified on Main Street, Conlig beside the shop on ground owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. He added that fundraising would continue even with the Council providing its match funding element.

Alderman McAlpine asked why it had taken so long for the request to be put to Council particularly as those serving equated to a quarter of the village residents.

Ms Lyons advised that Ards War Memorial had only been erected in 1934 and it was suggested that as Conlig was a small village the residents at that time did not have the funds for a memorial.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ballard and Ms Lyons for their attendance and they returned to the Public Gallery at this stage.

NOTED.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

At this stage the Chairman informed the Committee that she had been asked to bring forward Item 17.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Kendall and Aldermen McRandal and Graham for consideration at this stage.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that Item 17.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Kendall and Aldermen McRandal and Graham was brought forward for consideration at this stage.

NOTICES OF MOTION

17.1. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR KENDALL, COUNCILLOR MCRANDAL AND ALDERMAN GRAHAM

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that 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. This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project. This Council therefore reiterates its commitment to financial and practical support for the Conlig war memorial project, tasking Officers to bring back a report exploring costs of planning permission, site ownership transfer, and any associated legal fees, that will be required to enable the memorial to be completed and installed. Furthermore, Council agrees to add the Conlig Memorial to the existing list of war memorials across the Borough that are maintained by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The proposer, Councillor Kendall expressed her thanks to the Committee for hearing her motion and took the opportunity to acknowledge all of the hard work which had been undertaken to date by the Conlig War Memorial Project Group. As the Committee had already heard from the Conlig War Memorial Group, she indicated that she would not repeat what had already been said as they had represented their community and the project excellently.

Continuing she commented that as she was thinking about what to say to the Committee this evening in respect of the War Memorial, she had come upon an

article that week that posed the question "why do we still after all this time attend memorials, why do they mean so much to people years on?". Many members including herself had been in Bangor to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings and she had thought about why memorials meant so much and two main reasons had come to mind.

The first, was that we recognise and remember those who died and were injured, those who suffered, away and at home, during both world wars and in conflicts since. As human beings, she stated that we felt the losses suffered, husbands who did not come home, mothers who never saw their sons again, siblings who would never see one another. The second reason was because she thought it brought people together. Thinking back to a time that exemplified community spirit, neighbours helping one another, the huge spirit of volunteering, providing help, services and community spirit with one another.

As such Councillor Kendall stated that this Conlig War Memorial Project was an example of community spirit and community at work. The Conlig community, particularly the volunteers of the Conlig War Memorial Group had worked hard on this project and had raised money to partially fund it. With support from North Down Community Network, Holywood representatives Councillors Barry and Woods in 2017, and now herself had all had input in helping move their project along. Aldermen McRandal and Graham had supported this Notice of Motion, and Council officers from the Lands and Assets Teams had also provided help and assistance.

It was further noted that many, across the community and the Council, had come together to try and enable a project that meant so much to the community. Councillor Kendall stated that was what Council and Local Government was, supporting and providing services for, to, and most importantly with local communities. Many aspects of Council's work were larger projects, and those were important but there was great value in supporting the smaller local led endeavours and initiatives, helping communities achieve their aims for their local areas, helping to recognise and build community, with the community.

In summing up Councillor Kendall stated that she hoped members would therefore support this Notice of Motion and that this Council would continue to lend practical support and assistance and provide financial assistance to ensure that now the War Memorial Project could be completed in Conlig.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McRandal acknowledged the efforts which had been put into this project by the Group particularly the research and fundraising which had been undertaken. He too also acknowledged the work undertaken by Council officers to date in relation to this matter. As such he urged members to support the motion to ensure there were no further delays.

Alderman Graham stated that he wholeheartedly supported the Notice of Motion adding that he would be very surprised if it was not passed this evening. He acknowledged the impact the Covid 19 Pandemic had had upon the Project and agreed that now was the time to get it up and running.

Rising in support of the Notice of Motion, Councillor S Irvine expressed the hope that it would go through as a matter of urgency and he commended the Group on their professionalism.

Concurring with the comments which had already been made, Councillor Chambers on behalf of his UUP colleagues offered their full support and recognised the work which had been undertaken to date. He added that the quality of their brochure which had been tabled was superb.

By way of summing up Councillor Kendall thanked members for their supportive comments adding that she knew that it meant a lot to the Group. She also took the opportunity to thank them for their excellent presentation and acknowledged the effort which had gone into preparing that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that 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. This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project.

This Council therefore reiterates its commitment to financial and practical support for the Conlig war memorial project, tasking Officers to bring back a report exploring costs of planning permission, site ownership transfer, and any associated legal fees, that will be required to enable the memorial to be completed and installed.

Furthermore, Council agrees to add the Conlig Memorial to the existing list of war memorials across the Borough that are maintained by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

(Mr Ballard and Ms Lyons left the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.29pm)

4. IMPROVING COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE BORDER COUNTIES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that the Council had been approached by a project consortium consisting of members from Ulster University, Foras na Gaeilge, The Ulster-Scots Agency, East Belfast Mission, Comhaltas Uladh, University of the Highlands and Islands, and Galway University to be a beneficiary in their project - Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

The project aimed to enhance community relations in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland by fostering mutual respect for the Irish and Ulster Scots language and heritage. It was a four-year initiative from January 2025 to December

2028. The project would primarily focus on three critical activities aimed at cultivating positive relations within the community.

Main Activities:

1. Organising Community Level Discussion Workshops: Those workshops would involve participants from all segments of society, providing a platform for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultural heritage.
2. Capacity Building for Local Authorities: The project sought to enhance the capacity of local authorities in dealing sensitively with language and cultural issues. This would involve training and support to enable effective management of such issues within the community.
3. Engaging Young People: The project aimed to actively involve young people in discussions regarding the shared indigenous heritage of Northern Ireland and the border region, fostering a sense of pride and understanding of their cultural roots.

An invitation had been received for Ards and North Down Borough Council to join the project as an Associate Partner and collaborate with them on Activity 2. The proposal involved working together to develop a tailor-made Continuous Professional Development course for Council employees. This course would focus on enhancing the understanding and sensitivity of Council staff towards language and cultural issues, ultimately contributing to improved community relations.

This project had the potential to have a meaningful and lasting impact on community relations in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

There were no cost implications to the Council associated with this report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to become a participant with the consortium and works with them as they develop a tailor-made CPD Course for employees, thereby demonstrating the Council's commitment to improving community relations.

Alderman McAlpine proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Graham commented that while he was not really opposed to the idea he was not convinced that it was a necessity for the Council to be part of it. He believed Council officers currently did a good job in this sphere and as such he did not see a need for it.

Alderman McIlveen queried what exactly the Council was being asked to be part of.

The Head of Administration confirmed that the Council was being asked to participate rather than become an associate and apologised for any confusion around that in the report. She added that there were no costs associated with the proposal which would be enabling and confidence building for Council officers.

Continuing she advised that it was more about capacity building to enable staff to become more aware of the issues.

Alderman McIlveen noted that CPD Courses were referred to in the report and he sought further clarity around those and what they would go towards.

In response the Head of Administration advised that there was no requirement for this within the Local Government for this topic specifically however she advised that the CPD would be tailored and accredited to assist staff.

Alderman McIlveen suggested that it was not something which was necessary or essential but rather a case that people may be interested in doing it.

At this stage Alderman Graham expressed the view that the Committee did not know enough about this or why it would be needed. Indeed he noted that as the course had not yet been designed no one was aware of its content and therefore he suggested it was difficult to support something which no one knew anything about.

The proposal was put to a vote by a show of hands and with 3 voting FOR, 5 voting AGAINST and 2 ABSTENTIONS, the proposal was declared LOST.

NOTED.

5. REQUEST FOR RIC MEMORIAL IN COURT SQUARE, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that a request had been made by Connor Cunningham, Secretary of the R.I.C. Memorial organising committee for permission to site an RIC memorial on Council land (Court Square, Newtownards) and donate it to Council.

All costs for the purchase would be borne by the organising committee, including planning permission. The Council would undertake to do the installation work.

Once installed the memorial would be gifted to the Council and therefore become Council property. The Council would look after any future cleaning or maintenance.

Significance of a memorial

The RIC Memorial Organising Committee felt 'that it is a travesty that there is no lasting memorial to the Royal Irish Constabulary on the island of Ireland. This force suffered the loss of 516 officers who were murdered in the execution of their duty throughout the island of Ireland. They were embedded in most towns and villages in the country. In fact, the original RIC station in Ards still exists in Court Street. A training depot was set up in Ards where the new Ulster Special Constabulary was trained by the RIC. Upon the final disbandment of the RIC 1331 officers joined the new Royal Ulster Constabulary and they were also trained in the Ards depot. This remained the training depot for the RUC until 1936. We feel that Newtownards is therefore inextricably linked to policing in Ireland from 1867.'

Plinth Design and inscription

The plinth would be rectangle in shape with a sloped face on the top. The plinth would contain the RIC crest and an inscription on three sides, which read as follows:

FRONT

“THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED TO ALL WHO SERVED IN THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY (1867 -1922), AND TO THE 516 MEMBERS OF THE R.I.C. WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AS THE RESULT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN IRELAND BETWEEN 24th APRIL 1916 AND 31st AUGUST 1922, ALSO TO THE 178 R.I.C. AND 11 DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE VOLUNTEERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES WHILST SERVING IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918.”

SIDE (left)

THE IRISH CONSTABULARY	1836 - 1867
THE CONSTABULARY OF IRELAND	1822 - 1836
THE PEACE PRESERVATION FORCE	1814 - 1822
THE DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE	1836 - 1925

SIDE (Right)

“THE ROYAL TITLE AND THE EMBLEMS OF THE HARP AND CROWN WERE AWARDED BY HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA TO THE IRISH CONSTABULARY ON THE 6th SEPTEMBER 1867 IN RECOGNITION OF THAT FORCES' GALLANT CONDUCT, LOYALTY AND DEVOTION, THUS CREATING THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.”

The attached Appendix detailed the memorial plinth in terms of size, scale and inscription.

Location

Following a site visit with Council officers and the organising committee, it was agreed that the most appropriate location would be adjacent to the existing R.U.C./Emergency Services memorial. This would provide continuity of heritage and historic timeline.

RECOMMENDED that the Council accedes to this request and accepts the gift of the RIC memorial once installed.

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

The proposer, Alderman McIlveen commented on how fitting this recommendation was given the history there was in relation to this in Newtownards. He also commended officers for the well laid out report which had been tabled before them.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Gilmour stated that during her Mayoral term she had met with some representatives of the RIC Memorial Organising Committee

and agreed that what was being proposed would be a fitting tribute to have in Newtownards.

Also rising in support Alderman Smith agreed that it was fitting to have this memorial situated in Newtownards, adding that it would provide an opportunity to highlight and commemorate the sacrifice of all RIC officers including those from the Republic of Ireland. Continuing he also acknowledged the part which Newtownards had played in the transition from the RIC to the RUC and recalled being in an office at Ards Airfield where a photo had been displayed showing a number of colonial police officers wearing very inspiring head gear, something which he always remembered. He added that the proposal before them was very impressive and one which the Borough should be proud to have.

Also rising in support Alderman McAlpine stated that her father had served in the RUC and in the early years with many RIC men for whom he had the greatest respect. As such she agreed that it was now time for everyone's contribution to their country to be recognised.

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

6. ECNI ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT (FILE EQ4)

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) had requested that all Councils completed a template to demonstrate progress on its implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties of The Northern Ireland Act 1998 and progress on implementation of positive duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006. This template covered the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

The completed template was to be returned electronically to the Commission by 31 August 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the Council's Annual Progress Report for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 be adopted and forwarded to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

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

The proposer, Councillor Gilmour, expressed her thanks to officers for the comprehensive report which had been tabled before them for consideration. She added that she had attended many of the events throughout the year including the opening of the Stoma Friendly toilets, a variety of LMP Academies, the Holocaust Memorial Event and a very successful Jobs Fair for the disabled and congratulated all those involved.

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

7. BUDGET REPORT AND YEAR-END OUTTURN

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that this was the final budget report for the previous financial year and set out the major variances for expenditure and income for the full 12 months. This showed a surplus of £864k for the year which would restore the General Fund to 7.5% of gross expenditure as required by the Reserves Policy.

In addition, the report detailed the transfers to and from the major fund categories in the Earmarked Funds for members information. This showed that the strategic funds now represented over 60% of the earmarked funds.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the strategic budget report and approves the fund transfers outlined in it.

Alderman Graham proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McIlveen referred to the figures relating to Waste Disposal and while noting the figures were favourable in respect of landfill tonnage he sought clarity around when a review of staffing at HRCs would be undertaken now that the HRC Booking system had been implemented.

In response the Director of Corporate Services indicated that he would get that information from the Director of Environment and report back to the member in due course.

Alderman McIlveen indicated that he was just querying if there was still a need for all those staff at HRCs given that the number of visits to them had reduced.

Referring to the Council's Strategic Funds, Alderman Smith welcomed the build-up of those funds and asked what the plan was for them during the next financial year.

The Director of Corporate Services stated that it was a moving feast and already some of those funds were being used to take forward some of the Transformation Projects such as the Leisure, Waste and Digital Strategy's. The focus he indicated going forwards would be on the Rates Base and it was noted that a small group had already been established to consider this. While there were currently three funds Sustainability, Transformation and the Tax Based Development there was reasonable flexibility between each of those funds depending upon needs at any particular time. It was further noted that those were managed through the STEP Board set up by officers which was reported on to members on a regular basis.

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

8. **REVISED SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that the scheme of delegation formed part of the Council's Constitution. Officers were currently reviewing the constitution to bring it up to date and seeking to put in place a process to maintain this, in line with legislative requirements.

Officers had reviewed the scheme using the following principles:

1. consolidate related documents;
2. remove superfluous items (such as 'approving drafts for council approval')
3. enhance delegations to speed up decision making; and
4. improve readability and layout.

In addition, a formal review process would be put in place to ensure that the constitution, including the scheme of delegation was kept up to date and current.
Scheme of Delegation

The following significant changes were noted for members information:

1. Changes to 2019 version (highlighted):
 - a. 1.21 removed as Planning delegates now included in Appendix 8
 - b. 1.22 removed as covered by 1.13
 - c. 2.4.15 removed as proposed to delegate awarding contracts to Committees, in order to speed up decision making
 - d. 2.4.16 non-contentious licences proposed to be delegated to Committees, in order to speed up decision making
 - e. 2.4.17 granting of leases and licences that comply with the Lands Policy proposed to be delegated to Committee, in order to speed up decision making
 - f. 3.1 – 3.7, 3.13 deleted, as these activities are part of normal management review. This is similar to sections 4 – 8, where all deletions are clearly marked.
 - g. Sections 3 – 8 remaining items have been tabulated to increase usability of the scheme.
2. New items in the 2024 version (highlighted):
 - a. Inserted a formal annual review. This will likely be timed to coincide with the annual meeting.
 - b. Inserted 1.5 in connection with Planning delegations.
 - c. Inserted 1.17 b and c to ensure collaboration on HR and Communications matters as well as Finance matters.
 - d. Inserted 1.23 to ensure all delegations are escalated to the next level of seniority when the decision involves the member of staff who would normally make the decision.
 - e. Inserted 2.0 Definitions section.
 - f. Inserted delegation of Council powers to Committees for four areas of less contentious decisions in order to speed up decision making. These will be subject to call-in in the normal way.
 - i. Awarding of contracts

- ii. Granting leases and licences
 - iii. Approved travel outside the UK and Ireland
 - iv. Granting some licences
- g. Inserted section 12 to tabulated delegations to officers, in order to reduce duplication and improve usability. A number of these have been reviewed regarding which level of management responsibility is delegated to with a view than decisions are made as low as possible while maintaining appropriate oversight.
- New delegations are:
- i. Fin5 signing letters of offer issued to Council
 - ii. Fin6 signing letters of offer issued by Council
 - iii. Fin 8 approving charging schedules in line with policy
 - iv. Fin10 approving grant awards (subject to approval of the revised Grants policy in September)
 - v. Fin12 approving settlement of insurance claims
 - vi. Fin13 Approving borrowing applications (formalising existing practice).
 - vii. HR15 concluding negotiations in respect of employment legal matters.
 - viii. Op2 signing Cemetery grave certificates.
- h. All Committee terms of reference have been consolidated into the main scheme. These have all the proposed Council powers delegation section inserted as noted above, with the exception of Corporate Services Committee and Place and Prosperity where two minor changes have also been made to formalise current practice.

This review had been subject to consultation with all members of the Corporate Leadership and Heads of Service Teams.

Following on from this review, officers had now commenced a comprehensive review of the Council's constitution, which was first published in 2015 and had now fallen out of date. A further report would come to Committee in the Autumn in this regard.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the revised scheme of delegation, updates all policies to comply with the new scheme and updates its constitution accordingly.

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

The proposer Alderman McIlveen thanked officers for the report commenting that this had come about as the result of the review of meetings, their length and the possibility of moving certain powers to Committees. As such he stated that he was pleased to see how thorough the report was and recognised that there were those who may feel a little uncomfortable with certain aspects. However he recalled that when the two Councils had merged it was decided that a more strategic approach would be adopted to ensure a reduction in interference in operational matters. He noted that regular reviews of this would be undertaken and he thanked officers for their work undertaken to date.

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

9. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that the Council had a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) each year, by 30 June, that set out at least one of the main short-term issues (improvement objectives) it wanted to improve for people living and working in the Borough during the year ahead.

Its Performance Improvement Plan for 2024/25 (see Appendix) set out four improvement objectives which had been carried forward from the improvement objectives for 2023/24, with some alterations. Whilst the Performance Improvement Plan focused specifically on the key areas identified for improvement this year, improvement was still being sought in other areas. The plan was not designed to describe all of the Council's day to day work.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

Improvement Objective 1	We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs
Improvement Objective 2	We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our borough
Improvement Objective 3	We will improve the borough's recycling rates
Improvement Objective 4	We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

The selection of the improvement objectives was originally informed by:

- Outcomes identified in the Big Plan for Ards and North Down
- Priorities identified in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Feedback from Big Conversation Panel Surveys 1 and 2
- Feedback from Age Friendly Surveys carried out during the latter part of 2020
- Feedback from our Resident Survey conducted during early Summer 2021
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2023
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2023

and had been further supplemented by information derived from:

- Review of Election 2024 Party Manifestos and identification of common themes
- Resident Survey completed late 2023
- Priorities identified in the new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Areas for improvement identified during the 2024/25 Budget and Service Planning process.
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2024
Four Focus Groups undertaken by Social Market Research (32 participants)

- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2024
Online survey published on the Council's consultation platforms and advertised on three separate occasions via social media and also advertised in the local press, emails to all staff and statutory partners (42 responses).

The objectives had been developed within the context of the Council's PERFORM framework ensuring:

- There were clear links to The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032, Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and Annual Service Plans
- They were based on evidence provided by the residents of the Borough
- They were aligned to at least one of the seven aspects of improvement.

Key Conclusions from Consultation

It should be noted that no significant changes were proposed to draft objectives following consultation process. Some changes were made to measures as a result of consultation to add clarity and baseline data where possible.

The findings from the focus groups showed that a substantial majority of residents were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objectives. "Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs" was considered to be the most important of the Council's objectives, followed by "Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough".

The Council's actions to achieve the objectives also drew strong support, though some thought that the actions were not stretching enough and not all of them were time bounded. Some residents commented that performance objective 4, "Support businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing", could only be achieved in partnership with others and the objective should reflect this.

Overall, the consultation provided robust evidence for the Council that its strategic direction, in terms of performance improvement objectives, aligned closely with the views, expectations and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

The consultation had also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of each objective and to identify other areas of focus within each of the performance improvement objectives. Participants welcomed the opportunity to make their views known and would welcome regular feedback from the Council on progress towards reaching the objectives.

A detailed Consultation Report was attached at the Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 attached at Appendix 1 for publication.

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

10. RECORDING OF IN COMMITTEE SECTION OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that as members would be aware the Council currently recorded all Council and Committee Meetings and those recordings were then placed on the Council’s website for anyone with an interest. Currently the recording was switched off when a meeting went ‘into committee’ and the public and press were excluded from this point.

Often the ‘In Committee’ section had reports which were particularly technical. This made taking of the minutes difficult to follow and subsequently scribe. Councillors often spoke from prepared notes which hastened their delivery. With no back-up recording it could be very challenging for the Democratic Services Officers to get a full and accurate minute if the speaker deviated from the speech or did not provide a copy of it. This was often not known until after the event. It was worthy of note that the ‘In Committee’ section of the meeting was in the latter part of the evening, when concentration levels could wane, if the meeting was particularly lengthy.

Officers request the consideration of recording the entire meeting with only the public recording being available on the website. This would be recorded in two parts to ensure there was a distinction between publicly available recording and the recording made to aid minute taking. This would allow the ‘In Committee’ section to be recorded for the use of the minute takers and would ensure complete accuracy of the minutes.

Risk considerations and mitigations

To ensure that the recording of the ‘In Committee’ section would only be used by the minute takers, a secure link would be sent from the technicians to the Democratic Services Manager and minute taker(s) of that particular meeting. The recording would be retained until the minutes had been ratified at the subsequent Council meeting. Once the minutes had been ratified the recording would be deleted. The recordings would only be used to aid minute takers.

As part of the consideration of this matter, contact was made with Democratic Services Managers in the other ten Councils. Six responses were received as follows:-

Council	Approach
Antrim and Newtownabbey	The ‘In Committee’ items are recorded to assist with the production of the minutes. Recordings are held for reference post meeting and deleted following ratification.
Armagh Banbrige Craigavon	The Council only keeps the confidential recording for the purposes of the minute taking. Once the minutes have been approved through Council the confidential recording is disposed of.
Belfast City Council	No recording will take place of a meeting, or those parts of a meeting, where confidential

	matters, as described in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, are being discussed and where the public have been excluded.
Causeway Coast and Glens	The Council holds its In Committee audio recording of the relevant Council meetings and committees meetings (as we do not record all), for a period of 6 years.
Derry and Strabane	Generally, they do not record the In Committee section of a meeting. The Committee Clerk however can request on occasion (for complicated meetings) for a recording to be taken. In these instances, the recording is deleted once the Minute has been approved by Officers.
Newry Mourne and Down	No recording is taken of the In Committee section of Council or Committee meetings.

From the responses above, it was clear that many Councils record the In Committee section of Council and Committee meetings, purely to aid the production of minutes.

RECOMMENDED that the Council records the 'In Committee' section of Council and Committee meetings to aid the production of minutes and destroys the recordings once the minutes have been ratified.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman McRandal commented that it made sense particularly as it seemed to be in line with what other Council's already did and as such he could not see any reason not to proceed along these lines.

The seconder Councillor Chambers expressed the view that this was something which should have already been taking place.

Alderman McIlveen commented that each of the Councils were doing things slightly differently, but he believed that it was something which would assist the Council's staff in getting an accurate minute as possible. He added that he was mindful however that minutes were not in fact a verbatim record but that particularly on some occasions whenever meetings went 'Into Committee' many members did not have pre prepared speeches and as such some of those comments could be lost in translation especially as members tended to talk much quicker whenever they did not have notes. As such he agreed that this would be useful in assisting staff to ensure that minutes were as accurate as they could be.

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

11. REQUEST FROM THE CITY OF BELFAST GRAND BLACK CHAPTER TO USE COUNCIL LAND AT SPAFIELD CAR PARK FOR A DEMONSTRATION AREA

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that the Council had received a request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park, Holywood for a demonstration area as part of the annual last Saturday parade on Saturday 31 August 2024. They had requested to use the car park as a demonstration area to host around 2,000 people involved in the parade. There would be portaloos in various locations and a temporary stage set up for a drumhead service with a battery-powered PA system.

Council officers were consulted and had no objections to the usage.

In accordance with Council policy the use would be subject to the following terms and conditions.

The Applicant must:

- i. Ensure that the use of Council land or property was limited to a demonstration area on Saturday 31 August 2024 from 9am to 5pm for up to 2,000 participants.
- ii. Pay a refundable bond to Council of £1,000, with all monies to be paid at least 14 days in advance of the event.
- iii. Provide a risk assessment and event management plan at least 14 days in advance of an event.
- iv. Display public notices for at least 14 days before an event to notify the public that said event was due to take place in the area. Signage to be agreed in advance with the appropriate Council Officer.
- v. Public notices must be removed after the event within seven days.
- vi. Provide evidence of relevant insurances at least 14 days in advance and fully indemnify Council against all risks, including injury to persons and/or damage to land or property, associated with the use of the land or property.
- vii. Employ enough stewards to efficiently and effectively protect the premises as well as to attend to the control of entrances and side gates/doors with a view to ensuring the comfort and safety of the public/audience/spectators etc. and /or to prevent any anti-social/ rowdy or obnoxious behaviour.
- viii. Provide appropriate welfare facilities at own cost.
- ix. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage was present.
- x. Make good any damage caused during the use and pay to the Council the cost of any repair work the Council was required to undertake or items the Council considers necessary to replace as a result of the usage.
- xi. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the usage e.g., staging or fencing (timescale for removal to be agreed with Council Officers).
- xii. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all litter and other debris from the main event and adjacent areas during the event, as well as once the

- event had concluded. However, should the Council have to do any additional cleaning the costs would be recovered from the applicant.
- xiii. Put in place measures to ensure that all litter generated during the event by the organisers, their contractors or by attendees is recycled to the full extent possible. Applicants should consider how to minimise any waste produced and ways in which they could make the event more sustainable.
 - xiv. Agree to provide maps or any other document deemed appropriate by Council Officers.
 - xv. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the event. Any plans to fence off or exclude the public from any areas should be agreed in advance with Council Officers.
 - xvi. Accesses to adjacent properties or businesses must be maintained during the event.
 - xvii. Ensure that where appropriate, the car parking facility at the location remains available for use by the general public and that contractors/attendees did not park on grass areas.
 - xviii. Where electric supplies were being used this must be agreed in advance with Council Officers. Additional costs may apply depending on the services required.
 - xix. No petrol generators were to be used. Where other generators were being used, ensure appropriate spill provision is in place.
 - xx. No chemicals, oils or other substances should be poured down drains and where cooking oil was being used, appropriate spill provision should be in place.
 - xxi. Ensure any statutory or regulatory permissions, licences or permits were sought and obtained in advance or usage.
 - xxii. Comply with any other relevant legislative provision including byelaws and have due regard to the Disability Discrimination Order.
 - xxiii. Comply with the Council's Safeguarding Policy where children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable would be in attendance.
 - xxiv. Where animals would be used as a part of any event, the Council's officers must be notified so that checks to ensure that welfare arrangements were in place could be undertaken, and the Animal Welfare policy must be adhered to.
 - xxv. Ensure that only the designated area, or areas specified by Council Officers are used for the event and for the purpose agreed.

The Council:

- i. Shall not be responsible for any loss, damage or injury to any property or person(s), including the applicant's entities suffered by reason of act, neglect or default of the Council, its agents, servants, or workmen.
- ii. Accepts no responsibility as regards loss or damage to property belonging to persons using the premises.
- iii. Did not guarantee the suitability of the premises being used for any purpose whatsoever and the applicant shall in all events be deemed to have satisfied themselves as to the suitability and safe condition of the premises as no liability shall attach to the Council in respect of same.
- iv. Could not guarantee exclusive use of the land and was not responsible for the actions of any other users of the space.

- v. Shall always have the right to have a duly authorised officer of the Council present and have access to all parts of the premises for the purposes of inspection.
- vi. May require a pre-event and post event inspection to be carried out in conjunction with a Council Officer.
- vii. Reserves the right to cancel the booking at any time if the applicant did not comply with the Terms and Conditions.
- viii. May withdraw or change permission to use Council land or property at short notice due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances.

RECOMMENDED that Council accedes to the request from the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter to use Council Land at Spafield Car Park, Holywood for a demonstration area on Saturday 31 August 2024, subject to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Alderman Graham proposed, seconded by Councillor Kennedy, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McRandal indicated that while he had no issues with this he was concerned that there could be issues with parking and traffic as it would be taking place on a Saturday at the end of August between 9am and 5pm. As such he sought an assurance from Council officers that neighbouring Sports Clubs particularly Holywood Football Club, St Colmcille's Church and Sullivan Upper School were notified.

The Director of Corporate Services indicated that officers would be happy to notify those clubs referred to by the member.

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

12. PERFORMANCE REPORTS (Appendix VIII)

The Chairman advised members that it was being proposed to note the Performance Reports collectively.

a) Community Planning

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2024)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

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

The report for October 2023 – March 2024 was attached.

Key points to note:

- During the second half of 2023/24 the Community Planning Manager was involved in additional work projects outside of community planning. This included helping to develop Council's new Corporate Planning (including consultation and engagement activities) and the Charter Plus accreditation for Elected Members.
- Ards and North Down was the first location to move forward with the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity project and it had been slower than anticipated. Issues had been identified in efforts to translate Public Health England guidance into the Northern Irish system. Phase II of the project was completed in June 2023 and the last 12 months had been spent, with PHA and the Health Trust, identifying the best way to take forward Phase III. Phase III involved complex systems mapping. The Council was reliant on PHA to appoint a provider to help us, and its stakeholders, completed Phase III and Phase IV.
- In early February the services Community Planning Officer left Council, and the post remained vacant for the rest of the reporting quarter. This contributed to the recorded budgetary underspend.
- The Community Planning Manager had represented the Community Planning Officers Network on a Regional Integrated Care System Board. This Board had been established to share learning from a shadow Area Integrated Partnership Board (AIPB) established in the Southern Trust area. New AIPBs would replace the previous Integrated Care Partnerships.

Key achievements:

- Age Friendly – Working with the Over 50s Council plus the Council's Disability group to develop the concepts for a Considerate Parking campaign. This was being done using a community planning co-design approach. Age Friendly activities were used to demonstrate Elected Member influence within the community as part of the Charter Plus Accreditation.
- Dementia Friendly – working as part of South Eastern Region Dementia Friendly subgroup evidence had been gathered from careers and people

living with dementia to help develop an action plan of support. Work was started to plan an information event for Dementia Action Week and to provide longer-term information stands throughout the Borough.

- Involvement in a Northern Ireland Community Planning Conference. This was organised by the Community Planning Officers Network and was used to identify what has worked well with community planning and how progress could be made to re-enforce its importance in terms of being each Council areas sovereign document.

Emerging issues:

- Slow progress of the WSA to Obesity project.
- Work was needed to re-engagement partners and wider stakeholders in community planning. This would involve a programme of communication demonstrating some of the achievements that had happened because of community planning in Ards and North Down. 2025 was the 10th anniversary of community planning in Northern Ireland.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work with PHA to move forward the WSA to Obesity Project.
- Develop a plan to raise awareness of community planning achievements.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

b) Corporate Communications

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for H2, October to March, was attached.

Key points to note:

- This report detailed progress made against Service Plan KPIs. It should be noted that some KPIs were reported on a half-yearly and some on a full yearly basis. All KPIs would be reported against during the course of the reporting year.
- The period under review saw the delivery of a new website platform for the Council (www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk). This was a resource intensive piece of work requiring significant focus by the Corporate Communications team. Delivery required engagement with all Council service areas to review content and the updating/ migration of over 1,200 pages of information. The new updated site went live on 25 March. It had a fresh, clean design and more powerful search engine. It had been well received both internally and externally. The transformation team would be working with a number of service areas to try to move more of customer services online (in line with the feedback from the resident survey).
- Bangor Waterfront – over the past six months the focus for this project had been finalisation and issuing of procurement documents. As such public messaging had been limited – resulting in a lower than anticipated number of visits to the website. This would change moving forward with public announcements around contractors being appointed, etc.

Key achievements:

- During the period a new digital participation platform was launched – [CitizenLab](#) to enable residents to find out more, and provide feedback on, Council investment projects. The platform currently held information on the Ward Park Environmental Improvement Project and was launched to coincide with a public engagement session at the park – allowing the Council to run traditional and digital engagement approaches together. To date 250 people had registered for the platform and some positive engagement had been received as well as commentary on the scheme. Learnings were being compiled from this first use to share with service areas that would be using the platform moving forward including the Bangor Waterfront Development and Whitespots.
- All Council social media channels had seen growth over the period – averaging a 31% increase in followers. The 'Time Together' Autumn Destination Awareness campaign that ran in October made a significant contribution to this generating 4.3 million digital impressions (number of times the ads were seen).
- Completion of the biennial Resident Survey that recorded an overall satisfaction rate with the Council of 83% (comparative figure for all GB Councils in June 2023 was 60%). Detailed findings were reported to Council

in February, were being considered by all service areas and would be used to inform several of the Council's performance improvement publications.

- Several successful events took place during the period including the Taste Autumn Food Festival, Puppet Festival, Remembrance events across the Borough and Christmas Switch Ons. Support including graphic design, technical support, marketing and PR was provided to each. Promotion of Taste Autumn (including Tide and Turf) was particularly strong, resulting in early and high ticket sales across all events and significant positive media coverage including TV and radio.
- Internal comms: the annual staff business conference was delivered in January, with a focus on digital transformation. It was held at the BT Tower in Belfast, with support from BT who were the Council's digital transformation partner.
- From January to March 2024 marketing campaigns were delivered to support the work of the Labour Market Partnership (Careers Convention, Jobs Fair, Disability Employment and Support Day, and a general awareness campaign). Those ran across digital and traditional channels. Messaging was tailored to the target audience for the specific campaign - including school leavers, job seekers, those re-entering the workforce, etc. A digital campaign strategy, focused on Pay Per Click (PPC) google ads and a social media advertising campaign, to drive traffic through to the LMP landing page delivered significant impressions, reach and uplift in sessions to the website.
- A Borough-wide Support Local campaign ran in March 24 across digital and traditional channels (Out-of-Home sites, 30 bus rears, 150k total readership via local weekly newspapers, Cool FM, Downtown, Q Radio and U105). Social media reach was 28.7k. The promotion showcased 73 offers from local businesses covering a broad range of goods and services including hospitality, tourism attractions, gifts, healthcare, homeware and beauty. 1.5k promotional in-store assets were distributed to businesses (posters, display boards and decals), including 'evergreen assets' for long term window and counter display that remain in stores to continue to reinforce the 'support local' message.
- Ongoing programme of communications (PR/ graphic design/ technical event support/ social media content) work to promote a range of Council initiatives including the In Bloom Programme/ Mobile Orchards Launch/ Recycling Programme/ Grants/ Tourism Development Activity/ Community Initiatives.

Emerging issues:

- To support work by Transformation on the development of the Corporate Plan, focus groups were undertaken on the priorities and overall vision of a 'Sustainable Borough'. This was specifically focused upon assessing residents understanding of, and engagement with, some of the language we use around sustainability. This had highlighted the need for more clarity and more realistic aspirations in this respect, which would be factored into communications messages moving forward.
- Resources continued to be prioritised on employee engagement and communications activity, including actions from the People Plan and a range of activities and initiatives to engage staff with the Council's Behaviour Charter and Values.

Action to be taken:

- In line with the Borough Events Strategic Direction paper, delivery of Council run events was changing and more support was being given e.g. via grants to third parties. A review of communications and marketing support was being undertaken to maximise opportunities while encourage third parties to undertake their own promotional schedule.
- A number of service areas were keen to explore sponsorship opportunities that support core activities either directly or indirectly. To facilitate the development of commercial relationships that were in line with the Council’s values and strategic priorities it was proposed to develop a sponsorship policy. This would be progressed in line with the agreed policy development process and come before Council in due course.
- As outlined in the new service plan work was ongoing on the development of a new digital Borough Magazine, the first edition would be live in September 2024.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

c) Finance

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services outlining that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for October 2023 to March 2024 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Although, spend against budget was showing a red status, this was because interest received was significantly higher than budgeted – over £723k above budget. If this was excluded the status was green, 98%.

Key achievements:

- Policy work had progressed well this year, with three new planned policies agreed in the second half of the year. In addition, a further two were completed, although not originally planned.
- Transaction activities were all above target and performing well.
- Budget reporting having was back on track this year, having struggled to hit the nine working day target last year, had been on time each month this year.

Issues:

- Month end reconciliation processes were not hitting their target, due to staff vacancy. This post had now been filled.
- Unplanned workload still was affecting the ability to deliver improvement initiatives with only five out of 16 delivered over the course of the year.
- Although the finance service had not engaged formally with every service twice over the past year. 12 engagement meetings had taken place, and it was planned to further roll those out in the coming months, particularly focussed around estimates and year-end financial statements processes.

Actions to be taken:

- A number of the improvement initiatives not addressed last year would be considered as part of the implementation of the new financial management system, which would also consider which business processes needed to be reviewed in order to adapt to the new software.
- The two policies that had been planned for completion last year, but which were outstanding would be in draft by the Audit Committee meeting on 22 June. As both were staff related, they would go through the normal Human Resources policy consultation process which it was hoped to complete by March 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

d) Strategic Transformation and Performance

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services outlining that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (30 September 2023)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a six-monthly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October - March	May

The report for Quarter 4 2023-24 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Spend against budget was slightly lower than expected (96.66%) due to the vacant Performance Improvement Officer post.
- Attendance (at 91.13%) was slightly below the target of 93% and this was a result of one member of staff being on long-term sick leave. This was also the reason for the percentage of time invested in team briefing, training, development and performance conversations being slightly under target (4.91 % versus a target of 5%).
- The Head of Service led the facilitation and development of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, which was currently being prepared for publication.

Digital Services	
Key achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft IT Disaster Recovery Plan approved by CLT in November 2023. • Systems and network uptime is 99%. • 92.1% of service calls are satisfactorily addressed within timescales (against a target of 97%). It should be noted that this figure only reflects those calls logged through the helpdesk. Many staff continue to email Digital Services staff and contact them in person, and these service requests/ response times are not captured. This should be resolved with the new helpdesk, which will go live in September 2024. • Digital Services lead the development of our Digital Strategy, in collaboration with our external specialists, BT. This was completed in February 2024. • Significant work has been undertaken to progress recommendations from our Cyber security review and the

	<p>majority of staff have completed the Cisco Cyber Security Essentials training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's telephony estate has been reviewed and implementation of new solution commenced in late November 2023 with 'go live' timetabled for May 2024. • Wide Area Network (WAN) project implementation is well progressed. • Transitioning of the mobile phones is well progressed. • All outstanding Priority 1 audit recommendations have been closed.
Emerging Issues	Succession planning is an identified risk within the service.
Action to be taken	Further staff training and development, particularly in relation to cyber-security profiled for 2024.

Transformation Service

Key achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since being established in September 2023 (temporarily for a period of two years) the Transformation Service has completed the following projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of service planning process. - Post project Evaluation (PPE) of the Core system. - Business Continuity Plan developed. - South Street office relocation. • The following projects are underway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leisure transformation. - Review of Corporate Grants Policy and Processes (Phase 1). - Ongoing review of the Core system. - Review of Events Strategy. - Community centres/ halls review. - New finance system. - Migration of telephony. - Mobile phone transitioning. - Legal services review. - Review of Procurement Service. • All audit recommendations have been closed.
Emerging Issues	Two of the Transformation Officers are on agency contracts. In order to ensure we retain this talent the Council is investigating the viability of moving these staff onto temporary contracts.
Action to be taken	The Transformation Team will continue to gather and collate evidence to demonstrate the value add of their activities with a view to securing permanent funding for their posts from September 2025.

Procurement Service

Key achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement savings for the Council are over target for the year to date (£361,139 versus £250,000). Figure achieved through Procurement engaging with Service areas to define
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	<p>project budgets, and tenders received being under this stipulated budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been zero procurement challenges.
Emerging Issues	<p>Historically, over the last 5 years, the PSU (with a full team of 3 staff: Procurement Manager; Procurement Officer; and Procurement Assistant) managed an average of 25 tender exercises per year.</p> <p>Circa 43 tender exercises were programmed for the year 2023. There are approximately 30 procurement exercises already identified for 2024.</p> <p>This represents an increase in tenders of circa 70% for the PSU. Whilst the Procurement Officer post was filled in June 2023, the PSU has been without a Procurement Assistant since early August, again reducing the staff complement to two.</p> <p>The current structure (FTE 3) does not have the capacity to address the increased workload nor to identify corporate tenders which can achieve significant efficiencies across the organisation both in terms of monetary savings and also process/ transactional savings.</p>
Action to be taken	<p>The Transformation Team has commenced a review of the PSU to understand the optimal staffing compliment and structure required to deliver the ever-increasing volume of procurements required across the organisation.</p>

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

e) Administration

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for April – September 2023 was attached.

Key points to note:

The majority of targets in the Administration Service Plan were measured annually.

Key achievements:

Despite the number and complexity of information requests (FOI/DSAR) the Council had continued to respond within the statutory timeframe for 97% (FOI) and 100% (DSAR).

The Council introduced a new Complaints Handling Procedure in line with the NIPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure which reduces the procedure from 3 to 2 Stages before the complaint can be escalated to NIPSO. This was launched in October 2023 and the first report would be in March 2023 on Jan - Mar 2023.

Emerging issues:

It was apparent that high impact weather was now hitting the Borough more frequently than in the past. The Risk Management team had robust reporting mechanisms to alert officers and provide horizon scanning and live information to the public and Elected Members (through the Communication team).

Action to be taken:

We continue to work towards all of the KPIs.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

f) Human Resources

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for quarter 4, 2023-2024 was attached

Key points to note:

- This report gave an update on performance against the 16 Service Plan KPIs with nine being totally achieved, two being borderline to being achieved and five showing as not being achieved.

Key achievements:

All candidates had been notified of results and interviews within a two week period.

An Agile Working Policy had been consulted on and had been fully implemented

The Agency Policy had been reviewed and updated, including an update of all relevant policies

The new digital Appraisal Scheme was in place and managers were being encouraged to complete appraisals using the new more efficient approach

An Absence Action Plan and Absence Dashboard had been created and were updated on a quarterly basis for presentation to Managers and Elected Members

The absenteeism within the HR and OD Service was extremely low with an attendance level of 97.24%

Team Briefings were delivered to the HR team in a timely manner

Targets not Achieved

Number of sick days lost per employees who were sick across the organisation was 16 days, the target was currently 12 days.

A formal Corporate Induction process was not in place, however, there was a thorough and well documented departmental induction programme in place.

Although there had been considerable progress made in the formulation of a Workforce Strategy, this had not yet been completed.

A target showing which was showing as not achieved was the number of appraisals which had been completed for HR staff. This was showing at 50%, the target was

100%. However, as this was the first year of the new Appraisal Scheme, a period of 18 months was being given to have those completed.

Similarly with the People Plan 70% of the People Plan was completed at the end of March 2023, however an 18 month period was also in place with regard to this target being met.

Action to be taken:

- Focus on encouraging managers to carry out staff appraisals under the new Scheme
- Continue to analyse absence statistics and constantly develop and review ideas to encourage higher attendance at work

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

**13. QUARTERLY REPORT ON EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS
(FILE EQ33)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that in accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme, a progress report was required to be submitted to the Council's Corporate Services Committee every quarter. This ensured the Council complied with its obligations to meet its equality and good relations duties and responsibilities, as identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

This report listed the actions of Council officers to meet the statutory duties between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024.

Consultative Panel

The Consultative Panel did not meet within this reporting period, however the next meeting was scheduled for 30 July 2024 at The Marquis Hall, Bangor. The panel members would review Council policies. Suggestions and comments would be added to the screening forms.

Screening of Council policies

The Internal Screening Panel met in May 2024. Officers from across the Council directorates screened five Council policies. This enabled comments to be received, considered, and addressed.

Quarterly Consultations

The Council had a requirement within the Equality Scheme to publish the outcome of screened policies quarterly. A quarterly report would be uploaded onto the Council's website on 30 June 2024.

Equality Action Plan

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) continued to review and ensure that items outlined in the plan are in place and on track. Officers were reminded of their responsibilities during the quarterly Screening Panel meetings. A review of the Equality Action Plan (EAP) was required and a new EAP for 2025 – 2030 was underway.

Disability Booklet

A disability booklet had been drafted by the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) and the Councils' training co-ordinator. This booklet was a reference guide to meeting the needs of those with a disability who used Council Services. The booklet was currently in draft form and it was hoped that this would be distributed to all staff via email and made available on the ANDI portal.

Training

30 Casual Staff from the events team had been trained in disability awareness and safeguarding. Training played a crucial role in helping staff develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of people with disabilities. The training equipped them with effective communication strategies and use of appropriate language when interacting with individuals with disabilities, leading to more respectful and meaningful interactions.

The training explained the tools and resources to address challenges and support the needs of people with disabilities, ultimately equipping them with the knowledge and skills to feel confident and competent in providing support.

Disability Forum in conjunction with Council Events

To gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities at Council events, a productive meeting was arranged with representatives from the Ards and North Down Disability Forum, along with Council's Event Manager and a member from the Council's communications team.

During the meeting, valuable suggestions were contributed, such as creating a 'quiet hour' prior to the main opening time at Sea Bangor events for registered groups, to address the concerns of wheelchair users and large crowds. Furthermore, the issue of limited parking was addressed, resulting in the exploration of hiring specially adapted buses and organising park-and-ride options. It was agreed that this would be investigated further for next year's event.

The need for disabled viewing areas was carefully considered, leading to the establishment of a dedicated viewing area in partnership with the Royal Scottish Pipeband Association at this year's UK Pipeband Championship in Ward Park. Additionally, the strategic placement of accessible toilets near those areas was recommended for the convenience of attendees. The Council was commended for its existing facilities, particularly the consistent use of Accessaloo at all tourism events.

A walkability audit was thoughtfully conducted the day before the Sea Bangor event, allowing the Forum to provide real-time suggestions to encourage and support those

with disabilities in attending. The Forum was eager to conduct a further walkability audit in Comber prior to the Comber Earlies event.

This proactive collaboration had not only addressed existing challenges but had also set a promising precedent for inclusive and accessible events in the future.

Disability Action Plan

The Compliance Officer (Equality and Safeguarding) continued to work to deliver the Disability Action Plan (DAP). This was reported through the Internal Screening Group and the Disability Forum. At those meetings, any identified concerns may be added to the plan to ensure appropriate actions were identified and undertaken promptly to enable the Council to remain compliant with the relevant legislation. A review of the DAP was required and a new DAP for 2025 – 2030 was underway.

Complaints

During this period, no Section 75 complaints had been received.

It Takes All Sorts

The 'It Takes All Sorts' team were meeting in July to discuss the upcoming events for 24/25, this would be reported in the next quarterly report.

Carers Event, supporting Carers Week.

Ards and North Down Borough Council hosted its tenth annual carers event on the 10 June 2024 as per the agreed Equality Action Plan (2020 – 2025) The event was organised by SEHSCT to mark careers week which was held in June. The event allowed Council to celebrate and acknowledge the work of unpaid-paid carers in the Borough. The event was for a maximum of thirty carers who took a tour of Bangor Walled Garden and then enjoy a light lunch in the Craig Room at City Hall. The Deputy Mayor attended the event and expressed gratitude to the carers for their invaluable work and the positive impact they have on the lives of others. The event was oversubscribed, (50 carers attended the event), the current constraints of the equality budget did not allow for hosting this type of event. If the event was to be included in the next Equality Action Plan (2025-2027), the Council would need to agree on a budget to facilitate this event.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

14. ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABILITY 6 MONTHLY REPORT (SUS1) (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that the Roadmap to Sustainability (the Roadmap) was agreed by Council in March 2021. It had been developed to formalise the Council's commitment to becoming more sustainable and to act as a key enabler in this regard.

The Roadmap ran from the period 2021 to 2028 to coincide with 2 Corporate Plan phases. It would be updated periodically, with the accompanying Action Plan reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The first update report summarising progress against the key actions agreed in the Roadmap was provided to Council in December 2021 with further updates provided every six months since. The latest six-monthly update against actions had been prepared for members and was attached to this report.

As reported in June 2023 Corporate Committee it was the intention to review the Roadmap in line with recommendations from internal audit and that was ongoing. Members would be updated once this was complete.

Environmental Management System (ISO14001)

The Council obtained full recertification of its Environmental Management System (ISO14001) in May 2024. The auditor identified no aspects for improvement. This accreditation was for three years. This accreditation demonstrated the continuous improvement and commitment officers had in relation to environmental practices throughout all services.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Kennedy referred to the Woodland Strategy and noted that approximately 45,000 trees had been planted throughout the Borough and he asked if officers were aware of how many trees there actually were throughout the Borough.

In response the Director of Corporate Services indicated that he would not have that information to hand but would report back to the member in due course.

Following on from that Alderman McIlveen asked of those 45,000 trees planted how many were still alive, given the high mortality rate during the first year following planting.

The Director of Corporate Services indicated that again he would report back to the member with that information.

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

15. TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS V(FILE FIN161)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services advising that the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the Prudential and Treasury Codes issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), supported by guidance issued by the Department for Communities,

required the Council to approve financial policies and strategies for its capital financing and treasury management activities. As a minimum, the Council was required to receive and approve annual capital and treasury management strategies at the commencement of each year, quarterly updates and an annual report after the close of each financial year.

This report met the last requirement of an annual report for the 2023/24 financial year. The purpose of this report was to highlight performance against the Prudential Indicators (PIs) which were set for capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activities set out in the Council's annual strategies, which were approved in February 2023.

1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The PIs for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council were affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to those PIs were set out below.

Table 1.11 below summarised the total amount of capital expenditure incurred during 2023/24 compared to the original estimate approved by Council.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.11	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure 2023/24	17.406	6.512	10.894

The variance showed that the actual expenditure for the year was below the estimate by £10.9m. This was primarily due to programme slippages in the planned major capital schemes, particularly

- Greenway Schemes, Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Bangor, due to delays in the planning process, including awaiting responses from statutory consultees.
- Bangor Aurora Pool Floor following a detailed assessment of business needs.
- Portaferry Public Realm which started later than initially expected but was now well underway and due for completion by mid 2024.

Table 1.12 below summarised how the capital expenditure for 2023/24 of £6.512m has been financed.

	Actual
	2023/24
Table 1.12	£m
Capital Expenditure	6.512
Financed by:	
Grants	(1.356)

Capital Receipts	(0.625)
Revenue/Reserves	(0.330)
Balance to be met from borrowings	4.201

The unfinanced balance of £4.201m was required to be met from borrowings. This formed part of the Capital Financing Requirement (see 1.2 below) and was financed through an annual charge for minimum revenue provision (MRP).

1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure was termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). It was simply a measure of the total cumulative historic capital expenditure which had not yet been met from either revenue or capital resources.

The CFR increased as new debt-financed capital expenditure was incurred and reduced as MRP (minimum revenue provision) was charged to revenue. See section 1.4 for further information on MRP.

Statutory guidance was that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The actual positions on the CFR and Gross Borrowing at 31 March 24 compared to the estimates set were shown in table 1.21 below.

	Estimate	Actual
	31/03/24	31/03/24
Table 1.21	£m	£m
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	81.235	75.068
External Gross Borrowing	63.034	59.651
Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement	18.201	15.417
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£15.4m March 2024) and indicated that historic capital expenditure had been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. This had been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in the current and previous years. The position had been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018.

In order to ensure that borrowing levels were prudent over the medium term, the Council's gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and following two financial years. The forecast CFR for 31 March 2026 (based on the Council's latest approved capital investment plan) was £90.3m. In this regard, it was considered that the Council's borrowing level at 31 March 2024 of £59.6m was prudent.

When making borrowing decisions, management would continue to work with its treasury advisors, Arlingclose, to develop the most appropriate borrowing strategy. This was expected to consider the benefits, risks, and impacts of both short-term and long-term loans, with the aim of minimising long-term interest costs.

1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

Council was legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit each year, known as the 'Authorised Limit'. In line with statutory guidance, a lower 'operational boundary' was also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit. The maximum gross borrowings at any point during the year was £63.7m. This meant that Council maintained its borrowings within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year, as shown in table 1.31 below.

Table 1.31	2023/24
Operational boundary – borrowing *	£ 81.235m
Authorised limit – borrowing ^	£ 86.235m
Maximum Gross Borrowing during 2023/24	£ 63.725m

* **The operational boundary** – the operational boundary was the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year and was based on expenditure and cash flow modelling. Periods where the actual position was either below or over the operational boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

^ **The authorised limit** - Section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 required the Council to set an authorised limit for borrowing at the beginning of each financial year. During the year, the Council did not have the power to borrow above this level.

1.4 Capital - Revenue Budget Implications

Capital expenditure was not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead, interest payable on borrowings and MRP (minimum revenue provision), together known as capital financing costs, were charged to revenue. Those financing costs were compared to the net revenue stream ie. the amount funded from District Rates and general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which was made up of capital financing costs. The final position against the budget set for the 2023/24 year was set out in table 1.41 below.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Table 1.41	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
Capital financing cost (£m)	£7.867m	£7.867m	£0.0m
Net Revenue Stream	£62.743m	£62.122m	£0.621m
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	12.5%	12.7%	0.2%

2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

Long-Term Loans During 2023/24, no new long-term loans were taken out and loan principal repayments of £4.1m were made against existing loans. This resulted in a level of long-term borrowings at 31 March 2024 of £59.6m, as shown in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.11				
Lender	Balance 01/04/23	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 31/03/24
Dept of Finance	£ 56.450m	£ -	(£ 3.074m)	£ 53.376m
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 7.275m	£ -	(£ 1.000m)	£ 6.275m
Totals	£ 63.725m	£ -	(£ 4.074m)	£ 59.651m

Short-Term Loans Council did not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The table below showed the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2023/24	Actual at 31/03/24
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	2%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	98%

Table 2.22			
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2023/24	Upper Limit 2023/24	Actual 2023/24
Under 12 months	0%	15%	4.7%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	6.0%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	13.8%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	27.2%
10 years and above	30%	90%	48.3%

2.3 Treasury Management - Debt Rescheduling and Average Interest Rates

Officers were not able to avail of any debt rescheduling opportunities during the year as the differential of 1% between new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates on government loans did not create any viable options. At 31 March 2024, the average interest rate for the Council's total debt portfolio was 3.87%.

2.4 Treasury Management - Investment Activity

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy were safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its investments on time, with the investment return being a secondary objective. The current investment climate continued to be one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. In line with advice provided by treasury management consultants, officers continued to implement an operational investment strategy of placing short-term investments with approved high-quality counterparties.

For the year to 31 March 2024, Council earned interest of £633k on investment deals with approved financial institutions, comparing favourably to the budget set for the year of £220k. This was due to larger than anticipated investment balances and higher than expected interest rates. The activity for the year was summarised in table 2.31 below.

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£2.9m	Call A/c	4.98%	£149,552
State Street Global Advisors	£2.8m	Call A/c	4.96%	£145,467
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£2.7m	Call A/c	5.09%	£127,717
Bank of Scotland	£2.0m	Call A/c	4.92%	£99,647
Barclays Bank	£1.6m	Call A/c	4.86%	£69,505
Santander	£1.1m	Call A/c	2.91%	£10,065
Other Local Authorities	£3.0m	3 mths	4.20%	£31,414
Totals				£633,367

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement included controls regarding diversification of balances among financial institutions to mitigate security risk. Those limits allowed for the higher of £3m or 30% of total investments to be held with one counterparty, except for periods of up to four days for administrative purposes. Due to an administrative oversight Council breached this policy by 1% for 8 days. Steps had been taken to remind staff of the importance of correctly monitoring those thresholds.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts at 31 March 2024 was £10.5m. The table below showed the risk and return metrics on those investments against other Northern Ireland Councils.

Table 2.32	Counterparties	Investments	
	Credit Rating	Liquidity	Rate of Return (%)
ANDBC	A+	100%	5.22%
NI Council Average	A+	59%	5.30%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Mar-24

The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days is £500k. The Council had not entered into any such investments.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

16. RESPONSE TO NOTICES OF MOTION

A) RESPONSE TO NOM 191 – DEEP CONCERN AT THE POOR STATE OF THE ROADS ACROSS ANDBC (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Corporate Services stating that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council at its meeting in February 2024:

“That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DFI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20 millimetres from the current 50 millimetres in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.”

This item was deferred at the meeting of 14 May 2024 for a further letter be sent by the Interim Chief Executive in relation to the following amendment agreed by Council on 28 February:

“Further that Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure expressing concern that Ards and North Down continues to receive the lowest Roads investment across Northern Ireland Councils and requests an increase in funding to make road repairs and resurfacing a priority and for fair allocation in funding for coastal defences, roads and pavements resurfacing and street lighting investment across our Borough as a matter of urgency.”

On 14 May 2024 a letter was sent from the Interim Chief Executive and a reply was received on 28 May 2024. A copy of this letter was attached.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the attached response.

Alderman Smith proposed an alternative proposal, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council write back to the Minister to seek clarification on the range of the weighted indicators being used to allocated resources for road maintenance.

The proposer, Alderman Smith referred to the letter from the Minister which made reference to the weighted indicators which he believed were fair and proportionate but that did not appear to be the case in this Borough. As such he would be keen to see the evidence of his decision making rather than this broadbrush approach which appeared to have been adopted. Continuing Alderman Smith acknowledged his

reference to vacancy rates but his question to the Minister would be what was being done to fill those vacancies. He added that was no reflection on the local Section Office which he believed did an excellent job but rather his issue was about resourcing. Councillor Smith believed that it would be useful to have some knowledge of his decision making thought process adding that in his reply he had not even answered the initial question which had been put to him.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McIlveen concurred with Alderman Smith that the Minister had not dealt with the initial query which had been raised by the Council. That question had been about a change in the policy to ensure road repairs were carried out in a timely fashion. The other aspect had been about being properly funded as it appeared to be the case that there was no imagination about this would be funded. Continuing he recalled that last year it had been a stated fact that this Council received six and a half times less funding than its neighbouring Council Newry, Mourne and Down adding that this Council was consistently lower than it. He added that it was also the case that this Council was always consistently lower than other Councils. He added that it was also the case that whenever Southern Division was allocating its budget that this Council again was consistently lower than many other Councils and as such it did not get what it deserved. He added that it was also the case that the Minister was not considering how to use his budget more effectively or imaginatively. He stated that he was happy to second the proposal, particularly as it had been his intention to also make an alternative proposal at the meeting.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that that the Council write back to the Minister to seek clarification on the range of the weighted indicators being used to allocate resources for road maintenance.

17. NOTICES OF MOTION

17.2. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GILMOUR AND COUNCILLOR MARTIN

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that 8th May 2025 will be 80 years since VE Day- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.

The proposer, Councillor Gilmour, commented that this was quite fitting following on from the presentation made by the Conlig War Memorial Project Group which ably demonstrated the desire to remember. On 8 May 2025 it would be 80 years since VE Day and that she felt should be celebrated and commemorated. She referred to the recent events held for D-Day80 in Bangor which proved very poignant in remembering the role the Borough played as part of the D-Day story. As part of that commemoration the Council was fortunate to have a D-Day veteran in attendance Mr George Spencer however she was mindful that as years progressed there would be

less veterans and as such she felt it was important to remember what they had went through. Continuing she also referred to a veteran of the Holocaust whom she had met during her Mayoral year and as such she emphasised the importance of ensuring those personal stories were retained for future generations. For the 50th Anniversary of VE Day she recalled how there had been street parties and local story telling sessions and as such she felt it was time for the Council to commence planning and preparation now. Suggested events for consideration include tying in with National Commemorations such as Beacon Lightings and those events which had taken place to commemorate D-Day80. She referred to the many great military connections there were throughout the Borough and asked that consideration was given as to how community groups and associations could also be supported and encouraged to take part in events such as Street Parties, Tea Dances and Historical Talks. As such she encouraged members to support her motion as put.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McIlveen indicated that he was very happy to support the motion given the role which Newtownards had played at this time. At this stage he made reference to the military connections there were in Newtownards including that it was the birthplace of Lieutenant Colonel Blair Mayne and the armaments which remained in situ at Ards Airfield which they had protected during the war. He was aware families would have many wartime stories to tell including his own grandfather. Referring to the recent D-Day80 commemorations he noted that the one thing which had come across that day was that veterans felt that could be one of the last major memorials that they may attend. Opportunities such as this to commemorate those major events with veterans in attendance did diminish as each year passed by and as such he agreed that it was appropriate now to look at funding and preparations in relation to this. Continuing he referred to the plans in place by War Years Remembered which hoped to have its facility in place in the not too distant future in Newtownards, adding that he was aware there was huge interest in that. As such he was very supportive of the proposal as put.

Alderman McAlpine agreed that it was very important to mark this significant anniversary, particularly as the Ards Peninsula at the time was very much an airfield from top to bottom. She also noted that the Shorts factory at the time had manufactured the wooden planes which had been sent to France. Continuing she agreed that it was important to acknowledge all of those who had served at that time and never returned and even more so now as the number of veterans diminished with each year that passed. Given that she felt that it was important for young people to hear their stories to ensure that such events never took place again.

Alderman Smith congratulated Councillor Gilmour for bringing forward the motion agreeing that it was important for preparations to commence. He referred to the success of the recent D-Day80 Commemorations and agreed that with each year that passed there were fewer and fewer veterans left to tell their stories. Continuing he commented that everyone would have their own family stories of war and it was important at every opportunity to be able to educate today's younger generation. As such he reiterated his support for the motion.

Alderman Graham also rose in support of the motion and agreed that sadly the stage would be reached where those with those living memories would no longer be alive to tell their stories. He agreed that there was immense interest in this throughout the

community, particularly given the many military and wartime connections there were throughout the Borough. As such he believed that it was very important to have those stories from those last remaining veterans to educate the younger generation.

In summing up Councillor Gilmour thanked members for their comments adding that it was important to preserve the fascinating stories of veterans, particularly as on some occasions those stories were never told to family members. She reiterated her thanks again to members for their support.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that 8th May 2025 will be 80 years since VE Day- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.

18. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

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

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

19. BLAIR MAYNE BURSARY AWARDS (FILE ADM24) (Appendix XI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE - 1. Exemption: relating to an individual

The Council was asked to agree a sets of minutes from 11 April 2024 from the Blair Mayne bursary fund committee and to agree to increase the number of award categories to 4 and the monetary level for each to £1,000 subject to budget setting for 2024/25 onwards.

The recommendation was adopted.

20. NOTICE OF MOTION 186 – THE LIVING WAGE

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE - 4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

The Council was asked to consider whether to commence the accreditation process to become a Living Wage and Living Pension Employer.

The recommendation was adopted.

21. REQUEST TO VARY A COVENANT – LAND AT NORTH ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS (Appendix XII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider the amendment of a covenant at North Road, Newtownards. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

22. REQUEST TO RENEW THE LEASE – TELEPHONE MAST IN CASTLE PARK (Appendix XIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider the renewal of a Lease for the telephone mast in Castle Park. It was recommended that the Council renewed the Lease.

The recommendation was adopted.

23. RENEWAL OF LICENCE – REQUEST TO CARRY OUT WORKS AT CROMELIN WOOD (Appendix XIV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider the renewal of a licence in relation to works at Crommelin Wood, Donaghadee. It was recommended that the Council renewed the Licence.

The recommendation was adopted.

24. SUPPORT OPTIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (Appendix XV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE - 3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

The Council was asked to consider a recommended that the Council commits to The Sustainable NI (SNI) Accelerator Plus Membership for 2024/25.

The recommendation was adopted.

25. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT (Appendix XVI)

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

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at this stage 9.00pm and resumed at 9.10pm.

NOTED.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE - 4. Exemption: consultations or negotiations

The Council was asked to consider an update on the Councils Absence Management plans set against the recommendations of the APSE report which was presented to Committee in June 2023.

The recommendation was adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.31 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Wednesday 19 June 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Boyle

Aldermen: Adair

Councillors:	Ashe	Harbinson
	Chambers	Kendall
	Cochrane	Martin
	Douglas	

Officers: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development (A Faulkner), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

MATTERS OF BUSINESS

The Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee advised that Alderman Brooks, had given apologies for the meeting and the Vice Chair, Councillor Boyle, took the role for the duration of the meeting.

On behalf of the Community and Wellbeing Committee the Chair expressed deepest condolences to Councillor W Irvine following the death of his mother. He informed the Committee that Mrs Irvine's funeral would take place on Saturday 22 June at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Bangor.

NOTED.

The Chair shared his delight on the recent success of Portaferry athlete Ciara Mageean on winning a gold medal for a 1500 metres race recently in Rome. He said that Ciara was a fantastic ambassador for Portaferry and the entire Borough. The Council had provided funding to Ciara and he knew that she never forgot those who had helped to support her. He reported that she was currently training for the Paris Olympics which would be taking place in August and he wished her continued success for that.

Alderman Adair believed that Ciara's success should be recognised by the Council and it was suggested that a letter of congratulation be sent to her from the Mayor.

AGREED.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Aldermen Brooks, Cummings and McRandal and Councillors Hollywood, S Irvine, W Irvine and Moore.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were notified:

- Councillor Martin – Item 5 and Item 26
- Councillor Chambers – Items 4, 22 and 26

NOTED.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Under Standing Orders Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that Item 27 be taken Out of Committee. Alderman Adair suggested that there was huge public interest in the Item and he would be careful not to let the discussion stray in to confidential matters.

AGREED.

3. DEPUTATION RESOLUTE M;NDS

The Chair introduced a Deputation from Resolute M;nds and welcomed Rory Sloan to the meeting and invited him to make his presentation to the Committee.

Rory thanked the Community and Wellbeing Committee for the opportunity to speak and informed them that he was the founder of Resolute M;nds. He explained that the semi colon used in the name was a symbol for mental health. He was 23 years old and described his background having struggled with substance abuse in his early teenage years. After a brief recovery the Covid pandemic struck and Rory developed an eating disorder, started drinking heavily and began using Cocaine. That downward spiral lead to criminal activity and soon after his 21st birthday Rory spent a short time in prison.

At that time, he was introduced to Northern Ireland Alternatives which led him through therapy and restorative justice and that opened his eyes to the harm he was causing himself and others. He explained that his wish now was to tell his story to young people to open their eyes to the dangers that they could be led in to unintentionally through drink, drugs and criminal activity. He had recently been a One Young World leader for the first time and was given an opportunity to tell his story. He received good feedback from that and it had led him to launch Resolute M;nds.

Resolute M;nds was launched in the Culloden Hotel in May and in an effort to make every voice heard they offered workshop support, one to one help and a soon to be completed online forum. He believed that he could show something different to

young people as a person who was young himself but had lived experience. In turn he hoped that would be empowering to young people through work in schools.

Alderman Adair thanked Rory for sharing his inspiring story and asked if he had engaged with any schools in the Borough already. In response Rory said that he was still considering the best approach to that but he had worked with his former school. Alderman Adair knew the work would help many people in the future and said that he would help to promote Rory's work when in discussion with schools and youth leadership.

Councillor Kendall commended Rory for his confidence and bravery and it was inspiring how he was using his skills, drive and enthusiasm to help others. There was a drugs epidemic and she thought it was important that more therapeutic, persuasive interventions be introduced including help for mental health rather than locking people in prisons. Rory shared that view and was a huge believer in restorative work stating that some people were not necessarily 'bad' but were unfortunate to be caught up in a dangerous situation but could turn their life around with help and support. He felt that focus could be on wellbeing of the body along with physical and mental fitness that could make people happier and in turn they could live more productive lives. The Member asked Council officers to link Rory with the PCSP.

Councillor Martin told Rory that he had communicated his story very effectively and it had been very moving and redemptive in how he had managed to turn his life around. The Member had been impressed by Rory's lived experience and thought that could be used very positively in schools.

Councillor Douglas praised Rory for sharing his remarkable story and the courage he demonstrated. She had a son who had just turned 18 and was aware of the dangers that young people were facing and thought it excellent that he should wish to speak in schools encouraging those who may be challenged by mental illness or addictions. She fully supported him and said she would be willing to help him if she could.

Councillor Chambers told Rory that his story was one of success and drug abuse was an epidemic in society for people of all backgrounds and he understood how he would be relatable to young people. He asked him how ambitious he hoped to be and in response Rory said that he was determined and worked hard on everything he put his mind to. He reminded Members that everyone was addicted to something even if in a more minor way than the use of hard drugs.

Councillor Ashe thanked Rory for his incredible story which had been very moving and said he should be proud of his sobriety and asked him how his programme would be run. Rory replied that he would like to run four-week programmes in schools but would need to source funding for that.

In closing the Chair told Rory that he had sat as a Councillor for almost twenty years and Rory's story had been one of the most inspiring that he had ever heard expressed in the Chamber he wished him every success for the future.

Rory thanked the Committee and left the meeting at 7.28 pm.

(Have declared an interest in Item 4 Councillor Chambers left the meeting at 7.28 pm).

4. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS

(Appendices I – VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that on the 26 August 2015 the 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. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for that purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still required Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to Members.

During April 2024, the Forum received a total of 55 applications: 1 Anniversary, 1 Coach Education, 1 Equipment, 2 Goldcard, 50 Individual Travel/Accommodation Grants. A summary of the **53** successful applications was detailed in the attached Successful Anniversary, Successful Coach Education, Successful Equipment.

Successful Goldcard, Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation and Successful Club Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories was as followed:

2023/24 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded April 2024	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£250.00
Coach Education	£3,000	£0	£1,453.75
Equipment	£14,000	£0	-£4,558.76
Events	£6,000	£0	*-£442.53
Seeding	£500	£0	£55.01
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	£0	*-£5,282.81
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£3,252.96
28 Goldcards in total during 2023/24.			

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£5,282.81** was based on a reclaimed amount of **£553.38**.

*The proposed remaining budget for School/Sports Club Pathway of **£3,252.96** was based on a reclaimed amount of **£250.96**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2023/24 was **-£4,272.38** (109% of the 2023/24 budget spent).

2024/25 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded April 2024	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	*£249.90	£0.10
Coach Education	£3,000	*£256.25	£2,743.75
Equipment	£14,000	*£1,000.00	£13,000.00
Events	£6,000	£0	£3,319.95
Seeding	£500	£0	£500.00
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£6,169.00	£3,701.00
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£5,000.00
2 Goldcard Awarded in April (5 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)			

*The proposed remaining budget for Anniversary of **£0.10** was based on a proposed award this month of **£249.90**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Coach Education of **£2,743.75** was based on a proposed award this month of **£256.25**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **£13,000.00** was based on a proposed award this month of **£1,000.00**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£3,701.00** was based on a proposed award this month of **£6,169.00**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 is **£29,264.80** (35% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) were noted.

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

(Councillor Chambers re-entered the meeting at 7.29 pm)
(Councillor Martin left the meeting at 7.29 pm)

5. MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT MOVE MORE CO-ORDINATOR FUNDING 2024-2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that, since November 2018 Ards and North Down Borough Council had worked with MacMillan Cancer Support and

Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) to support the provision of a MacMillan Move More Co-ordinator in the Borough, based on a matched funding partnership agreement (25% Council, 25% NCLT, 50% MacMillan).

The role had provided an opportunity for public services to work in partnership to make a real difference to cancer sufferers lives, strengthening engagement between health trusts and their coterminous local councils and leisure services and offering support for people living with and beyond cancer to identify the opportunities to ensure that physical activity became an integral part of their lifestyle.

In the period of November 2019 to March 2021 a total of 298 referrals were made by the South East Trust however it was noted that there was a significant drop in referrals in 2021 due to the effects of Covid-19, with cancer treatments being cancelled or postponed, and a significant drop in red flag referrals from GPs and cancer screening services being stopped during the first lockdown.

In September 2021 MacMillan was awarded a grant of £926k from the Department of Health Northern Irelands Cancer Charities Support Fund, which was utilised from January 2022 to August 2024 to provide 50% funding to the Council partners. That enabled further investment into the Macmillan Move More Coordinators within each of the 11 Councils throughout the period, and also to provide the necessary project management within each Trust to establish the service model and support integration which was core to the success of the work.

Following a report to Council in November 2021, ANDBC committed to provide funding contributions towards the Move More Coordinator in its budget for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

Ards and North Down – Update and current position

Coming out of the pandemic, with cancer services resuming and services reopening, the number of referrals had recovered somewhat, with a total of 203 referrals noted in the period of September 2022 to December 2023.

Throughout the term of the project, the Move More Co-ordinator had been employed by Northern Community Leisure Trust, with 50% of project funding met by MacMillan and 25% provided by Council. A breakdown of associated costs in the 22/23 and 23/24 financial years was set out below:

Costs	2022/23	2023/24
Base Salary	£27,741	£28,936
Salary on costs	£4,161.15	£8,709
Travel	£2,000	£2,000
Facility Hire	£756	£0
Total	£34,658.15	£39,645
Cancer Support funding towards salary costs only	£20,000	£20,000
Estimated cost to NCLT/Serco	£7,329.07	£9,822.50

Estimated cost to Council*	£7,329.08	£9,822.50
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The Move More Co-ordinator had been primarily based in Bangor Aurora but had delivered classes and support to patients from across the Borough, with 98 clients from Bangor and Holywood and 105 from Ards and Comber in the last reporting period.

Participants were mostly referred by a health professional in the South Eastern Trust however, individuals could self-refer directly to the Co-ordinator as well. All referrals were contacted directly and could have one to one consultation in the leisure centre of their choice, followed by tailored programme advice for exercise. That could range from attending specifically designed and delivered exercise classes, using home exercise booklets with future updates, or individual/group gym-based training sessions.

The Co-ordinator had noted that the cancer specific classes run in the Borough were vital for patients who may never have been active before or patients who had lost a lot of confidence following their diagnosis. They enabled people living with cancer to get active in an environment that they felt comfortable in during a time of great change and uncertainty in their lives. The programme also offered a roadmap for progression for patients who had the opportunity to discuss tailored/guided programmes with the Co-ordinator as a means of entry back into mainstream fitness classes run in leisure centres.

Funding from September 2024 onwards

At the conclusion of the current period of funding in August 2024, MacMillan had advised each of the 11 Councils across Northern Ireland that due to a reduction in charitable donations, rising costs and budgetary restrictions, the funding agreement for the Move More Co-ordinator posts would conclude, and subsequently, Councils would be required to take on full 100% funding of the associated costs of the programmes or cease to deliver a programme in their area.

MacMillan had outlined the possibility of a new contract, commencing 1 September 2024 through which funding of up to £15,000 over a period of three years (i.e. £5,000 per annum) could be made available but only for training and development for the Move More Coordinator and wider delivery team.

The proposed way forward

ANDBC Leisure Officers had included a sum of £10,000 in the Leisure budget for 2024/25, planning for continued provision of the Macmillan Move More Co-ordinators post in line with the previous year’s funding agreement (25% match). As Macmillan had now advised that they were not now in a position to continue to fund their contribution to the post, ANDBC Leisure Officers and their operating partners in NCLT had been faced with the challenge of identifying a new operating model that enabled ANDBC/NCLT to best utilise the available resources, relationships cultivated and knowledge gained to ensure that that valuable provision for people with Cancer in the Borough was continued.

NCLT had confirmed its commitment to continue to offer the resource and together with Council Leisure Officers had formulated a proposal which would enable Cancer prehabilitation and rehabilitation referrals to be taken. It was proposed that NCLT would retain the member of staff currently within the Move More Co-ordinator role within the NCLT staffing structure. The member of staff would be employed in a new, wider wellbeing role, which would encompass aspects of both the PARS (PHA physical activity referral scheme) and Cancer rehabilitation. The focus of the role would be assisting in growing the ANDBC PARS programme as well as continuing to take cancer prehab/rehab referrals directly from the South Eastern Trust clinical team at leisure facilities across the entire Borough.

As the role was being retained within the NCLT staffing structure and would continue to be based primarily at Bangor Aurora Leisure Complex, it was proposed that NCLT would be responsible for 75% of the salary costs, with Council continuing to commit to the already agreed 25% funding towards this post (£10,000) in 2024/25 as per the previous agreement with MacMillan. It was proposed that in return for this commitment from Council, the post holder would work within Leisure Ards facilities at Ards Blair Mayne and Comber Leisure Centre for 8 hours of the working week, carrying out one to one consultations, direct delivery of classes for both PARS and Cancer rehab/prehab clients, as well as hosting gym floor 'drop in sessions' where clients would be able to meet the Co-ordinator at either centre for any assistance required including inductions, programme updates etc.

It was proposed that the emphasis would largely be on group training, with the Co-ordinator then referring clients on to other memberships/classes and leisure's other GP Referral qualified staff at each site where appropriate.

It was envisaged that that operating model would have several key benefits, including:

- The ability to retain the existing Co-ordinator in post, subsequently retaining the knowledge base and key relationships built with clinical staff over the course of the Macmillan Move More programme.
- Maintain provision of specialist prehabilitation and rehabilitation opportunities for members of the community across the Borough who had been diagnosed with Cancer.
- Increase the number of clients that could be referred through the PHA PARS scheme through increased delivery of specific group training sessions at Leisure sites across the Borough.

It should be noted that the proposed funding to NCLT was to secure the post and support for PARS and Cancer rehabilitation from September 2024 to August 2025. There would be a requirement to review the agreement as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2025/26 in order to determine the success of the role and/or consider any alternative operating models which may become available upon further upskilling of other Leisure staff.

In addition to the above, NCLT and Council Leisure Officers had also submitted an application to Macmillan Cancer Support in relation to the funding available post August 2024. The application was currently with Macmillan and, if successful, could

lead to a grant amount of £15,000 over the next 3 years which it was understood must be utilised for upskilling of the Wellbeing Co-ordinator and other staff across all leisure sites. Leisure Officers and NCLT would continue to attend meetings of the multidisciplinary NI cancer prehab steering group in order to maintain links with the clinical professionals in the field.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the above Report and approve proceeding on the basis outlined above including the contribution of £10,000 from this year's budget towards the costs for the Co-ordinator.

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

The Chair welcomed Councillor Harbinson as a new Member of the Community and Wellbeing Committee and said it had been remiss of him not to do that at the start of the meeting.

Alderman Adair congratulated Councillor Boyle on his position of Vice Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee and commended the recommendation to Members. Macmillan provided a vital service in end-of-life care to many constituents; they had a centre for people to go to but at end of life they supported people to stay in their own homes to have vital and precious moments with their loved ones.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Harbinson agreed that the organisation stepped in during the most difficult of circumstances and it was only right that the Council assisted them.

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

(Councillor Martin entered the meeting at 7.31 pm)

6. PLAY AREAS WORKSHOP OUTCOME

(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Play Areas Refurbishments 2024-2025 report, as considered by Members in April 2024, outlined the following sites for refurbishment:

- To replace the Millisle Outdoor Gym
- Refurbish New Harbour Road Play Park, Portavogie
- Shorefront and Springwell Crescent, Groomspoint (requires Consultation)
- Northfield and Beechfield, Donaghadee (requires Consultation)
- Londonderry Park
- Ward Park (Ballyholme, Banks Lane and Pickie will be part of the Waterfront regeneration)

The Council agreed to the following in relation to that report:

That Council proceed with upgrades at sites contained in the report that required no community consultation but paused a decision on those sites that required community consultation, with the exclusion of Ward Park. That would enable a Members’ workshop to take place on the future of the Council play strategy.

Therefore, the following projects would be delivered in this Financial Year:

- Millisle Outdoor Gym
- New Harbour Road play park, Portavogie
- Londonderry Park
- Ward Park

It should be noted that a consultation exercise was undertaken as part of the wider Ward Park Regeneration Scheme on 20 April in the Bangor Carnegie Library and the results were that the majority were in favour of relocating the play park from its current location to that of the currently unused tennis courts.

In relation to the second part of the decision, a Members’ Workshop was held in the City Hall, Bangor on Thursday 30 May where 9 Members were in attendance along with the Director of Community and Wellbeing and 3 Officers.

The background to the Play Strategy was presented (Presentation attached in Appendix) in terms of:

- Why play is important
- Why we have a Play Strategy
- When it was commissioned, what methodology and evidence was used to formulate the approach outlined in the Strategy
- What were the main elements in the Play Strategy
- What decisions were agreed following the adoption of the Play Strategy
- What the Play Strategy has delivered

A number of questions were then posed to those in attendance to begin the discussions. Those were as follows:

- Do you agree with the refurbishment plan as identified by the annual independent inspector's report?
- Do you agree with the consolidation approach (offer a smaller number of bigger and better facilities as opposed to a larger number of lower grade play parks.)
- Shall we continue with the consultation process in its current form? Most consultations have not been accepted.

The general feedback was as followed:

Question	Comments	Approach
Do you agree with the refurbishment	Generally, Members were content that the approach to refurbishments continues to	Officers would explore to see if this pragmatic approach can be incorporated in some way into the

<p>plan as identified by the annual independent inspector's report?</p>	<p>be driven by the Independent Inspectors Annual Report.</p>	<p>Independent Inspectors Report or taken account of that when outlining the yearly refurbishments list. It is likely to only happen on rare occasions.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Play Development Officer can help facilitate further engagement going forward and speak to local schools and community groups about their needs.</p> <p>It was caveated that because of the complexities of play park design due to Health and Safety requirements etc the engagement approach would focus on themes, locations, facility type (in relation to the older children provision) certain elements within the design etc.</p> <p>It was explained that equipment can no longer be reused as it is being removed because it is no longer fit for purpose, and in any case generally gets damaged further during removal which would compromise its integrity and nullify its health and safety standards and due to British, European and RoSPA requirements additional elements cannot be retrofitted.</p>
	<p>It was suggested that a pragmatic approach be taken, when for example, a settlement has one good play park and then a lesser one, which is scoring low, and if another settlement which only has one play park doesn't score as low as the other, it is prioritised first to give that settlement a good play park.</p>	
	<p>It was also suggested that generally more Community Engagement is carried out (as opposed to a one-off Consultation Event) to get a feel for what the local communities want.</p>	
	<p>It was suggested that we reuse removed equipment at other sites to improve the play value.</p>	
<p>Do you agree with the consolidation approach (offer a smaller number of bigger and better facilities as opposed to a larger number of lower</p>	<p>While bigger and better play parks with better play value would be the ideal, the idea of closing one and upgrading another has divided one settlement already (Kircubbin) and that is likely to occur in other settlements where this approach is proposed.</p>	<p>The consensus was that we shouldn't be closing any play parks and that the consultations don't provide a fully definitive answer as not everyone engages to justify removal.</p> <p>Need to keep the existing ones where they are to ensure that they are locally and easily accessible on foot.</p> <p>It was highlighted that while this approach can be adopted it will</p>
	<p>People were used to having the existing ones there. Need to be mindful of areas of need/deprivation. Strategy</p>	

<p>grade play parks.)</p>	<p>viewed by some as a play park closure strategy.</p>	<p>have a financial implication in terms of the refurbishment and maintenance budgets (outlined below).</p>
	<p>It was posed that it might be a case of people use their local play parks, albeit with a lower play value on a regular basis and then travel to the bigger and better ones once a week for example.</p>	<p>External funding can be explored but cannot be relied upon to cater for the refurbishment of those now being retained, the standard refurbishments nor the Tier upgrades etc. as it is uncertain when or if external funding will become available and it is a competitive process.</p>
	<p>There was brief discussion around the proposed Tier upgrades. Given that these were dependent on a smaller one closing and it is now being proposed not to close any where does that leave the upgrade approach. Kircubbin is getting a Tier upgrade at The Green/Shore and Parsonage Road is to be retained for example.</p>	<p>It was discussed that potentially those that were proposed for Tier upgrades could be considered, but that that would have another financial impact especially when taken into consideration that there will be no closures to offset the Teir upgrades.</p>
	<p>It was suggested that the Strategy focused on Tourism too much.</p>	
<p>Shall we continue with the consultation process in its current form? Most consultations have not been accepted.</p>	<p>It was put forward that if we don't close any play parks then the consultations won't be required.</p> <p>Consultations would only be needed where there is a proposed relocation and for the older children provision, to establish what type of facility and if applicable, which location is preferred.</p>	<p>Again, more wide ranging and longer term engagement could be facilitated with local communities by the Play Development Officer to engage more people than a one off consultation provides. Engaging with schools, where applicable the Town Advisory Groups and local community groups etc. Try to do this over different times to engage more people.</p>
	<p>It was also suggested that the consultation (in Kircubbin) potentially asked too many questions or the wrong questions and that some people got confused.</p>	<p>Where consultations are required, they would be limited to relocations (although there are no further relocations planned unless the existing site won't accommodate a more modern play park in terms of space) and</p>

	The online voting process allowed people to vote multiple times, should be a mechanism to only allow one vote per address.	that in relation to the older children’s facilities offering facility options and potentially locations. Any online voting elements could be restricted to one vote per email/address.
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Members should be aware that prior to this issue arising in March, Officers had become cognisant that the current refurbishment budget of £500k that had been agreed as part of the adoption of the Play Strategy in 2021 (and associated Business Case) was no longer delivering the same number or standard of play parks due to the costs of inflation. The same would apply to the Maintenance Budget of £300k.

In 2022 the play park at Castle Park, Portaferry, was refurbished and costed just over £170k, to deliver the same play park today would cost an additional 39%, the same was true of Aurora, Bangor which was completed at the same time.

The separate, respective contractors repriced both at today’s rates and demonstrated similar inflationary costs. It was therefore envisaged that Officers would have been submitting a revised Business Case to cover the Refurbishment Budget for the next financial year in any case, to increase it to cover the costs of inflation and to ensure that the play parks the Council delivered were still at the previous Tier 1, 2 and 3 standards. The previous indicative costs as outlined in the Play Strategy for the various Tiers were as shown in Table 1 below and for the past number of years, the Council had been delivering play parks at the upper limit of each scale, as applicable.

Play Provision	Indicative Cost
Tier 0/Flagship play area	£200,000 - £250,000
Tier 1/Destination play area	£150,000 - £175,000
Tier 2/Local Facility play area	£100,000 - £120,000
Tier 3/Doorstep Facility play area	£50,000 - £60,000

Table 1. Indicative costs as outlined in 2021

At today’s prices (40% increase) the indicative costs would need to be revised to the following:

Play Provision	Indicative Cost
Tier 0/Flagship play area	£300,000
Tier 1/Destination play area	£245,000
Tier 2/Local Facility play area	£168,000
Tier 3/Doorstep Facility play area	£84,000

Table 2. Indicative costs taking into account of inflation in 2024

To that end, just to cover the inflationary costs, the Refurbishment Budget would need to be increased to £700,000 per annum. Similarly, the Maintenance Budget would also need to be increased to £420,000.

Even by increasing the annual refurbishment budget to £700k that would only allow for example:

- 2 x Tier 1 and 1x Tier 2 to be delivered per year
- 1x Tier 1 and 2x Tier 2 and 1x Tier 3 to be delivered per year

Business cases with options would be developed as part of the future budget setting consideration for play provision. It was anticipated that significant increases would be required in the refurbishment and maintenance budgets if the Council wished to continue with the implementation of the play strategy, while maintaining a policy of not removing any older facilities going forward.

Based on the agreed budget allocation the following projects could be delivered this financial year:

- Millisle Outdoor Gym. Replace in situ
- New Harbour Road play park, Portavogie. Replace in situ
- Londonderry Park. Replace in situ
- Ward Park. Relocate and replace.
- Complete upgrade and new MUGA at Kircubbin
- Tier Upgrade to the Green Kircubbin

Also given this year’s budget, the Council was unable to progress playpark development at Donaghadee or Groomsport as originally envisaged, nor replace the playground at Parsonage Road Kircubbin. Those would be reassessed for 2025/26 as would the application of priorities and use of consultation to deliver the current play strategy, along with associated business cases going forward.

RECOMMENDED that the Council, based on the outcome of the Workshop, agree that this financial year, within the confines of the already approved 2024/2025 budgets:

- To deliver the 6 projects as listed above,
- Not to close any play parks at this time,
- That consultations and engagement will only occur where the relocation of a facility is proposed or to establish what type (and if applicable, what location) of new, older children facility is to be delivered, and

Also, agree that beyond 2024/25, Council will review the Play Strategy and will reconsider the approach to facilitate improvements, re-evaluating the refurbishment and maintenance budgets, subject to Business Case approval and the rate setting process.

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

Alderman Adair thanked the Head of Parks and Cemeteries for facilitating the Workshop where the issues around play provision could be discussed and commended the recommendation to Members. He was disappointed that some had taken to social media to criticise the workshop taking place and that it was not a secret but had proved very beneficial in shaping the report between officers and members alike now in front of them. He said that ratepayers had demonstrated that playparks were very important to them and felt that it was important that the Council listened to them, that play mattered, and it should be given investment rather than the suggestion of closures. He was mindful that the budget was not enough to provide 21st century facilities but stressed that playparks needed to be accessible to all children and he welcomed the progress that had been made to date. He praised the officer for having been able to source a limited amount of external funding.

Councillor Cochrane agreed that the Playpark Strategy Workshop had been useful to enable the Council to listen to the views of the Borough's residents who had spoken of speculation about closures in social media. He stressed the ongoing clear communication between the Council and the public in helping to allay fears.

Councillor Chambers had been pleased to read the report and echoed what had been said to reassure the public of the Council's future intentions. He asked about plans for Ward Park where it was suggested that the playpark would be moved from its existing location to another part of the park which was prone to flooding and asked what the intentions were to circumnavigate that. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries informed him that work was being done to alleviate the negative issues there and remedial work would be carried out and the Council did not envisage future problems. There was a proposal to put a Dementia Friendly Garden in the area where the existing playpark had been.

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

7. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2024-2025

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Food Service Plan had been produced as a requirement of the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls. All Local Authorities were required to provide a plan of the Council's Food Control function for the Borough and review on an annual basis.

The Plan was attached for Council approval and a year-end update would be provided to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the attached Food Service Plan for 2024/2025.

Proposed by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Kendall that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Martin was encouraged that the vast majority of the Borough's food premises were either good or very good and that was pleasing to hear. Councillor Kendall shared that view and praised the work of the amazing food and drink establishments in the Borough and the environmental health teams.

The Chair said that he spoke from his almost 40 years working in the food industry locally and found the Environmental Health Officers willing to assist and give advice and if that was taken and applied, he felt businesses would be on a straight path. He congratulated the team on the level of expertise they provided.

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

8. BEACH OF DREAMS – BEAT CARNIVAL

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Beach of Dreams was a national outdoor and digital creative programme exploring and activating the UK's coastlines, across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, beginning in June 2024 and culminating in a UK wide walking arts festival to be held from 1 May to 1 June 2025.

As part of the festival activities, people would be invited to walk together along their own lengths of the UK coastline in a collective moment of reflection and action. It was an opportunity to be a part of a spectacular international movement, that re-imagined our relationship with the coast and inspired positive climate action. Belfast-based Beat Carnival, the Northern Ireland partner in Beach of Dreams, would deliver local activity including artistic commissions with communities. The art programme would engage local people in creation of new artworks in response to the coastal environment and climate emergency. A NI coastal finale, during the UK festival, was proposed to be at Millisle Beach on 17th May 2025.

Beach of Dreams has 9 UK Regional Partners –

- Activate, Dorset
- Bay of Colwyn Town Council, Wales
- Beat Carnival, Northern Ireland, prioritising the Ards Peninsula and County Down coast
- Estuary 25, Thames Estuary
- Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Scotland
- MSL Projects, Hastings
- Out There Arts, Great Yarmouth
- Stronger Shores, South Tyneside
- T100 Festival, Thurrock

Arts Council England had granted an award to Beach of Dreams as a 'nationally significant project'. Beat Carnival was managing a local creative arts commission through this award provision providing a core to the Northern Ireland programme that would enable further funds to be raised.

Project Purpose

- To explore together through combining walking, nature connection and creativity, how we could and would take care of the coastal environment, communities, and ourselves.
- To support health, wellbeing, and happiness.
- To build stronger connections between participants, communities and with nature.
- To celebrate lives along our coast: life and culture that existed because of the coast.
- To activate climate awareness for future generations through shared creativity, ideas, inspiration, pledges, and resources.

Beach of Dreams 2025 would be a partnership of arts, cultural, environmental, and community organisations across the UK and in local regions, which would bring artists together with communities to creatively understand coastal life, celebrate it and respond to challenges presented by the climate emergency. Stories and dreams would be gathered, community by community, shared on digital platforms with a global audience, showcased in artistic displays and portrayed on locally designed pennants and banners made and carried by the public to inspire and catalyse positive change.

Resources and Support

Engagement of local authorities and other relevant organisations would be essential to delivering a high-quality programme. The two relevant authorities for the County Down coastline area that Beat was prioritising were Ards and North Down Borough Council and Newry, Mourne & Down Council.

Outline of Activity

Beat Carnival proposed experiences, collaborations and skills building with coastal communities in a programme of arts workshops; environment, climate awareness and action sessions; local story gathering with individuals and communities including communities of interest such as fishing, Ulster Scots culture, boat building, and a

number of coastal artwork and performance events, culminating with a large-scale Beach of Dreams event with a public audience at Millisle in May 2025. Beat considered Millisle to have the required facilities of an attractive beach, public event infrastructure, a community hub, visitor accessibility and was appropriately located along the peninsula coastline.

The working title for the Millisle festival event was **Siren Song**. Coastal stories would inform artistic design for the final event creation and composition of a song performed by communities. Coastal walks and the final event would have carnival procession and atmosphere, with puppet making, fabric painting and the creation of a giant structure, a carnival-float-style mermaid centrepiece for the siren song performance. Complementary figures/characters/structures would be created in/visit /tour participating communities. Some would travel by sea to the Millisle event as well as by coastal land journeys.

Budget and Funding

Beat Carnival's budget target for the project, summer 2024 to summer 2025 was £100,000. £20,000 had been raised initially, which enabled the project to get underway. Beat Carnival wished to submit a project proposal to ANDBC with a request for community programme and event funding.

Outline of Activity

While the Ards Peninsula was the primary area of focus for NI's Beach of Dreams, Beat Carnival was talking with other areas on NI's coast, such as the north coast (Derry Playhouse) and Newcastle, Annalong, Kilkeel in the south. Significant organisations that had expressed interest and support included the National Trust NI; Friends of the Earth NI; Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful; Queens' University Belfast (Sustainability, Equality & Climate Action dept – active citizenship, democracy and green politics); Climate Craic Festival; and Marine Historic Environment Advisor |Marine & Fisheries | NI Gov. Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Beneficiaries

The activity will increase opportunities (in the short and long-term) for: people who did not currently get involved in creativity and culture, ie the general public, families and individuals of all ages from children to elderly, people who were only involved a little in creative and cultural activity, and people with occasional experience at local festivals and events programmes. The project would enable school groups and those involved with sports, walking, and maritime groups to access creative arts opportunities. It offered further opportunities to people who were already taking part in creative and cultural activity. Individuals and communities engaged in arts through a range of local providers, who participated with others in this new programme, would gain new skills, experience and social connections.

Creatively connecting with the coastline would enable all of us to understand it better, empowering people and their communities to take care of themselves, each other, and the local environment.

It was hoped there would be:

- 1,500 community participants
- 25 creative practitioners or artists

- 100 volunteers
- 5,000 in a live audience
- 10,000+ in an online audience.

Following the May 2025 Beach of Dreams Festival, artwork and digital documentation would tour UK venues.

Beat Carnival was Northern Ireland's Carnival arts company with 30 years' experience of managing that type of project with communities and artists.

Beat encouraged neighbourhoods and communities to think big about celebrating their creative community life in ways that were culturally inclusive, artistically ambitious and welcoming to all.

RECOMMENDED that the Council support the development of the Beach of Dreams project to culminate in a large-scale finale at Millisle Beach in May 2025.

An indicative budget of up £40,000 may be requested subject to approval of the draft programme of activity that will be brought to Council in October 2024. This will be sought through the estimates for 2025/26.

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

Alderman Adair was delighted to see the recommendation before the Committee and Millisle had a beautiful, award-winning beach which was the backdrop to the Borough's Kite Festival. Last year that festival had attracted over 4,000 people to the area, and he hoped that would be the first of many. One issue of concern however was disability access to the beach and he noted that the existing access had been damaged due to coastal erosion. That matter had already been raised with the Council and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and he strongly believed that there was an obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act to make the appropriate adjustments. He urged the Council to put pressure on the Environment Agency to be reasonable and he would like to see repairs in time for the Kite Festival in August.

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

9. ULSTER SCOTS ACTION PLAN RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council in December 2023:

“That this Council notes the importance of this Borough as the birthplace of the Ulster Scots community from 1606 onwards and the role of those settlers in the

development of the lands known as the Hamilton-Montgomery Estates which make up the majority of this Borough;

Notes the rich heritage of the Borough in relation to Ulster-Scots language and literature;

Notes that 19,685 people in the Borough registered a level of ability in the Ulster-Scots language in the most recent census, representing 12.4% of the population;

Notes the significant potential of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture as a catalyst for social and cultural development in the Borough;

Notes the thriving interest in the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture within the Borough;

Notes the Council's responsibility under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to take resolute action to promote Ulster-Scots;

Notes the recent recognition of the Ulster-Scots community as a National Minority of the United Kingdom under international law;

Notes the weakness of this Council's engagement with Ulster-Scots Language Week this year and in previous years;

And tasks officers to develop a budget to ensure and encourage participation in future Ulster Scots Language Weeks; and to develop an action plan, with advice from the Ulster-Scots Agency, to develop all aspects of the Borough's rich Ulster-Scots heritage”.

Officers from the Good Relations section and Arts and Heritage section together with officers from the Ulster Scots Agency had produced an Action plan attached for the 2024 -2025 financial year using the £10,000 budget agreed by Council.

Funding for provision in 2025-2026 would be included in the Community and Culture proposed budget as part of the rate setting process.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree the Action Plan for 2024-2025.

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

Proposing Councillor Ashe thought this was an interesting agenda and was an important cause to promote and she was encouraged by young people getting involved which would showcase the talent of the Borough.

Councillor Martin was pleased to welcome the report especially since the Borough had strong historic Ulster Scots roots.

Councillor Douglas remembered that the Notice of Motion had come from her colleagues Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy, and they looked forward to the initiative being progressed.

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

Reports for Noting

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 AND Q4 LEISURE SERVICES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every four years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for Leisure Services was attached.

Key points to note:

- The Leisure section returned an excellent performance against budget coming in over half a million pound below budget (£562,921 under our £1,931,000 target). A significant benefit for the ratepayer.
- Sport Capital and Forum grants continued to be well received and there was significantly more demand than available budget as the Borough's sporting success continued.

- Swimming lessons continued to grow and develop at both Aurora and ABMWLC Centres.
- Footfall was slightly below target, Serco reported that that was due to the two main pools in Bangor Aurora having reduced operating for significant periods over the last year due to floor failures.
- While there was a nil return on team briefings it should be noted that there were numerous team meetings throughout all levels of the service, leisure needed to find a way of capturing that data to report.
- Community Centres and Hall's (CCH) had seen a positive trend in usage, evidenced by significantly higher than expected total hours booked (32,242 against a target of 22,500) and footfall (144,415 against a target of 85,000), demonstrating an extremely successful first full year post Covid and the demand for those facilities across the Borough.

Key achievements:

- All four leisure centres had retained Quest.
- Swimming lessons continued to grow across both aqua sites, that was due to good water management by the aqua managers at both sites who had to work within limited timeframes for the lesson programmes.
- The move from a traditional Sports Directory Book to an online Directory had been justified with over 4,000 views.
- The Leisure section returned an excellent performance against budget coming in over half a million pound below budget (£562,921 under our £1,931,000 target). A significant benefit for the ratepayer.
- The CCH budget was also significantly beneficial for the ratepayer despite significant increases in staff costs due to the work done by the team on attracting additional bookings to facilities which already were being utilised and thereby reducing net cost per booking.

Emerging issues:

- Staffing continued to be a major problem for all sites with recruitment and retention issues leading to temporary closure of some facilities and suspension of activities. The strain of the situation was also causing significant issues for the wellbeing of the remaining staff.
- Whilst the Council had some relatively new leisure facilities a significant element of its leisure estate was well beyond 20 years of age and significant investment in refurbishment/new facilities would be needed over the next 10 years to ensure the service continued to operate at the levels expected. That included Comber and Hollywood leisure complexes and the artificial pitches across the Borough.
- Rising costs of goods and services would continue to have a significant impact on costs of providing services over the next couple of years.
- Memberships for over 50s were very popular and a significant user group across all sites.
- The Council would need to provide additional sport forum grants to continue to support the blossoming sporting success.

Action to be taken:

- Budget was approved to commence a three phased Transformation project within the CCH section, that would seek to secure the appropriate resources, inclusive of staffing structures, consultation work, and user engagement to meet CCH's budget management and operational aspirations.
- Further modernisation projects were planned to increase the online presence of CCH that included a significantly improved webpage, opportunities to engage with customers, and potentially online bookings.
- A period of stability was required within the leisure service to facilitate the staff transformation process and the wellbeing of leisure staff being prioritised.
- The cost per visitor to the Community halls (estimated at over £8 per visit) needed to be considered when compared to the cost per visitor to the leisure centres of less than £1 per visitor.
- The development of a leisure strategy would need to be prioritised to ensure the service was delivered based on the expectations of the key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the report.

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

Councillor Kendall asked if she could raise a matter in relation to staffing matters later in the meeting In Committee. Councillor Ashe also wished to raise a matter in confidence later in the meeting.

AGREED to RECOMMEND on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted and AGREED that a matter arising from the report be discussed in committee.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 AND Q4 PARKS AND CEMETERIES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

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

The report for Parks & Cemeteries was attached.

Key achievements and points to note:

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan Agreed at Council
- Design team for the Ward Park Project
- Volunteer programme in Bangor Castle Walled Garden has attracted many members.
- Green Flag Awards retained for Castle Park, Londonderry Park, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Linear Park and Ballymenoch Park.
- Cemetery Post Box Scheme in place at Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries.
- Floodgates Park Business Plan progressing towards planning.
- Rewilding scheme plans for a further 120,000sqm.
- Schools Growing Club - six schools selected in Year One i.e.: Towerview Primary (Bangor), Andrews Memorial Primary, (Comber), Loughries Primary (Newtownards), Holywood Primary School, St Patricks Primary (Portaferry) & St Marys Primary (Kircubbin).
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan New Year Roadshows took place.
- 18,000 plus trees planted this winter in multiple locations including Castle Park, Skipperstone Community Centre, Ballymenoch Park, Londonderry Park, Ballycran (Kircubbin).
- Planned programme of Winter Events including Tree Week and other **STAND4TREES** activities took place.
- New Orchard at Holywood Nature Park, Kircubbin Pavilion & Laurel Bank Lane (Comber).
- Staff Business Planning Day took place (1st December) with all staff involved in working on the Service Plan for 2024.

Action to be taken:

- Local Biodiversity Action’s being progressed for Summer Programme.
- New Parks & Cemeteries Machinery Replacement & Utilisation Strategy agreed and being implemented.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

Councillor Kendall welcomed the report and was pleased to read about the number of initiatives being undertaken in her own area.

Alderman Adair shared that view and commended the work of the Head of Parks and Cemeteries. He referred to the sports pitches on the Ards Peninsula and the annual sowing of those which was due to start in May but for the past three years there had been problems. He described crisis meetings in relation to the pitches and thought that it was paramount that the maintenance was timely. The local clubs in that area were united in their disappointment and thought that the position they had been placed in was unacceptable.

The Member understood that the issue straddled two different Council directorates which he felt should be examined but meanwhile the residents in the area paid the same rates as everyone else and they wanted to be treated in the same way. He asked the Head of Parks and Cemeteries when work on the ground was expected because he was concerned that the pitches would be unplayable during the summer league.

In response the officer explained that work was already ongoing and accepted that there had been a delay on the part of the contractor appointed. The contractor only played one part in the overall maintenance programme and the Council also carried out work. Generally, the pitches were well maintained and, in most cases, useable.

A capital programme had begun in Millisle as the first pitch being replaced and the Council had met with the local community and agreed the programme of work. The officer had put in a business case for the capital programme, and it would make a tangible difference over the coming years to provide the changes needed.

Alderman Adair disagreed with the state of the pitches and thought that the contractor should have been on the ground by the end of May and the community believed that the contractors were not doing a good job. Indeed, he reported that in Portavogie the pitch had deteriorated so much that play had to be cancelled. He added that the Council used to do well in maintenance because it started in May as it should, but the contractors seemed to offer little more than delays and excuses and he hoped that the Council could put in place a schedule to avert more crisis meetings ahead of the start of the summer league.

The officer hoped that the work would be completed next week and he reminded the Committee that the contractor had been changed after issues in previous years but there were a limited number of companies providing this work in Northern Ireland. He stated that an alternative course of action would be to buy machinery and do the work in house but that was an expensive option. Alderman Adair was in support of Council staff doing a better job and it was suggested that the equipment could potentially be hired by the Council. Alderman Adair thanked the officer and reminded everyone of the strong history of football on the Peninsula.

The Chair (Councillor Boyle) agreed with the Alderman's comments that the general consensus of the five clubs was that there was inadequate communication with the Council. The officer replied that there was a known dedicated officer for the football teams to use in Leisure Services with whom he believed they were in touch regularly and they were aware of that. A prompt service was always provided to the teams.

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

12. REWILDING INITIATIVE UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Parks and Cemeteries Service commenced with a Rewilding initiative in 2018. Following the successful launch of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), Parks were committed to implementing the actions stated within this plan, specifically "Creation of a council grassland management strategy." Creation of the strategy was underway, which would guide the Council's future work.

Rewilding required converting frequently mown amenity grasslands to managed grassland habitats that could support a much more diverse range of floral species, pollinators and insects and thus improving Biodiversity.

At present just over 90,000m² of grassland was being managed for rewilding. In addition to Biodiversity Net Gain, the Council's Rewilding initiative had climate change benefits such as reducing carbon emissions by using less fuel as a result of cutting less grass. It also improved workload planning by increasing the staff's capacity to work in other areas within parks and open spaces.

Rewilding was about the restoration of natural ecosystems to encourage an equilibrium between people and the rest of nature, where each could thrive. It was not solely focused on rural landscapes. The creation and maintenance of meadow grasslands was taking place in public open spaces across the UK and making a noticeable improvement to biodiversity.

The promotion of biodiversity was a statutory requirement under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Biodiversity was defined as the variety of life on earth. Moreover, it was the variety of flora and fauna and the functions that existed between them. Once such function was the interaction between the natural environment and recreational value of open spaces. As part of the Council's statutory obligations, it was pleased to launch the new Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The LBAP was a partnership effort to target actions for key habitats and species in Ards and North Down.

Development of the Plan raised awareness, understanding and a joint ownership of the challenges facing the Borough's wonderful and diverse environment. Highlighted throughout the plan was the need to effectively manage grassland to the benefit of the environment. The LBAP had been recently presented to communities across the Borough through a series of Roadshows, focussed on connecting residents with the action plan and encouraging participation in associated activities.

By improving the biodiversity and creating a place for wildlife to thrive the Council had opened opportunities for education by creating outdoor classrooms where schools and local members of the community could discover the natural world and develop an understanding of environmental issues through first-hand experience. Educational activities continued to be carried out in meadow grasslands including bug hunts, flower species identification, sketching flowers etc. The importance of those sites to the constituents and visitors to the area was shown through the positive feedback that was regularly received, which highlighted the positive impact the scheme had made to people's lives in addition to the obvious biodiversity benefit.

Current Sites

It was the intention that the current sites would still continue to be subject to the alternative management techniques outlined above with a view to encouraging an increased variety of species. The rewilding scheme included areas at the following Council owned sites:

- Ballystockard Open Space, Comber
- Cloughey Road, Portaferry
- Tullymalley, Portaferry
- Linear Park, Bangor
- Ballymenoch Park, Holywood
- Stricklands Glen/Connor Park, Bangor
- Seapark, Holywood
- Brompton Coastal Path, Bangor
- North Street, Greyabbey
- Bowtown Road, Newtownards
- Lands Adjacent (Parsonage Road) to Kircubbin Cemetery
- Demesne View, Portaferry
- Whitespots Country Park
- Glenlyon, Holywood
- Windmill Stump, Portaferry
- Whiterock Car Park

In addition to the ongoing maintenance, the schedules would be altered to take account of infrequent event use on certain sites. It was critical that the rewilding project worked in harmony with the overall use of parks and a balanced offering was available across the Parks portfolio. Events and community use would be catered for in the integrated grassland management of each chosen site.

It should be noted that those sites were in addition to areas transformed from closely mown grasslands into new tree plantations under the **STAND4TREES** initiative, which had seen in excess of 45,000 trees planted.

Rewilding Initiative Expansion

Parks and Cemeteries were committed to expansion of the rewilding initiative following successful implementation at the afore mentioned current sites. A further audit of grassland maintenance across the Borough was currently being undertaken

by Parks and Cemeteries officers and operational teams with the view to extend the Council's existing rewilding portfolio with a target total of 120,000m² of grassland being managed for rewilding. Officers secured funding through Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership for a bespoke piece of mowing equipment designed to provide a cut and lift across smaller areas of land. On that basis, it was possible to roll out the initiative across a range of new sites.

Proposed Additional Sites

Jacks Cut, Newtownards
5,000m²



Dalton Glade, Comber
2,000 m²



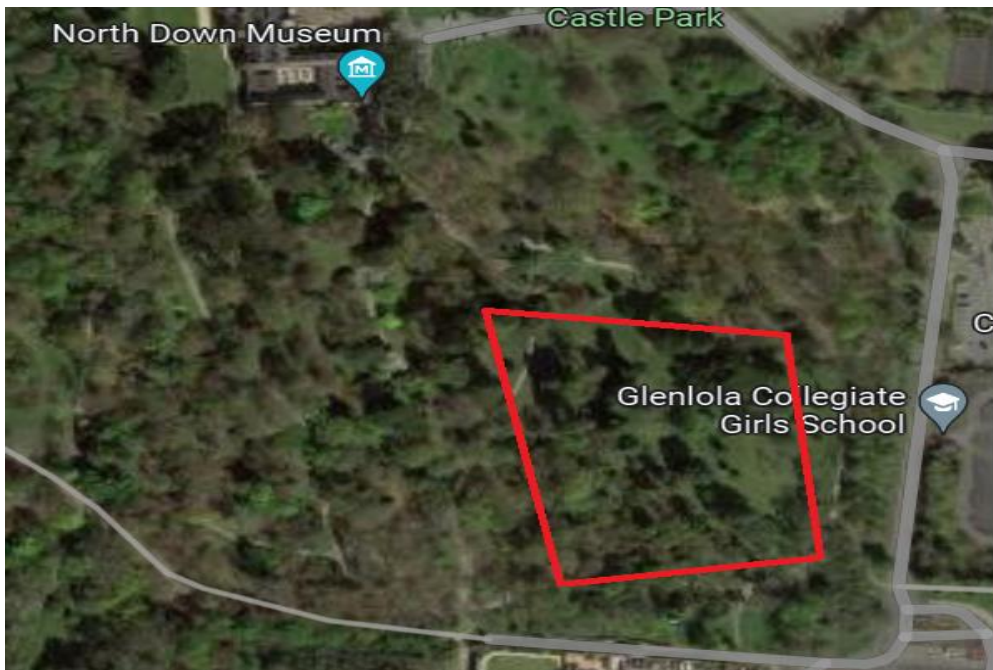
Linear Park, Bangor
1,100m²



Upper Crescent, Comber
6,600m²



Castle Park, Bangor
9,300m²



The Commons, Donaghadee
6,700m²



Dermott Gardens, Comber
2,100m²



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes and continues to support the ongoing development of the rewilding project as outlined within this report to enhance and promote biodiversity across the Borough.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Kendall thanked officers for the tangible work and she was pleased that the Council was prioritising biodiversity above the statutory requirement and hoped that would continue and spread further.

Councillor Chambers said that people often spoke of striking a balance and he thought that the right balance had been achieved. He asked about educational signage so that people would understand the Council's intention and avoid the criticism that areas were being neglected. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries added that some signage was in place at many of the sites but plans were underway to invest in more.

Councillor Cochrane agreed that signage was helpful and referred to the Friends Groups throughout these areas which worked to encourage the thriving biodiversity around the Borough. He mentioned Linear Park and if there was direct engagement with the residential area around that and if rewilding there could cause increased activity of rats. In response the Head of Parks and Cemeteries said that anyone could join a 'Friends of' group and take part in the activities within parks. Rewilding did not encourage rats as such since it was not a habitat for them and it would be more likely that field mice would live in rewilding areas. Where residents had concerns they could contact the environmental health section.

The Chair (Councillor Boyle) referred to a rewilding project close to Portaferry Football Club and asked how consultation took place in these areas. The officer replied that there were no hard and fast rules or boundaries for rewilding and adjustments could be made where necessary and that had always been the position.

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

13. LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the following report summarised progress made against the Council's Local Biodiversity Actions Plans (LBAP) that was agreed in 2023. The report also provided Members with an update on the Re-wilding Initiative.

Background

The provision of biodiversity was a statutory requirement under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 or WANE Act. The Act required public bodies to take reasonable steps to further the conservation of priority habitats and species or to promote such actions by others. The production and delivery of the LBAP would assist in demonstrating the Council's compliance with the statutory duty.

Under the WANE Act, the Council was responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity. Those were:

- Protection of Biodiversity
- Maintenance of Biodiversity
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Restoring Biodiversity
- Promoting Biodiversity

The Borough's second Biodiversity Action Plan was approved and adopted in April 2023 and had helped to coordinate efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity across the Borough. The development of the plan was an important step in recognising the importance of our local biodiversity. It aimed to ensure that international, national, regional and local biodiversity objectives were achieved through a range of partnerships.

A total of 84 actions were proposed across four themes in the LBAP, the actions listed were to help protect, conserve, and enhance those priority habitats and species within the Borough identified through the audit. LBAP actions were listed under one of the following 4 themes:

Theme 1: Education and Awareness – 28 actions in total

Theme 2: Research and Monitoring – 7 actions in total

Theme 3: Land Management – 33 actions in total

Theme 4: Building Partnerships – 16 actions in total

Progress during 2023

Theme 1. Education and Awareness

During 2023 a total of 4 actions were addressed under this theme, including:

Action: Support participation in national and international biodiversity awareness campaigns

Action: Encourage participation in citizen science wildlife projects and engage the public in biodiversity recording and awareness

Update: In summary, encouraging participation in citizen science wildlife projects and engaging the public in biodiversity recording and awareness could greatly enhance data collection, public education, community involvement, scientific research, and policy-making, all of which were crucial for effective biodiversity conservation.

International Dawn Chorus

Dawn Chorus Event at Cairn Wood

7th May 2023

Taking place on the first Sunday of May, International Dawn Chorus Day was the worldwide celebration of nature's greatest festival of birdsong at dawn. One of the

key reasons for the popularity of International Dawn Chorus Day was the opportunity it provided for citizen science.

The event was led by expert guide David Thompson and was a wonderful success. Participants were taken on a slow hike through Cairn Wood stopping occasionally to listen and identify the birds of the woodland. A total of 16 species were identified on the morning of the event. Those recordings were passed onto the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), which helped to gather and record information about local wildlife and habitats in Northern Ireland.

The event was a wonderful opportunity for participants to experience the serene and inspiring sounds of nature, helping to foster a deeper connection and appreciation of the environment as well as highlighting the need to protect bird habitats and biodiversity.

National Insect Week

Moth Identification Event Ballyphilip Playing Fields, Cloughey Road, Portaferry 17th June 2023

Insect Week (19th – 25th June) was organised every two years by the *Royal Entomological Society* and was supported by several partner organisations across the UK and Europe. It encouraged people of all ages to learn more about insects and raised awareness of their essential role as pollinators aiming to raise awareness about their importance in the ecosystem and to encourage interest in entomology.

The event was led by expert guide Ross McIlwrath and was a wonderful success. Ross was able to provide the participants with some interesting background ecology of moths and their habitats. A total of 42 species were caught and identified at this rewilding site. The large number of moths trapped was a positive indication of the grassland management changes made by Parks under the rewilding initiative. Moth recordings were passed onto CEDaR, the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording.

Mini-Beast Hunt, Castle Park, Bangor 24th June 2023

This was a wonderful family friendly event with over 40 children attending on the day. Participants were taken on a trail of diverse habitats around Castle Park where they searched for and were able to observe small invertebrates in their natural habitats. The event gave families the opportunity to get up close to nature and hands on with wildlife. Using equipment and resources provided, children were able to use their observation skills to identify and record all the minibeasts they found during the event.

Minibeast hunts were not only fun but also fostered a deeper appreciation for nature and its tiny inhabitants. Those events also provided educational and engaging ways to learn about ecology, biology, and the diversity of life.

Wildflower Identification Event, Greyabbey Rewilding Open Space
1st July 2023

This event took place at the Greyabbey rewilding site which had been managed under the Council's rewilding initiative since 2021. The event focused on the rationale behind rewilding, identifying and learning about local wildflowers and the essential role they played in the survival of our pollinators. Participants also had the opportunity to try some cyanotype photography and botanical drawing which all helped to develop their wildflower identification skills.

Rewilding amenity sites could create vibrant, biodiverse environments that benefited both people and nature. By shifting the focus from traditional landscaping to ecosystem restoration, the Council could foster healthier, more resilient communities.

Wild Days Out

Castle Park

31st July – 4th August 2023

To promote local biodiversity the Council held Biodiversity public engagement events over five days at Castle Park in Bangor. The events were designed to coincide with Love Parks Week. All five daily events were aimed at families with children under 14. The events were fun and entertaining with five different biodiversity themes including bug hunts, wildlife survival skills, bird care and identification and a celebration of the Park's wonderful trees.

International Bat Night

Bat Walk & Talk Event, Castle Park, Bangor

25th August 2023

International Bat Night was observed on the last full weekend of August every year. It was an opportunity to raise awareness about bats and their ecological significance in relation to pollination and pest control. The event was led by conservationist Caroline Finlay from Conservation Detection Dogs NI (CDDNI) who was joined by Rufus, a springer spaniel employee. Participants had the opportunity to learn about CDDNI's important conservation work, the threats bats faced, as well as having the opportunity to use bat detectors to identify local bat species within Castle Park. There was huge interest in the event which reached full capacity very quickly.

International Bat Night offered a unique opportunity for communities to come together to celebrate and protect bats, contributing to the overall effort to preserve biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

Action: Promote 'Gardening for Wildlife' and support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

Update: Promoting and supporting Gardening for Wildlife and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan had been met through a variety of Park initiatives and projects including the rewilding initiative, **STAND4TREES** initiative, sustainable planting, 'in

bloom' community competitions and Pesticide and the Pesticide and Herbicide Reduction Policy.

Action: Publicize the BAP within the council and beyond through existing information centres and museums (e.g. Bangor Library)

Update: The LBAP Roadshow consisted of 7 events, the initial launch event and a further 6 presentation evenings across the borough shown below.

LOCATION	DATE	TIME	TOWN/VILLAGES
Signal Business Centre	29/11/2023	13:00	Elected members, Local NGOS, Staff, Towerview PS
Donaghadee Community Centre	11/01/2024	7PM-8PM	Groomspart/Six road ends/Millisle
West Winds Community Centre	17/01/2024	7PM-8PM	Newtownards/Conlig
Marquis Hall, Bangor	25/01/2024	7PM-8PM	Helens Bay/Crawfordsburn/Hollywood
Carrowdore Community	31/01/2023	7PM-8PM	Ballywalter/Greyabbey/Kircubbin
Comber Leisure Centre	07/02/2024	7PM-8PM	Ballygowan/Lisbane/Killinchy
Portaferry Community Centre	14/02/2024	7-8PM	Ballyhalbert/Portavogie/Cloughey

The launch event was well attended with over 30 present including Elected Members, representatives from NGOS, local conservation groups and staff. A presentation was delivered on the LBAP outlining the benefits and importance of the document to the Council and residents. The following events shown above across the Borough were open to all to attend and advertised on Facebook, via direct invitation to community groups in parks and through Community Development.

The roadshows had an average of 14 people attend, mostly residents representing local community groups. The roadshows were aimed at those groups, and the presentation delivered in a way that showcased the usability of the document as a tool for groups to get ideas for events and contributions that they could make. Since the delivery of the roadshow, local community groups such as Helens Bay and Crawfordsburn Residents' Association had delivered their own session on local biodiversity.

Theme 3. Land Management

During 2023 a total of 10 actions were addressed under this theme, including:

Action: Secure funding to commission a feasibility study to explore the options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen.

Update: Parks and Cemeteries Service commissioned feasibility studies as described above. The Council was now in receipt of a report demonstrating options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen. Those reports would guide further actions on both sites.

Action: Restore or plant new native species-rich hedgerows for biodiversity with emphasis on connecting woodlands and other habitats. These hedgerows should act as demonstration sites for good practice hedgerow management.

Update: The Council had an annual tree/hedgerow-planting programme which saw many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted over each Autumn/Winter season. For example, our **STAND4TREES** initiative aimed to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that was approximately 160,000 trees. Through planting season 2023-2024 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planted in the Borough. To date, the Council had planted over 45,000 new trees which had seen the creation of new woodland, orchards and hedgerows, the yearly breakdown was:

- 2021/22 – 12,435
- 2022/23 – 15,223
- 2023/24 – 18,269

Action: Continue to manage and monitor lowland meadows under the council rewilding initiative and increase the extent of species-rich wildflower meadow habitat by creating new meadows and expanding the area of existing meadows, in both urban and rural locations. Opportunities to connect to other habitats should be identified and prioritised.

Update: The Council's rewilding portfolio had increased to a total 90,000m². New areas added included former Conacre sites at Kircubbin and Bowtown Road. In addition the creation of new wildflower meadows took place at two locations along the coastal path in 2023. The seed was harvested from Crawfordsburn Country Park less than 2km from the new sites. Both wildflower meadows were situated along one of Buglife's B-lines. By creating a wildflower meadow at those sites, the Council was helping to meet the vision of the project. B-Lines were an innovative solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators.

Action: Actively pursue the use of local provenance seed (tree and wildflower) and hold workshops on seed harvesting, collection, storage and growing. Including the establishment of local / community tree nurseries.

Update: Engaging local people could take many forms with events and local community planting schemes being an essential mechanism to ensure wide community buy-in for the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy which included the **STAND4TREES** initiative. One other aspect of community engagement Council officers had been developing was a network of Community Tree Nurseries and Community Seed Gathering Projects. The new initiative was called Seed2Leaf. Community tree nurseries allowed the local community to come together and gather

local tree seeds, plant them and care for them to become young trees. Trees were important and the act of growing a tree could help create a link to nature for many people. It was also something that anyone, anywhere could get involved in. Each year Council officers developed an application pack which was circulated to the local community. Groups were encouraged to apply for funding to help develop their new community tree nursery. For the 23/24 season, two community groups would have Council support for developing their own Community Tree Nursery.

Action: Ensure all built structures and mature trees on council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of bats prior to any works (even minor works such as limb / ivy removal) occur.

Update: It was the responsibility of Council approved tree surgeons to scope for bats before any work was carried out on trees. The Council may only actively remove ivy from trees to further a tree survey. Heavy forming Ivy could at times hinder a tree survey by covering potentially damaging fungi which could weaken the structure of the tree.

Action: Creation of a council grassland management strategy.

Update: A draft version of a new grassland management strategy has been developed by officers in conjunction with staff through a dedicated Task and Finish Group. That strategy aimed to deliver a sustainable grassland management policy, empowering the Council to increase local biodiversity through the recovery of natural habitats, whilst reducing the impact on resources.

The strategy aimed to:

- improve Biodiversity across the Borough in line with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- contribute to Councils Net Zero targets on carbon emissions by reducing the amount of fuel used and provided grasslands that were sequestering and storing more carbon.
- increase efficiency throughout Parks and Cemeteries Service Operations.
- increase community participation and engagement with the local environment.

A full version of the grassland management strategy would be reported to Members when complete.

Action: Investigate with our partners the feasibility of providing wild bird cover for farmland birds

Update: A habitat management plan was produced for Bowtown Road rewilding site. Council officers were investigating the suitability of the site for providing wild bird cover for priority farmland bird species.

Action: Reduce, replace and where possible eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers on council land

Update: Following agreement on a Herbicide Reduction Policy, a Task and Finish Group had been established among staff to focus on the creation of herbicide free sites, evaluating them in terms of control success and also public perception. Each site had differing levels of success. Kiltonga experienced no negative impact and indeed benefited greatly from the approach. In the case of Hunts Park, the ageing infrastructure reduced the effectiveness of the alternative methods. That was being reviewed and a project for path refurbishment and repurposing would be implemented through this financial year. That would enable a more sustainable herbicide free approach to the site.

The Task and Finish Group identified a number of key areas for the further reduction in the use of herbicide. Those included:

- The cessation of treating kerb lines and mature tree bases as appropriate.
- Allowing boundary edges to naturalise.
- Increased used of weed suppressant mulching
- Localised herbicide free zones within selected areas.

Overall, the above measures had led to a 30% reduction in chemical weed control since 2021.

Going forward and to reduce the use of herbicide further, the following techniques were being explored and trialled:

- Additional mechanical sweeping equipment deployed across the teams.
- Non-Herbicide based products trialled for use on hard surfaces.
- Exploration of Electrical Weed Control – eWeeding

It was important to note that this Policy Statement would not apply to the management of Invasive Species, sports pitches, fine turf areas such as bowling greens, where chemical control was the most appropriate control option currently available. Invasive species weed control was being carried out by In house teams.

Action: Ensure a collection of diverse tree colonies through the planting of native trees across the Borough with the creation of an equitable canopy map.

Update: In general, trees planted would be native species such as oak, elder, hazel, hawthorn and birch, in line with the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan, unless there was a specific ornamental scheme which required cultivated species. An example of that was Castle Park (Bangor) and Ballymenoch Park (Holywood) which were regarded as historic tree arboretums and would require rare and unusual trees as replacements. That was intended to ensure that there was a diverse collection of tree colonies across the Borough.

Over the past year, Council officers had been developing a new interactive tree map which was available for public view via the council website. The Ards and North Down Borough Council's new tree map reflected a progressive commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement. That initiative aimed to catalogue and display the diverse array of trees within Ards and North Down's Borough Woodlands, Parks, and urban areas, promoting awareness of the region's rich biodiversity. The tree map served as an interactive tool, allowing residents to explore and learn about individual tree species. The map contributed to a sense of

community involvement, as residents could actively participate by reporting tree-related issues or suggesting potential locations for new tree plantings. The technology helped create a user-friendly and accessible tree map and demonstrated a forward-thinking approach to environmental conservation and community engagement, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility among residents for their local green spaces. The map would also allow residents to view upcoming scheduled tree works.

Action: Develop an ambitious planting plan starting with the planting of 160,000 native trees across the Borough with further increased planting to contribute to regional and national targets

Update: **STAND4TREES** initiative aimed to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that was approximately 160,000 trees. Through planting season 2023-2024 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planted in the Borough. To date, the Council has planted over 45,000 new trees.

Theme 4. Building Partnerships

During 2023 a total of 3 actions were addressed under this theme, including:

Action: Promote biodiversity objectives in the management of golf courses and encourage all golf courses in the Borough to secure the GEO certified label.

Update: A presentation was delivered to Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn Residents Association in 2024. Taking place at Helen's Bay Golf Club the presentation promoted ANDBC'S LBAP with particular focus on the opportunity Golf Clubs had in playing a role in nature conservation, how they could maximise biodiversity on their courses and the benefits that biodiversity could have on the clubs and their members. Case studies of Golf Courses recognised for their positive changes for biodiversity in NI was also discussed.

Action: Work in partnership with bodies, NGO's and local groups to support the conservation of the red squirrel and pine marten and identify road mortality black spots where warning signs can be erected.

Update: Council officers engaged closely with the North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Group (NDRSPMG) which received ongoing support from ANDBC in relation to the control of grey squirrels on council owned land.

Action: Improve the value of urban green spaces for biodiversity by setting up 'Friends of' Groups at selected sites

Update: As the Council continued to work towards promoting biodiversity in local parks, engagement efforts were yielding some positive results. The Council's LBAP roadshow had been a success, traveling to various locations and providing residents with information on how they could make a positive impact on the environment. Which led to groups such as Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn, who had hosted their own biodiversity meeting to discuss how they could contribute to conservation efforts on a local level using other groups from Donaghadee to input along with Parks staff.

Those meetings had not only provided valuable insights but also fostered a sense of community and ownership among residents.

The Council was also excited to announce that its partnership with local In Bloom groups was promoting more sustainable practices and promoting better biodiversity, such as the adoption of perennial planting schemes, which would provide a vital source of food and shelter for local wildlife rather than traditional bedding schemes. Additionally, a new "Friends of Hunts Park" group which was operating under Donaghadee Community Development Association, which would focus on protecting and enhancing the park's natural habitats. The group had already carried out planting of 400 native trees and the establishment of a new community orchard in the area, which would not only enhance biodiversity but also provide a beautiful green space for residents to enjoy.

Other efforts to introduce a new friends of group in Linear Park were underway, with regular events and engagement with residents to bring them along the journey of making positive changes within Linear Park to better help them and biodiversity within the park such as the possible introduction of a Community Orchard in 2025 and new rewilding sites. The group had already taken part in clearing self-seeded phormiums within native tree clumps in the park.

As the summer season approached, the Council would see a full schedule of events for residents to get involved in and sign up to help volunteer across parks leading to the creation of more Friends of Groups across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the progress of the Local Biodiversity Action plan and continues to support future projects and initiatives.

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

14. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 AND Q4 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1&2	April – September	December
Quarter 3&4	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 3 and 4 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Staff absence rates had been challenging with a number of staff on long term sick and maternity leave. The Council had been unable to fill some of those temporary vacancies and that had led to targets missed in health and safety inspections and licensing.
- The underspend position for year end was again due to vacant posts and the withdrawal of affordable warmth mid-year.
- The tascomi business case appeared on the dashboard as not progressed however that was not a true reflection of the status. The leadership of the project had been taken over by IT on a collaborative basis for a Council upgrade including other regulatory services.
- The Q4 target for PTO inspections was not met as during the period officers worked to complete property inspections that were delayed as a result of Covid lockdowns. That backlog had now been cleared and should not impact future achievement of targets. The Council was confident that the property inspection service had now recovered to pre-Covid levels of performance and that would be indicated positively on future reports.

Key achievements:

- The Service had generally performed well against the KPI’s for Q4
- The target for PTO inspections was not met in the previous year and that backlog had now been cleared.
- Similarly significant progress had been made on clearing the backlog of food inspection and that should be completely cleared in this financial year.
- Development of a four-year Age Friendly Strategy

Emerging issues:

- The businesses plan for 2024/25 listed a number of emerging areas presenting challenges for the service including the Windsor framework, a new food delivery model, transfer of landlord registration to local government, new legislation, blue green algae and increasing use of vapes.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to progress with recruitment of EHO’s and technical staff.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

Alderman Adair commended the work of the Environmental Health section and said that it always seemed to be able to solve the issues that many other government agencies were not able to, and he asked for his appreciation to be passed on to the team for their professionalism.

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

15. PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 AND Q4 COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for October 2023 – March 2024 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Significant budget reduction (47%) in the Letter of Offer from The Executive Office to provide for delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan.
- PEACEPLUS Plan – significant additional work required in relation to theme 1 -capital projects.
- Four key positions in the department vacant due to delay in recruitment, retirement and long-term sick leave.
- The Community Development team and the Externally Funded programmes team were relocated from South Street offices to smaller premises in the Signal Centre, Bangor.

Key achievements:

- PCSP Action Plan 2023 – 2024 delivered.
- Good Relations – Cultural Expressions programme and Shared Voices programme delivered.
- Asylum seekers and refugees programme delivered in Partnership with North Down YMCA.
- PEACEPLUS Plan nearing completion.
- Community Safety Officers increased working in partnership with PSNI Neighbourhood Officers to tackle community safety issues around the Borough.
- Provision of Summer schemes and Council clubs despite staffing issues.

Emerging issues:

- Cultural Expressions agreement was outdated and would require updating in the near future.
- Multiply Officer post to be implemented in the near future as funding had been granted until March 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

16. GOOD RELATIONS ANNUAL REPORT (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that attached was the Good Relations Annual Report for 2023-2024 outlining the work of the section in delivering the Good Relations Action Plan for 2023-2024.

The Good Relations Strategy (2022-2025) informed an annual action plan, which was submitted to The Executive Office for assessment. The Action Plan was based on the four key themes of the Executive's Strategy Together Building United Communities:

- Children and Young People
- Shared community
- Safe Community
- Cultural Expression

The Good Relations section is normally externally funded 75% from the Executive Office and 25% by Council. In 2023-2024 the budget allocated from The Executive Office was reduced to 53% to £90,128.36 making the total Good Relations budget available for 2023-2024 to £120,171.15. The significant reduction in funding had a detrimental effect on the delivery of all programmes in the Action Plan.

The Good Relations section worked closely with PCSP, PEACE and Community Development sections to avoid duplication and ensure a cohesive delivery of programmes to the community.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the Good Relations Annual Report for 2023-2024.

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

17. MAE MURRAY GROOMSPORT BEACH 2024-2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council continued to work in partnership with The Mae Murray Foundation and the Inclusive Beach initiative based at Groomsport. That was the third year operating during the summer to provide a specialised equipment hire scheme.

The initiative was created to bring a change so that people of restricted mobility were no longer excluded from using the beach. Groomsport beach was the first inclusive beach in the Ards and North Down area.

The season would begin Saturday 15th June and run to Sunday 15th September 2024 inclusive, operating from 10.00 – 16.00 every Saturday and Sunday (subject to staff availability).

Advertisement of the Groomsport Inclusive Beach would be released via ANDBC website, social media platforms including Facebook, with Community Development run additional needs club (The Hub) and shared via the Community Development Database. Further posts would be shared throughout the season to raise awareness.

Groomsport Inclusive Beach operated via an online booking system but also welcomed “drop ins”. The mobility equipment such as beach chairs and walking aids assisted participation on sand and sea, whilst hoist, shower, seating and changing bench options facilitated a wide range of personal care needs provided within a “changing places” area funded by Sports NI.

In addition to offering beach equipment for individual loan, Groomsport Inclusive Beach would be hosting 5 family fun day events and activities this year, delivered by Mae Murray Foundation team and Ards and North Down Brough Council. That would include a range of experiences and activities for everyone to enjoy such as visit from Lamas and puppet show. Further details of all events would be available on the Council website.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cochrane was happy to welcome the report and referred to disability access to the beach at Groomsport and how the Council worked with DAERA. Work was ongoing although the Council was aware of problems with excessive seaweed last year. The Head of Community and Culture said that had been dealt with last year, and at the launch this year there was no issue with access caused by seaweed. Staff worked hard to keep that clear.

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

18. COUNCIL GRANTS POLICY UPDATE RESPONSE TO NOM WORKING GROUP

(Appendices XII & XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a meeting of the Elected Member Community Development Grants Working Group was held on 16th May 2024 and the minutes of the meeting were attached for information together with copy of presentation given at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the minutes.

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

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

19. ARTS AND HERITAGE PANEL (A&HP) MINUTES

(Appendix XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a meeting of the Arts and Heritage Panel was held on 15 April 2024 in Signal Centre, Bangor. The minutes were attached.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the minutes.

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

20. NOTICE OF MOTION

20.1 Notice of Motion submitted by 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.

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

Councillor Cochrane began by saying that he had brought his Notice of Motion following concern from local residents about the closure of Groomsport Tennis Courts. He and Councillor Thompson decided to bring the Motion in respect of the condition and maintenance of all tennis courts throughout the Borough.

Residents in Groomsport had expressed their frustration about the closure of the much-used facilities in their village. It was welcomed, however, to see that work had recently been completed and he looked forward to the improved courts opening soon. He said the maintenance carried out had been a long time coming and he and his Party colleagues had been calling for the playing surface to be repaired since last year.

He believed sport had such a positive influence within communities. Tennis was particularly popular and was enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds which was why he believed that courts needed to be properly maintained and fully accessible to all.

His Motion called on Council officers to monitor and report back to this Committee on the condition of tennis courts throughout the Borough outlining any issues discovered during inspections and informing Members of any closures that may be required to carry out maintenance works. He would like to see defects and issues with the playing surface to be fixed as soon as possible to avoid a prolonged period of closure for courts maintenance. He also would appreciate if officers could advise where there were timescales for tennis court upgrades. He was aware that Donaghadee Tennis Club and others had also been waiting for an upgrade of the facilities there. He was also aware that Council staff had been engaging with local Clubs on the status of upgrades/works scheduled and called for regular communication between the Council and Clubs to continue.

Further to that, he called for the Council to carry out a promotional campaign to encourage the use of its tennis courts throughout the Borough on its social media platforms and website outlining the locations and terms/conditions for the usage of

each court. During the summer interest in playing tennis peaked so he hoped that the Council could capitalise on that interest and encourage individuals to get active and socialise through this wonderful sport.

He asked that officers ensured all courts were also fully wheelchair accessible and that as part of the promotional campaign wheelchair tennis was promoted. That would help people with disabilities feel more included and encourage them to get active and enjoy the benefits of exercise.

Ultimately, he believed the Council owed it to its residents and ratepayers to provide a high standard for leisure provision throughout the Borough including tennis courts which was why he had brought his Motion and to ensure that the facilities were maintained and accessible. He asked the Committee to support his Motion.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Thompson did not think there was much to add and he was pleased that repairs had been carried out at Groomsport but he looked at tennis provision as a health and wellbeing opportunity and a means to encourage tourism development.

Councillor Harbinson was happy to support the Motion and he welcomed opportunities to increase physical activity within the Borough. He asked about development of facilities at Ward Park, Bangor with Ulster Tennis and asked about the outcome of that. Officers agreed to come back to him on that.

Councillor Martin also supported the Motion and was glad to hear that the Groomsport tennis courts were back up and running and said that they were superb, particularly since they were free of cost and were a good way for families who simply wanted to have a fun game in the open air.

Alderman Adair commended his colleagues for bringing the Motion and remembered when the former Councils came together in 2015 there was talk of a tennis strategy. He thought that the tennis courts within his DEA, such as Greyabbey and Ballywalter could be improved. He added that if those were lit the sport could be extended into the winter months.

Councillor Chambers supported the Motion referring to a request he had made a number of years ago and believed that it was good to keep monitoring sports facilities.

In closing Councillor Cochrane thanked Members for their support and looked forward to a report in due course.

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

20.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor Morgan

That this Council recognises the importance of ensuring that our parks and open spaces are inclusive and accessible to those with speech, language, and communication needs and that it recognises the positive role of communication

boards in achieving this. That it commits to working with relevant organisations to bring back a report regarding communication boards considering, but not limited to, the following points:

- How communication boards would integrate with the required existing signage;
- Identifying possible locations for the communication boards, such as a specific Tier of park; and
- An indicative budget.

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

Councillor Ashe explained that she had brought her Motion in response to being contacted by a speech and language therapist in her DEA who had been disappointed that there was no provision within playparks locally for those with speech and language difficulties. It had been established that play was essential to the cognitive, physical and emotional development of children and a recent report had shown that Northern Ireland was seriously lagging behind other parts of the United Kingdom when it came to early years communication. She called for support by the Council to see what could be achieved within the Borough's playparks.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Harbinson thought that any additional help to children was important to ensure that they could have the best possible start in life.

Councillor Adair gave his support and said that every child mattered and it was important to ensure that playparks could be used by all children and he commended the Members for bringing it to the attention of the Council.

Councillor Martin was aware of the figures expressed by Councillor Ashe and regretted that Northern Ireland was falling behind other regions and he hoped that this would provide an opportunity to make the playparks more accessible to all children.

Councillor Ashe thanked Members for their expressions of support and gave particular thanks to the Head of Parks and Cemeteries who had been enthusiastic of her suggestion to him.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

21. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

Before the meeting went in to Committee the Chair advised Members that it had been agreed earlier in the meeting to discuss Item 27.

27. CEMETERY MAINTENANCE RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in September 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council.

“That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.”

A response to the Notice of Motion was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing meeting in December 2023 and Members requested a further detailed report to be presented on tangible options to improve the maintenance within Cemeteries.

Service Overview

The Parks and Cemeteries Service had responsibility for the maintenance and development of approximately 292 hectares of Parks and other open spaces including responsibility for burials in 12 active cemeteries and the maintenance of a total of 19 cemeteries. In the management of the 19 cemeteries spread across the Borough, the operational Parks and Cemeteries team carried out service activities regarding the burial process and overall cemetery grounds maintenance. That was currently delivered by a multidisciplinary skilled team who worked to a suite of Standard Operating Procedures.

Following several issues raised at some cemetery locations, the management of the cemeteries had been reviewed and several interventions put in place to avoid further issues.

The basis of the report was to detail current operational practices and highlight how those had been adapted to ensure continuous improvement and respond to the issues which had been raised and the impacts of changing climate patterns over recent seasons.

Burial Service

The burial service was dictated by the Burial Grounds Regulations 1992 (NI) and all service elements were carried out in line with the legislation. All gravedigging was carried out by skilled in-house teams. Working to the Standard Operating procedures, that element of the service includes the opening and subsequent closing of graves along with the interment service.

Given the more recent prevailing weather patterns and excessive levels of prolonged rainfall, there had been many challenges presented to the teams in protecting the ground during the gravedigging process. While the use of ground guards was deployed to protect the surrounding ground while digging and travel direction of machinery, it was invariably the case that there was some ground disturbance. Staff were acutely aware of the need to minimise those impacts and if damage was

caused, remedial repairs were carried out once the burial had taken place. In a further attempt to mitigate against ground damage, additional ground guards had been purchased to ensure there was enough to provide protection where higher burial numbers impacted on several sites at one time.

In addition to the ground conditions, the prevailing wet weather had impacted on the level of grave collapses across some of the cemetery sites. To further mitigate against that, additional shoring equipment had been sourced and deployed.

Grass Cutting Operations

The grass cutting element of the service comprised of several methods of cutting depending on the cemetery layout and configuration. Those methods ranged from the use of ride on equipment to pedestrian and handheld equipment. The schedules for grass cutting generally aligned to a weekly day cycle during the growing period and were dependent upon weather conditions, burial demand, and availability of staff.

The changing weather patterns had impacted on grass growth over the last number of years with milder winters extending the growing period significantly. Additionally, the wetter summer periods led to increased growth rates which put pressure on the cyclic nature of the cutting schedule.

To address those impacts, investments had been made in additional equipment and configuration of staffing. That included a capital investment of more than £50,000 this financial year. In addition, new technologies were being explored to assist in the operation.

A recent tender process had been completed to appoint external support for Parks and Cemeteries ground maintenance using contracted partners. While the use of the Council's own staff was the preferred option, the implementation of the contract would allow for an uplift in workload capacity through challenging periods, ensuring negative impacts on service provision were mitigated.

Infrastructure Developments

To improve the aesthetics of cemetery facilities, several initiatives had been put in place. The aim of those was to create efficiencies in the maintenance requirements while also improving the appearance of each site.

Those included:

- The installation of drainage solutions to avoid flooding.
- The increase in spacing within new sections and installing ground reinforcing pathways to reduce the impact of machinery on the grounds.
- The installation of additional width strip foundations to reduce the impact on headstones from grass clippings.
- The installation of formal bin storage locations.
- Resurfacing of access roads in Greyabbey and Comber.

The developments in the infrastructure would be further enhanced by improved housekeeping across sites by the cemetery teams.

Staffing Profiles

The Cemeteries management team was constantly reviewing staffing profiles to ensure the service could adapt to changing demands and pressures. Given the complex nature of the service, it was critical to have appropriate staffing resources in the right locations to address service needs. To ensure flexibility in the service, the cemetery teams were centralised at two key locations where they were dispatched to the relevant areas of work. To support that further and to ensure continuity of service, particularly regarding grass cutting, additional support was provided to the cemetery team by selected parks staff. That enabled a continued grounds maintenance service delivery when burial service was at its peak.

The Parks and Cemeteries Transformation project would further enhance the flexibility within the service to be more adaptive to changing service demands.

In addition to staffing, it was critical that the level of skill across the team be retained and developed. Following significant cuts in training budgets last year, officers had secured additional training budgets for 2024/25 to ensure continued staff development across the service.

Service Monitoring

Given the geographical nature of the Borough and the dispersal of sites, it had been identified that there was a greater level of monitoring required to support both the operational teams and the service as a whole. To that end, the Technical Supervisors had been allocated defined areas of responsibility with the remit to ensure a greater level of quality control was carried out across the service. In addition, the Green Flag Award criteria would be used as a national benchmark accreditation to quality open green space. While one cemetery was being put forward for Green Flag accreditation in 2024, the criteria would be applied consistently across the service.

There would be an adoption of a structured and efficient cemetery maintenance schedule to ensure cemeteries were maintained to the highest standard. That would involve the use of a detailed database for planning and tracking cemetery conditions. The information would be monitored daily by designated supervisors and overseen by the Bereavement Services Officer. Proper maintenance of cemeteries was vital to honour the memory of those interred and provide a serene environment for visitors. Currently, maintenance activities lacked systematic oversight, resulting in variable standards across different cemeteries. Implementing a structured maintenance schedule would ensure consistency and quality.

A comprehensive report would include detailed maintenance tasks, such as grass cutting, cleaning, and repair works. Each cemetery would be assigned specific maintenance tasks with clearly defined frequency for example daily, weekly, monthly. The Supervisors would use the maintenance spreadsheet to plan their daily activities and ensure all tasks were completed as scheduled, alongside monitoring cemetery

maintenance on a rotational basis daily, ensuring that each cemetery received the necessary attention. The Supervisors would conduct thorough inspections, focusing on certain areas such as pathways and grave sites and would document their findings and the completion of tasks in the spreadsheet, noting any issues or areas needing additional attention.

The Bereavement Services Officer would provide oversight to ensure the inspections and maintenance tasks were carried out effectively and would perform periodic audits, independently verifying the reports and conducting their own inspections. The Bereavement Services Officer would also be responsible for addressing any significant maintenance issues that arose and coordinating the response to those issues.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the contents of the report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair that the recommendation be adopted and that further the Council review in six months. That was seconded by Councillor Cochrane.

Alderman Adair put on record his thanks to the Head of Parks and Cemeteries for his work. He had asked for the item to be heard out of committee because he felt that it was a matter of public interest. He explained that he had brought a Notice of Motion last summer relating to the poor maintenance of cemeteries after having been contacted by upset relatives. When the Head of Parks and Cemeteries was appointed to his post it felt that someone was willing to listen to residents' concerns. He stressed that cemeteries were special resting places of loved ones and that the Council should do all it could to care for them and show respect and that would send a powerful message to residents. He hoped that he would never have to raise this matter in future.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that work undertaken had included improved drainage to address frequent flooding in some places and strips to protect headstones. The entrance to the Greyabbey cemetery had also been resurfaced. Regular cutting of grass was also being carried out.

Councillor Douglas also expressed her thanks to officers who had been happy to meet with some of her constituents and agreed that it was a concern for some residents.

In closing Alderman Adair stated that grief would affect everyone and he hoped that the action taken would bring comfort to many people.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council review in six months.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

22. AURORA POOL FLOORS SINGLE TENDER ACTION

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing recommending that Council use its Single Tender Action process to appoint a contractor for Aurora Pool Floors.

The Report recommended that Council agreed to the process.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

23. HOME SAFETY EQUIPMENT CONTRACT EXTENSION

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing detailing the contract extension for Home Safety equipment.

The Report recommended that Council extend the contract for one year.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

24. AWARD OF THE SOCIAL SUPERMARKET SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing detailing the service level agreement for the Social Supermarket.

The Report recommended that Council award the service level agreement in line with the process and continue to secure other providers for the remainder of the Borough.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

25. WORKS IN DEFAULT TO RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6a – EXEMPTION STATUTORY PROVISION

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing detailing carrying out works in default to abate a statutory nuisance.

The Report recommended that Council approve the process.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

26. NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEISURE TRUST Q4 2023-2024

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing NCLTs quarter 4 activity and performance.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

27. CEMETERY MAINTENANCE RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Heard out of committee

28. SOCIAL SUPERMARKET PILOT REVIEW

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 2. - Exemption: likely to reveal the identity of an individual

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing a review of the Social Supermarket Pilot.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

The recommendation was agreed.

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.26 pm.

Unclassified

253

ITEM 9.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 June 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	13 June 2024
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	Deputation Request - Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request has been received from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations which was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council accepts the request for a deputation from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and refers it to the next Council meeting or the appropriate Committee.



Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk, providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

Applicant Details

I/we apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

Name of person(s) making the deputation request:	Seamus Leheny – Chief Executive
Date of request:	11/06/24
If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:	Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:	Full Council

Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

NIFHA is the representative body for the twenty registered housing associations in Northern Ireland who manage more than 60,000 social homes. Our members are also responsible for the provision of new social and affordable homes as well as ancillary services such as the Supporting People programme that enables thousands of vulnerable people to live independently.

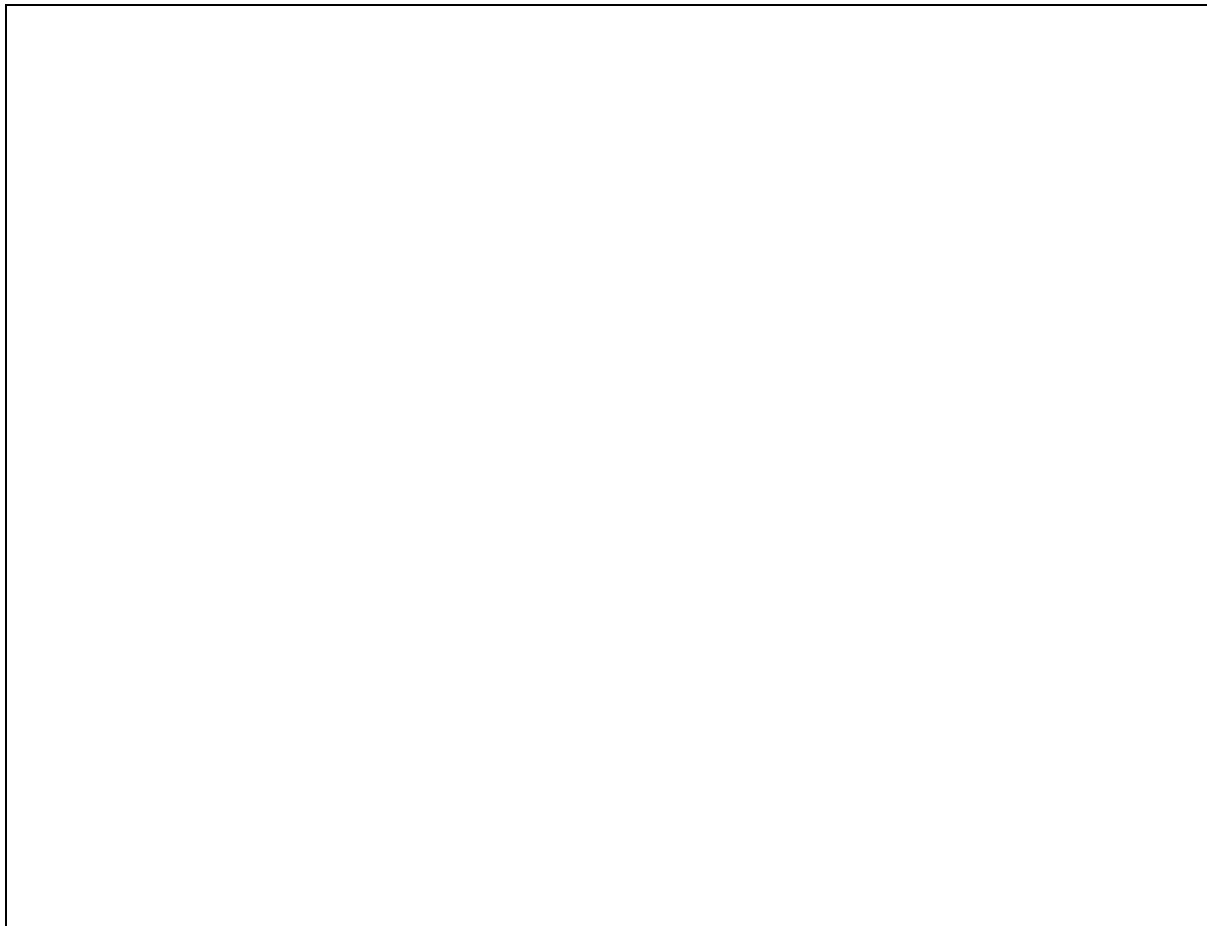
At present, there are a total number of 3,284 applicants on the housing waiting list within the Ards and North Down borough with 2,404 of those applicants deemed to be in housing stress (*Figures are as at 31/03/24 NIHE*).

The budget from the Department for Communities towards the Social Housing Development Fund has been drastically cut by 80% for financial year 2024/25 which means instead of delivering a planned 2,000 new starts this year, its likely the number will be below 400, this is bad news for those applicants on the waiting list and an issue that will be prevalent with all of your councillors in the months ahead.

In recent months along with one or two members (depending on number of speakers permitted), I have presented to nine of the local councils to date outlining the delivery of social housing in the area and challenges that face provision.

I have spoken to some councillors who sit on Ards and North Down borough council who would like to see us present to full council committee hence why I am writing to you to request that deputation.

I would appreciate if our request is considered and look forward to hearing from you in due course



Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024

12. Deputations

(1) Deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received seven working days notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Council.

(2) In the case of an emergency, deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received one working day's notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Mayor.

(3) The deputation shall be confined to the presentation of a statement, or copy of resolutions, and shall not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address shall not exceed 10 minutes followed by a maximum 15 minutes question and answer session.

(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn. Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

Privacy notice – how we will use information about you

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a Data Processor under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers when receiving and administering deputation requests.

You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing it falls within the following three categories:

- a) **Consent** - you consent to the information being processed for the specific purpose of the Council considering your deputation request;
- b) **Public task** - the processing is necessary in order for the Council to consider your request in line with its Standing Orders which were established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and
- c) **Legitimate interests** - the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests (or the legitimate interests of a third party) in order that Council may consider your deputation request.

The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

Your personal data will not be shared or disclosed to any other organisation without your consent, unless the law permits or places an obligation on the Council to do so.

Personal data is held and stored by the Council in a safe and secure manner and in compliance with Data Protection legislation and in line with the Council's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

If you have any queries regarding the processing of your personal data, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Email: dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 013 3333



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

259

29 May 2024

Our ref: C099/24

By Email: susie.mccullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

To Chief Executive: Susie McCullough

Dear Ms McCullough

Council at a recent Policy and Resources Committee meeting received a presentation from Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance (NIPSA) in relation to the pay and grading review of non teaching staff in the education sector.

Members agreed at the meeting that a request would be forwarded to encourage other councils to invite NIPSA to present on the matter which is impacting constituents throughout all districts.

I would ask that you bring this request to Council for consideration.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Dominic Molloy
Chair

Unclassified

260

ITEM 10.2**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 June 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	24 June 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Letter of Support from Council - CMAP
Attachments	Appendix 1 - draft letter of support

The Chief Executive received a request from Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) to write a letter of support to submit alongside a funding bid they are contributing to, led by Ulster University, under the Coastal and Marine Management investment area of PeacePlus by 1st July 2024.

GSNI is proposing to deliver a number of coastal monitoring pilots to get a better understanding of the geohazards at the coast and how they impact upon the economy, environment and society. The aim is that GSNI can develop a methodology to assess the vulnerability to coastal change for each of these locations and combine this with the projected impacts of climate change, so that they can be better managed in the future.

If successful, GSNI will be monitoring three sites including Kearney Co. Down, located at the end of the Ards Peninsula and within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. Each site represents a specific geological setting that GSNI are hoping to apply to other areas of the coast.

Not Applicable

261

Kirstin Lemon of GSNI delivered a deputation to the Place and Prosperity Committee in May 2024 and there was significant interest in the threats from coastal erosion especially in relation to planning. One of the aims of the work that GSNI will be doing is to produce spatial tools to support planning decisions in this area.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve the letter of support for the CMAP funding bid.

xx June 2024

Professor Jackson
Ulster University

Sent by email only to:

Dear Professor Jackson,

Peace Plus proposal - Coastal Monitoring and Adaptation Planning (CMAP)

I am writing on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council, to support the CMAP project proposal to be submitted as part of Peace Plus Investment Area 5.2 Marine and Coastal Management.

We understand that the project will work to better understand coastal change and its impact on both natural and human systems, as well as climate change impacts such as sea level rise, coastal erosion and flooding risk and threats to habitat and species. The project will allow for the development of suitable adaptation strategies which have never been more important in protecting one of our best environmental assets, our coastline. Council welcomes that CMAP recognises the fundamental need in gathering data on coastal environments and species and ultimately, the development of appropriate (and realistic) strategies and plans to help secure their future.

Two of the proposed study sites, Anne's Point and Kearney are located within the Ards and North Down Borough and we are keen to highlight our support for the work planned for these areas as well as in the wider project area. Council recognises that working together with local communities, CMAP will provide the opportunity to co-develop and implement coastal actions that, when combined with a science-based approach to monitoring, will feed into the development of toolkits and decision-making materials that will not only benefit the Ards and North Down Borough but the wider project area as a whole.

Ards and North Down Borough Council has a particular interest in CMAP as it contributes to a number of key work areas including in the delivery of aspects of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-2028. This is well demonstrated through the seven outcomes identified within the plan but particularly through Outcome 4: We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors. Council is supportive as the CMAP project encourages community participation that will help protect valuable natural and coastal assets so they can be sustainably used for recreation and climate adaptation. The



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

outputs of CMAP will also contribute to decision-making and produce tools to assist in well-considered and timely planning decisions.

I would like to reiterate the Council's support for the CMAP project and look forward to hearing how it develops and the sharing of outputs and best practice amongst all relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

DRAFT

Unclassified

264

ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance
Date of Report	12 June 2024
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	Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028
Attachments	Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028

Context

Council will be aware that significant work has been undertaken over the last 12 months to develop a new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, outlining the strategic direction of the organisation. This work has been progressed by an internal project team, with representation from across all Directorates, a workshop with Elected Members, staff workshops and feedback and a review of the 2023 Residents Survey.

Formal public consultation was undertaken in February and March 2024 and is now complete. This included 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.

The Corporate Plan has been updated (see attached) following this public consultation. The document is in Word version as this is required by multi-media/ graphics for publication purposes.

It is proposed that an easy read version of the document is produced which could also act as a summary document.

Not Applicable

265

The main changes to the document can be summarised as follows:

Commitments

We had previously referenced 17 'commitments' within the plan, which are essentially actions we plan to undertake. However, feedback indicated a lack of understanding that this was the case. As a result the word 'commitments' has been replaced with 'strategic actions'.

Outcomes

- Outcome 5 has been changed from 'We have socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming' to 'We have safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing'. Feedback suggested that socially sustainable was not understood and was not plain English so the wording has been simplified.
- Outcome 6 has been changed from 'We have active and healthy people' to 'We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy'. Feedback suggested that the original wording was a big ask of the Council and, while important, it was not clear what our responsibility might be.

Strategic Actions (formerly commitments)

Following feedback, a number of the strategic actions have been reworded for clarity.

- Strategic Action 2 – Developing and implementing a plan to transition Council operations towards our long-term net zero carbon targets.

This outcome now includes an additional measure of success in relation to tree planting, based on feedback and the need to reference biodiversity as part of transitioning to net-zero.

- Strategic Action 9 – Managing and promoting working with businesses and enhancing the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination. This used to say 'of choice' at the end.

Based on focus group feedback this outcome now includes an additional measure of success in relation to sustainable visitor numbers.

- Strategic Action 11 - Working in partnership with citizens to help develop and promote culture and diversity. Originally this was 'Working with citizens to help them embrace culture and diversity', feedback suggested that the original wording was condescending.
- Strategic Action 12 - Developing sustainable communities by creating safe public spaces that encourage social interaction and help to improve wellbeing. Originally this was 'Achieving positive placemaking with a focus on creating sustainable communities'. Feedback suggested using the words placemaking and sustainable communities was jargon so this has been reworded to simplify.
- Strategic Action 13 - Improving physical and mental wellbeing for all abilities. Feedback suggested we should make sure that this action considered people with disabilities.

Vision

Some additional wording has been included to better explain the vision and it was suggested we include a diagram to show the link between the vision, priorities, outcomes, strategic actions and service plans.

Costs

Some feedback was received about the costing of the plan and specific actions so the role of service unit plans has been specified.

Indicators

Some feedback was received regarding indicators and measurable targets. The following have now been included:

Not Applicable

266

- Proposed whole population indicators and council specific targets for the three priorities.
- Big Plan whole population indicators have been included to help monitor our outcomes.
- Biennial residents survey indicators have been included and mapped against relevant outcomes.
- Statutory indicators and targets have been included and mapped against relevant outcomes.

Throughout the document, based on consultation feedback, extra wording has been added to each of the priorities, or existing wording amended, not all of which is highlighted in this paper. By way of example:

- In economic growth it has been clarified that increasing the money received from the non-domestic rate is not about raising business rates but spreading the burden across more businesses.
- Net zero has been explained the potential cost and implications of not prioritising this.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the attached Word version of the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, whilst design work is completed, with a view to publication in July 2024.

Corporate Plan Word Version for Design

FRONT COVER

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028

TITLE: Towards A Sustainable Borough

Table of Content	
Introduction	
Strategic Context	
About the Council	
Plan on a Page	
Our Vision	
Our Three Corporate Priorities	
Economic Priority	
Environmental Priority	
Social Priority	
Our Seven Outcomes	
Our Strategic Actions and Measures of Success	
Outcomes, Strategic Actions and Measures of Success	
How we will measure progress	

Introduction

Our Council exists to provide civic leadership, promote prosperity and deliver essential services to people who live in, work in and visit the Borough of Ards and North Down. We want to see progress towards 'A Sustainable Borough' through innovation in our services and greater partnerships with our residents and other organisations.

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

In developing this Corporate Plan, we aligned our outcomes to the Big Plan (also known as the Community Plan), engaged with key stakeholders, considered our strengths and resources and worked hard to decide where we could offer best value, while also trying to future proof our services to respond to the challenges that lie ahead.

The plan is driven by three corporate priorities:

1. Economic – Increasing economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses
2. Environmental – Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
3. Social – Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reducing inequalities

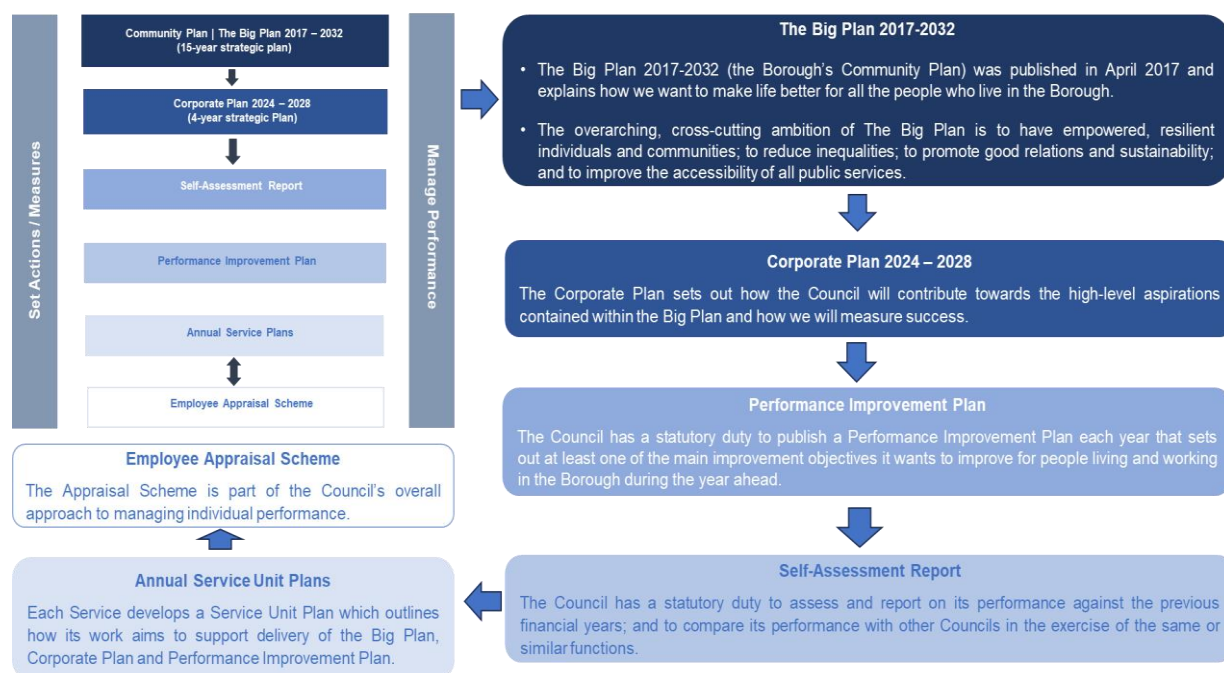
The plan is ambitious and to adequately resource its economic, social and environmental priorities we will need to review how our services are currently delivered. This will mean changing how we do business and how we invest our resources (people and money).

Since 2015, the Borough's non-domestic rate (business rates) has been in steady decline. The Council needs income from domestic rates and non-domestic rates to pay for the delivery of services. To fund our commitment to create more employment opportunities, reduce the energy costs associated with our buildings and fleet, and support our communities, we need to reverse the declining non-domestic rate. We can do this by working to attract new businesses into the Borough, and helping existing businesses to grow, which will also create more job opportunities for our residents. Doing this will mean taking challenging, but necessary, decisions to reduce activity and expenditure in some areas while increasing it in others.

It is through making the Council more financially sustainable, that we will be able to invest further across our economic, environmental and social priorities. This will help achieve our vision of 'A Sustainable Borough'.

Strategic Context of the Corporate Plan

Strategic Context of Corporate Plan



Our Corporate Plan sets the organisation's strategic direction and shapes how resources are allocated. It is aligned with the Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017-2032). The Big Plan, also known as the Community Plan, is a long-term plan that is co-owned by many other organisations delivering public services e.g. health, housing and education. It is an umbrella plan that Community Planning Partners (including the Council) look to for guidance and direction to ensure their own strategies and services help work towards the Big Plan's five outcomes. The Council is responsible for facilitating the delivery of the Community Plan.

The Council's Corporate Plan will help deliver the outcomes of the Big Plan.

To deliver the priorities, outcomes and strategic actions of the Corporate Plan, the Council produces a Performance Improvement Plan and annual Service Unit Plans. Service Unit Plans are measurable and include targets. Every year these are scrutinised by Council to ensure that they will help deliver against the strategic actions in both the Big Plan and the Corporate Plan.

The Council also develops other strategies and plans. These include the Local Development Plan, the Road Map to Sustainability and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy. These are reflected in the Corporate Plan and Service Unit Plans.

About the Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council is responsible for service areas.

An illustration is being prepared to show the functions of the Council.

Summary of Our Corporate Plan

Vision: A Sustainable Borough

To achieve our vision of **A Sustainable Borough**, Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan is centred on three priorities, seven outcomes and 17 strategic actions.

The three priorities we are focused on are:

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

The Seven outcomes we want to achieve will result in:

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses given opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.
3. A thriving and sustainable economy.
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors.
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing.
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy.
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council being a high performing organisation.

The 17 strategic actions we are committed to implementing are:

1. Proactively broadening our community, business and stakeholder engagement approach to include co-design and participation where appropriate.
2. Developing and implementing a plan to transition Council operations towards our long-term 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 infrastructure requirements.
5. Prioritising economic growth within the low carbon sector.
6. Helping people to maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability.
7. Participating in partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g. digital) across the Borough.
8. Developing the cultural and heritage assets of the Borough.
9. Working with business and communities to enhance and promote the Borough as a sustainable visitor destination.

10. Working in partnership with statutory agencies to promote safe communities and improve good relations.
11. Working in partnership with citizens to help develop and promote culture and diversity.
12. Developing sustainable communities by creating safe public spaces that encourage social interaction and help to improve wellbeing.
13. Improving physical and mental wellbeing for people of all abilities.
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.

Measures of success

We have identified milestones (measures of success) that we will use to assess the impact of our Corporate Plan. A combination of indicators, performance measures and feedback from stakeholders will show if we are making progress towards achieving our three priorities and making a difference via the seven outcomes and 17 strategic actions. We will use our annual Service Unit Plans to explain how our services will deliver our Corporate Plan. We will regularly report progress to the Council.

Your opinion matters and you will continue to hold us to account for our performance.

A biennial resident survey is used to measure satisfaction with the Council and how we deliver services. This can be used to track progress against three of the seven outcomes.

Our values

We uphold the following values:

Progression | Respect | Integrity | Delivery | Excellence

Our Vision of A Sustainable Borough

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

This means that when taking decisions, the Council should consider their economic, environmental, and social implications and make sure that any action implemented, for example on an economic issue, does not have a disproportionately negative impact on either the environment or on groups of people or communities. This is what is meant by a well-balanced and equitable decision.

The identification of priorities, outcomes, strategic actions, and measures of success is based on what is needed to become A Sustainable Borough and how we will know if we are making progress.

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 three priorities we are focused on are:

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

Outcomes

To become A **Sustainable Borough** we have identified seven outcomes. Using an outcomes-based accountability approach will help us identify what we need to happen (the outcome) and then work backwards to determine the steps (or strategic actions) that are needed.

Strategic Actions

17 strategic actions break our seven outcomes down into smaller steps that will help ensure progress is made towards our goal of becoming A Sustainable Borough. The strategic actions are important as, alongside the three priorities, they provide the route to help us work towards the outcomes. In addition to the 17 Corporate Plan strategic actions, we are also committed to delivering all our statutory functions.

Measures of Success

Measures of success have been identified that will help evaluate the effectiveness of the Corporate Plan. By tracking progress towards our strategic actions, we can assess if we are on track to meet our agreed outcomes and vision of A **Sustainable Borough**. Measures of success are both quantitative (numbers and amounts) and qualitative (words and experiences).

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 strategic actions 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.

Corporate Plan INDICATORS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES and SMART TARGETS

We use indicators to assess if we are achieving what we set out to achieve.

We have looked at the data available for each Corporate Plan priority to identify trends, i.e. is it getting better, worse, fluctuating or staying the same.

The indicators we have identified for each Corporate Plan priority are a mixture of “whole population indicators” and Council specific “performance indicators”.

A whole population indicator may be influenced by other factors and is not a sole measure of Council performance.

A Council specific performance indicator is a direct measure of Councils’ activities. These can help influence the whole population indicator.

Annual service unit plans have targets and service specific performance measures that are reported to the Council to help monitor collective progress towards the Corporate Plan.

Economic Priority

Increasing economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses

Growing the economy includes deriving more income from business rates (non-domestic rate) that can be invested in vital public services, amenities and programmes. This priority does not mean that we will be increasing the rates of current businesses. It is about attracting more businesses into the Borough to share the costs needed for the Council to deliver its services. A growing economy should lead to more jobs and create better opportunities for people to develop skills and take advantage of improved opportunities for employment.

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 will focus on activities that will increase economic growth, or risk funding being unavailable to achieve the other two corporate priorities. 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. A healthy thriving economy can help create jobs and reduce poverty, which is essential for ensuring that everyone benefits from the transition to a sustainable future.

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 offset the cost of transitioning to a low carbon future, which will require considerable investment in renewable energy sources and infrastructure. It can also lead to higher living standards, better employment opportunities and greater economic security for all.

Why is this priority important?

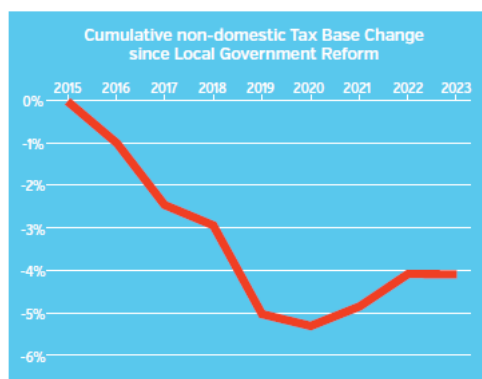
- The non-domestic (business) rate base in Ards and North Down has decreased year-on-year since 2015.
- There are 4,815 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in AND (2023). 63% of these businesses have a turnover of over £100k and 19% have a turnover over £500k.
- The GVA per head in AND at current basic price was £13,327; 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).

How will we measure progress?

To measure progress, we will use both whole population indicators to provide a 'big-picture' view alongside a variety of council specific performance indicators.

Monitoring the non-domestic rate base will help assess if the strategic actions in our Corporate Plan to support our priority to increase economic growth by attracting new businesses and jobs is having an impact.

Whole population indicator - Income from non-domestic rate base



Council Specific Performance Indicators

We will use a variety of council specific performance indicators to assess whether the strategic actions we implement are making a difference. These include, but are not limited to:

- Delivery of a revitalisation and regeneration scheme of unoccupied commercial premises within the city and town centres
- The number of jobs promoted annually
- Delivery of capital regeneration programmes

SMART Target: From 2018 – 2030 7,500 jobs created (*IRTD Strategy*)

SMART Target: Deliver 20 capital regeneration projects over 4 years

Environmental priority

Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero

The Council will need to provide strong civic leadership and 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.

Transitioning to '**net zero**' means that we want to ensure the **total Green House Gas (GHG) emissions (carbon, methane etc) we generate** (from activities like burning fossil fuels such as oil, petrol and gas) are **offset** by **removing an equal amount of GHGs** from the atmosphere.

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

To meet our legislative requirements the transition to net zero will be integrated into all Council functions via both climate mitigation (directly reducing our carbon footprint) and adaptation (adjusting to the effects of climate change). Direct mitigation will focus on reducing our reliance and use of fossil fuels through a transition to low carbon buildings and fleet.

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.

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 woodlands. These activities also improve biodiversity and strengthen our resilience to heatwaves and floods. In the long run these changes will lead to savings, meaning some low-carbon investments could ultimately pay for themselves.

While there will be a significant cost to achieve this priority, the financial cost and implications for service delivery of non-transitioning is also substantial. Volatility of energy costs, availability of fleet vehicles and the financial implications of increased weather events (heat, droughts, floods and sea-level rises) mean that not prioritising a transition plan will potentially be a more expensive option for the Council.

Why is this priority important?

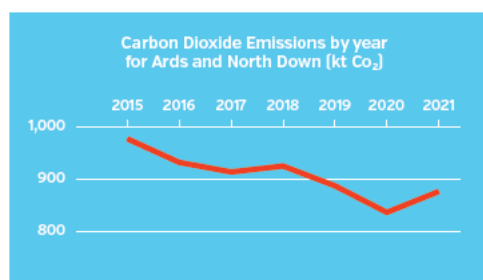
- The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.
- In Ards and North Down, it is predicted summer heatwaves will become more common. Winters will be warmer and wetter, and sea levels could rise by almost 20cm by 2050.

How will we measure progress?

To measure progress, we will use both whole population indicators to provide a 'big-picture' view alongside a variety of council specific performance indicators.

Monitoring carbon Dioxide emissions (CO₂) for the Borough of Ards and North Down will allow us to measure progress towards the Northern Ireland target for net zero.

Whole population Indicator - kt Co2 emissions for Ards and North Down Borough



Council Specific Performance Indicator(s)

We will use a variety of council specific performance indicators to assess whether the strategic actions we implement are making a difference. These include, but are not limited to:

- Council carbon footprint (Electricity, gas and fleet) (Scope 1 emissions)
- Number of trees planted by ANDBC since 2021

ANDBC Carbon Footprint

- Council Building: Electricity- 865.08 tCO₂e (2019)
- Council Building: Gas – 1421 tCO₂e (2019)
- Council Fleet: 1809 tCO₂e (2019)

Over time we will also monitor and report on scope 3 emissions. Scope 3 emissions are indirect ones e.g. from procurement activities or suppliers.

Since 2021 Ards and North Down Borough Council has planted 41,000 trees

SMART Target: Reduce Council carbon footprint by 48% by 2030

SMART Target: Plant 160,000 trees by 2032.

Social priority

Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality

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 and education and to provide protection for people who are vulnerable.

Council will not be able to achieve this priority alone and via Community Planning and Police and Community Safety Partnerships will work collectively with other organisations, also providing public services, to address inequality. We can contribute to increased social inclusion via the diverse range of programmes and outreach services it provides. These include arts and culture, community development, outdoor recreation and sports development as well as gardening and growing projects. How we use our distribution of grants can also help increase social inclusion and reduce inequality.

Inequality and exclusions are often linked to increased community tension and conflicts. By prioritising these as part of our agenda to improve wellbeing we can 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, volunteering and opportunities for more creative 'play' among children, as well as contributing to better educational performance.

There is a link between economic inactivity, health and inequality that demonstrates the need to address these to promote a healthier and more equitable society. Economic inactivity due to sickness is increasing which results in lower levels of productivity. The gap in life expectancy demonstrates the need for targeted interventions to address health and economic inequalities. The Council can contribute to reducing inequalities via the delivery of skills development and labour market activities. Focusing on wellbeing, social inclusion and equality will help to enhance economic growth, productivity and innovation by tapping into the potential of diverse talent, skills and resources.

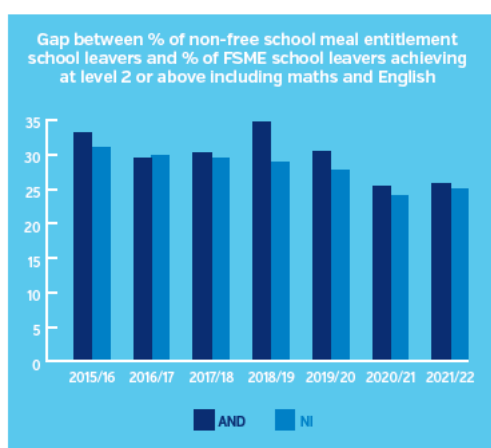
Why is this priority important?

- The economically inactive rate for those living with a disability in Ards and North Down in 2022 was 56.1%, a significant 47.3 percentage points higher than the economically inactive rate for those without a disability. This is a significant increase of 10.4% from the 2021 figure.
- 3.6 (male) and 2.5 years (female) – is the gap in life expectancy between AND residents living in deprived areas (2019-21).
- 12.2% of young people in AND are not in education, employment or training.

How will we measure progress?

To measure progress, we will use both whole population indicators to provide a 'big-picture' view alongside a variety of council specific performance indicators.

Educational attainment directly impacts our career, income, and overall quality of life. Education provides a pathway for individuals to move beyond their socio economic background. Measuring the gap in achievement between those who are entitled to Free School Meals and those who are not is a good indicator of progress towards our priority to reduce inequality.



Whole population Indicator(s) – Gap between % of non-Free School Meal Entitlement school leavers and % FSME school leavers achieving at Level 2 or above including maths and English.

In 2021/22, 86.5% of non-free school meals pupils achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A*- C inc. English and Maths, while only 60.7% of pupils in receipt of FSM received these same grades.

Council Specific Performance Indicator(s)

We will use a variety of council specific performance indicators to assess whether the strategic actions we implement are making a difference. These include, but are not limited to:

- Delivery of interventions that support and reinvest in our communities and review the number of people and communities who have benefited to assess the impact.
- Social return in investment (mechanism to measure this to be developed)
- Grants (community, sports, arts, tourism etc) awarded with data collected to show distribution and potential impact
- Growing Space per 1000 households

SMART Target: Mechanism to assess the social value of the amount of inward investment per head of population (then set target)

SMART Target: In collaboration, provide 1250 sqm (0.125 ha) of community growing space per 10,000 households by 2028

Our Seven Outcomes

To become **A Sustainable Borough**, we have identified seven outcomes. Using an outcomes-based accountability approach will help us identify what we need to happen (the outcome) and then work backward to determine the steps (or strategic actions) that are needed. Collective progress towards all seven outcomes is what helps us become **A Sustainable Borough**.

The Seven outcomes we want to achieve? will result in:

1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses given opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.
2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.
3. A thriving and sustainable economy.
4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors.
5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing.
6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy.
7. Ards and North Down Borough Council being a high performing organisation.

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.

Each outcome includes examples of how we will measure our success. Progress against our strategic actions 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.

Our seven outcomes can be broken down into **17 strategic actions**. 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 strategic actions will provide the route to help us work towards the outcomes.

In addition to the 17 strategic actions, we are also committed to delivering all our statutory functions.

While the strategic actions 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 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: An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses given opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.

Having a Borough in which citizens and businesses are consulted and engaged with, 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.

Strategic action to achieve outcome 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 etc.)
- Examples across all our service areas of mechanisms used to consult and engage with residents, businesses, visitors and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Outcome 2: An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets.

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 and 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.

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 2

- Developed and are implementing a plan to transition Council operations towards our long-term net zero carbon targets
- 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, including fleet (Roadmap to a Green Fleet) and building emissions (Strategic Energy Strategy), 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.
- 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.
- Increased tree planting across the Borough to meet our target of 160,000 trees planted by 2032.

Outcome 3: A thriving and sustainable economy

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 we can then use to support environmental and social wellbeing activities.

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 3

- Supporting the growth of key business sectors by focusing on business support, employability skills and the required infrastructure.
- Prioritising economic growth within the low carbon sector.
- Helping people maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability.
- 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.
- Developed programmes, and worked in partnerships, that increase people's 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.

Outcome 4: 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.

A sustainable visitor destination is one where tourism operators, communities and individuals understand the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism and make appropriate choices to ensure that everyone benefits. As part of this it is important that consideration is given to environmental limits and the capacity of existing infrastructure (roads, carparks etc) in order to protect our natural spaces and the wellbeing of host communities.

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 4

- Developing the cultural, natural and built heritage assets of the Borough.
- Working with business and communities to enhance and promote the Borough as a sustainable visitor destination.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- A targeted Borough-wide programme of events and activities.
- Started to see delivery of the ambitions within our 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.
- Delivered the commitments within the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy
- Effectively applied the policies within the Local Development Plan to ensure 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, increase community growing opportunities and encourage responsible use.
- Participated in partnerships that help protect our valuable natural and coastal assets and enable us to sustainably use them for recreation and climate adaptation.
- Achieved sustainable visitor numbers meaning there is a balance between the number of visitors to the Borough, the capacity of local infrastructure (roads, carparks etc) and benefits to local people and communities.

Outcome 5: Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

A sustainable community is one where people feel safe and welcome and where prosperity is inclusive of everyone. 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 creating public spaces that foster social interactions, community engagement and improved wellbeing.

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 5

- Working in partnership with statutory agencies to promote safe communities and improve good relations.
- Working in partnership with citizens to help develop and promote culture and diversity.
- Developing sustainable communities by creating safe public spaces that encourage social interaction and help to improve wellbeing.

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 programmes to increase community resilience (e.g. in response to the activation of the Emergency Plan).
- 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.
- Increased the area for growing spaces available.

Outcome 6: Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Focussing resources and delivering services that contribute to active, happy and healthy citizens/ 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.

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 6

- Improving physical and mental wellbeing for people of all abilities.
- Encouraging active and sustainable travel.

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- Developed and implemented a Leisure Strategy.
- Delivered on our proposed greenways and urban trails.
- 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.
- Supported health and wellbeing initiatives (citizens and employees) that focus on physical activity, mental health and early intervention.
- Reduced absenteeism and increased the wellbeing of employees.

Outcome 7: Ards and North Down Borough Council being a high performing organisation

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

Strategic actions to achieve outcome 7

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

We will know we have been successful if we have:

- Developed and implemented a digital strategy to facilitate digital connectivity and delivery across all council services.
- Implemented a Workforce Planning Strategy that 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 so that we have the right number of employees and buildings to work effectively.
- Invested in leadership programmes and training that creates and nurtures high performing teams/ leaders throughout the Council.
- Embedded our Behaviour Charter* and PRIDE** values as part of the everyday work of our employees.
- Increased our financial resilience to safeguard the Council's long-term sustainability.

* *The Behaviour Charter is a document for council employees that demonstrates the Council's preferred approach and attitudes to work.*

** *The PRIDE values (Progression, Respect, Integrity, Delivery and Excellence) are the core values of the Council and are embedded in everything that we do.*

How we will monitor and report on the plan

We will use a range of methods to monitor the implementation and impact of our Corporate Plan.

We will measure progress towards **our vision of A Sustainable Borough** by reviewing the whole population indicators, and Council specific performance measures with associated SMART Targets, of **our three Corporate Priorities**.

Corporate Priorities	Whole population indicator	Council Specific Indicator	SMART Target
Increasing economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses	Ards and North Down non-domestic rate	Delivery of a revitalisation and regeneration scheme of unoccupied commercial premisses within the city and town centres The number of jobs promoted annually Delivery of capital regeneration programmes	From 2018 – 2030 7,500 jobs created (<i>IRTD Strategy</i>) Deliver 20 capital regeneration projects over 4 years
Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero	Kt CO ₂ emissions for Ards and North Down Borough	Council Carbon footprint (Electricity, gas and fleet) Scope 1 & 2 emissions. Number of trees planted since 2021	Reduce Council carbon footprint by 48% by 2030 Plant 160,000 trees by 2032
Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality	Gap between % of non-Free School Mean Entitlement School leavers and % FSME school leavers achieving Level 2 of above including English and Maths	Delivery of interventions that support and reinvest in our communities and review the number of people and communities who have benefited to assess the impact. Social return in investment (mechanism to	Mechanism to assess the social value of the amount of inward investment per head of population (then set target) In collaboration, provide 1250 sqm (0.125ha) of community growing space per

		<p>measure this to be developed)</p> <p>Grants (community, sports, arts, tourism etc) awarded with data collected to show distribution and potential impact</p> <p>Growing Space per 1000 households</p>	<p>10,000 households by 2028</p>
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We will measure progress towards our outcomes using a combination of whole population **Big Plan indicators**, Council specific performance measures included in services unit plans, and feedback from the biennial resident survey. We will also use the statutory indicators we are required to formally report to central government.

	Outcome	Big Plan Indicator
1	An engaged Borough with citizens who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment	Level of influence people feel they have over local decision making
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon emissions	Kt off CO2 emissions for Ards and North Down priority indicator Number of e-car charging points % of municipal waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting
3	A thriving and sustainable economy	Number of VAT and PAYE registered businesses Medium gross weekly earning GVA per head of population against NI average
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors	Total spend (£m) during overnight trips % of persons spending time outdoors; once a week or more
5	Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing	Number of anti-social behaviour crime offences Number of recorded crime offences Number of dwelling fires Number of road traffic casualties per 10,000 % of individuals in relative poverty
6	Opportunities for people to be active and healthy	Number of preventable deaths Gap in life expectancy between most and least deprived Obesity rates (adult and childhood) % of population who were low self-efficacy (persons ages 16+ and 60+)

Every two years Ards and North Down Borough Council commissions an independent organisation to undertake a telephone survey of 1000 residents. Some of the feedback collected can be used to measure the seven outcomes of the Corporate Plan. Every two years we can use this to check progress.

Outcome	Indicator	Residents Survey		
		2021	2023	TREND
1 An engaged Borough with citizens who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment	% of participation in Council engagement		2%	
	% satisfaction with level of engagement the Council offers to local residents	68%	65%	↓
	% (of those who have engaged) who rated their experience as good or excellent		87%	
4 A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors	% satisfaction with local area	90%	93%	↑
7 Ards and North Down being a high performing organisation	Resident satisfaction with Council	82%	83%	↑

Statutory indicators

The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015 sets out statutory indicators and agreed standards that Councils must report on.

	Outcome	Statutory Indicators	Target
2	An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon emissions	<p>The percentage of household waste collected by district councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use).</p> <p>To landfill no more than the following tonnages of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste</p> <p>The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings.</p>	23,956
3	A thriving and sustainable economy	The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity.	85 jobs per year
4	A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors	<p>The average processing time of major planning applications</p> <p>The average processing time of local planning applications</p> <p>The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks</p>	<p>Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks.</p> <p>Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks.</p> <p>70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint</p>

BACK COVER

Ards and North Down is full of vibrant communities, each contributing valuable ideas that will shape the area's future.

To amplify these voices, the Council has introduced Citizens Lab, an online engagement platform. In addition to in-person conversations, surveys, and public information sessions, residents from across the Borough can now propose ideas, share comments, engage in topic debates, respond to surveys, and express their views on new projects. You can sign up to this engagement platform via ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk.

Get in touch

Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
0300 013 3333
[Ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](https://ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Unclassified

297

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 June 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	19 June 2024
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	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Notice of Motion Status Report

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 the Council notes the report.

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	FINAL OUTCOME
11	31.05.15	Rory McIlroy recognition	Councillor Muir	Jun-15	Corporate Services Committee – October 2015. NOM transferred to C&W committee.	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow in 2024.	
330	21.01.19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Jan-19	Environment Committee	Agreed	TBC	Officers awaiting feedback from potential funder	
419	20.10.20	“I would like to task officers to produce a report to consider what could be a more environmentally friendly and benefit the wellbeing of the community for the use of the disused putting green on the Commons and play park at Hunts park in Donaghadee . Following the success of the Dog park in Bangor and the demand for a Dementia garden, both should be considered as options in the report. The process should involve consultation with the local community.”	Councillor Brooks	Oct-20	Community & Wellbeing Committee – December 2020	Agreed at December 2020 C&WC. Ratified at December 2020 Council	TBC	Report to follow after consideration of Masterplan and application of play strategy with local consultation when it takes place in Donaghadee	
463	10.05.21	That officers are tasked to bring back a Report on how the Council might approach a Climate Change Action Plan and perhaps including - but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, a Conference of Ideas, and values-based recommendations for next steps.	Councillors Walker & Egan	Jun-21	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	Various strands of work taking place across different departments on development of Council Climate Action Plan - led within Corporate Services Directorate.	Council Adaptation Plan being drafted.

513	17.05.22	2028 Centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT races. Asking Council how best to commemorate this important sporting anniversary.	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	May- 22	Community and Wellbeing June 2022 - Moved to: Place & Prosperity Committee	Agreed	Reported to November 2023 P&P, agreed and ratified by Council Further report to June P&P 2024 Subject to ratification by June Council	NoM transferred to P&P Committee.	Agreed that Council notes the planning arrangements set out in report and that seven elected members be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group at the June meeting of
514	19.05.22	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Councillors Cummings and Johnson	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022	Agreed at October 2022 C&WC. Ratified at October 2022 Council	TBC	Council agreed Comber 3G pitch is ranked 21st in project prioritisation. Stakeholder engagement to commence at the appropriate time	
516	20.06.22	Report exploring the possibility of introducing a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone undergoing IVF.	Councillor Greer and Councillor McKee	Jun-22	Corporate Services Committee – deferred to October 2022	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow during 2024.	
519	21.06.22	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen’s Leisure Complex	Councillors Kendall, McRandal and McClean	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 –	Amended and agreed at October 2022 C&WC. Ratified at October 2022 Council	TBC	Engagement Ongoing	

522	05.07.22	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 Received from Councillor Cathcart - 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.	Alderman Irvine & Keery	Jul-22	Environment Committee - September 2022	Amended and agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee once advice from the Cabinet Office is received. This NOM went to the Corporate Committee - report was brought back to January 2024 Corporate Committee meeting. Letter sent to Cabinet Office April 2024 - awaiting	
525	24.08.22	That this council withdraws all funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums or competitions, and tasks officers to bring back a report outlining the specific relevant council policy.	Cllrs Cooper, T Smith and Councillor Irvine	Aug-22	Corporate Committee – deferred to October 2022 NoM transferred to C&W Committee	Amended and agreed	TBC via C&W Committee	NoM Transferred to C&W Committee. Officers considering report to be brought to future Committee	
529	22.08.22	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Councillor Dunlop and Councillor Douglas	Sep-22	Environment Committee – October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back to a future meeting	
545	16.11.22	That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local schools when the stones have been returned.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	Nov-22	Community & Wellbeing - December 2022	Agreed at December 2022 C&WC. Ratified at december 2022 Council	March 2023 and June 2023 C&W Committee	Officers have asked HED to confirm return arrangements and will report to future C&WC when final arrangements for return of the stones is confirmed	

549	09.12.22	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to ' <i>Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls</i> ', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.	Councillors Douglas & Walker	Dec-22	Corporate Services Committee – January 2023. NOM transferred to Community and Wellbeing Committee	Agreed	January 2024 C&W Committee	Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee ratified at Council. Officers considering further reports. Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&W Committee	
550	13.12.22	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try address the issue of bins left on public footways.	Councillors Cathcart and MacArthur	Dec-22	Environment Committee – January 2023	Agreed	Report to May 2024 Environment Cttee seeking approval to lobby other Councils to petition for Council enforcement powers.	Alternative proposal agreed at June 2023 Cttee. Update report to be brought to a future meeting (date to be confirmed) Letters sent to DfI and PSNI 12/10/23 - Response rec'd from PSNI 13.11.23, Response rec'd from DfI 02.11.23 Letter sent to DAERA 12.12.23 and response rec'd	
555	08.12.22	This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas (Postponed from Dec Council to Jan Council)	Jan-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023	Agreed at February 2023 C&WC. Ratified at february 2023 Council	June 2023 C&W Committee	Further report to future C&WC including a report to recommend declaration.	

562	18.01.23	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back a report with costs to outline what steps can be taken to ensure that Council car parks and footpaths in the City and town centres are gritted when the weather is forecast to have heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing weather conditions.	Councillors Morgan and McRandal	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	01/10/2023 and ratified at October 2023 Council	Supplementary report requested - TBC		
564	08.02.23	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.	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	Feb-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Agreed at February C&WC. Ratified at February Council	TBC	Officers awaiting response from EA in order for report to be brought back to future C&W Committee. Director writing to Department of Education	
567	14.02.23	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund	Feb-23	Corporate Services March 2023		July Council	Officers considering next steps for further report to be brought back once advice from Cabinet Office is received. Follow up letters have been sent. 30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update.	

568	06.02.23	<p>Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change.</p> <p>As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.</p>	Councillor Smart and Councillor Irvine	Mar-23	Place and Prosperity Committee June 2023	Agreed and ratified by 5 July Council	Reported to June 2024 P&P Subject to ratification by June Council		
575	31.07.23	<p>That this council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 12,431 to 26,310 households between 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2023, an increase of 111.7%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this borough alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services; and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently supported as well as how the Council's community planning function can further support homelessness prevention work in the local area</p>	Councillors Creighton and Moore	Council - August 2023	Community & Wellbeing Committee-September 2023	Agreed at September 2023 C&WC. Ratified at September 2023 Council	September 2024 C&W Committee	Officers considering report to be brought back to September 2024 C&W Committee	
		<p>That Council task officers to bring back a report on the costing to install signage identifying the townlands of Ballyblack and Kirkistown and that officers are tasked to bring forward proposals to incorporate townland signage across our Borough.</p>	Alderman Adair, Councillors Edmund & Kerr	Council - August 2023	Environment Committee - September 2023	Agreed - ratified by September Council	To be confirmed		

581	18.09.23	That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.	Alderman Adair, Councillor Douglas and Alderman McIlveen	27-Sep-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee	Agreed at October C&WC. Ratified at October Council	December 2023 C&W Committee. June 2024 C&W Committee	Report ratified at December 2023 Council. Report on tangible options to June C&W. NoM will be removed from list once ratified at June Council	
580	06.09.23	That this Council, recognising its commitment as a responsible employer, and that staff are paid the current Living Wage, tasks officers to explore becoming 'Living Wage' accredited with the UK Living Wage Foundation, as well as ensuring any regularly contracted employees and workers, including those who are employed externally to deliver Council services, are paid the living wage hourly rate. It also explores becoming Living Hours and Living Pensions accredited too.	Councillor Woods and Councillor McKee	Sep-23	Corporate Services- October 2023	Agreed to recommend	CS June 2024	Remove from tracker after ratification	
585		That Council recognise the value of our Beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DEARA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DEARA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.	Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund and Councillor Kerr	Oct-23	Environment Committee - November 2023 - Transferred to Community & Wellbeing Committee	Agreed subject to ratification at November Council	January 2024 C&W Committee	Report to January 2024 C&WC. Further report requested being considered by officers with a report to future C&W	
588		That this council asks officers to include the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter (owned by Council), located in Main Street, Greyabbey in the 2024/25 maintenance budget. Furthermore Council seeks an officer's report on the feasibility of Council painting the decorative Greyabbey lamp posts (in the ownership of DFI). This is a feature of the historic village, and we understand the current shabby condition impacts not only residents of the village, but the wider tourism and regeneration potential of this scenic conservation area.	Councillor Wray and Alderman Smith	Oct-23	Environment Committee - November 2023	Agreed - ratified at November Council		Agreed. That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward. Furthermore,	Action agreed at Environment Committee, referred to Place and Prosperity for follow up.
586	16.10.23	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	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Martin	Oct-23	Corporate Services November 2023	Agreed	TBC	Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor.	

		That this Council, in recognising the decision taken in July 2023, titled 'Leisure Transformation Project' reference LE1 20, (i) requests the completion of the recommendation and action points agreed in this report ahead of consideration of the current NCLT/Serco bid relating to the provision of leisure for the remainder of the in-house services. This action will permit elected members to consider all relevant information and data relating to the in-house leisure offering (in-house bid) or a LATCo and, (ii) holds a Members Workshop on said options, as has been previous practice, as soon as possible, prior to any decision being taken by Full Council	Alderman McAlpine, and Councillor Woods, and Councillor Smart and Councillor Boyle	25.10.2023	Heard and agreed at Council. Further agreed that C&W progress and organise an EM workshop		First Report to March 13th 2024 C&WC.	- Update provided to March C&WC. EM workshop planned for 25th June 2024	
595	16.11.23	This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and	Councillor McCracken and Councillor Blaney	29.11.23	C&W December	Agreed at December C&WC. Ratified at December Council	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	
596	20.11.23	Ulster Scots - tasking Officers to develop a budget to ensure and encourage participation in future Ulster Scots Language weeks; develop and action plan, with advice from the Ulster-Scots Agency, to develop all aspects of the Borough's rich Ulster Heritage	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	29.11.23	C&W December	Agreed at December C&WC. Ratified at December Council	Report to June 2024 C&WC	Action Plan developed. Budget secured for 2025/26. NoM will be removed from list once ratified at June Council	
598	20.11.23	That this Council continues discussions with the Education Authority concerning the redevelopment of the play area fronting Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert (which is a shared facility between the school and public) and tasks officers to source external funding streams to enhance recreation & sports facilities for the village and surrounding area. Further, Council notes the poor condition of Ballyhalbert children's play park and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	29.11.23	C&W January	Agreed at January C&WC Ratified at January Council	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	

599	21.11.23	<p>“That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)</p>	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Gilmour	29.11.23	C&W January	Agreed at January C&WC Ratified at January Council	First report April C&W committee. Second report to June 2024 C&WC	Grants transformation project already underway. First working group on 10th May 2024. First report was brought to April C&WC and ratified at Council.	
601	29.11.23	<p>That this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals washed up on our beaches and coastlines and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.</p>	Alderman Adair and Councillor MacArthur	Council December 2023	Environment Committee January 2024 - to be ratified at January 2024 Council	<p>Agreed with amendment: That this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals and all mammals washed up on our beaches and coastline and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.</p>	Update report brought to EC March 2024 - agreed to note the report.	No further action required.	NOM to be removed.
607	13.01.24	<p>That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.</p> <p>Council further requests that DFI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20ml from the current 50ml in order to improve the quality and</p>	Cllr Wray and Alderman Smith	Council - January 2024	Coporate Services Committee		TBC	Report to CSC June 2024.	

609	23.01.24	That this Council acknowledges with concern the devastating impact of the planned closure of the Action Mental Health Promote Day Opportunities Service on its users, their families and the wider community throughout this borough and agrees to write urgently to the Chair and Chief Executive of South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to call on the Trust to address funding pressures to secure the future of the service and centre at Enterprise Road, Conlig.	Cllrs McCollum and Morgan	Council - January 2024	Heard and agreed at Council. Further agreed that Council writes to the Health Minister once appointed		April C&W committee		Letter sent to Minister for Health, and the Chairman and Chief Executive of the SEHSCT. Response received from the Health Minister and Chair of SEHSCT, response to NOM will go to C&W Committee in April
610	19.02.24	That Council note the increasing growing population in the village of Ballyhalbert and the current lack of public open spaces in the village and task officers to bring forward a report on options to provide a public green open space to promote health and wellbeing of the local community and further tasks officers to engage with developer to ensure the new play park planned for Saint Andrews is delivered in line with our Council play strategy.	Ald Adair and Cllr Edmund	Council - March 2024	C&W March	Agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	
612	23.02.24	That Council brings a report with a view to implementing a "dogs on leads" policy on that part of the Coastal Path which traverses the private road serving the properties 91 to 117 Station Road, Hollywood inclusive.	Alderman Graham and Councillor Martin	Council - March 2024	Environment Committee - April 2024	Agreed	TBC		
613	04.03.24	Rescinding Notice of Motion - Playpark, Parsonage Road, Kircubbin	Councillors Wray, Kerr, Boyle, Edmund, Aldermen Adair and McAlpine	Council - March 2024	n/a but report to C&WC	Agreed at Council	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	

616	19.03.24	<p>That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams.</p> <p>Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders would need to be involved.</p>	Councillor McCollum and Councillor Irwin	Council - March 2024	Environment Committee - April 2024	Agreed	May-24		
619	30.04.24	Groomsport Tennis Courts and Tennis Court facilities throughout the Borough	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson	Council - May 2024	C&W June	Agreed			
620	05/03/24	Ensuring that parks and open spaces are inclusive and accessible to those with speech, language and communication needs	Councillor Ashe and Councillor Morgan	Council - May 2024	C&W June	Agreed			
623	14/05/24	Ways to commemorate 80 years since VE Day on 8th May 2025	Councillor Gilmour and Councillor Martin	Council - May 2024	Corporate Committee - June	Agreed			
624	20/05/24	Conlig War Memorial Project	Councillor Kendall, McRandal and Alderman Graham	Council - May 2024	Corporate - June	Agreed			

Amendment received 20.06.2024

Proposed amendment submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund.

That Council Tasks Officers to implement a ground maintenance schedule of works to address the poor and unkept condition of Ballywalter Road Car Park Millisle in order to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-kept to welcome visitors to Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further that Council bring forward a report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie beaches following recent storm damage.