



Performance Improvement Plan **2024/2025**

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1. Introduction

Ards and North Down Borough Council was established in 2015 as part of government's Local Government Reform programme. The Council consists of 40 elected councillors to represent the people of the Borough across 7 District Electoral Areas with the 5 main towns of Bangor, Newtownards, Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood and 19 smaller villages of Balloo, Ballygowan, Ballyhalbert, Ballywalter, Carrowdore, Conlig, Cloughey, Crawfordsburn, Greyabbey, Groomsport, Helens Bay, Killinchy, Kircubbin, Lisbane, Millisle, Portaferry, Portavogie, Seahill and Whiterock. The Council has a population of 164,223 people and covers an area of over 228 square miles and has around 115 miles of coastline, one of the longest in Northern Ireland.

2. Duty to Improve and arrangements for continuous improvement

The Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to publish a Performance Improvement Plan each year that sets out at least one of the main short-term issues (improvement objectives) it wants to improve for people living and working in the Borough during the year ahead.

Definition of Improvement

"Improvement" in the context of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 means more than just quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or the internal effectiveness of the Council.

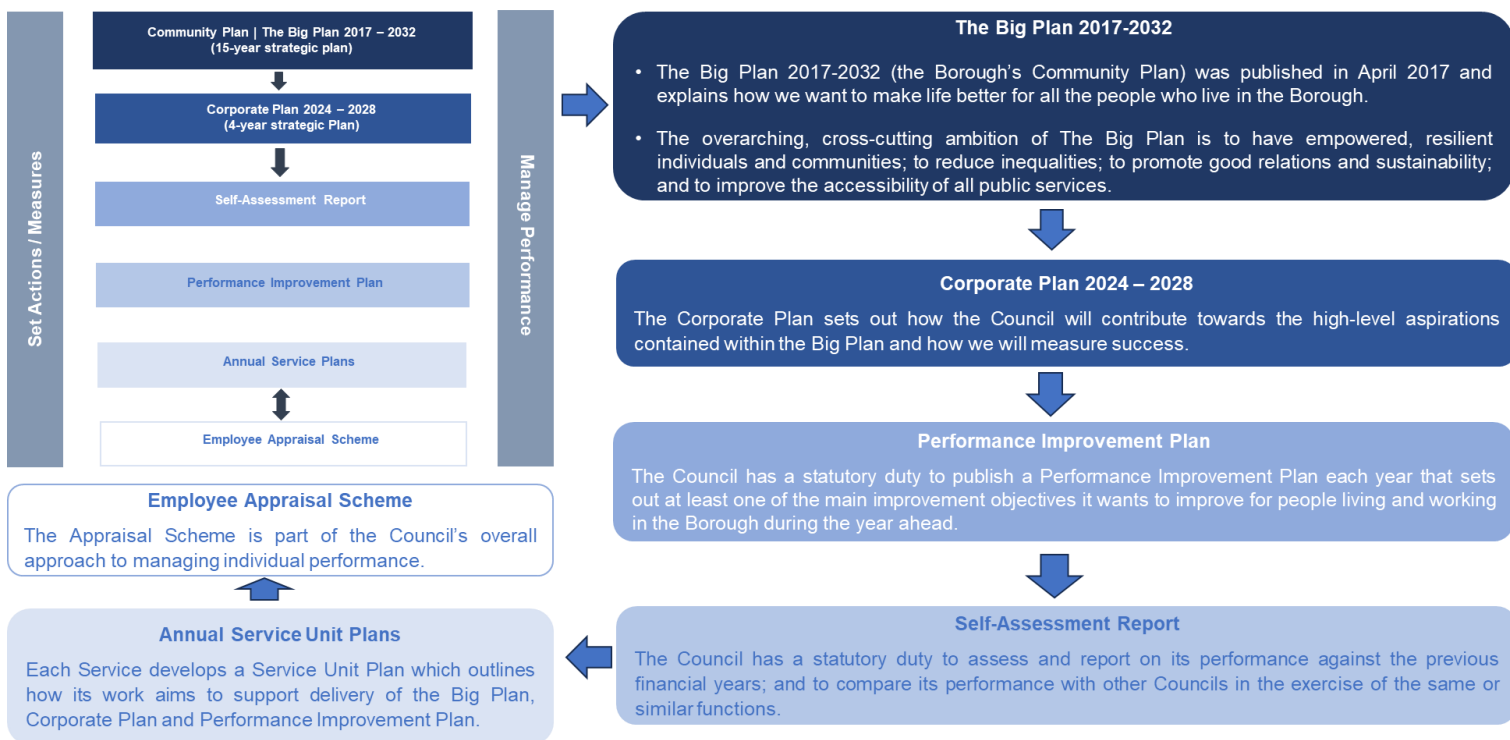
Improvement for Ards and North Down Borough Council focusses our efforts on the issues that are most important to our residents and customers, ensuring that the things we do will enhance the sustainable quality of life and environment for our citizens helping us to create a better future for all.

To demonstrate our commitment to improving the areas that matter most to our residents, our annual improvement plan and objectives are aligned to the outcomes set out in [The Big Plan](#) 2017-2032 (the Council's Community Plan) and supports the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

The Council has put in place arrangements to support performance management and improvement which will drive and provide assurance that we are delivering on our vision, shared outcomes and improvement objectives. To support its approach to continuous improvement and performance management Council has put in place a bespoke framework, PERFORM (see [Appendix 1](#)), which is used in recognition that successful performance is multi-faceted, that is, it is not sufficient to only prepare plans and monitor performance, as much else is necessary to deliver effective performance including engaging, developing, and inspiring staff, working with partners, having excellent processes and systems and communications with our customers, and stakeholders.

The diagram below illustrates how strategic objectives within the Community and Corporate Plans cascade through the organisation to each employee. Each plan sets out the expected outcomes and key actions to allow us to continuously monitor, report and review performance.



The Big Plan 2017-2032

The Big Plan 2017-2032 (the Council's Community Plan) was published in April 2017 and provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years.

The Vision is "Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be".

The overarching, cross-cutting ambition of The Big Plan is to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities, to reduce inequalities; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services. The Big Plan for Ards and North Down explains how we want to make life better for all the people who live in the Borough.

The Big Plan contains five outcomes. These are ambitious statements that we aspire to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032:

- **Outcome 1:** All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential.
- **Outcome 2:** All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- **Outcome 3:** All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
- **Outcome 4:** All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.
- **Outcome 5:** All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

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

It aligns with the long-term aspirations of the Borough's Community Plan (The Big Plan 2017-2032).

The Corporate Plan serves as the Council's strategic framework for 2024-2028, setting out our vision to be **A Sustainable Borough**.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a range of strategic and service unit plans, which set out in more detail how we will deliver and resource the activities needed to work towards our vision.

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 reduced inequalities.

The Plan outlines seven outcomes that support the three priorities. Each outcome is supported by strategic actions detailing the commitments the Council is making for the next four years.

Measures of success, to monitor progress and demonstrate if we have achieved what we set out to, have also been identified within the Corporate Plan.



| |
|--|
| Ards and North Down is a Sustainable Borough |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses 2. Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero 3. Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment 2. We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets 3. We have a thriving and sustainable economy 4. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors 5. We have safe welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing 6. We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation |
| <p>17 Strategic Action to achieve the outcomes and priorities</p> |
| <p>Annual Service Plans developed in tandem with the rate setting process to specific each service areas annual activities aligned with the Corporate Plan</p> |

Annual Service Plans

The Council's Service Planning process takes place between September and March each year. The Service Plans are working documents that:

- detail how the organisation will deliver its services to meet the Corporate Plan Outcomes, Priorities and Vision to be A Sustainable Borough;
- identify areas for improvement; and
- detail the Key Performance Indicators that will be used to measure if it is achieving its purpose and progress towards its vision.

Service Plans are agreed by Directors and Heads of Service and adopted by the relevant standing committee annually with progress being reported every six months.

Employee Appraisal Scheme

The Employee Appraisal Scheme is a mutually beneficial 1 to 1 conversation that an employee has with his/her line manager annually. Resulting in joint agreement on enhancing performance and identifying learning and development needs, there are 4 main steps:

1. Review of progress
2. Colleague ideas for service improvement
3. Setting individual objectives for the year ahead
4. Agreeing learning and development needs

The emphasis is on the quality of the conversation and resulting outcomes.

Our Values

The Council is committed to delivering on its Improvement Objectives within the context of our core values:



Progression: We will be proactive, ambitious, innovative, forward thinking and outward looking.

Respect: We will treat everyone in a fair and equitable manner, respecting diversity and each other's roles.

Integrity: We will always be open, honest, transparent, trustworthy and accountable in our business relationships.

Delivery: We will ensure a “can do” attitude, being passionate about achieving results, performance-driven and outcome focussed.

Excellence: We will strive to deliver continuously improving and excellent quality services whilst ensuring value for money.

Performance Management System

Council has in place an electronic performance management system which allows it to:

- Analyse data on a range of frequencies for trends and comparison
- Track the progress of indicators and actions
- Provide and communicate regular and robust performance information to Managers, Elected Members and the public.

Further information on our how we are performing can be found [here](#).

Strategic Planning Timetable

| Timeline | Activity |
|------------------------|---|
| October – March | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Planning process • Identification of areas for improvement • CLT/HoST consultation on Service Plans and key areas for improvement • Citizen Satisfaction Survey (every 3 years) • Budget Planning Process • Strike the Rate • Employee Appraisals begin • Report on Performance to December Standing Committees (Quarter 1 and 2) • Report on Performance to December Audit Committee (Quarter 1 and 2) |
| April – May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with stakeholders • Consultation with employees • Consultation with Elected Members • Service Plans approved by Standing Committees • Employee Appraisals complete |
| June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Improvement Plan to CLT, Corporate Committee and ratification by Council • Publish on Council website by 30 June • Begin Self-Assessment review of prior year's performance • Submit Benchmarking statistics • Report on Performance to June Standing Committees (Quarter 3 and 4) • Report on Performance to June Audit Committee (Quarter 3 and 4) |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAO Fieldwork • Draft Self-Assessment Report to CLT and HoST |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Assessment Report to Corporate Committee and ratification by Council • Publish Self-Assessment Report by 30 September • Budget Setting and Service Plan preparation |

3. Performance improvement objectives for 2024/25

Our Performance Improvement Plan for 2024/25 sets out 4 improvement objectives which have been carried forward from the improvement objectives for 2023/24, with some alterations. Whilst the Performance Improvement Plan focuses specifically on the key areas identified for improvement this year, we are still seeking to bring about improvement in other areas. The plan is not designed to describe all of the Council's day to day work.

Summary 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 has 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
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2024

The objectives have been developed within the context of the Council's PERFORM framework ensuring:

- There are clear links to The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032, Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and Annual Service Plans
- They are based on evidence provided by the residents of the Borough
- They are aligned to at least one of the seven aspects of improvement (see [Appendix 2](#)).

The tables in the following section set out the expected improvement (Improvement Objectives), how it links to Programme for Government, The Big Plan for Ards and North Down and the Corporate Plan 2024-2028. For each improvement we state:

- why we chose it;
- what we hope to achieve;
- how we plan to do it;
- how we will measure progress;
- the Senior Responsible Owner; and
- how it aligns to the seven aspects of improvement.

| | |
|--|---|
| Improvement Objective 1: | We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs |
| Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s) | <p>Outcome 1 We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy</p> <p>Outcome 6 We have more people working in better jobs</p> <p>Outcome 10 We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest</p> |
| Associated Community Plan Objective Outcome 4 | All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy |
| Corporate Plan Priority | Economic |
| Why are we focussing on this priority? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023, residents identified the top two Council priorities as: attracting jobs and investment into the local economy (1st) and ensuring annual rate increases are kept at or below inflation (2nd). • 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. • Economic growth is important because it can lead to higher living standards, better employment opportunities and greater economic security for all. • Economic growth can help create jobs and reduce poverty, which is essential for ensuring that everyone benefits from the transition to a sustainable future. • The non-domestic (business) rate base has decreased year-on-year since 2015. • There are 4,815 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in Ards and North Down (2023) with 63% of these businesses with turnover over £100k and 19% with turnover over £500k. • The GVA per head at current basic price was £13,327 in Ards and North Down, continuing to be lowest among all NI Local Government Districts (2021). • 23.6% of Ards and North Down working age population (16-64 years) were economically inactive (2021). • The median gross weekly earnings for Ards and North Down residents working outside the Borough was £464 and only £394 for those working within the Borough, both below the NI average of £498 (2022). |
| What we hope to achieve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support more local businesses to start-up, develop and grow by focusing on employability opportunities, business support, employability skills and required infrastructure. • Greater prosperity through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy. • Help people maximise their lifelong potential by increasing their skills, knowledge and employability. • Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest. • Participation in partnerships to improve connectivity (e.g. digital) across the Borough. • Develop the cultural and heritage assets of the Borough. • Manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice. |
| How are we going to do it and how will we measure progress? | <p>Council plans to.....</p> <p>Manage and deliver projects to enhance physical and digital infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena in keeping with the agreed Quality Specification as part of the Queen's Parade redevelopment scheme – anticipated 50% completed by March 2025. • Approval of Outline Business Case (OBC) and creation of action plan by 31st March 2025 to progress Innovation Hub concept to support the growth of the Creative and Digital Tech sectors in Film and TV production. • Develop a master plan and OBC by 31st March 2025 for the delivery of a business park at the former NIE site on Balloo Road, Bangor. • Design teams appointed and planning application progressed by 31st March 2025 for Newtownards Citizen Hub. • Design teams appointed by 31st March 2025 to take forward a number of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment projects. • Implement Social Value in Council Procurement Policy by 31st March 2025 to consider how the services we commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| | <p>Develop regeneration improvements in conjunction with City and Town Advisory Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create five new Town/ City Advisory Groups following review that was undertaken. • Create two additional village partnership groups by 31st March 2025 - North Down and Strangford (equivalent to the Ards Peninsula Partnership Group). • Undertake a review of the existing village plans by 31st March 2025 and agree with the partnership groups key priority projects. • Develop 5 Urban/Rural projects to procurement stage to access funding streams. <p>Deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete delivery of the Portaferry Public Realm by 31st March 2025 using funding secured from the Small Settlements Grant. • Develop and deliver four capital projects using the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Grant. <p>Work to optimise funding and collaborate with key partners to create and deliver innovative transformation support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support 17 businesses in 2024/25 through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund programme. <p>Deliver NI Enterprise Support Service ‘Go Succeed’ and other general business support programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 117 new jobs in 2024/25 through “Go Succeed” (Statutory Indicator). • Deliver 12 projects in 2024/25 through Labour Market Partnership Action Plan (subject to funding). <p>Manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Checklist for events to be developed and applied to Council’s tourism events and grant aided events by 31st March 2025. • Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales in 2024/25 – experiences and walks and tours to 50%. • Increase % of Out of Borough ticket sales in 2024/25 – food and drink experiences to 33%. • Deliver 3 training seminars to the tourism/food and drink sectors. • Deliver 4 training/capacity building sessions via the Festival Forum. <p>Meet the Schedule 3 Planning Indicators of the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Planning applications processed within an average of 30 weeks (Statutory Indicator)* • Local Planning applications processed within an average of 15 weeks (Statutory Indicator)* • 70% of planning enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks (Statutory Indicator)*. <p>*Statutory Planning targets being met are reliant on receipt of timely input from various external statutory bodies</p> | | | | | | |
| Senior Responsible Owner(s) | Director of Place Director of Prosperity Director of Corporate Services | | | | | | |
| 7 aspects of Improvement | Service Effectiveness ✓ | Service Quality ✓ | Service Availability ✓ | Fairness | Sustainability ✓ | Efficiency | Innovation ✓ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Improvement Objective 2: | We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough | | | | | | |
| Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s) | Outcome 2 We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment | | | | | | |
| Associated Community Plan Objective Outcome 5 | All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment. | | | | | | |
| Corporate Plan Priority | Environment | | | | | | |
| Why are we focussing on this priority? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most common suggestions for Council improvement in the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023 included: keeping areas clean and tidy, reducing litter, reducing fly tipping, street cleaning and keeping grassed areas weed free. 81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019). | | | | | | |
| What we hope to achieve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the standard of cleanliness of our Borough. Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment. AND residents feeling pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment. A clean, attractive, environmentally responsible place, including our city, towns, villages, countryside and coast. | | | | | | |
| How are we going to do it and how will be measure progress? | <p>Council plans to.....</p> <p>Target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve or exceed the NI average Cleanliness Index score of 75 (Measured by an independent Litter Cleanliness Survey that produces the Local Environmental Audit and Measure Score (LEAMS) - Cleanliness Index score) Increase total number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued to a minimum of 375; targeting areas of concern to reduce issues (2023/24 Target: 178) <p>Monitor and improve the cleanliness of our public toilets across the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve 100% success in 'Loo of the Year' Awards. <p>Invest in 'In Bloom' Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £21,000 to be invested in 'In Bloom' Projects. 4 'In Bloom' / Best Kept Awards retained. <p>Provide open spaces and parks that are well maintained, managed in an environmentally sustainable manner, accessible to all and to improve biodiversity in the Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant 15,000 trees across the Borough in 2024/25. 7 Green Flag awards for the Borough. Increase the m2 of rewilded Council maintained ground from 90,000 to 120,000. Increase Community Gardening projects organised from 30 to 40. | | | | | | |
| Senior Responsible Owner(s) | Director of Environment Director of Community and Wellbeing | | | | | | |
| 7 aspects of Improvement | Service Effectiveness ✓ | Service Quality ✓ | Service Availability ✓ | Fairness | Sustainability ✓ | Efficiency | Innovation ✓ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Improvement Objective 3: | We will improve the Borough's recycling rates | | | | | | |
| Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s) | Outcome 2 We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment | | | | | | |
| Associated Community Plan Objective Outcome 5 | All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment. | | | | | | |
| Corporate Plan Priority | Environment | | | | | | |
| Why are we focussing on this priority? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 for Northern Ireland, along with interim targets including at least 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030. • Residents being fully committed to recycling is key to the Council delivering on its waste management strategy. The most recent Resident survey completed late 2023 found that most residents stated their commitment to recycling is high (58%), however this level of commitment has fallen significantly from the figure of 67% recorded in 2021. • 81% of households in the Borough are concerned for the environment (71% across NI, NISRA CHS, 2019). • Ards and North Down Municipal Recycling Rate - 51.7% (2020/21). • £4.1 million paid in landfill costs in 2023/24. | | | | | | |
| What we hope to achieve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough. • Increase the Council's recycling rate across the Borough and reduce landfill costs. • Support residents to live and work sustainably by protecting the environment. • AND residents feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment. | | | | | | |
| How are we going to do it and how will be measure progress? | <p>Council plans to....</p> <p>Encourage householders to recycle more to reduce the tonnage of household waste being sent to landfill through:</p> <p>Improve the Council's overall re-use, recycling and recovery rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use) to 60% (Statutory Indicator: 55.5%). • Reduce amount (tonnage) of biodegradable waste that is landfilled to less than 14,395 tonnes (Statutory Indicator). (Previous year's target: 17,124 tonnes) • Reduce the amount (tonnage) of Local Authority collected municipal waste arisings to less than 83,740 (Statutory Indicator). (Previous year's target: 85,976 tonnes) • Improve recycling rates at Council's Household Recycling Centres to 70%. <p>Improve kerbside collection service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a new kerbside collection model by 31st March 2025. • Commence new kerbside textiles collection service to increase tonnage of textiles diverted from landfill (2024/25 Target is 250 tonnes). <p>Improve recycling rates at Council delivered events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed and expand the recycling model at Council delivered events by 31st March 2025. | | | | | | |
| Senior Responsible Owner(s) | Director of Environment | | | | | | |
| 7 aspects of Improvement | Service Effectiveness ✓ | Service Quality ✓ | Service Availability ✓ | Fairness | Sustainability ✓ | Efficiency ✓ | Innovation ✓ |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Improvement Objective 4: | | We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing | | | | | |
| Associated Programme for Government Outcome(s) | | Outcome 4 We enjoy long, healthy, active lives. | | | | | |
| Associated Community Plan Objective Outcome 2 | | All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing. | | | | | |
| Corporate Plan Priority | | Social | | | | | |
| Why are we focussing on this priority? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the most recent Resident Survey completed late 2023, residents identified supporting businesses and residents' health and wellbeing as a top priority for Council (top 3). Living in greener areas is associated with less income-related health inequality, weakening the effect of deprivation on health. Access to outdoor spaces and leisure activities has been linked to improved mental health and wellbeing. 3.6 (male) and 2.5 years (female) - the gap in life expectancy between AND residents living in deprived areas (2019-21). | | | | | | |
| What we hope to achieve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater awareness of health in the business community. Improved use of parks and outdoor spaces. Provide safe and accessible public spaces for all to enjoy. Enjoying long, healthy, active lives. All residents to enjoy good health and wellbeing. Enhanced physical and emotional wellbeing of residents through provision of services, facilities and partnerships. | | | | | | |
| How are we going to do it and how will we measure progress? | <p>Council plans to....</p> <p>Provide additional resource and support for health and wellbeing opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community planning partnerships - participate in at least 20 external group sessions with an impact on wellbeing. Increase the number of businesses registering for Health and Wellbeing initiatives to 24. Continue to develop as a Dementia Friendly Council and Borough by 31st March 2025. Move to stage 3 and working towards stage 4 of the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Plan by 31st March 2025. Develop a Leisure Strategy for the Borough 2025-2035 by 31st March 2025. Deliver 220 Fitness Classes per week by Leisure Ards and Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT)/Serco. Increase Active Ageing Memberships across Leisure Ards from 400 to 450. Increase numbers enrolled in Swim programmes delivered by Leisure Ards and NCLT/Serco from 3,500 to 4,250. Review of Council's grants policy by 31st March 2025. Produce and implement a final PEACEPLUS Local Authority Action Plan in 2024/25. <p>Manage and deliver projects to enhance physical infrastructure for health and wellbeing opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Greenway - Floodgates to Green Road Project to be onsite 2024/25. Development of Greenway - Comber to Newtownards Project to achieve planning permission and contractor procurement to commence by 31st March 2025. Planning application to be submitted by 31st March 2025 for Whitespots redevelopment project. Construction contractor appointed 2024/25 for the Ward Park redevelopment project. | | | | | | |
| Senior Responsible Owner(s) | Director of Community and Wellbeing Director of Place | | | | | | |
| 7 aspects of Improvement | Service Effectiveness ✓ | Service Quality ✓ | Service Availability ✓ | Fairness ✓ | Sustainability ✓ | Efficiency | Innovation ✓ |

4. Consultation

Our Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 process commenced in September 2023 with the Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service Team being asked to identify service development/improvement areas during the 2024/25 Service Planning and Budget process.

The Plan has been developed taking account of:

- The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032
- Corporate Plan 2024-2028 based on input from Elected Members, officers, residents and stakeholders
- Big Conversation Panel Surveys 1 and 2 where we asked what the public sector should prioritise to support Covid recovery and what improvements could be made to create a better Ards and North Down. There were 717 responses to the surveys with 266 giving us their opinion on what should be prioritised to help recovery and 300 offering their views on what could create a better Ards and North Down.
- Age Friendly Surveys which were carried out during the latter part of 2020. There were 455 responses gathered through Zoom Focus Groups and telephone interviews.
- Residents' Survey that was carried out in June 2021 and identified the key priority areas of Prosperity (jobs and the economy), Life (health and wellbeing) and Excellence (improving Council performance) for Council. The Residents' Survey was based on a representative sample of 406 residents and was conducted by telephone in accordance with the ISO20252 Standard.
- Residents' Survey that was undertaken in October and November 2023 and identified the key priority areas of attracting jobs and investment into the local economy (1st); ensuring annual rate increases are kept at or below inflation (2nd) and supporting residents and businesses' health and wellbeing (3rd). The survey was based on a representative sample of 1004 residents covering all areas of the Borough. The survey was conducted by telephone and in accordance with the ISO20252 Standard.
- Feedback from Focus Groups held in 2023.
- Feedback from PIP Survey in 2023.
- A review of Election 2024 Party Manifesto and identification of common themes.

Following approval from Corporate Leadership Team a public consultation was undertaken and included:

- 4 Focus Groups
- Online survey published on the Council's consultation platform
- Emails to all staff requesting their views on the proposed improvement objectives

- Emails to Statutory Partners seeking their views
- Promotion through the Council's social media platforms
- Local press advertisement

A summary of the results of the consultation can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

5. Linking our improvement objectives to our available budget

Council receives income from the District Rates, specific Government Grants and charging for some of its services.

The level of rates income is the major driver determining how much financial resources the Council has to deliver its services.

Figure 1 illustrates how Council funds its 2024/25 Gross Budget.

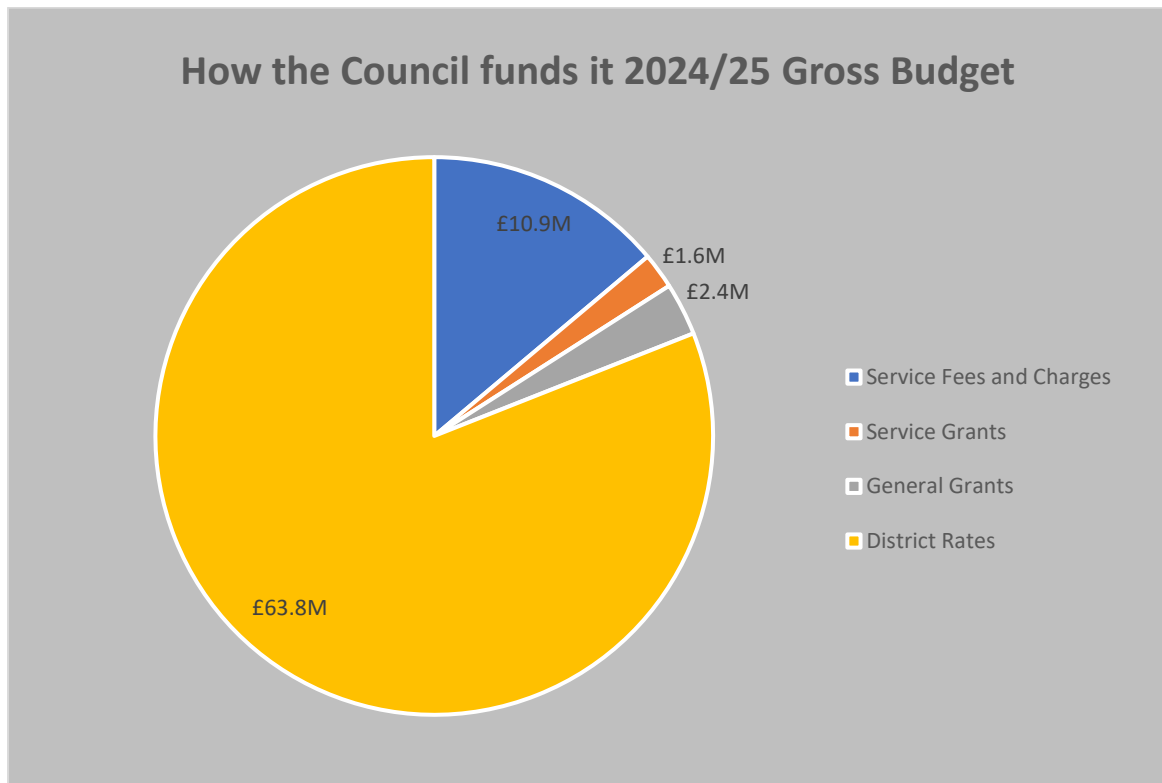


Figure 1

Table 1 sets out how we have allocated our revenue budget across our services for the 2024/25 financial year and gives the previous two years for comparison.

| | | 2024/25 | 2023/24 | 2022/23 |
|------|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Gross Expenditure Budget | Gross Expenditure Outturn | Gross Expenditure Outturn |
| | | £ | £ | £ |
| 110 | Environmental Health | 2,843,300 | 2,707,000 | 2,710,100 |
| 120 | Community and Culture | 3,463,500 | 3,659,800 | 3,382,300 |
| 140 | Parks and Cemeteries | 5,446,100 | 4,897,200 | 4,794,400 |
| 150 | Leisure | 5,770,900 | 5,825,700 | 6,129,000 |
| 210 | Waste and Cleansing Services | 18,974,000 | 18,583,900 | 17,768,300 |
| 220 | Assets and Property Services | 9,682,000 | 9,390,400 | 9,359,800 |
| 230 | Regulatory Services | 2,850,200 | 2,666,600 | 2,701,500 |
| 600 | Chief Executive's Office | 1,901,800 | 1,896,500 | 1,547,000 |
| 720 | Economic Development | 1,821,100 | 2,079,800 | 2,107,300 |
| 730 | Planning | 2,836,800 | 2,560,400 | 2,432,600 |
| 740 | Tourism | 2,019,600 | 1,653,500 | 1,833,000 |
| 810 | Regeneration | 1,233,300 | 1,152,100 | 1,219,400 |
| 820 | Strategic Capital Development | 749,000 | 490,900 | 394,500 |
| 1020 | Finance & Internal Audit | 1,395,000 | 1,221,400 | 1,147,600 |
| 1030 | Strategic Transformation and Performance | 2,434,200 | 2,185,700 | 1,973,500 |
| 1040 | HR & OD | 1,326,800 | 1,115,900 | 1,159,200 |
| 1050 | Administration | 4,728,800 | 4,755,500 | 4,663,200 |
| 910 | Capital Financing | 8,781,600 | 7,899,100 | 8,164,600 |
| | | 78,258,000 | 74,741,400 | 73,487,300 |

Table 1

A full list of the Services we provide is included within [Appendix 4](#).

6. Statutory and Corporate Indicators

The Council has a suite of Corporate Indicators on which it reports. This suite is made up of the Statutory Indicators as set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and a range of self-imposed (non-statutory) indicators with corresponding targets (standards) to be achieved to enable us to monitor and compare our performance.

STATUTORY INDICATORS

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the standards set for the statutory performance indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being reported to the Audit Committee half-yearly;
- Inclusion within the relevant Annual Service Plans with progress being reported half-yearly to the relevant Standing Committees; and
- Data submission to relevant Government Departments, with reports being issued to monitor the performance of each Council, outlining regional trends and comparisons.

The seven statutory performance indicators and standards are set out in the following table:

| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATOR | Annual Standard |
|--|--------------------------|
| ED1: Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity | 117 |
| PLANNING INDICATOR | Annual Standard |
| P1: Average processing time of major planning applications* | <30 weeks |
| P2: Average processing time of local planning applications* | <15 weeks |
| P3: Percentage of enforcement cases processed and concluded within 39 weeks* | 70% |
| <i>*Statutory Planning targets being met are reliant on receipt of timely input from various external statutory bodies</i> | |
| WASTE MANAGEMENT INDICATOR ¹ | Annual Standard |
| W1: Percentage of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use). | 60% (55.5% statutory) |
| W2: The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable waste that is landfilled. | <14,395 tonnes |
| W3: The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority collected municipal waste arisings | <83,740 tonnes |

¹ Annual report with fully validated figures for 2024/25 will be available from [DAERA website](#)

SELF-IMPOSED (Corporate) INDICATORS

Performance against corporate indicators is reported half-yearly to Standing Committees for consideration before being approved by Council and will be published in our Annual Report.

| Indicator | 2024/25 Target |
|---|----------------|
| Staff Absence | 6.00% |
| Resident Satisfaction (conducted every two years) | ≥83% |
| Annual Prompt Payment of invoices | |
| Within 10 days | ≥80% |
| Within 30 days | ≥95% |

We will continue to progress performance on the following priorities, outcomes and strategic actions, set out in our Corporate Plan 2024-2028, and report progress on them in the Self-Assessment Report.



| Ards and North Down is a Sustainable Borough |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased economic growth attracting more jobs and businesses 2. Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero 3. Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment 2. We are an environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets 3. We have a thriving and sustainable economy 4. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors 5. We have safe welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing 6. We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation |
| 17 Strategic Action to achieve the outcomes and priorities |
| Annual Service Plans developed in tandem with the rate setting process to specific each service areas annual activities aligned with the Corporate Plan |

7. Recording and reporting progress

The Improvement Objectives are delivered alongside all other Council work included in the Service Plans for 2024/25. These plans are developed for a one-year period at the beginning of each financial year and run concurrently with the Council's Improvement Plan.



Through our PERFORM framework (see Appendix 1) we will continually assess how we are doing against targets and ensure we are making a difference to our stakeholders.

Progress on delivery of our improvement objectives against performance will be monitored and reported throughout the year and are subject to the Council's usual governance arrangements: report to Audit Committee; consideration by Standing Committee; and ratification by Council.

Each year we will publish by 30 September an assessment of the Council's performance for the previous year.

8. Promotion of Equality

The Improvement Plan, which reflects our responsibility to promote Equality and Good Relations, is embedded as a part of the duty to secure continuous improvement and the process of choosing its Improvement Objectives is in keeping with the Council's Equality Scheme.

Details of Equality Scheme can be found on our website at

[Equality and Safeguarding - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

9. Your opinion matters

The Council is committed to improving its services and it is important that we listen to what the community have to say. We welcome your comments or suggestions at any time of the year and suggestions for improvement initiatives can be sent to us by emailing yom@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or writing to us at the address in section 10.

10. Further information

If you would like any further information, or to request a copy of this plan please contact:

Transformation Team
Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
BANGOR
BT20 4BT

Email: pim@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 013 3333

11. Alternative formats

This document can be provided in alternative formats if required in relation to language or disability by contacting the Transformation Team.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 | PERFORM Framework

Plan

Stating what we will do and why - the Performance Planning and Management process will be used at the following levels:



Community Planning and Reporting, where a plan will be developed every 10-15 years, setting out shared objectives for the local area and its people, to be fulfilled by a range of organisations working in partnership. A review of the plan will be carried out every four years in advance of its fourth-year anniversary.

Corporate Planning and Reporting, where a plan will be developed every 4 years to set out objectives for the Council.

Performance Improvement Plans which set out the Council's plan for a single year.

Service Planning and Reporting, where a plan will be developed every year by each council service.

Individual (and/or collective Team level) Planning and Reporting, where a plan will be delivered every year.

This approach is designed to facilitate alignment between Community, Corporate, Service and Individual plans, activities and the needs of our stakeholders. It will also focus on assessment of key risks, alignment of the Council's resources, processes and systems to consistently achieve strategic objectives.

Engage

Working together to achieve it - to inspire and motivate staff and stakeholders to be engaged with what the organisation seeks to deliver. It is likely to include focus on developing leadership, culture and values and will typically involve effective inductions, team building, cross-council team working and staff forums.

Resource

Putting our people and budgets where they are needed - to improve organisation and structural design, budget setting and management. It will involve recruitment, learning and development and system investment. It should also ensure a coordinated approach to the development of resources including staff.

Focus

Doing the right thing right – to ensure system and process alignment with organisational objectives. It is likely to involve carrying out service reviews, ongoing coaching, identifying process improvements, reviewing potential suitable systems and ensuring optimum use of systems, technology and equipment.

Operate

Getting on with the job - to ensure continuous improvement. It is designed to promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice. This will typically include ongoing benchmarking exercises to ensure we continually improve our practices and any other identified activities that would encourage continuous improvement.

Relate

Communicating with our stakeholders - to have successful communications. The aim is to encourage engagement and transparency; this stage will include decisions on communication and delivery, including internal/external communication methods, carrying out stakeholder surveys and receiving feedback including complaints. Stakeholder analysis and Partnership working are also likely to be included.

Manage

Reviewing how we are doing and managing improvements - to monitor, reward good performance and address under performance. This will involve reviewing scorecards, feedback etc. for each of the parties involved and determining actual measurement achieved against original objectives/targets.

Appendix 2 | Specified aspects of improvement (as defined in Section 86 Local Government Act 2014)

Strategic effectiveness is key to linking the community plan (or corporate plan, in the absence of a community plan), and the ongoing processes that underpin it, with a council's improvement processes. The Department would expect that a council's community planning outcomes and objectives should be central to that council's improvement activity. In doing this, councils should be able to develop a clear narrative around their plans for improvement that will resonate with the citizens and communities that they serve.

Strategic effectiveness is likely to be a key focus for a council's performance improvement activity, and the Department acknowledges that councils will require time to build the required consensus to establish their community plans.

Service quality, availability and fairness all relate to service provision, by aiming to meet the needs of citizens, and ensuring fair ease of access to the most suitable services that meet their needs. Clearly, all of these objectives can be demonstrated individually, or collectively.

Fairness can also be demonstrated by exercising non-service functions in ways which reduce disadvantage and improve social well-being, for instance by improving citizens' access to information.

When carrying out its functions or providing services, a council may demonstrate improvement when it operates in a way that contributes towards the **sustainability** of its area. Equally, on-going **efficiency** may also be shown if fewer resources are utilised while maintaining provision of substantially similar, or better, services. Should a council choose to alter the manner by which a service is provided, and in so doing it uses fewer resources or more integrated services, it will not only be demonstrating efficiency, but may demonstrate improved sustainability as well.

The **innovation** aspect is slightly different. It covers any changes to service design and delivery methods that are intended to yield improvement under any other aspect and are reasonably likely to do so. This allows councils to make changes which may not have tangible effects within the same reporting year, but are likely to in subsequent years, and still count them as improvements.

Appendix 3 | Consultation Results

The following are the key findings from the Focus Groups and Survey. The Council wish to thank all of the participants for contributing to this.

Performance Improvement Objective 1: We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs

- The majority (91%) in the focus groups agreed that increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs was an important objective for the Council. The bulk of managerial and higher paid jobs were perceived to lie in Belfast rather than in the AND Borough.
- Among the different actions associated with this objective, manage and deliver programmes to enhance physical and digital infrastructure (34%) was identified as the most important, followed by manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice (31%), and deliver capital projects using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (13%).
- Overall, 94% of residents in the focus groups were supportive of this objective.
- 69% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 31% unsupportive.

Performance Improvement Objective 2: We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough

- All residents (100%) agreed that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups were "supportive" or "very supportive" of the list of actions that the Council has set out to meet the performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- The most important objective was "target identified problem areas for enhanced enforcement and street cleansing activities" (75%).
- All residents (100%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough.
- 79% of consultees in the Council's survey were supportive of this objective, with 21% unsupportive.

Performance Improvement Objective 3: We will improve the Borough's recycling rates

- All residents (100%) in the groups agreed that improving the Borough's recycling rates is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- All residents (100%) in the groups said that "improving the Council's re-use, recycling and recovery rates" is the most important action under this objective.
- Almost all residents (97%) were supportive of the Council's performance improvement objective of "improving the Borough's recycling rates". The reason for non-support was that the targets were said to be not stretching enough.

- 64% of consultees in the Council’s survey were supportive of this objective, with 36% unsupportive.

Performance Improvement Objective 4: We will support out businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing

- 91% of residents in the groups agreed that supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is an important performance improvement objective for the Council to be focusing on.
- Residents were mostly in support of the actions (62%). However, they queried “working within existing budgets” and felt an increase in budget would be appropriate. Others commented on the need for the Council to work in partnership with those agencies that are in the lead.
- Overall, 91% were supportive of the Council’s Performance improvement objective of supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing.
- 74% of consultees in the Council’s survey were supportive of this objective, with 26% unsupportive.

Most Important Performance Improvement Objective

- The most important performance improvement objective, according to participants in the focus groups, is “Increase economic growth by attracting more businesses and creating jobs.” 50% of all the participants placed this as the most important, many commenting that economic growth could help support the other three objectives. Second most important (25%) was “Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough”. Relatively fewer residents said the other objectives are most important “supporting businesses and residents to protect their health and wellbeing”, 12.5%: and, “improving the Borough’s recycling rates”, 12.5%).
- Just over half (53%) of residents in the Council survey said that increasing economic growth and creating jobs is the most important performance improvement objective, with 21% saying supporting businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing is most important. 21% felt that improving the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Borough is most important.

Other Areas for Improvement suggest by Residents

- Other areas of improvement residents believe the Council should focus on included: dog litter, potholes (in conjunction with the relevant Executive Department) and regular updates to residents. Some commented that the improvement objectives themselves should be improved so that they become more stretching, time-bounded and have clear targets that are above the minimum or statutory standard.

Key Conclusions

The findings from the focus groups show that a substantial majority of residents are 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”, can only be achieved in partnership with others and the objective should reflect this.

Overall, the consultation provides robust evidence for the Council that its strategic direction, in terms of performance improvement objectives, aligns closely with the views, expectations and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

The consultation has 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.

The following table illustrates the levels of support for the Improvement Objectives.

| | | FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY CONSULTATION RESULTS | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|--------------|
| | | Very supportive / Supportive | Not very supportive / Not at all supportive | Not answered |
| Improvement Objective 1 We will increase economic growth by attracting more business and creating jobs | Focus Group Online | 94% 69% | 6% 31% | |
| Improvement Objective 2 We will improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of our Borough | Focus Group Online | 100% 79% | 21% | |
| Improvement Objective 3 We will improve the recycling rates | Focus Group Online | 97% 64% | 3% 36% | |
| Improvement Objective 4 We will support our business and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing | Focus Group Online | 91% 74% | 9% 26% | |

Appendix 4 | The services we provide

Council Services

- waste collection and disposal
- recycling and waste management
- local planning functions
- civic amenity provision
- grounds maintenance
- street cleaning
- cemeteries
- public conveniences
- food safety
- health and safety
- environmental protection
- environmental improvement
- estates management - building design and maintenance
- building control - inspection and regulation of new buildings
- dog control
- licensing, such as entertainment licensing
- enforcement byelaws such as those around litter
- sports, leisure services and recreational facilities
- parks, open spaces and playgrounds
- community centres
- community development
- arts, heritage and cultural facilities
- registration of births, deaths and marriages

Planning

- local development plan functions
- development control and enforcement

Roads

- off-street parking (except Park and Ride)

Local economic development

- Start a Business Programme and Enterprise Shows
- youth entrepreneurship (such as Prince's Trust)
- social entrepreneurship
- Investing for Women

Local tourism

- providing business support including business start-up advice, along with training and delivery of customer care schemes
- providing advice to developers on tourism policies and related issues

Heritage

- control of alterations, extension and demolition of listed buildings
- conservation area designation and management

- listed building enforcement notices
- compensation where listed building consent has been revoked or modified
- issuing of Building Preservation Notices. This will allow a council to temporarily list a building for a period of six months pending Northern Ireland Environment Agency assessment of permanently protected status as a listed building. [This is commonly called spot-listing]
- issuing notices to require Urgent Works to preserve a building
- community listing (previously called Local Listing) of buildings of special architectural or historic interest

Other services

- neighbourhood renewal funding relating to enterprises initiatives
- local water recreational facilities
- local sports (greater involvement of local government in local sports decisions)
- Donaghadee Harbour