

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

11 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday 18 December 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 December 2024
(Copy to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 27 November 2024 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 7.1 Planning Committee dated 3 December 2024
 - 7.2 Environment Committee dated 4 December 2024
 - 7.2.1 Matter Arising from item 4 – Granting of an Amusement Permit (Report to follow)
 - 7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 5 December 2024
 - 7.4. Corporate Committee dated 10 December 2024
 - 7.4.1 Matters Arising item 8 - NOM 623 Update: VE Day – 80th Anniversary (Report attached)

7.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 11 December 2024 (Copy to follow)

8. **Consultations**

8.1 Just Transition Commission Consultation (Report attached)

9. **Conferences and Courses**

9.1 NAC Conference - Youth Services, Safeguarding, Radicalisation & Knife Crime, 24th – 26th January, South Shields (Report attached)

10. Changes to Standing Orders (Report attached)

11. NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Elected Members 2025 (Report to follow)

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 Smith and Councillor Blaney

That Council notes the recent changes to National Insurance made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves that increased employers contributions from 13.8% to 15% and also reduced the threshold at which NI is paid from £9,100 to £5,000. This increased tax on jobs will have a detrimental impact on all areas of the economy. The implications for this Council is an unbudgeted £1 million increase in our cost base which works out at a potential 1.6% increase for ratepayers. The Chancellor has stated that she will compensate the public sector to cover the increase so it is expected that the Northern Ireland Executive will receive a Barnett Consequential payment accordingly. We therefore call on the Executive to guarantee that local government in Northern Ireland will receive compensation and confirm that the burden will not fall on ratepayers and writes to the Finance Minister to obtain this reassurance.

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter

That Council notes the poor condition of the Bowtown children's play park and its poor provision of accessible play equipment and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.

15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McLaren and Councillor Wray

This Council expresses its concern at the crumbling state of our water and wastewater infrastructure and the resultant profound impact it is having on households throughout our council area; the disastrous and dangerous impact the resulting sewage pollution is having on our coastlines; further notes the impact the

lack of wastewater connection capacity is having on the delivery of new homes and the establishment of new businesses; further highlights that through rates, water is already accounted for, and that the separation of this payment as a sustainable funding stream for Northern Ireland Water could unlock the ability to attract additional funding to invest in water and wastewater infrastructure and; resolves to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to highlight this council's deep concern and press for urgent action on the funding model for Northern Ireland Water to enable it to secure the required funding to invest in our water and wastewater infrastructure.

15.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas

That this Council brings back a report identifying potential sites around Comber to accommodate industrial units suitable for use by SME's, and outline their compatibility with the Department of Economy Sub Regional Economic Plan, and Sectoral Action Plans together with Invest NI.

15.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson

That this Council recognises the considerable delays and frustration experienced by Donaghadee FC, Donaghadee Rugby Club, Ards and Donaghadee Cricket Club and Donaghadee Ladies Hockey Club in relation to the long-awaited upgrade to their playing surface and facilities.

Further to this Council Officers will commit to implementing the upgrade and creation of a 3G pitch at Crommelin Park in a timely manner, with a report being brought back exploring external funding opportunities, or in the absence of external funding, options for direct funding.

Further to this Council officers shall engage meaningfully with all Sports Clubs in Donaghadee around facilities to ensure the development and investment to improve sports provision and facilities.

15.6 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall

This Council acknowledges the success of the United Kingdom Pipe and Drum Major Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards.

This Council notes that other areas of the Borough have the space, potential locations, and infrastructure are required to host major events, for example 14,000 people attended the Donaghadee light up events, and that a spread of large events across the Borough brings cultural, social and economic benefits, fostering a sense of whole-Borough inclusivity.

Therefore, working with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association, this Council will bring back a report considering the potential for these Championships to be held across the Borough on a rotational basis in Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee.

15.7 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken

That this Council, recognising the opportunities of the Green Economy to bring substantial funding to this Council, make significant savings and create new local jobs, sets up a working group comprised of Councillors and Officers to bring forward detailed proposal to achieve these benefits and in the process, help reduce carbon emissions in the Ards and North Down area.

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

16. Request to extend Lease - Origin Gymnastics at ABMWLC (Report attached)

17. Queens Parade Update (Report to follow)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hennessy
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 McBurney
Alderman Smith	Councillor McClean
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKee
Councillor Cathcart (Mayor)	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Chambers (Deputy Mayor)	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Moore
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Smart
Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Wray

**LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS
FOR DECEMBER 2024**

Tuesday 3rd December 2024

11:00 Orchardville Opening of Centre & Christmas Craft Fair 6 Enterprise Road, Conlig

19:00 Kircubbin Xmas Switch on Kircubbin Town Centre

Wednesday 4th December 2024

14:00 Unveiling of Tree of Hope for Homeless Awareness Week Simon Community, Central Avenue, Bangor

19:00 Xmas Switch on Bangor (cancelled due to adverse weather)

19:00 Cloughey Xmas Switch on Main Rd, Cloughey

Thursday 5th December 2024

12:30 Agenda Strategy Meeting, Bangor Castle

15:30 Nexus 40th Reception, Bangor Castle

18:15 Groomsport Xmas Switch on Starting at the Stables

19:00 Ballywalter Xmas Switch on, Ballywalter

Friday 6th December 2024

19:00 Lord Weir and Residents Visit, Bangor Castle

Saturday 7th December 2024

16:30 Conlig Xmas Switch On Starting at Conlig Newsagents (cancelled due to storm Darragh)

Monday 9th December 2024

19:30 Killinchy Xmas Light Switch-On, Killinchy Community Hall

Tuesday 10th December 2024

18:00 Bangor Chamber of Commerce Xmas Drinks, King's Quay, Bangor

Wednesday 11th December 2024

18:00 Rathgill Xmas Event, Rathgill Community Centre

19:00 Ards CCE All Ireland Success Reception, Bangor Castle

Thursday 12th December 2024

16:00 Meeting with Greenspaces, Mayor's Parlour, Bangor Castle

18:00 Neurodiversity UK Christmas Grotto Visit, Castle Street, Comber

Sunday 15th December 2024

16:00 Cultural Xmas Celebrations St Comgall's Parish Centre, Bangor

Tuesday 17th December 2024

18:30 Community Carol Service, Bangor Central Integrated Primary School

Friday 20th December 2024

09:45 Annual Prize Giving Distribution, St Columbanus College, Bangor

Saturday 21st December 2024

13:00 Jingle Bell Trail, The Walled Garden, Bangor

Sunday 22nd December 2024

18:30 Carol Service Reading, Bangor West Presbyterian

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 27 November 2024 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)

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

Councillors:	Ashe (Zoom, 7.17pm)	Kennedy
	Blaney	Kerr
	Boyle	McBurney
	Chambers (Zoom)	McClellan
	Cochrane	McCollum
	Douglas	McCracken
	Edmund	McKee (Zoom)
	Harbinson	McKimm
	Hennessey	McLaren
	Hollywood	Moore
	Irwin	Morgan
	S Irvine (Zoom, 7.06pm)	Thompson
	W Irvine	Smart
	Kendall (Zoom)	Wray

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

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman McDowell and Councillor Gilmour. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Ashe and Councillor McLaren.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest from Members at the following were made:

The Mayor, Councillor Cathcart – Item 6 – Deputation from NIFRS
Alderman Graham – Item 16.2 – Notice of Motion and 16.3 – Notice of Motion
Councillor Kerr – Item 16.2 – Notice of Motion and 16.3 – Notice of Motion

NOTED.

4. MAYOR’S BUSINESS

Reflecting on engagements throughout November, the Mayor had been honoured to welcome the Duke of Gloucester to Donaghadee to recognise and celebrate the RNLI on its 200th anniversary. The Duke also visited the Moat and the Sir Samuel Kelly exhibition centre to unveil a plaque – where a number of the Mayor’s colleagues were present as well.

The Mayor had found it a pleasure, along with the Chief Executive, last week to recognise 17 Council staff who had over 25 years of service working within Local Government. Between them they had nearly ½ a millennium of service supporting the Borough and our local community. It was a wonderful achievement and his thanks and congratulations went to all worthy recipients.

Finally, the Mayor expressed how disappointed he was that the Bangor Christmas lights switch on had to be cancelled last Saturday evening due to the unfortunate significant flooding on the site and the surrounding area. He was pleased that the planned activity in the city centre throughout the day had been able to go ahead as planned. The switch-on had been rescheduled to take place on Wednesday 4th December.

NOTED.

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

(Appendix I)

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

There had been a strong theme of remembrance throughout November, the Mayor recalled, highlighting a series of Remembrance Sunday services across the Borough which he had attended.

He reflected on a visit to Newtownards Airfield to remember 13 young men who were killed during World War II and the unveiling of a plaque to remember those spectators killed during a tragedy at the Ards TT Rally. It had been humbling to meet the families of those victims at a civic event held in Newtownards.

The Mayor further recalled hosting visitors involved in the St Columbanus partnership, including local Council Mayors from Italy and France and he welcomed those connections.

In closing, he welcomed the opening of the Vikela factory in Bangor which represented an exciting investment resulting in new jobs within the Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Blaney, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the information be noted.

(Councillor S Irvine joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.06pm)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Mayor advised that he would exclude himself for the duration of Item 6 having declared an interest. In the absence of the Deputy Mayor from the Council Chamber, the Mayor suggested that Alderman Brooks, as the most recent serving former Mayor in attendance, assume the Chair in his absence.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Alderman Brooks assume the Chair in the Mayor’s absence.

The Mayor withdrew from the meeting (7.08) and Alderman Brooks took over the role of Chair.

6. DEPUTATION FROM NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above presentation.

Mr Declan Rogers (Group Commander, NIFRS) outlined the attached presentation in a 10-minute address, summarised as follows:

- The NIFRS Community Risk Management Plan was a live public consultation.
- NILGA Executive Committee had requested that Mr Rogers reach out to each of the 11 Councils to provide information around it.

- His presentation would also be delivered to each of the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and Community Planning groups.
- NIFRS worked 24 hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year to keep everyone in Northern Ireland safe.
- It wanted to provide the best possible service to meet the changing needs of our community.
- Its plan was to make our fire and rescue service more effective and efficient with the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.
- Council was invited to have its say on how NIFRS enhanced community safety and its opinion mattered in shaping the future of the NIFRS.
- Mr Rogers referred Members to an online information video on the NIFRS website and this was played to Members during the presentation.
- The last strategic plan ran from 2017 and had closed in 2021 and the current CRMP was the recommendation from an independent review.
- NIFRS was aligning itself with two national professional bodies – the UK Fire Standards Board and National Fire Chiefs Council.
- NIFRS had adopted national guidance from those two bodies and that included establishment of the CRMP.
- This provided a blueprint and strategic direction for the NIFRS along with improvement over the next five years.
- It outlined in detail what the NIFRS was, the work it would undertake including steps to prevent emergencies occurring.
- The process assisted with budget prioritisation in terms of tackling risk, demand and vulnerability and spend its budget to make sure that it had the right resources and the most effective locations across Northern Ireland.
- There was no statutory requirement for NIFRS to have a CRMP but there was a Home Office mandate for all English Fire Services to have one.
- This therefore was following good practice.
- A strategic assessment of risk meant that the national risk register was adapted to local level
- Identified risks in Northern Ireland included hazardous materials, loss of critical infrastructure, major accidents, climate change, which was a huge concern. Other risks included vehicle technology, renewable energy, all of those risks were crucial.
- Seven weeks remained of the public consultation and Mr Rogers encouraged members to read the 79-page document on the NIFRS website and provide feedback.
- This document would be the basis for future recommendations and provide the reasons for service changes going forward and show they were being made through thorough risk assessment.

(Councillor Ashe joined the meeting via Zoom – 7.16pm)

The acting Chairman, Alderman Brooks, thanked Mr Rogers and praised the NIFRS for its work, recalling personal experience, as a business owner, of the fire service responding to a serious fire at his premises in Donaghadee.

(The Mayor returned to the meeting and reclaimed the Chair – 7.21pm)

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 30 OCTOBER 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Item 18 - Event Locations 2025

Raising a point of accuracy, Alderman McRandal advised that he had spoken to second the proposal and not Alderman McDowell as recorded.

Item 7.4 – Minutes of Place & Prosperity Committee

Referring to minutes of a TAG meeting, Councillor Cochrane sought assurances that a manager from the Council's Leisure team would attend a rescheduled meeting with the sporting community in Donaghadee. It was important that the Leisure Manager attended that meeting because the sport club representatives needed answers.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed that the Leisure Manager would be attending.

Councillor McCollum referred to three meetings where there had been a commitment by a Leisure officer to attend, but each one had been cancelled due to the officer's unavailability. Meetings for 12 August, 16 October and most recently 20 November, had all been rescheduled.

Councillor McCollum, along with Alderman Brooks, had recalled meeting sports clubs in the area on a number of occasions during the past year and was aware how important this meeting was and the level of unhappiness that it had been cancelled on those three occasions. She sought further assurances from the Director that the Leisure Manager would be in attendance for the planned meeting next Thursday and the Director advised that the Leisure Manager had given him personal assurances that he would be attending that meeting.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be agreed.

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Minutes of Special Audit Committee meeting dated 23 October 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Councillor McCollum felt that the meeting had been beneficial in order to clarify the uncertainty and confusion around the findings in the report of the Northern Ireland

Audit Office. She thanked officers for providing the explanatory documentation and thanked the Chief Executive and Head of Finance for hosting a meeting for herself and Alderman McRandal which had provided insight and understanding that this was a legacy Council issue and that none of the existing officers had had any oversight of the contract at that time.

As Vice Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor McCollum explained that she had raised with the Director of Corporate Services, the value of holding the meeting in public and she paid credit to the Director for taking that into consideration and deciding to hold the entirety of the meeting in public. This had afforded complete transparency.

Continuing, Councillor McCollum recalled what had been a robust and thorough examination by all members of the Committee that were present on the night, and it had certainly answered all of her own queries. She asked if consideration would be given to holding these types of meetings again in future, concerned that there was a perception of many meetings taking place in confidence.

The Chief Executive explained that there was an emphasis on being as transparent as possible and officers were being challenged to make sure as many reports as possible were heard in public. She advised that certain issues around procurement, staffing and legals were required to be heard in committee. She reminded Members that in line with Standing Orders they could propose to bring an item out of committee which was at the discretion of the Council Chamber.

The Mayor welcomed that commitment and recalled that his Council party grouping, the DUP, had taken that approach to propose items be brought out of committee, referring to the Household Recycling Centre booking system and the flags debates, as more recent examples.

Alderman McIlveen claimed that the Alliance Party had often objected when the DUP had made proposals to bring items out of committee, but he was pleased that it had come round to that way of thinking. He also highlighted that the meetings with the Chief Executive that Councillor McCollum had referred to had also taken place with other Members including himself and Councillor Wray, so there had been a cross-Chamber approach to enabling transparency. He felt that the decision to hold the meeting in public had been justified given the age of the documents in question and felt there were no longer any issues of commercial sensitivity.

Alderman McRandal stated that the Alliance Party was interested in transparency and not in bringing items out of committee only to have sham debates where only half of the facts were available as with the flags debate.

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

8.2. Planning Committee dated 5 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

8.3. Environment Committee dated 6 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

Item 3 – Response to Notice of Motion – Donaghadee Harbour

Welcoming the progress of Donaghadee sea protection enhancement, Councillor Thompson thanked Officers for their work and the contribution from groups at the forefront of the issue, including Donaghadee Community Association and Donaghadee Sailing Club. He asked for an update on timelines for the work and the Director of Environment explained that in accordance with the terms of a Levelling Up funding agreement the report would have to be completed by the end of March 2025.

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

8.4. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 7 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

The Mayor advised that there was a matter arising report and recommendation for Item 4 so requested a proposer and seconder to agree the minutes with the exception of Item 4.

Proposed by Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the minutes be approved and adopted, with the exception of Item 4.

Item 6 – Event Locations 2025 – Deferred from Council – Consideration around Sea Bangor

Councillor McClean proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that officers bring back a report detailing how the Sea Bangor Festival can, despite site limitations, be included at a time in May-August in the 2025 events programme. The report will also examine alternatives such as additional family/music in Ward Park and an Autumn event for Bangor.

Speaking to the amendment, Councillor McClean was aware that everyone had been trying to find a solution for what was a difficult situation at a time when there would be major development work going on in the area. He referred to the public concerns at the loss of the Sea Bangor event and those of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce in terms of the impacts it would have on traders.

Councillor McClean felt it important to try and find a way for Sea Bangor to go ahead in 2025 but appreciated it would not be on the size and scale that was held normally given the site restrictions due to major development work commencing. He also recognised that the Armed Forces Day would also now be held in Newtownards.

In closing, he felt that it was extremely important to find a way of holding Sea Bangor next year, particularly for the traders at what would be a time of great disruption for Bangor city centre.

The seconder, Councillor Cochrane, spoke of the importance of getting Sea Bangor back up and running as it was a fantastic asset, while Councillor Blaney explained how important the festival was for local businesses who were already trading in difficult conditions under normal circumstances without the disruption that would occur. The loss of Sea Bangor had been a major disappointment, and the Bangor Chamber had urged Council to do all it could to reverse the decision to postpone the event during 2025.

Alderman W Irvine made a similar point, and he too recalled the concerns raised by the Bangor Chamber of Commerce while Councillor McCracken added his support for the amendment, asking officers to do all they could to try and enable a reconfigured event, given there would be limited capacity. Whatever happened in 2025 however, he felt it was important to make sure that in 2026, Council put some effort into a reimagined and renewed Sea Bangor as it was a unique maritime festival bringing out our wonderful location. By that stage he also hoped that Marine Gardens would be a central feature of that showcase, making the festival a jewel not only for Ards and North Down but for all of Northern Ireland.

The Mayor welcomed the amendment and felt that it would clearly be unacceptable not to have Sea Bangor in 2025. While the reason for having this debate was because of an extremely positive development at Queen's Parade, it was still important to look after the city centre in the shorter term during that period of change. He thanked Members for their contributions and Officers for their recent engagement on the issue.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that officers bring back a report detailing how the Sea Bangor Festival can, despite site limitations, be included at a time in May-August in the 2025 events programme. The report will also examine alternatives such as additional family/music in Ward Park and an Autumn event for Bangor.

Item 14.2 – Notice of Motion

While recognising that Members had been behind the purpose of the motion, Alderman McIlveen explained that there was some concern raised at the meeting around costs and practicalities and the fact this would potentially be an unbudgeted spend. He asked for some clarity on how officers would be approaching this, explaining that his preference would be to have a report come back in the interim.

The Interim Director of Place explained that officers would be looking at resources and information that was already available internally initially. He referred to GIS data

and information that could be available through Community Planning partnerships. Once that was identified along with any gaps, a report would come back to the Committee for further guidance on how the Council wished to proceed.

Alderman McIlveen was satisfied with that approach but asked if the proposer and seconder of the motion shared that understanding. Both Councillor McCracken (proposer) and Councillor McCollum (seconder) confirmed to the Mayor they were content with that way forward.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the minutes, with the exception of Item 4, be approved and adopted.

8.4.1 Matter Arising from Item 4 - International Relations

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that at January's Corporate Committee it was agreed to close down formal relationships with Peoria, Arizona, and Kemi, Finland, but maintain the 'twin' and friendship relationship with Bregenz, and the sister city relationship with Virginia Beach, with a view to developing those relationships in a meaningful way and re-form an International Relations Sub-Committee under the Place and Prosperity Committee.

An update report (Item 4) to November's Place and Prosperity Committee advised that it was now recommended to form a Working Group, as opposed to a Sub Committee, and included a recommendation to nominate five elected members to that Working Group.

At Committee only three members were nominated as follows: Alderman McDowell, Councillor Gilmour, and Councillor McLaren.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to appoint two more elected members, or if it is content with the three places as nominated.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Council proceeds with the three places as nominated under Item 4 of the Place and Prosperity Committee minutes dated 7 November 2024.

8.5. Corporate Committee dated 12 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes, with the exception of Item 5, be approved and adopted.

8.5.1 Matter Arising from Item 5 – Advertising and Sponsorship Policy (File C&M/24/SAP24) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that as part of budgeting processes, advertising and sponsorship was highlighted as an

opportunity Council should explore as a means of income generation. While some sponsorship agreements already existed across the Council, there was little consistency in how they were secured or managed.

To facilitate a more proactive and structured approach to advertising and sponsorship across the Council, a report at item 5 of the Corporate Services Committee asked Members to adopt a newly developed Advertising and Sponsorship Policy for the Council and note the planned pilot of six key opportunities in an initial period before wider roll out.

Clause 5 'Prohibited Advertisers/Sponsors' of the policy submitted to the Corporate Committee made reference to the Equality Act 2010. It was highlighted that this was not applicable in Northern Ireland and needed replaced.

This point in the Policy had now been rewritten and a clause to cover organisations involved in Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking was also added - as follows.

- organisations or businesses involved in discrimination, victimisation, harassment or other unlawful conduct that is prohibited under anti-discrimination legislation applicable in the Northern Ireland, against people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, political opinion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership. This applies to employment and education as well as the provision of goods, facilities, and services. This legislation is set out on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland website here: [ECNI - The Law, Equality Legislation, Equality Commission, Northern Ireland](#)
- organisations involved or associated with [modern slavery/human trafficking](#) as outlined in [Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Criminal Justice and Support for Victims\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#)

Furthermore, the Committee sought reassurance that Council could terminate a contract immediately should a company be deemed likely to bring the Council into disrepute. Within Clause 5 of the Policy (extract below), and to be referenced in the associated Advertising and Sponsorship Contract agreed with any organisation or business, it was made clear that:

5.3 The Council retains the right to decline advertising and/or sponsorship from any organisation or business or in respect of products that the Council, in its sole discretion considers inappropriate. Council also retains the right to decline consent for advertising or sponsorship on its land and properties if it is deemed inappropriate. The Council retains the right to terminate a contract if they believe the partner company has acted in a way to bring the Council into disrepute. The Council will ensure that any contract entered into with an advertiser or sponsor contains adequate provision for the Council to unilaterally and immediately terminate the contract at any time.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopt the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

8.6. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 13 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 7 – Leisure Strategy Update

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the minutes had been reviewed as usual but recalled what had been a challenging meeting and referred to an inaccuracy that was recorded within the proposal from Councillor Kendall. He advised that the proposal was simply that the recommendation be adopted and the further text that followed in the remainder of that paragraph should be disregarded as it related to a different item. The recorded final recommendation from the Committee however was correct.

Item 5 - Borough of Sanctuary

Councillor McClean proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that that Council does not at this time apply to join the City of Sanctuary UK network or further engage with the organisation but commits to continuing to do everything reasonably practicable within our communities and in our dealings with the NI Executive and the Home Office to effect the efficient and compassionate management of issues pertaining to refugees and those seeking asylum.

Speaking to his amendment, Councillor McClean explained at the outset that he felt the original intent was to make a statement following the recent protests over the summer around immigration, including the utterly shameful treatment of members of our community who happened to be of ethnic minorities, behaviour which was roundly condemned by all parties and elected representatives.

He explained that the original recommendation was to join a City of Sanctuary network, and while he understood the desire to show goodwill given those events, he wanted to find out more about what that particular status would entail and require of the Council, along with the nature and purpose of the organisation.

He felt it important to remember that immigration was a Home Office issue, beyond the remit of local Councils or even the NI Executive. However the Home Office provided funding to the Council for it to do what it reasonably could.

He referred to the organisation's charter and the criteria and steps that the Council would be required to take and explicitly follow. He had researched the charter and offered to share this with Members.

He went on to explain that the charter would require the Council to feed into a broader movement which included calls for changes in the law, specifically that

people could seek asylum in the UK no matter how they came here. This was explicit and he warned that the Council would be signing up to this as an organisation that corporately, supported illegal immigration.

He referred to people who had arrived in the UK illegally by dangerously crossing the English channel, organised through human trafficking. He felt Members needed to understand that point because he believed they had not done so on the night of the Committee meeting.

Councillor McClean had sought confirmation with the relevant Director, who had confirmed that the Council did not have an immigration policy and that in effect Council would be declaring alignment with the City of Sanctuary charter. He repeated that this was enabling people to seek asylum in the UK no matter how they got here.

He explained that as a group, the DUP could not support that and he urged colleagues in the Ulster Unionist party grouping, in particular, to reconsider their position given the Director's recent confirmation on this.

While he did not question the good faith of the organisation and its founders. This was a pro-immigration charity campaigning to change the law around immigration and it was in its rights to do that, but this was an advocacy group and he believed it was encouraging illegal immigration. It was a clear and explicit stated goal of this advocacy group and therefore he felt Council ought to reject it.

The proposer referred to a protest welcoming refugees reported by the organisation by a Hastings Sanctuary group and noted that this was on a beach and not outside a Town Hall or Westminster. It was a protest on the channel, so the Council needed to be clear what it was signing up to.

He believed there had also been confusion at the Committee meeting on the law around claiming asylum, and he accepted that claiming asylum no matter how you arrived in the UK was not illegal but entering and remaining the UK without the required leave to do so had been an offence for many years. He referred to the relevant legislation which in 2022 had expanded the scope of offences and increased the penalty of up to four years imprisonment.

In closing, he explained that he had no intention of getting into a wider debate about immigration. Like all of us, he wanted to light a candle rather than curse the darkness. However what Council would be going for here would be neither compassionate nor helpful to anybody.

The seconder, Councillor Cochrane, rose to support the amendment, stating that he was concerned about the implications of signing up to the City of Sanctuary charter as outlined by the proposer. He explained that the DUP group had no problem welcoming those who came here via safe and legal routes. He referred to the Borough's very proud record in welcoming people who had fled from the likes of Ukraine and Syria. This had shown the people of this Borough were warm and friendly to those seeking refuge here.

In terms of the Sanctuary charter, he agreed with the proposer that it was sending a message that the Borough would be in support of illegal immigration. He went on to provide figures of the number of channel crossings, advising that as of the 11th of November, 32,900 people had crossed the English Channel in 2024.

That was 32,900 people who had unnecessarily put their lives at risk. Furthermore those crossings were organised by criminal gangs and human traffickers and he believed Council should send a clear message that those who wished to come here should do so legally via safe routes. Everything should be done within its power to discourage illegal immigration and the criminal gangs that profited from it.

He felt there was nothing of great benefit to existing refugees for this Council signing up to be a Borough of Sanctuary but the signing of the charter only presented risk to this Council in terms of sending out the wrong message and encouraging illegal immigration.

Speaking in opposition to the amendment, Councillor McKimm argued that this was not the knee-jerk reaction to recent protests and referred to the request dating back to his notice of motion a number of years ago. It went further back to what he had described as a wave of Bangor Love and he recalled receiving a message from the former Chief Executive getting a message advising that asylum seekers would be arriving at the Marine Court Hotel. He had sought further information at the time but none of the relevant agencies knew anything at the time. This had resulted in a multi-agency group forming made up of 16 partners. The group would support and encourage integration and become an agency in which facts could be checked and information could be sought. That had triggered this wave of Bangor Love where people then came forward and offered their skills and knowledge to provide a range of services given that these people could not access anything that had Government funding attached. He explained that there were now 15 cities and multiple universities, including Belfast's Queens University which had set themselves up as places of Sanctuary and he felt that this had a history of good pedigree which dated back now for 20 years when Sheffield had become the first to adopt the status.

Councillor McKimm went on to argue against the view that this was supporting illegal immigration and explained that it was about bringing services together and creating a place of warmth so that people could be made welcome. He pointed to Belfast City Council and suggested speaking to people there about this. He believed that they had signed up for warmth and kindness and he did not believe that there was one person in the Chamber would not wish to sign up for that. He suggested if people were unsure, just to ask for further information but he was confident that the Council would find out that this wasn't about law breaking, but showing love and he believed this was the will of the people that had elected them.

Councillor McKee was disappointed by the amendment, describing it as a spanner in the works. He found it depressing that people who were lucky enough to be born in a safe country with the freedom to build a life for themselves were unable to show the unconditional compassion for those fleeing warfare and oppression. He recalled the conversation at the Committee and that no human was illegal and seeking asylum was a human right. He referred to the 1951 Convention, adding that it was not unlawful to travel to the UK to seek protection. He believed that support should be

offered on the need of the individual rather than the manner in which they had arrived, and he felt that if people fully understood the trauma and sacrifice people made in seeking that protection, people here would show the compassion and care that they needed. He found it disappointing that the Council was not united on this and he asked that the DUP reconsider its amendment.

Councillor Wray found it important that the first message sent from this was that refugees seeking asylum were very welcome in the Borough. He condemned elements of racism within the Borough and felt strongly that this needed to be called out. Having heard the concerns of the DUP, he could not agree with them all and he had concluded that their understanding of this organisation was not the same as his own. He also reflected on the contrasting view of Councillor McKee and felt that it would be beneficial to have a united voice around the Chamber on this issue. He could not support the amendment and would be abstaining on the basis that he would like the organisation to come and present to the Council and hopefully persuade the DUP that it was wrong on this matter and enable the Borough to become a place of Sanctuary.

On behalf of the Alliance Party group, Councillor Moore explained that it was unable to support the amendment. She believed that everybody in the Chamber wanted to show that the Borough was an outward-looking forward thinking and compassionate place. She referred to attacks on the Islamic Centre in Newtownards in August and this showed that Council needed to go beyond condemning the perpetrators and to also support those affected. Being a Borough of Sanctuary would create a supportive culture and counter some of the misinformation and dis-information in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. She recalled Members attending a workshop earlier in the month and expert speaker had helped dispel many of the myths around what motivated people to come here and provide understanding of the challenges they faced and the lives they were leaving behind.

People had experienced unimaginable trauma – leaving behind family and careers, taking dangerous routes at huge financial cost. Leaving behind all they had to find what they believed would be a better life. She added that the Borough was already doing what it could to be a Borough of Sanctuary and this process was only formalising and co-ordinating that, working with partners to sign post refugees and asylum seekers to services that they are legally entitled to. Sanctuary status would show that this Borough was compassionate, committed to social cohesion, inclusion and against discrimination. Those were hugely important values.

As a Borough, we could only benefit economically, socially and reputationally, and benefit from everything they had to offer. For example, that would include welcoming the children of refugees, creating a safe and supportive environment to allow them to go on and become some of the most active and enriching citizens in our Borough. By becoming a Borough of Sanctuary, Ards and North Down would be showing its strongest, most resilient and compassionate face.

Alderman McIlveen recalled an email conversation with Councillor McKimm when this was first proposed and he had raised a number of queries including what the process entailed, what the implications were as well as the longer-term commitments that were involved at that time.

He explained that his party colleagues had simply wanted to know more and had approached this with an open mind, despite some of the comments that had arisen at the Committee meeting. He felt that the problem with current debate was that it conflated two issues. Members were being told that if they did not go with the Borough of Sanctuary proposal then they were cold and heartless and did not care about refugees. Those were two separate things entirely. The report showed the amount of work that Council did in terms of working with the church and voluntary sectors and that reflected the Council's compassionate side in relation to this. His party objected to was signing up to a charter of what was essentially a lobbying charity that had political aims. That was very separate to how his party felt and acted towards refugees who came to the Borough. That was the height of the misinformation and the dis-information to link those two things together. He felt that there was no need for further information on the organisation and it was clear what it stood for and he had hoped that the desire for a presentation from the organisation was for Councillor Wray's own benefit to help him make up his own mind. He confirmed his support for the amendment.

On balance of the comments so far, Alderman Smith sympathised with some of the points that were made by the proposer and seconder of the amendment and he took the view that Council could benefit from some clarification on those issues and seek engagement with the organisation. The Council could then consider and decide accordingly. He wondered what it actually meant in terms of anyone being able to seek asylum no matter how they came here and wanted further clarity on if there was differentiation made in terms of the safety and risk etc of their home country, along with their view on the 147,000 people that had travelled across the English Channel since 2018, which was nearly the population of this Borough. He wanted to know how they saw that and how that could be reduced given the dangers that people faced.

There were currently just under 11,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland which was the lowest of all UK regions, if that was divided by population it was 5.74 asylum seekers for every 10,000 of the population in Northern Ireland. This along with Wales, was the lowest level across the UK. One of the challenges was the growth over the last number of years and spending had gone from £733m in 2018/19 to just under £4billion in 2022/23. It was a concerning issue and needed due respect. As a Council everyone wanted to be compassionate but the difficulty was in how that was done. He explained the Ulster Unionists position and they would be abstaining on the amendment and if that failed, they would be bringing a further amendment forward reflecting the calls for further engagement.

Councillor Irwin had taken issue with some of the comments and she argued that nobody was painting anyone cold or heartless, recalling the compassion shown by Jim Shannon MP and his DUP colleagues reaching out to the migrant community following the attack on the Islamic Centre in Newtownards. Those were certainly not the actions of people who were cold and heartless. She was confused though by the confusion of other Members around this matter and she believed that the definition of someone seeking safety no matter how they came here was that of someone seeking asylum. This was legal and she could not understand where the claims around human trafficking had come from. She had no concerns whatsoever around

people seeking safety no matter how they came here and she would welcome them with open arms. She argued that there was no mis-information coming from the Alliance Party and she was not confused about this and pointed out that the DUP's colleagues in Belfast City Council had not been confused when the same proposal was brought forward and agreed there. She confirmed her support for the Borough becoming a place of Sanctuary and believed it would send a strong message that Ards and North Down was compassionate.

In summing up, Alderman Brooks explained that he would be abstaining as Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee and not for the reasons that his UUP colleagues would be doing so. He explained this would be consistent with the approach taken throughout his term as Mayor and as Chairman of the Community and Wellbeing Committee. In a further point, he added that he was not being inundated with calls from his constituents for the Borough to become a place of Sanctuary and as a Councillor, it was not an issue on his radar.

A recorded vote was requested, with 15 voting FOR, 15 voting AGAINST, 8 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT. The Mayor opted to use his casting vote in favour and the amendment was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (15)	AGAINST (15)	ABSTAINED (8)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen:	Alderman:	Alderman:	Aldermen:
Adair	McAlpine	Brooks	McDowell
Armstrong-Cotter	McRandal	Smith	Councillors:
Cummings	Councillors:	Councillors:	Gilmour
Graham	Ashe	Blaney	
McIlveen	Boyle	Chambers	
Councillors:	Harbinson	Hollywood	
Chambers	Hennessey	McLaren	
Cochrane	Irwin	Smart	
Douglas	Kendall	Wray	
Edmund	McBurney		
Irvine, S	McCollum		
Irvine, W	McCracken		
Kennedy	McKee		
Kerr	McKimm		
McClellan	Moore		
Thompson	Morgan		

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClellan, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that Council does not at this time apply to join the City of Sanctuary UK network or further engage with the organisation but commits to continuing to do everything reasonably practicable within our communities and in our dealings with the NI Executive and the Home Office to effect the efficient and compassionate management of issues pertaining to refugees and those seeking asylum.

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

8.7 Special Planning Committee dated 18 November 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Consultation response to the Draft Environmental Principles Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (Appendix II)

(Appendix IV – V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing stating that DAERA had launched a consultation seeking views and comments on an Environmental Principles Policy Statement for Northern Ireland. Under Schedule 2 to the Environment Act 2021, DAERA had a statutory duty to prepare and publish a policy statement, which was defined in the Act as, "...a statement explaining how the environmental principles should be interpreted and proportionately applied: (a) by Northern Ireland departments when making policy; and (b) by Ministers of the Crown when making policy so far as relating to Northern Ireland."

The 'Environmental Principles' were:

1. the principle that environmental protection should be integrated into the making of policies;
2. the principle of preventative action to avert environmental damage;
3. the precautionary principle, so far as relating to the environment;
4. the principle that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source; and
5. the polluter pays principle

A draft response had been prepared by the Environmental Health Protection and Development department in consultation with other key services across the Council.

The closing date for responses was 9th December 2024 which would fall before the call-in period. Therefore, the response would be submitted following agreement at Council with the caveat that it may have been subject to amendment.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the draft response.

Alderman McIlveen asked for confirmation if this was an officer response or if it was part of an outsourcing arrangement as he had not noticed anything specific to this Council.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the Head of Service had agreed the response with other officers and Alderman McIlveen welcomed that.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith had noted that the response referred to rejecting the concept of economic growth. While he appreciated there was a school of debate that recommended that approach, he was aware that it was a corporate objective of the Council to support economic growth and was concerned that this would send a message that failed to correlate with the Council's corporate strategy. He felt uncomfortable with that.

The Director explained that it was important to remember the context of the strategy and that it promoted sustainable economic growth and that did take in to account both the environmental and social sustainability aspects. This was not a case of sacrificing one element for another but working in tandem with the other elements of sustainability.

Alderman Smith understood the context but felt the statement of rejecting economic growth was definitive within the response and went on to propose the following amendment:

That Council removes any reference to rejecting economic growth within its response to the consultation.

This was seconded by Councillor Blaney.

Councillor Blaney felt that the statement needed to be amended given that it could be read by a range of audiences who would not necessarily understand the wider context of the Council's Corporate Strategy. This Borough was very much pro-business and pro-economic growth, and that part of the response conveyed the opposite message.

Councillor McCracken suggested that a solution could simply be to state that the Council rejected any unsustainable economic growth. He recognised that there was a school of thought in environmental policy and sustainability that wanted to move away from some of the unconstrained consumption of the past and move to more sustainable growth of the future. Moving towards a greener economy should create many more jobs and many more opportunities.

Alderman McIlveen felt that the response did not specifically say that Council rejected economic growth but talked about changes in definitions so he felt that there was an incorrect emphasis being placed on it, but he was happy to support the amendment if that helped to tidy up the response.

Speaking in opposition to the amendment, Councillor Kendall agreed that there was some misunderstanding in terms of the definition, but it was important to accept that modern economists as well as environmentalist were rejecting the concept of infinite growth of economies, and that economies needed to be reimaged in terms of a

finite world with finite resources. She felt that the consultation response was very good and showed a good understanding of where the Council needed to move to, and it fitted the plan to become a sustainable Borough. She pointed to the recent impacts of the rainfall and flooding that had been experienced to show the impacts of the way resources were used currently. She argued that the current environmental policies of successive Governments had led to rock bottom social and environmental welfare and as would be discussed later in the meeting, had failed to have their eyes on the welfare of people including farmers. She felt that the Council should approve the response.

On being put to the meeting, with 35 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING, and 2 ABSENT, the amendment was CARRIED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that Council removes any reference to rejecting economic growth within its response to the consultation.

9.2. NIE Networks - Consultation on Cluster Substations (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment stating that NIE Networks had launched a consultation on Cluster Substations:
<https://www.nienetworks.co.uk/about-us/regulation/cluster-substation-update-consultation>

The purpose of this consultation paper was to present proposals to amend NIE Networks' cluster connection charging methodology, as set out in NIE Networks' Statement of Charges for Connection to the Northern Ireland Electricity Networks distribution system (the 'SoCC') Appendix 2. Ultimately it was NIE Networks' view, that the existing network and current charging arrangements did not provide the capability to connect the volume of renewables required to meet 2030 targets in time without a level of change or investment. While these consultation proposals alone would not enable the 2030 targets to be met, they aimed to be a step towards addressing the stagnation that currently persists.

This consultation sought views on whether NIE Networks should:

1. Amend the charging arrangements for assets needed to increase cluster substation capacity (e.g. second transformer), to align with the charging arrangements in place for the original cost of the cluster substation. Currently the costs of the second transformer were wholly chargeable to the customer that triggered the need and this was limiting the further development of existing clusters.
2. For new cluster sites, expand the scope of the generation that could be considered when designating a cluster i.e. to include generation that was at early-stage planning, with an appropriate weighting factor applied, and to look at including two transformers from designation stage.
3. At what stage NIE Networks should seek approval from the UR for costs associated with developing existing and new cluster substations.

Proposed Consultation Response

This programme of work by NIE Networks was of key importance in the context of the Council’s Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and our capacity to meet specified carbon emission reduction targets.

A draft response to the consultation had been prepared by officers and was attached at Appendix 1. The deadline for response was 6 December 2024

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the draft consultation response at Appendix 1.

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

9.3. Department of Justice - Call for Views: New Victim and Witness Strategy 2025

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence attached from the Department of Justice.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the consultation be noted.

10. CONFERENCES AND COURSES

10.1. Ongoing Conversations Invitation

(Appendix VIII - X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that the Council had received an invitation from Artsawonder inviting Members to participate in its new programme, Ongoing Conversations, which was funded by the International Fund for Ireland (see attached correspondence).

Members were asked to consider if they wished to attend any of the following Conversations events:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 17-19 January 2025 | Best Western Plus White Horse
Hotel
68 Clooney Road
Derry – Londonderry BT47 3PA |
| 28 February –2 March 2025 | Whistledown Hotel
6 Seaview
Warrenpoint BT34 3NH |
| 9-11 May 2025 | Haslem Hotel
Lisburn Square
Lisburn BT28 1TS |

13-15 June 2025

Maldron Hotel Portlaoise
Abbeyleix Road
Meelick
Portlaoise R32 HKN3

The correspondence requested the Council to either confirm which Conversations Members wished to attend or to nominate other party colleagues (ie: a full party member, aged between 20 and 40) who would be interested. It was not essential to commit to attending all meetings. Attendees would not be asked to pay for meals and accommodation, but travel expenses were not paid.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the invitation.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Council accepts the invitation and that Councillor Wray be nominated to attend.

Councillor Wray spoke about the peace building objectives of the programme and said he would be delighted to attend. He explained that his attendance would have no cost for the Council.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Council accepts the invitation and nominate Councillor Wray to attend.

11. NOMINATION TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(Appendix XI – XII)

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

Following the resignation of Councillor Gilmour from the Fair-Trade Working Group, a place had become available.

The below table reflected the current membership of the Working Group:

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Irwin
2	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
3	Alderman Keery	Councillor Gilmour
4	Councillor Irwin	-

In addition, the Chief Executive had received correspondence from the Department of Infrastructure informing her that a position had become available on the Drainage Council. Members were asked to consider whether they wished to submit an application to become a Non-Executive Member of the Drainage Council. The

Candidate Information booklet and the application form were appended to this report. The Department requested that applicants ignore the closing date listed on the form but that any applications were submitted as soon as possible.

The below table reflects the current membership of the Working Group:

	2023/24	2024/25
1	Councillor Kerr	-
2	Councillor Wray	Councillor Wray

Nominations were sought from Council to fill the place held by Councillor Gilmour on the Fair-Trade Working Group for the remainder of the term as necessary and Members were asked to consider nominating a Member to apply for the position on the Drainage Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- (a) Nominate a Member to the Fair-Trade Working Group and;
- (b) Consider whether they wish to individually submit an application to become a Non-Executive Member of the Drainage Council.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that Councillor Thompson is nominated to submit an application to become a Non-Executive Member of the Drainage Council.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that no further Elected Members be appointed to the Fairtrade Working Group at this time.

12. QUEEN’S PARADE UPDATE (FILE RDP63)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Interim Director of Place detailing that as Members would be aware the Council and the Department for Communities (DfC) entered into a Development Agreement with Bangor Marine Ltd (BM) for the development of lands at Queen’s Parade, Bangor in May 2019. Following that, BM finalised its plans for the development and submitted a planning application. The application was agreed by the Council on 26 January 2021, however, the Department for Infrastructure did not permit the Council to issue the determination until 29 September 2022. Since then, BM had been working up the detailed designs and information required to comply with their pre-commencement conditions as outlined in their planning approval, gaining approval of these for Phase 1, Marine Gardens, on 5th November 2024.

Members would also be aware following a recent press statement that BM planned to commence works on site early 2025.

For this commencement date to be met there were three outstanding issues that needed to be finalised:

Development Agreement and Quality Specification

Under the terms of the Development Agreement (DA), as amended by the agreed Deed of Variation, BM was required to submit plans, including the technical specifications, for the proposed works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock arena. The Council was also obligated to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) to assist it with assessing the proposals put forward by BM.

The Council had now received the specifications for the works, and these were being assessed by Council officers and the ICT. Once agreement on the specifications had been reached, the ICT would prepare a Specifications Report for the Council's consideration and approval, it was anticipated this would be brought to December's Place and Prosperity Committee. Following approval, the specifications would be used to ensure the works were completed as agreed.

Crown Estate

The majority of Marine Gardens sat within the Recreational Lease from the Crown Estate. Protracted negotiations had been ongoing with the Crown Estate over several issues around the proposed design/specifications. Most of these had been resolved and it was anticipated that the remaining would also be settled within the next couple of weeks.

At the meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 12 November 2024 it was agreed to execute the final Recreational Lease and to grant a licence to Bangor Marine to commence work on site if the Lease had not been sealed subject to certain terms and conditions. This work would continue.

Deed of Variation

As with all major developments, changes to the initial agreements were proposed and accepted with the passing of time. This had been the case with the development of Queen's Parade. The Development Agreement was signed in May 2019 and a Deed of Variation (DoV) was agreed in January 2023.

Since then, further negotiations have taken place which require an additional DoV. This agreement was currently being finalised and it was anticipated it would be brought to December's Place and Prosperity Committee for approval.

RECOMMENDED that the Council gives delegated authority to the Place and Prosperity Committee, which is to meet on 5 December 2024, to review and agree the Specifications Report and the Deed of Variation to enable the works on site to commence in the New Year.

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

Referring to the lease issues with the Crown Estate, Councillor McCracken sought further details along with the process for finding a resolution.

The Interim Director of Place advised that there was a meeting scheduled in the coming week between the solicitor and agent and he hoped that would address some of the outstanding issues which were just for clarification on what he saw as an otherwise straightforward lease agreement.

Councillor McCracken hoped this would result in progress at the December Place and Prosperity Committee along with a more specific timeline. He asked for further clarification on all of the outstanding matters before work could commence. The Director referred to three areas which remained outstanding, explaining that the Quality Specification had one remaining item to resolve, as discussed, the Crown Estate lease matter was progressing, and then the final outstanding area was the Deed of Variation which was ongoing between solicitors as they worked towards finalising the legal agreement. Those three matters needed to be resolved before works could commence.

The seconder, Councillor W Irvine, felt it was important for the onsite works to commence as early as possible in the new year and he raised a query around engagement from Bangor Marine with local traders in relation to that work starting. The Director explained that communication had already begun between the main contractor who had already met with business owners and planned to engage with local schools. He explained that the engagement would be stepped up once a specific timeline was confirmed.

Councillor McClean asked if the date range for work starting would narrow once the three issues were resolved and the Director confirmed that was correct and explained the importance of those matters being resolved as soon as possible to enable the relevant licence to be issued for hoardings and then work commencing.

The Mayor thanked officers for their work on progressing the matter and hoped that the delegated authority to the Place and Prosperity Committee would speed up the process. He vowed to do all he could as Mayor to help move the development along.

In a final comment, Alderman Graham reflected on the long number of years that the Queen's Parade site had been an issue and spoke of the complexities in terms of dealing with many different organisations to enable the development to proceed and thanked officers for all they had done in this regard.

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

13. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: - THAT the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

Rights of Burials

- a) Numbers D40674 – D40710
- b) Change of Address – Mr Leonard Reid – Redburn 3108
- c) Reprint - Glynis Topping - Loughview C 45
- d) Duplicate – John Thompson - Clandeboye LX 4626

Other Documents for Sealing:

- e) Transfer Deed (x3) – ANDBC to NI Water - land at Clanbrassil, Holywood

- f) Deed of Surrender (x2) – Telefonica UK Limited and ANDBC
- g) Cell Site Agreement (x2) - Ards and North Down Borough Council to Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Limited.

14. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Received as follows:

Brian Eastwood – Joanne McBurney
Redburn 498 499 500

Jacqueline Orr – Jonathan Topping
Movilla 62 84

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

15. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix XI)

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

16. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

16.1 Notice of Motion received from Councillor Morgan, Alderman Cummings, Councillor Douglas, Alderman Smith and Councillor Ashe

The Comber representatives are delighted that Comber has won the Best Kept Medium Town Award this year and want to thank all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this happen.

There is, however, a long-standing dilapidated hoarding in Castle Street which badly detracts from this important area of Town.

The Comber representatives recognise that Council officers and the Comber Regeneration Community Partnership have tried to address this issue, but this has not been successful.

Considering this, Officers should do a report exploring all further options available to resolve this issue with some urgency.

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

RECESS

(The meeting went into recess at 8.56pm and resumed at 9.11pm)

(Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKimm left the meeting at 8.56pm)

(Alderman Graham and Councillor Kerr left the meeting having declared an interest in Items 16.2 and 16.3 – 9.11pm)

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair

That this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses.

Further to this Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.

The Mayor advised that he had granted a request from the proposer to hear the motion at this meeting due to the urgent nature of the matter. He also advised that the original proposer wished to make a non-substantial amendment and invited Councillor Cochrane to proceed with his Notice of Motion as amended.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Alderman Adair, that this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses.

Further to this Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; further commits to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this budget and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor Cochrane appreciated that this matter was not only a concern to his hardworking farming constituents of Bangor East and Donaghadee, the Borough's farming community and its 752 farms but also a concern throughout Northern Ireland and United Kingdom.

He had been prompted to bring the Notice of Motion due to his fear for all of the hard-working families impacted by what was a lack of understanding for family farming by the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves.

Just because farming land was a valuable asset, it did not mean the farm owner was cash rich. He provided statistics for 2023 which showed a decrease in income for farmers across Northern Ireland by 44%, from £609million to £341million. Average income was expected to decrease from £51,043 to £27,345 per farm.

These figures, he added, put to bed the narrative of cash-rich farmers. He pointed to other pressures on farming over the last decade which had brought the farming community to breaking point. He pointed to cost increases and unfavourable weather conditions and this ill-considered budget item could just be the final straw for family farms in NI.

He spoke of the vital importance of the agricultural sector and that farmers were custodians of land passed down through generations for their families. Farming also provided employment to around 60,000 people in Northern Ireland and its value to the economy was around £1billion.

He referred to immediate concern from farmers and representative bodies at the budget announcement from the Labour Government which had broken a promise not to tamper with agricultural property relief. New Proposals for Inheritance Tax and Apr was attacking the very foundations of farming life in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Farmers Union had said, the Chancellor had failed to grasp the essential role our farming community played in the UK's food security, rural community and environmental stewardship. Most of all, he believed this decision would negatively affect impact young farmers for generations to come.

He referred to comments made by the Young Farmers Club President Richard Beattie who said: 'this announcement is going to have dramatic effects on our farming members and certainly the entire rural community. I fear the next generation's ability to carry on farming will be taken away, and farmers will be forced to sell land and other elements of their farm to pay the cost of tax. farmers play such a vital role here in Northern Ireland and they have been significantly let down.'

In closing, Councillor Cochrane said those words of the Young Farmers Club accurately summed up the destructive impact of Rachel Reeves' budget. He was now asking that the DAERA Minister bring proposals to mitigate the impact of those damaging policies and to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families and that current levels of financial support would not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.

The seconder, Alderman Adair, described the decision of the Labour Government as a disgrace and explained that he was bringing this on behalf the farming community which was the backbone of the community in the Ards Peninsula. This was an area with the highest number of dairy farmers in Northern Ireland and he referred to the level of concern.

He had attended a meeting with his party colleagues at the Econ Centre and he commended the Ulster Farmers' Union for its coordinated approach. He recalled that the First and Deputy First Ministers had attended along with the Minister for Agriculture. All political parties had been represented and he welcomed the united approach. He thanked the Ulster Unionist party for working with the DUP in reaching this amended Notice of Motion and he hoped all Members could support it.

The Labour Government had already attacked the most vulnerable in society by removing the Winter Fuel Allowance for pensioners and now it was attacking the farming community which put food on the nation's tables.

Farms were asset rich and cash poor, and this would heavily impact younger generations and there was great worry that farms would be broken up and sold to pay for inheritance tax bills. This would have a detrimental impact on food production and local economy. It was therefore important for the Council to raise its voice and stand up for farmers.

He recalled work that local farmers had done in the community throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and during times of adverse weather in terms of clearing the roads, and it was now time for Council to help them in their time of need. He urged the Chamber to support the motion and send a clear message to the Labour Government.

Speaking in support, Councillor Wray felt that the Labour Government decision was something that all sides of the Council Chamber should be concerned about. The UUP grouping had submitted their own Notice of Motion around this same issue, and he was also aware that the Alliance Party group also had strong feelings, so he felt that the farming community would appreciate a united voice and strong united condemnation of the Labour Government policy.

He spoke of the impacts on everyone in Northern Ireland as a result of the policy.

He thanked members of the DUP for incorporating a paragraph which included engagement with the Chancellor and therefore he was happy to withdraw his own Notice of Motion on this issue.

He echoed the struggles that farmers faced adding that they were often forced to take on additional borrowing to make ends meet and to ensure they were compliant with quality assurance schemes. The property tax would only result in farmers being forced to sell land and burden themselves with more debt. He also referred to the mental health issues which were already prevalent in the farming industry and he dreaded to think of the further impact this would have.

He referred to the message of the campaign, pointing out that you wouldn't ask a supermarket to sell a shop floor or a joiner to sell their tools.

Describing the policy as cruel, short-sighted and ill thought out, he warned that it would not only punish farmers but the wider economy. It was important to protect food, farming and the landscape and oppose this legislation in the strongest possible terms.

Councillor W Irvine added his support to the proposal and echoed those concerns. He referred to farms that had been passed down through generations and this policy would cause heirs to sell parts of their farm or take on significant debt. He added that supporting farmers and protecting them against this property tax was crucial for long-term viability of Northern Ireland's agricultural sector.

Councillor Irwin indicated that she wished to propose an amendment which had been submitted in advance, in line with Notice of Motion Standing Orders.

Councillor Irwin proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that that this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses. Further that this Council welcomes the launch of the Farming for the Generations pilot scheme to support farm succession planning; calls on the UK Government to reconsider the proposed changes to Agricultural Property Relief given the disproportionate impact on family farms in Northern Ireland; and further calls on the Executive to support a ring-fenced budget for agriculture, agri-environment, fisheries and rural development within the 2025-26 budget and beyond.

Speaking to her proposed amendment, Councillor Irwin explained that the Alliance Party grouping had agreed with the principle of the original motion. This was a bad budget for farmers and farmers in Northern Ireland would be disproportionately affected by the changes in agricultural property relief.

She argued against the Chancellors claims that three quarters of farms would be unaffected by those changes, pointing to DAERA data which showed that in reality one third of farms in NI could be affected including as many as three quarters of dairy farms, having a disastrous impact.

Explaining the reason for the amendment, she added that it was not against the principle of the proposal but it offered a more realistic way forward in order for the Council and the NI Executive to take into account some of the action that was already ongoing.

She referred to assurances from the DAERA Minister, provided in the NI Assembly the previous week, that work was ongoing between himself and the Finance Minister, and all other NI Executive Ministers around the need for this funding to be ring-fenced at local level. She hoped that Members could agree on this crucial measure and those with Assembly colleagues would pass on the message.

The policy had re-emphasised the importance of succession planning for farming families. For the sake of the future of the agri-food industry in NI, it was important to

encourage and support young people to pursue careers in the sector. Minister Muir had already announced the Farming for the Generations Pilot scheme last month.

The scheme would support 60 farming families in developing a succession plan, a farm business review and personal development plan for that successor.

Councillor Irwin was clear though that everyone in the Chamber could be in agreement that the ultimate desire was that the UK Government reconsider the changes contained in the recent budget. This was also the aim of the DAERA Minister and he had already taken urgent action.

This had included a meeting with the Secretary of State Hillary Benn in the days following the budget announcement and emphasised the impacts that the changes would have. The message was reiterated at a meeting with UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed alongside other devolved Ministers.

He had also written alongside the First and Deputy First Ministers to the Chancellor and the Finance Minister to further highlight the disastrous impact of the changes. He had also been in touch with Ulster Farmers Union and attended the rally that was referred to earlier in the debate. He looked forward to further working alongside the UFU to present a united message to the Government.

Councillor Irwin reiterated that her proposal was not to take away from the principle of the original motion and she felt it was fair to say that the Chamber was united in its support of the agricultural sector. It was important for food security and would play a key role as the country transformed into a greener society and it was important to take a coordinated stance to ensure the Government listened to the calls to reconsider.

The NI Executive had taken a united approach in writing jointly to the UK Government and she hoped that the Council could also present a united front by unanimously agreeing on the proposed actions within the amendment.

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

Alderman McIlveen noted that similar amendments had been submitted at other local Councils and believed this was an Alliance-wide approach. He did however note that the Alliance Party had withdrawn its amendment at Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to allow the original proposal to pass unamended.

He explained that the debate that had been held at the NI Executive had been brought by his sister, Michelle McIlveen MLA and a DUP colleague. He agreed that the ring-fencing matter was an important issue as well and when it came to the block grant and the competing elements of the NI Executive budget it would require Minister Muir to put up the fight of his life to ensure that funding came forward. That was the reasoning for including the element to ensure there was a firm commitment to working with the Finance Minister to maintain current levels of support and have that inflation proofed going forward. He felt that the amendment was letting the DAERA Minister off the hook from what was such an important element.

He explained that the original motion was not a criticism of the Minister but empathised the things that needed to be done and it was a common stance across Northern Ireland, in the NI Assembly, in the ECON Centre.

There were other things that farmers had been awaiting from the Minister in terms of clarity around other matters of policy. He referred to the ammonia regulations, restricting development to allow farmers to try and meet the green targets set by the Assembly. NV Testing was under threat and that would be a disaster for the sheep industry. The basic farm payment accounted for the majority of what farmers had to live on now and that showed the reality that farmers were asset rich but cash poor. Without the subsidies many family-run farms would not survive.

He was critical of the Labour Government who thought they were tackling millionaires that were trying to avoid inheritance tax. In Northern Ireland these were small family farms and he could not agree with the thinking that succession planning was the way to deal with it. 47% of health and safety fatalities were on farms and that could not be succession planned. He gave a hypothetical example of someone inheriting a farm one week and then getting crushed by a bull the next. It was important to focus on the issue of inheritance tax and what was one of many of the Government's ill-thought-out decisions. Farmers were impacted by the budget in terms of NI contributions and increases in National Living Wage. This was a triple whammy and it was important for Council to be consistent with what other Councils were putting forward.

Alderman Smith remained supportive of the original motion and agreed on the importance of sending a unified message rather than one of disagreement, the basis of which in reality was only semantical. He had read how a former advisor of Tony Blair had once provoked a backlash with comments that the nation could do without smaller farmers and they should be crushed by the Government in the same way as Margeret Thatcher crushed the miners. He felt that NI would be particularly hurt by the proposals given the higher price per acre here and that it primarily supplied the food industry. He referred to a report that Northern Ireland supplied enough food for 10 million people which helped the food security of the UK. This made it even more incredulous that the Government were putting that situation in jeopardy. There were 26,000 farms in NI, farming more than one million hectares of land and on top of that 25,000 people were working in food processing. It was essential therefore that the farming industry was protected and its output levels maintained, for those employees and for the whole of the UK.

NI could not afford to introduce a proposal that would damage that key industry and it was important to send a united message that Council was opposed to this and called on the chancellor to reverse the decision.

Councillor McKee spoke in support of family farmers who would be greatly affected. They would feel abandoned having already suffered badly from Brexit and the resulting detrimental trade conditions and reduced subsidies. Inflated land values also made it harder for new entrants and existing land farmers to rely on the resources needed to grow our food. While he agreed there were appropriate cases where Government's should close down loopholes to prevent tax avoidance, but

there was a clear difference between that and genuine family run farms. A policy such as this should be based on accurate data and consider the consequences across the UK. Clearly that wasn't the case with this proposal. The potential benefits of the policy had been destroyed by catching so many family-run farms in the net.

The Government needed to take action to ensure that hardworking farmers could have a decent income and shift towards nature friendly farming. This policy did not help that. The Government was right to identify a policy that would identify those extremely wealthy people who bought up land simply to avoid paying tax and that loophole did need to be addressed but the policy only created a gap for factory farmers to exploit family farms and push them out and create devastation to our environment as seen in Lough Neagh. The Government needed to make a clear distinction between people who were speculating in buying land and those family run farms.

Alderman Adair asked the Alliance Party to withdraw its amendment as party representatives had been done in Castlereagh. That was in the interests of a united voice and the original motion was not a criticism of the DAERA Minister in anyway and it was only a desire for the Council to work positively in the interests of the farming community.

The seconder, Alderman McRandal insisted that his party would not be withdrawing the amendment, advising that it was voted through in Armagh, Banbrige and Craigavon. He confirmed that this was an amendment put forward in other Council areas as referred to by Alderman McIlveen, but he also noted it was in response to the same motion put forward by the DUP in those same Council areas. He felt that the Chamber was united, and he wholeheartedly agreed with everything that the original proposer and seconder had stated. Everyone believed that the UK Government should reconsider the changes, that this was bad for farmers and Northern Ireland would be disproportionately affected. He added that the amendment was better because the DUP motion was solely about the DAERA Minister but that was relying only on one person. If the Chancellor and Prime Minister were going to change their minds, it would require all parties to be on board. He argued that Minister Muir's actions had reflected the seriousness of the matter. He was a little perplexed by Alderman McIlveen's comments around the ring-fencing of the budget and suggesting that the amendment was somehow defunct compared to the original proposal. The amendment addressed this clearly, he added, calling on the Executive to support a ring-fenced budget for agriculture, agri-environment, fisheries and rural development within the 2025-26 budget and beyond. He argued that this was a crucial part of the amendment, and it was much clearer on the action that was needed. He was sure though that whatever decision was taken tonight, the Council would be sending a united message.

In summing up on the proposed amendment, Councillor Cochrane referred to the comments of Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Adair throughout the debate, and he felt that the amendment did not add anything to the original motion. In terms of the ring-fencing element, he added that the amendment was taking out the calls to not only maintain existing levels of funding but also to increase it. It would also exclude the element of liaising with the Chancellor. He could therefore not support it.

On being put to the meeting, with 12 voting FOR, 22 voting AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING and 6 ABSENT, the amendment FELL.

Returning to the original proposal, Councillor Blaney felt the Labour Government could not have come up with a more nasty and vindictive policy if it had tried. It attacked the very heart of farming and what it was about. He explained that many families had a sense of duty to keep farms in their families and they didn't get involved to get rich. It wasn't a pleasant or easy job but purely a matter of duty, but they did it because their father had done it and wanted the same for their children. They were custodians of the land, and they were keeping the legacy alive. He went on to add that it wasn't just the final straw that would break the camel's back, it was a steel beam that would crush the industry and make it impossible to keep people active in family farms. He welcomed that the Council would hopefully be speaking in a single voice on the matter.

Alderman McIlveen added that one of the most crucial elements of the motion was to maintain current levels of financial support and increase those in future years. He referred to the subsidies that were an important part of farm incomes and that was a strategic aim to secure the nation's food supply, but the Labour Government had abandoned that. The message was also saying to farmers' that now you had lived your existence, your land would now be up for grabs, and it would be a reality that farmers had to sell off parts of their land to remain on the farm or it could force them to sell completely to turn to other investments.

It would only potentially lead to the bigger corporations coming in and this was therefore an attack on small farms, no matter what way it was dressed up. The Council needed to be united on its view, and he hoped that once the Labour Government was voted out at the next elected, the policy would be overturned immediately.

In summing up on his proposal, Councillor Cochrane thanked Members who had supported the motion. Reflecting on the wider reaction to the policy, he said it had been an honour to attend with 6,000 farmers in the Econ Centre to send a clear message to the Government that this was not acceptable. He argued that it was a myth that all farmers were cash rich. He referred to the financial support and the DAERA Minister's responsibility elements which were key parts. It was not an attack on the Minister. In closing, he added that without farmers there would be no food, and we needed to stop the family farm tax.

A recorded vote was requested.

On being put to the meeting, with 33 voting FOR, 0 voting AGASINT, 0 ABSTAINING and 7 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED.

FOR (33)

Aldermen:

- Adair
- Armstrong-Cotter
- Brooks
- Cummings

AGAINST (0)

ABSTAINED (0)

ABSENT (7)

Aldermen:

- Graham
- McDowell
- Councillors:**
- Chambers

McAlpine
McIlveen
McRandal
Smith

Gilmour
Kendall
Kerr
McKimm

Councillors:

Ashe
Blaney
Boyle
Cathcart
Cochrane
Douglas
Edmund
Harbinson
Hennessey
Hollywood
Irwin
Irvine, S
Irvine, W
Kennedy
McBurney
McClellan
McCollum
McCracken
McKee
McLaren
Moore
Morgan
Smart
Thompson
Wray

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Alderman Adair, that that this Council condemns the failure by the UK Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms and discourage investment in many farm businesses.

Further to this Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; further commits to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this budget and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and firm commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor Smart

That Council recognises the negative impact on the farming and agriculture industry caused by the first Budget of the new Labour Government, particularly the changes to Agriculture Property Relief and the damage that will do to the continuance of family farming. Council further recognises the intrinsic value of farming and agriculture to regional and national food security, and further commits to writing to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to call on him to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for farmers affected by this Budget.

The Mayor advised that the Notice of Motion had been withdrawn.

(Alderman Graham and Councillor Kerr returned to the meeting - 9.56pm)

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

That this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the post office to propose to close its branches in Main Street, Bangor and Frances Street, Newtownards as part of a widened UK overhaul. We would call on the Post office to reverse this decision and meet with Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss the proposal and the impact it will have on staff and customers. This Council notes how important post office services are to our communities and the huge role it plays in serving constituents.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

Circulated for Information

- (a) NI Commissioner for Standards report – 2023/24

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.04pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell
Smith

Councillors:	Harbinson	McCollum
	Kendall (Zoom)	McClellan
	Kerr	Smart
	McKee (Zoom)	Wray

Officers: Interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Acting Head of Planning (G Kerr), Principal Planners (C Blair, C Barker & L Maginn), Senior Planner (A Todd) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from the Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) and apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Smith.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McCollum – Item 4.1 – Application LA06/2022/0827/F.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 5 NOVEMBER 2024

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(Having declared an interest in Item 4.1 Councillor McCollum left the meeting at 7.02 pm)

4.1 LA06/2022/0827/F – STABLE BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED HAYSHED/TACK ROOM AND EQUIPMENT STORE. LANDS APPROXIMATELY 250M SW OF 240 SCRABO ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendices II-IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: A local development application "called-in" to the Planning Committee by a member of that committee from the Delegated List on 30 July 2024.

Proposal: Stable building and associated hayshed/tack room and equipment store

Site Location: Lands approximately 250m SW of 240 Scrabo Road, Newtownards

Recommendation: Refusal

The Principal Planner explained that the application was for a stable building and associated hayshed/tack room and equipment store on lands approximately 250m SW of 240 Scrabo Road, Newtownards. The application had been refused planning permission and had been "called-in" to the Planning Committee for debate.

Members would note that there were no letters of representation either in support of or objecting to the application. Also, Members would note that DfI Roads had no objection to the proposal subject to conditions regarding the access. However, those would only apply if the Planning Committee approved the application.

A slide was shown of the position of the site which was approximately 180m south of Scrabo Road. It was accessed via an existing agricultural lane which initially inclined in a southerly direction up from the public road before declining gently to the application site. The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) was the adopted plan for the area. The site was located in surrounding open landscape comprising high scenic value land, which fell within the designations of Scrabo Tower and Landform Local Landscape Policy Area and Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The site sat at a higher ground level than the adjacent agricultural laneway and Moate Road to the east. The two defined site boundaries were to the south and west (which was along the laneway), and they comprised hedgerows as could be seen on a slide. The north and east boundaries were undefined as they extended into the remainder of the field.

The proposed site layout was shown along with elevations and floor plans for the hay shed and stables building.

The proposal was for a 4.5m high stable building which faced northerly towards Scrabo Road and a hayshed with tackroom and equipment store measuring 6m in height, which would sit perpendicular to the stables facing westerly.

The Case Officer's Addendum Report fully detailed the background and context of the applicant's planning application for the site including his existing commercial stud farm business. Members would note from the supporting statements provided that the applicant currently used stables near Ballymena, as due to personal circumstances the applicant was required to sell previously owned stables and buildings associated with his stud farm business.

The relevant policy for the application was considered which included policy OS 3 of PPS 8 for outdoor recreation in the countryside.

Despite the submission of that supporting material Members should note that under policy OS 3 of PPS 8 an applicant was not required to demonstrate a need for a proposed equestrian development in a countryside location and therefore that was not a material consideration in the assessment of the proposal. By accepting the requirement for a location for a business need, that could create a dangerous precedent.

The policy's criteria went on to outline that a development must have no adverse impact on visual amenity or the character of the local landscape, which was underlined by the PAC, including a decision set out in the case officer's original planning application report.

While an application was considered in the round including all supporting information, a weighing up of policy considerations was required.

The crux of the Planning Department's recommendation for refusal related to visual integration of the proposal. Whilst the site was positioned in the lowest part of the applicant's land at the location, and whilst that may be the sole area of land that the applicant owned and therefore it was contended by the applicant's agent that the need was to develop at that specific location, that did not carry any determining weight under the policy and it could not outweigh the tests on visual amenity or integration, which must be considered.

The Planning Department's recommendation to Planning Committee entirely related to the siting and integration of the proposal in the surrounding open and exposed landscape, which fell inside the scenic and sensitive designations of the LLPA and AONB.

The LLPA designation was not applied to an area lightly. It related to areas of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance. In this particular instance LLPA 5 was the policy designation in the Area Plan. The policy outlined that that part of the LLPA, where the application site was located, was an area of high value scenery which was iconic to the Borough with the prominent landmark of the listed Scrabo Tower and subsequent undeveloped patchwork agricultural land sweeping down from the Tower to the Lough.

Further to criterion (iii) of Policy OS 3 of PPS 8 regarding a visual amenity test, Policy CON 2 of the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 set out the policy for LLPAs and stated that planning permission would not be granted for development proposals

which would be liable to adversely affect the environmental quality, integrity or character of the area.

Additionally, Policy NH6 of PPS 2 'Natural Heritage' outlined that for new development in an AONB planning permission would only be granted where the siting and scale of the proposal was sympathetic to the special character of the AONB in the particular locality.

In terms of the integration and design of buildings in the countryside and their impact on the surrounding rural character policies CTY 13 and CTY 14 of PPS 21 applied. For reference, policy CTY 13 was included in a slide.

The Planning Department's assessment was that the proposed development of two new buildings would be prominent features in the landscape, the site in which they would be located lacked long established natural boundaries with a reliance on hedgerows no more than 1.5m in height to the south and west boundaries only, with the western hedged boundary itself to be removed to provide the proposed access, therefore unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure. Furthermore, the buildings were relying upon new landscaping for integration and that it failed to blend with the surrounding landform, and there were no trees, buildings or other natural features to provide a backdrop.

As set out in the Justification and Amplification under policy CTY 13 it was important to assess integration from critical views along the road network and other public access points. In this instance there were critical views into the site from the surrounding public road network, from Moate Road to the east of the site and from Killynether Road to the northwest. There were also long-distance views of the site from the Ballyhenry Road to the southwest.

The agent had provided a map which was shown indicating in their opinion the long-distance views towards the site from the local road network including Moate Road, Ballyhenry Road and the A21 dual carriageway to the south/southeast. The agent set out that there were no views of the site from the A21 and glimpses of the site from a section of Ballyhenry Road to the southwest and a glimpse of the top two metres of the proposed building 330m away on Moate Road to the east.

Members would note from that map that there were no critical view assessments of the site taken from the closer position of the nearby Killynether Road to the northwest.

As shown in that slide, the photos from the Killynether Road towards, through and beyond the site that contained visually significant long-distance views of the remaining undeveloped, open and exposed agricultural land which created the patchwork effect. The site formed part of that important vista, which was a character of the LLPA. From that viewpoint, there was no intervening built development or natural features in the foreground, or landform, existing trees, buildings, slopes or other natural features, which provided a backdrop to the site. When looking into the site from the critical viewpoints along Killynether Road, the proposed development would result in the carving out of a new site for built development in that section of

undeveloped countryside resulting in it being a prominent feature with no existing means of integration possible.

In an accompanying additional supporting statement provided by the agent, photos were submitted showing a reflective jacket attached to a pole on top of a tractor and loader to show the 6m height of the proposed hayshed from a potential critical viewpoint on Moate Road. That photo showed views into the site from Moate Road to the east. Whilst it was acknowledged that the entirety of the development would not be visible from Moate Road, the photo and the map provided by the agent, which was in an earlier slide showing long distance viewpoints did demonstrate that the top two metres of the proposed rear elevation of the 6m high hayshed with its sand cement finish would be visible. The proposed hayshed building would clearly read as skyline development occupying that top of slope position and being a prominent feature in the presently undeveloped landscape.

The proposed site layout plan included the planting of 26 new trees to aid integration with it being contended that there were existing groupings of trees in the surrounding area. Whilst there were existing wooded areas nearby, which were existing natural features, they were not positioned in this open expanse of undeveloped land. Policy CTY 13 was clear in that new planting alone was not sufficient to achieve integration with it inevitably taking a considerable amount of time to mature. That did not therefore mitigate the adverse visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape, with determining critical views demonstrating the development would be a prominent feature, adversely impacting the visual amenity of this high scenic undeveloped landscape at this location.

Members were advised that to permit this type of development based solely on need and setting aside the policy assessment in terms of impact on visual amenity and integration would set a precedent for similar proposals resulting in permanent damage and change to the surrounding character and appearance of the high value scenery at that location.

Accordingly, refusal was recommended.

The Chair referred to the policy which had been guiding the planners' decision and the Planning Officer explained that the area had such high scenic value that it was important to respect.

Councillor Harbinson sought clarity on the heights of the hayshed which was confirmed to be 6m tall and the top of that could be seen from Moate Road. The development also proposed a stable block which would be 4.5m in height.

Mr Donaldson was invited to speak in support of the application and he indicated that he represented Mr Metcalf who was with him. He explained that the Case Officer had requested further information from the applicant for the benefit of the Committee.

He indicated that extracts from the submitted information had been appended. Mr Metcalf had demonstrated that he was a recognised and successful breeder of thoroughbred racehorses. Those animals required a high degree of husbandry and security. The proposed stables were on his only land, which he had owned for nearly

40 years. A small stable building for up to four horses was needed, along with an associated hay and feed store. The buildings would be sited on a laneway to the south of Scrabo Road, where the land was some 10m lower than the highest point on his land. The buildings would be well screened by rolling topography and vegetation.

The application was submitted 28 months ago. It was to be brought before the Committee in September 2024 but was removed to allow Planners to consider the applicant's response. It was now being presented with a much more extensive Addendum Report. The Addendum Report was vigorous in its 18 pages of opposition to this modest development. Numerous new concerns, not articulated in the previous report, had been added. However, the core issue remained a simple one. The Committee should determine whether or not the proposal would cause such harm to landscape character that the applicant must be denied modest husbandry facilities for his thoroughbred horses. They remained convinced that this proposal would not adversely impact landscape character and believed the following points were relevant:

- i) The Report accepted that AONB and Local Landscape Policy Areas did not prohibit development. Small scale stables and barns were already a characteristic of the area. Numerous buildings located within the LLPA were not being argued as a 'precedent' for further development - their presence simply demonstrated that this was a living and working countryside.
- ii) 'Prominence' - The Committee Report repeatedly asserted that the proposal would be 'prominent'. He questioned how something could be prominent or lacking in integration when only glimpses of it were available from a few locations which were over hundreds of metres away. None of the policies imposed a test of invisibility.
- iii) 'Lack of Clustering' - That was a new assertion. But there was no policy requirement for stables to cluster with other buildings. The Applicant had no other buildings, and this site, in the corner of a low field, could not reasonably be regarded as being 'isolated within an exposed landscape'.
- iv) 'Pattern of Development' - Another new assertion was that the subdivision of a small field to deliver animal welfare facilities would erode 'the traditional pattern of fields' and adversely affect 'the whole landform of Scrabo Hill'. The Council's aerial illustration Figure 1 (page 4) of the Addendum demonstrated just how inconsequential the proposal was.
- v) Applicant's Visual Assessment - The Addendum attempted to dismiss that on the basis that the precise position of the tractor and loader was not provided and therefore no reliance could be placed upon the accuracy of the information. The tractor was positioned exactly at the location of the proposed 6m shed. The officers were specifically invited to witness a repeat of the exercise. It was disappointing that they had chosen not to do so. Only a small part of the shed would be visible from a short stretch of Moate Road. He stated that that could be repeated for Members should they wish.
- vi) Views from Killynether Road - The previous report stated that the critical views were over long distances from 'east and south' - an assertion which they believed they had demonstrated to be incorrect, and from which officers now appeared to have retreated. Killynether Road was not even mentioned previously but had now emerged as having 'the most critical and sustained view

- of the buildings in the landscape'. Whilst some limited views would be achievable, the site was at a lower level than Killynether Road and views would be within the context of the extensive vista of rolling farmland and building groups which stretched down to the Lough.
- vii) Hedge Removal - Another new 'concern' was that hedge removal for the site access may be contrary to Policy NH5 due to lack of an 'extended Phase 1 Habitats Survey.' That was irrelevant as removal of the grass bank in front of what had been confirmed by their ecologist was a mainly bramble encrusted fence (not a priority habitat) would be sufficient to deliver the splays. And in any case the access was not onto a public road, so provision of splays was not even an essential requirement.
 - viii) Proposed Planting – Another new aspect was that the applicant was now being criticised for proposing to plant 26 native species trees around the site boundary on the basis that that was out of character. He wholly rejected that since groups of trees (eg Killynether Wood and trees around building groups) were a demonstrable characteristic of the landscape. It was proposed mainly around the wintering paddock (not the buildings) and designed to enhance landscape quality, not to 'hide' the buildings as they would already integrate into the landscape by virtue of the surrounding topography.
 - ix) Alternatives - The officers asked the applicant to demonstrate what alternative sites were considered. He had explained why the lowest and most sheltered point on the applicant's holding had been chosen. The planner had since suggested that alternatives beyond the applicant's land should have been considered. He thought that there was no policy basis whatsoever for that and the whole rationale for the application was to provide stabling and other necessary facilities for the horses on the land which they were using.
 - x) Appeal 2020/A0064 - The Council had found an appeal decision near Carrickfergus where retrospective permission for stabling was refused on the basis that it had an adverse impact on local character. That shed had already been built without permission on open land adjacent to a main road, creating a ribbon of development. He thought that was neither comparable nor relevant and the fundamental consideration remained whether the proposal would give rise to such demonstrable harm that it must be refused.

Concluding he stated that the proposal was modest and would help to support an established equestrian business. He suggested similar equestrian facilities were common throughout the rural area and within the LLPA. The development would not be prominent but would be well integrated into the rolling landscape.

He invited the Planning Committee to approve this much needed development and furthermore suggested that the applicant would be delighted to repeat the visual assessment exercise for the benefit of Members should that be considered helpful. The Chair then invited Members to ask questions.

Alderman Graham referred to the height of the shed which was 6.5 metres and asked if it was necessary to be that height. Mr Donaldson advised that the stables were smaller at 4.5m but the additional height of 6m allowed for more efficient use of the shed which could be considered fairly modest by agricultural standards.

Councillor Smart thought that visual amenity was a key aspect within the report and asked if a description could be made of the colour of the shed and the materials that would be used. He also asked if there would be significant public access to the site and would signage be required. In response it was noted that there would be no signage to the site and there would be little public access on to it. This was a business which by its nature would remain discreet and be very much a private enterprise. The finishes to the barn would be unpainted render and the visible top two metres of the building would be the pitched roof. Overall, the building was described as being unobtrusive within the environment.

Councillor McClean asked what had been done regarding the visual amenity of the building and if it was attractive and added character in the landscape to create balance and work within the policy. He also queried the views over the landscape and the suggestion that trees would be planted. He asked how that would overcome objections.

Mr Donaldson explained that these were farm buildings and were not designed to be fancy. They would be simple rural buildings with green cladding and roof colour with a rendered finish on the external walls. It would be green to integrate well into the landscape.

Referring to the LLPA Policy he thought there were two ways of looking at that policy test, visual integration and the site would be on the lower part of the land and tucked in to a corner. The surrounding hedges would help the building to be integrated.

Mr Donaldson referred to the opinion of the Planning Officers who held the view that the business aspect of this development was not a planning matter and he did not believe that to be correct. He suggested that for the welfare of the animals the sheds should be situated on the applicant's land and that was a material consideration that could not be ignored.

He went on to say that previously the Planning Officers had not raised views from Killynether Road when this was originally presented in September but they were now being flagged up as being the most sensitive viewpoints. He also referred to trees and that the applicant would be willing to plant more to be an aid to further integration. He suggested that those trees were not viewed to be essential and it would be wrong to interpret them as such. The trees to be planted were native Silverbirch and Ash.

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

Councillor Wray stated that he had listened to Mr Donaldson carefully and was interested in the views of officers in response to the claim that the views from Killynether Road were not prominent in the landscape given the distance from that road. The Planning Officer stated that the views from that road were considered in the round and it would be wholly incorrect in the Planners' view that the trees were unnecessary for the development. He said that trees were completely uncharacteristic of the landscape and the applicant in planting them would be as a form of integration of a building into a landscape. It was added that these trees were

uncharacteristic of the landscape which was mainly open land with no clusters of trees or buildings.

Policy OS3 suggested that there should be no adverse amenity and that a building should be readily absorbed or integrated by taking advantage of existing vegetation on the site so therefore relying on new vegetation did not meet that requirement.

The Chair asked why views were limited to roads rather than higher points such as Scrabo Hill. It was explained that CTY13 indicated that in relation to critical views those should be taken from the public road network but other places such as landmarks or shared open spaces could also be considered. Planners agreed that this was a very subjective topic and that this was a very sensitive landscape under consideration.

Councillor Smart also referred to the viewpoints and the roof ridge which would be visible and asked for the planners' opinion on that so that it could be considered in a wider context. In response the Planning Officer referred to the visuals using a jacket on a tractor but did not believe that this was an accurate representation. Councillor Smart suggested that a decision be deferred until a site meeting could take place and felt that this would be useful considering the special environmental landscape under discussion.

It was proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the application be considered further with a site visit.

The Acting Head of Planning gave clarification that the recommendation was for refusal and that Members should be mindful that a precedent could be set and also in respect of equestrian businesses there was no requirement for them to be accommodated on the same site and indeed it was perfectly common for horses to be separated from the lands they would graze or exercise on. The Planning Officers were of the opinion that the business aspect was not relevant in this case and the main consideration in this application was the integration of the proposal in the landscape.

Councillor McClean agreed that a site meeting would be useful and it would be important to look at the various vantage points with consideration to visual amenity. The Acting Head of Planning, in referring to the Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee in relation to site visits stressed that site visits could be useful to identify important aspects in proposals but she contended that the application had been fully described and that Members should consider them in exceptional circumstances and that they could cause delays to applications.

The Committee was unanimous in its decision that a decision should be deferred to enable a site meeting to be taken place.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the decision be deferred until a site meeting had taken place.

(Councillor McCollum was readmitted to the meeting at 7.44 pm)

4.2 LA06/2024/0676/F – EXTENSION TO RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGE AND ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY DETACHED ANCILLARY RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION. 55 WOBURN ROAD, MILLISLE
(Appendices V-VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officers Report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: A local development application “called-in” to the Planning Committee by a member of that committee from the Delegated List on 13 November 2024.

Proposal: Extension to residential curtilage and erection of single storey detached ancillary residential accommodation

Site Location: 55 Woburn Road, Millisle, BT22 2HZ

Recommendation: Refusal

The Senior Planner outlined that this was an application for an extension to residential curtilage and erection of single storey detached ancillary residential accommodation at 55 Woburn Road, Millisle and was being presented to the Planning Committee following a call-in request from Councillor Cathcart. The application had been recommended for refusal on the grounds that it would not constitute subordinate ancillary accommodation as required under policy EXT1 and PPS7 Addendum Residential Extensions and Alterations as it could practically and viably operate on its own as a separate dwelling. The application was also considered to be contrary to policy CTY1 of PPS21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that no overriding reasons had been demonstrated as to why the development was essential in the countryside.

Councillor Cathcart considered the proposal was essential as the applicant wished to provide an element of independent living and support to his adult daughter who had health issues and may require additional support going forward.

He would like the Planning Committee to consider whether the annex could practically and viably operate on its own given it was proposed that it would be fully dependent on the host dwelling for all services, parking, amenity and access and also whether that could be dealt with through a planning condition or legal agreement.

Finally, Councillor Cathcart had asked that the Committee consider the proposal in the context of the recent approval of a similar detached annex at 225A Millisle Road, Donaghadee.

The site was located in the countryside between Carrowdore and Millisle and was occupied by a dwelling with attached stables and an adjacent metal fabrication business including a building and yard in the immediate rear of the dwelling. There was a field and paddock to the immediate north-east of the dwelling. Within the Policy EXT1 of PPS7 Addendum was provided the policy context for ancillary

residential accommodation. The policy required that the accommodation must be supplementary to the use of the existing residence and should be designed to demonstrate dependency on the existing residential property. Ancillary uses that could practically and viably operate on their own would not be acceptable.

Planning appeal decision 2015/E0053 for detached ancillary accommodation at 13 Newtown Road, Newry was always a material consideration for planners in assessing such proposals as in that decision, the PAC set out the various factors that should be taken into account when considering proposals for detached ancillary accommodation. In that case, the detached building shown was allowed by the PAC however, while the appeal building was self-contained, similar to the current proposal, it was located to the immediate rear of the dwelling and there was no physical boundary between it and the host dwelling. Furthermore, the garden area was shared between the two buildings as was the parking space and vehicular access. Accordingly, it was considered that there was no sub-division of the planning unit to create an independent dwelling.

The current proposal would fail to comply with those factors as it would essentially have its own curtilage, separate private amenity space, access and parking. Furthermore, it would be physically separated from the host dwelling by fencing and an access lane.

Two letters from doctors were submitted with the application regarding the applicant's daughter's health however that evidence was not considered to be sufficient to demonstrate any site specific and compelling reasons to justify a separate detached residential unit on the site currently proposed.

During the processing of the application, the Planning Department provided advice to the applicant on several occasions regarding a potential alternative site for the annex that would meet the policy and comply with the factors outlined by the PAC. Siting of an annex to the northeast of the dwelling as indicated on a shown slide was recommended by the Planning Department. In that location, the annex would sit adjacent to the dwelling and would share space without being separated. That was not deemed to be acceptable to the applicant given the proximity of the existing septic tank however there would appear to be ample room to site the annex towards the front of the building and away from the septic tank.

While each site had its own individual circumstances guidance generally recommended that houses should be approximately 7m from a septic tank and this could be located a minimum of 12m or more. The applicant suggested that the annex would remain dependant on the main dwelling as all services would be shared with it however it was not considered that the sharing alone was sufficient to ensure it would operate solely as ancillary accommodation.

Given the proposal had all the other physical features that would allow it to function independently the PAC had also taken the view in the past that shared services alone would not be sufficient evidence that an annex could not operate alone as an independent unit.

The Senior Planner referred to a Planning Appeal which considered a separate extension to a home at 85 Upper Darkley Road, Armagh, and in that case the sharing of services did not mean that it could not easily still function as a separate dwelling outside and at a distance from the main home.

At the site in question there was already existing separation in terms of driveway and access and it was also evident from Google Streetview images taken in 2022 and 2010 that the site had been used in the past as a small field or paddock for grazing sheep and horses.

The applicant had also referred to a recent approval for ancillary accommodation at 225a Millisle Road, Donaghadee. An addendum to the planning report was drafted to consider that case which was taken as read. Most Members should be familiar with the case which was considered by the Committee in May of this year. The applicant considered this case to be similar to the proposal under consideration however there were material differences between the two cases.

Firstly, the accommodation at Millisle Road was to replace existing established ancillary accommodation for which a Certificate of Lawfulness was granted in 2020. The accommodation was located within the existing curtilage of the dwelling in its rear garden area with no physical boundaries separating the unit from the host dwelling. The property only had a single vehicular access off Millisle Road with the only access to the annex via the narrow driveway running along the side of 225. All of those factors pointed to the accommodation being very much supplementary to the host dwelling and given its location in the rear garden and shared access it would be extremely unlikely that the accommodation could operate independently. The case was therefore also very similar to the appeal at Newtown Road which was referred to earlier.

The applicant considered that a S76 Planning Agreement could be put in place to ensure that the building remained ancillary and was not used as a separate dwelling. Planning Agreements should only be used as a last option when there were no alternative solutions available or where the use of a planning condition would not be possible or enforceable. While the Millisle Road application was approved subject to a S76 agreement, that was required to address the unique circumstances of the case and provided an additional safeguard given that the established accommodation had a historic separate postal address. However, as outlined, all other physical aspects of the proposal complied with the policy requirement for the accommodation to be supplementary to the main dwelling.

The Planning Department would be very concerned that approval would set a very dangerous precedent for future applications for independent residential accommodation which were currently against planning policy.

In this application there was failure to comply in that its function would not be subordinate or supplementary to the main dwelling but rather could operate practically and viably as an independent unit. The application was also against sustainable development within the countryside and the Planning Department also felt that there was an alternative site on the site where the annex could meet the policy requirements.

On that basis it was recommended that planning permission should be refused.

Councillor McCollum asked for clarification around the dependency of the proposal within the site and the sharing of services which was insufficient in the Planners' view. The officer advised that Planners believed that the physical features of the proposal would allow the annex to function independently with its own access, garden and parking. It was stated that the Planners believed that the application at Millisle did fulfil the policy in all the other aspects since it was also a replacement and there was also a certificate of lawfulness with a planning agreement.

Mr Hunt was invited to speak on behalf of the applicant. He said that the purpose of his representation was to ask the Committee to overturn the proposed recommendation to refuse the application on the grounds that the Department had failed to make a robust case within its 'Case Officers Report' for a refusal decision.

Firstly, the report referred on several occasions to the side garden (west of dwelling) as being a field, the applicant would refute that as it has always been a garden. On several occasions deer from the adjacent woodlands had escaped into the garden as had stray sheep. The applicant did not own any livestock, and his daughter kept horses on the land to the east of the driveway.

Secondly, the report stated that the driveway from Woburn Road '*splits in two close to the site entrance forming clear and separate accesses for the workshops and dwelling*'. There was a single point of access off the Woburn Road, historically that served the dwelling and stables, the work sheds to the rear of the stables were built much later and the driveway was extended to service those. At the same time a turning circle was formed at the front of the dwelling to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site without reversing. He said that in no way constituted separate accesses.

Thirdly, Section 3 of the report (Relevant Planning History) cited an Outline Planning Application LA06/2023/2483/O for a dwelling for the applicant's daughter which was withdrawn on the advice of the Planning Department, however it omitted to mention planning applications X/88/0544 – Outline Planning Approval for a new 1500 sqft dwelling (on which the above application was based). There was also a previous planning approval X/80/0137 for a replacement dwelling.

Section 4 of the report under 'Extension to Curtilage' stated "At present this field is seemingly only used for the grazing of animals such a sheep or horses" – it then went on to state that because there was a fence the 'field' was clearly disconnected to the host dwelling. That was a gross misrepresentation of the site as there was no evidence to suggest that the garden was used for grazing animals, since the applicant did not own any livestock. His daughter owned and cared for several horses and those were well catered for on the land and paddock to the east of the driveway. As stated previously the side garden was fenced to prevent animals getting in as opposed to out - a consequence of living in a rural area was that farm animals (especially sheep) often appeared in gardens. It was assumed that that comment was based on a Google Earth image which showed a stray sheep in the

corner of the garden but to anyone visiting the site it was obvious that this area was not grazed or cut up by animal hoofs.

The report conceded that there was no impact on privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents, no impact on trees/landscape features, no impact on amenity space and parking and no impact on designated sites and natural heritage.

There were no issues with PPS 21 – CTY 13 or 14 as per the report.

Section 4 of the report dismissed the medical evidence provided to `demonstrate the need for ancillary accommodation of this scale or detached nature`. The annex was to provide some modicum of independent living and privacy for the applicant's 31-year-old daughter who lived at home, she had various health issues both physical and mental and relied on support from her parents. A floor plan of the existing dwelling was submitted to demonstrate the lack of any viable location where an annex could be attached.

He went on to refer to reasons for refusal.

The proposal was 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 were no overriding reasons why the development was essential in this rural location. The clear overriding reason that the `development in this rural location` was essential, was that the applicant wished to provide an element of independent living and support to his adult daughter who had health issues and currently lived at home with the applicant and his wife. They believed that their daughter would require additional support going forward and that she would benefit greatly by living adjacent to her home with that family support on hand. The applicant's daughter lived with several health issues both physical and mental, she had a form of spinal arthritis which was progressive and degenerative and was currently treated with injections that were administered by her mother, and as her condition deteriorated more care would be required. The sole reason for the application was to allow the applicant's daughter a degree of independence but with the reassurance that support was close at hand. She also suffered with acute anxiety and OCD - catering for those needs made the application entirely `site specific`.

The proposal was contrary to Policy EXT 1 of the Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7 'Residential Extensions and Alterations' in that the proposal, if permitted, would result in development that was not considered to be subordinate ancillary accommodation demonstrating dependency on the main residential dwelling as it could practically and viably operate on its own as a separate dwelling. The proposed annex was clearly fully dependent on the host dwelling for all services including power, water, drainage, car parking, amenity and access from the public road. For those reasons alone it would be impossible for the annex to `practically and viably operate on its own as a separate dwelling`. Furthermore, no solicitor would convey on the sale of a property that was so fundamentally dependent on a host dwelling making it impossible for the annex be `independent`. NIE would not provide two separate supplies to a single residential address. The applicant had expressed his willingness to enter into a legal agreement with the Department stating

that the annex could never be sold off independently if that would facilitate an approval. He would further cite the recent approval of a detached 1,500 sq ft annex at 225A Millisle Road, Donaghadee ref LA06/2022/1262/F as a precedent for the current. Whilst the Department had argued that the approved annex did not set a precedent because it could not exist independently of the host dwelling the applicant would posit that if that was the case the Department would not have required the applicant to enter into a Section 76 Planning Agreement as a condition of approval.

The Chair invited Members to ask the agent any questions based on his presentation. Following up on that, Alderman Smith had listened to the planning officer and thought that there was an acceptance of many of the needs of the applicant but thought that the key point was the location of the annex and its size. He queried why the views of the Planners had not been considered in the location of the annex and in response Mr Hunt said that consideration had been given to the septic tank and also the floor layout of the main home where it did not seem logical to attach. Rather the side garden with existing mature boundaries would help the annex integrate more easily within the development. Mr Hunt replied that the application was one third smaller than the one on the Millisle Road. The proposal was designed to future proof the property for his daughter having two bedrooms in case there was the need for a guest to stay over in the future. He pointed out that the applicant's daughter faced a progressive condition and that this would be a one-time only annex.

Councillor McClean noticed that the location of the property would be to the side of the house and he sought clarity if that was a field or a garden and Mr Hunt stated that it had always been a garden. From a layman's point of view it looked like there were two driveways to the main home and Mr Hunt explained that the driveway had been established in this style many years previously. It provided a turning circle for horse boxes used by the family and for deliveries to the home but there remained only one access to the home and that was controlled by the main dwelling. He went on to say that the applicant was reticent to build in other areas of the site due to the septic tank, infrastructure from the previous studfarm and the presence of animals grazing close to the property. It was also considered that the layout of the existing house would not permit an attached annex.

Alderman Graham thought it was clear that the existing driveway was well established and asked about the system of sanitation that was proposed and also electricity supply and Mr Hunt reported that the annex would be served by the existing septic tank and the electricity supply would be provided by the main residence.

The Chair thought that the main question was whether the annex could function as a building on its own and went back to the question of why the annex could not have been sited elsewhere on the property. He felt that the proposed location would require increased demands and expense for the required infrastructure in relation to the septic tank.

Alderman McDowell thought that the more important issue was the health of the girl in question in respect of the facilities that were needed and asked if the applicant would be willing to agree to a Section 76 condition being put in place that the

property could not be sold off at a later point in time and that the development was not for financial gain. Mr Hunt agreed that the applicant would be willing to do that and the main interest in the development was to provide a home for a daughter.

The Chair thanked Mr Hunt and he returned to the public gallery.

Councillor McClean spoke of the disconnect between what was discussed between the Planners and the applicant in terms of the legislation and the desire to find a solution that would suit both parties. It was the view of the Planners that the site could provide a more integrated annex on a different location within the site such as with the use of a glazed link for example. While the PAC had accepted detached annexes in the past they must comply with other factors such as shared facilities and access for example. That had been discussed with the application and planners believed that an alternative proposal on the site would be acceptable.

Councillor McCollum took the question on that further asking if the planners could suggest an alternative but was advised that it was not for the Planning Department to find a location and that they could merely offer advice. Previous applications had been submitted for the site with the last permission granted in the 1980s. It was also important to note that the application had not been submitted with the intention to provide for the needs of the daughter so the assessment of the medical evidence was not being given consideration.

Alderman McDowell questioned planning officers on what specific medical qualification they held whereby they would discount two letters from health professionals regarding the applicant's daughter. The Acting Head of Planning explained that the application had not been made on the grounds of special circumstances, which fell under a completely different Policy and that was an important point to clarify. Medical letters were often received by planners and if the basis of the application had been changed to medical grounds the planners would require the current application to be withdrawn and resubmitted with a new fee so that an alternative policy could be considered.

Referring to the Section 76 agreement Alderman Graham asked if that could be used but the Officer explained that those could only be put in place where an application complied with planning policy. The Member wondered if there was a concern that the annex could become a separate resellable site since it did have those physical features at the moment. The planner explained that an annex needed to have a shared curtilage but permission for a separate dwelling had previously been applied for at this address and withdrawn and that is clear that this is what the applicant desired.

Alderman Smith asked if the crux of the question was that this would be a building that could be used independently since it had all the features of that and it did appear to be quite separate from the main home.

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Council grants planning permission with the necessary safeguards in place.

Proposing that Alderman McDowell believed that the Planners had not focused enough attention on the health issues of the applicant’s daughter and he felt that the applicant should be considered for special circumstances.

Alderman Graham was in agreement and was of the view that the site that the applicant had chosen for the annex was slightly more suitable and in a more attractive position. He was of the view that turning circles were common in rural settings and did not believe the building would inconvenience others.

Councillor Kendall had heard the debate and stated that she could not support the proposal due to it having enough contravention to planning policy to set a precedent. She was hugely sympathetic to the health of the applicant’s daughter but the application had not been brought on those grounds.

Neither could Alderman Smith support and he also expressed sympathy over the needs for an independent dwelling but he believed that other options could be considered that would fulfil that need. He was viewing the application through the lens of the existing planning policy.

Councillor McCollum agreed and was regretful that she could not give her support to the application. She was comforted that the site was large enough that the applicant could reconsider further development on his property.

Councillor McClean agreed that it was difficult to bluntly ignore a medical condition but the correct application based on medical grounds would need to be made and he was not satisfied that other alternative positions for the annex had not been exhausted. He also worried that passing the application would lead to a dangerous precedent being set.

Members were not in agreement and when the alternative recommendation was put to a vote, 2 voted to APPROVE, 8 voted AGAINST and 2 ABSTAINED. The proposal FELL.

FOR (2)
Aldermen
Graham
McDowell

AGAINST (8)
Alderman
Smith
Councillors
Harbinson
Kendall
Kerr
McClean
McCollum
McKee
Smart

ABSTAINING (2)
Alderman
McIlveen
Councillor
Wray

It was proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the officers’ recommendation be adopted.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 8 voting FOR, 2 voting Against and 2 Abstained it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (8)
Alderman
Smith
Councillors
Harbinson
Kendall
Kerr
McClellan
McCullum
McKee
Smart

AGAINST (2)
Aldermen
Graham
McDowell

ABSTAINING (2)
Alderman
McIlveen
Councillor
Wray

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

RECESS 8.55 pm
RECOMMENCED 9.06 pm

- 4.3 LA06/2019/0308/F – EXTENSION OF EXISTING COMBER GREENWAY FROM 20M NORTH OF 122 BELFAST ROAD, COMBER, TO EXISTING SHARED PATH TO THE SOUTHWEST ARM OF ROUNDABOUT ON A21 ACCESSING ENLER VILLAGE, COMBER. FURTHER PROPOSED SECTION OF GREENWAY FROM EXISTING AGRICULTURAL ACCESS APPROX. 10M WEST OF ENTRANCE GATES AT BALLYRICKARD WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS, 35M EAST OF 145 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, COMBER, TO THE EXISTING FLOOD EMBANKMENT ON THE NORTHWEST EDGE OF STRANGFORD LOUGH, THROUGH LONDONDERRY PARK TO 30M SOUTH OF 14 MOYNE GARDENS, NEWTOWNARDS (PROPOSED GREENWAY ALONG THE A21 BETWEEN ENLER VILLAGE ROUNDABOUT AND EXISTING AGRICULTURAL ACCESS APPROX. 10M WEST OF ENTRANCE GATES TO BALLYRICKARD WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS, 145 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, COMBER, TO BE SUBMITTED AT SEPARATE APPLICATION). WORKS INCLUDE 1X CAR PARK ADJACENT TO 122 BELFAST ROAD, COMBER, 3X PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES OVER ENLER RIVER, A CONTROLLED CROSSING AT BRIDGE STREET, COMBER, AND UPGRADING OF EXISTING STREET LIGHTING, FENCING AND ASSOCIATED SITE AND ACCESS WORKS. (AMENDED PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION AND AMENDED PLANS). EXTENSION OF EXISTING COMBER GREENWAY FROM BELFAST ROAD, COMBER TO GEORGES STREET/UPPER GREENWELL STREET, NEWTOWNARDS (BT23 5QP – BT23 7PA)**

(Appendices VIII&IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's Report.

DEA: Comber and Newtownards

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Extension of existing Comber Greenway from 20m North of 122 Belfast Rd, Comber, to existing shared path to the southwest arm of roundabout on A21 accessing Enler Village, Comber. Further proposed section of Greenway from existing agricultural access approx. 10m west of entrance gates at Ballyrickard Wastewater Treatment Works, 35m east of 145 Newtownards Road, Comber, to the existing flood embankment on the northwest edge of Strangford Lough, through Londonderry Park to 30m south of 14 Moyne Gardens, Newtownards. (Proposed Greenway along the A21 between Enler Village Roundabout and existing agricultural access approx. 10m west of entrance gates to Ballyrickard Wastewater Treatment Works, 145 Newtownards Road, Comber, to be submitted as separate application). Works include 1x car park adjacent to 122 Belfast Road, Comber, 3x pedestrian

bridges over Enler River, a controlled crossing at Bridge Street, Comber, and upgrading of existing street lighting, fencing and associated site and access works. (Amended proposal description and amended plans)

Site Location: Extension of existing Comber Greenway from Belfast Road, Comber to Georges Street/Upper Greenwell Street Newtownards (BT23 5QP - BT23 7PA)

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Principal Planner (C Blair) stated that the application was before Members as it was a Council application and fell within the major category of development.

At this juncture it was important that Members note that a proposed middle section of the Greenway route between the Enler Village Roundabout in Comber and Ballyrickard Waste Water Treatment Works (along the A21 dual carriageway section) had been excluded from this planning application. That was to enable the remaining sections to proceed to determination. The application had been stalled for a significant period of time as DfI Roads considered the proposed works along this "middle section" to be unacceptable with it unlikely to achieve a successful solution within the current red line of the site.

Members would note that DfI Roads had now no objections to the proposal subject to a number of conditions that had been agreed between the applicant and DfI Roads and would be attached to any decision notice should planning permission be granted.

Members would note that there had been two letters of support and 82 letters of objection received. 19 letters of objection were received following the recent neighbour notification process after the proposed development description and site address amended to take account of the excluded middle section. However, that was as a result of an incorrect drawing submitted by the agent with the route shown as progressing through the Castlelodge housing development in Comber. The applicant advised the Planning Department of its error and immediately issued individual apology letters to those local residents, which included a map showing the correct route.

The thrust of objections related to parking including a proposed car park at Ballyrickard Waste Water Treatment Works, which had subsequently been removed from the proposed scheme; landownership objections, potential impact on privacy and loss of residential amenity, security around properties and anti-social behaviour; objection to the use of the flood defence bank for walking and impact on geese and wintering birds. In terms of the latter two points raised, DfI Rivers had no objection to the use of the flood defence bank and NED was content with proposed mitigation measures in relation to birds, which were set out in an outline Construction Environmental Management Plan.

As a major application, the Planning Department was satisfied that the requirements for the pre-application community consultation process had been carried out as per Section 27 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The proposed Greenway as initially submitted measured 12km in length. The middle section, which had now been excluded, measured 1.5km long. The Greenway paths were proposed to be 3-4m wide with the exception of a number of pinch points where it narrowed to two metres at the existing road bridge footways and riverside paths adjacent to the flood defences. Otherwise, existing paths would be widened to a minimum of three metres.

The remaining two parts of the Greenway route were divided into five sections. The first section extended from the existing Comber Greenway on Belfast Road to Kennel Bridge, via the Enler River.

At Belfast Road a new car park with 35 no. spaces was proposed along with a picnic area. On this site layout plan it could be noted that the existing Greenway was annotated in a greenish-yellow colour. DfI Roads had no objections to the car park or access from Belfast Road. The new Greenway path would be constructed perpendicular to the existing Greenway with an approximate 4m high embankment constructed from the car park ground level to the start of the new Greenway route. One walked up from the car park onto the Greenway path which would be located at the top of the embankment.

The path would then follow a countryside route along the Enler River until it reached Kennel Bridge. That pathway would be set back 2.5m from the riverbank with a 1.2m high timber fence positioned inland from the pathway. At this point a new 4m wide pedestrian bridge (Bridge A) would be constructed across the river and beneath the existing Mount Alexander Road Bridge.

The second section of the proposed Greenway route was from Kennel Bridge to Bridge Street in Comber. It travelled alongside the Enler River crossing again via a new bridge (Bridge B) in an east to west direction. It then continued to hug the river until reaching existing pedestrian Bridge C, which would be widened to 4m and as could be seen on an attached slide.

It would then follow the route until it reached Bridge D, a new pedestrian and cycle bridge which would again traverse the Enler River adjacent to Comber Primary School. The Greenway then approached Bridge Street, where it was proposed to construct a further new bridge (Bridge E) adjacent to the existing road bridge. A new puffin-control crossing was proposed across Bridge Street to enable users to continue along the river towards the bypass, which comprised the third section of the Greenway.

The proposed Greenway route worked its way south from Bridge Street to the rear and east of terrace housing within Park Crescent, Comber, and crossed a small subsidiary to the river via an upgraded pedestrian and cycle bridge known as Bridge F, which could be seen on a slide. Adjacent to the east corner of Comber Recreational Football Club, it was proposed that the Greenway then crossed the river again to lands known as Muckers Field via an upgraded Bridge, known as Bridge G.

The route proceeded south to the A21 bypass where it was proposed to reopen an existing underpass with these details shown. The route then travelled along the

bypass and joined the shared use path, which was to be widened to 3m and resurfaced and led to the Enler Village Roundabout. At this point the Greenway route stopped at speed control gates.

The fourth section of the Greenway Route recommenced at Ballyrickard Waste Water Treatment Works 1.5km further along the dual carriageway from the Enler Village Roundabout towards Newtownards.

At this point and as indicated on further slides, the Greenway travelled east towards the coast traversing an existing agricultural field adjacent to its boundary line which was defined by fencing and a belt of mature trees. The route would proceed along the existing pathway on top of the existing flood wall to the floodgates on Portaferry Road, Newtownards. A cross section of that path was also shown.

The final section of the Greenway ran from the Floodgates to Georges Street, Newtownards. The route proceeded along the left-hand side of the Portaferry Road until an uncontrolled crossing point opposite Londonderry Park.

The route then progressed along an existing path in Londonderry Park adjacent to the canal. The proposed Greenway route then ended at Bridge H, where it crossed the canal. That comprised a new replacement bridge where users could turn left and follow an existing pavement to join New Road / Georges Street or Upper Greenwell Street. A previously approved further section of the Greenway route then began further north at Belvedere Road.

It was considered that the proposed Greenway had been designed to a high standard and represented sustainable development, which did not damage any environmental features or quality of the local area. It therefore complied with the SPPS. NED had no objections in that regard.

There was no adverse impact on residential amenity due to adequate separation distances. Furthermore, the proposed Greenway route used existing pathway routes within the urban area, for example to the rear of Park Crescent in Comber, which were to be upgraded, widened and resurfaced. A condition would be attached to any planning permission to restrict construction hours to weekdays and Saturday mornings with no development works ongoing in evenings, Sundays or public holidays.

It was considered that the principle of development was acceptable and where the development works were located in the countryside, PPS 21 redirected one to PPS 8 for outdoor recreational uses. The proposed development complied with those policy requirements.

Additionally, the proposed development complied with policies AMP 1, AMP 2 and AMP 3 of PPS 3 "Access, Movement & Parking". The Greenway was accessible to all users, the access from the proposed car park onto Belfast Road had been justified under the protected route policy and the proposal would not prejudice road safety or inconvenience the flow of traffic.

The section of the proposal which ran along the flood defences was adjacent to and hydrologically connected with Strangford Lough, a local, national and internationally protected site. As such the applicant carried out a Habitats Regulations Assessment Stage One Screening followed by a HRA Stage Two Appropriate Assessment. SES had reviewed that and had no reason to disagree with its conclusions that the proposed Greenway would have no adverse impact on the integrity of any European site. DAERA's NED was satisfied that surface water drainage would use existing drainage pathways and consider the proposed mitigation measures to be put in place set out under the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan to prevent pollution or contamination of surface waters during construction to be acceptable. A condition would be attached to any decision notice requiring the submission of a final CEMP as requested by NED. However, it was otherwise content with the proposal. DfI Rivers also offered no objections with regard to the submitted drainage assessments.

In relation to bats, birds, otters and badgers, NED had no objections following submission of accepted information subject to conditions particularly in relation to the construction phase.

In terms of PPS 15 "Flood Risk" the proposed development lay within the 1 in 100 year fluvial flood plain, and 1 in 200 year coastal flood plain. The proposed Greenway was an exception under criterion (d) of Policy FLD 1 of PPS 15 as it comprised the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, amenity open space or for nature conservation purposes, including ancillary buildings. DfI Rivers was content with the detail including proposed mitigation measures within the submitted Flood Risk Assessments and offered no objection.

Taking account of the above the Planning Department considered the proposed Greenway development to comply with the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and prevailing planning policy, and accordingly, approval was recommended with a request for delegated powers to amend conditions.

The Chair asked the officer if he could confirm that in relation to the permissions granted that this did not supersede but connected the parts of the Greenway together and that was confirmed. He referred to the 1.5 km that was missing and there was an intention for a future application for the remaining sections.

The Chair had been surprised that this had been brought forward since he was aware that conversations with landowners were still ongoing. The Interim Director of Prosperity had consulted with the Director of Community and Wellbeing and referred to the Council having made a decision to continue discussions with the landowner, but that this planning permission was needed in order to appoint a contractor to work for the moment. What was brought allowed for the contractor to be appointed. DFI's Active Travel section fully supported the application and this was needed to move forward and to avail of grant funding.

Councillor McKee thought that the Chair had raised some good points and it would possibly have been a good idea to have had someone from Community and Wellbeing to present to the meeting to answer the necessary questions. He also referred to the uncontrolled crossing which led to the Portaferry Road car park as

being unclear. He asked the Principal Planner how the greenway would run from that car park to the Portaferry Road since it was not clear how pedestrians would safely navigate the path into the park to get to the puffin crossing. In response the Officer advised he did not have further drawings but appreciated the question and could not answer it at this point in time. The Member felt that there were some issues still outstanding in relation to the application.

Councillor Kendall was also uncomfortable to approve something that was considered incomplete. She asked officers about the consequences of deferring a decision for a month when further information could be brought forward especially since this was a Council application. The Interim Director thought that that was not an issue but advised that deferral would be to the February Committee and the relevant officers could be present to clarify the points accordingly, being from the Strategic Capital Projects Unit.

At this point Alderman McDowell proposed that the Planning Committee accept the officers' recommendation. That was seconded by Councillor Smart.

Alderman McDowell stated that this had been a long time coming and it was important, there were questions but delaying until February could lead to problems and he thought that the plans could proceed for now and if necessary amendments could be made to them at a later time but it was important to keep the momentum going.

Councillor Smart supported the proposal and while he agreed with the comments of some of the other Members about the piecemeal development he was mindful of deadlines and would prefer to have some development rather than none.

Councillor Kendall was not happy to support the recommendation and would have preferred more information and Councillor McKee also shared those concerns. They appreciated that the agent could not attend the meeting but believed that there was an onus on Council officers to give reassurance. This was not a great look for the Council and raised questions that it was not scrutinising its own development as closely as external applications.

Alderman Smith saw the dilemma and shared the concerns relating to the clarity of the proposals and elements of the piecemeal nature of the report. It would have benefitted from more detail in places and that could have been teased out. He also had concern over halting development and would be content to push back for a further month and hold a special meeting in January to discuss the application.

The Chair saw the argument and suggested if a further date could be set by the Interim Director of Prosperity to ensure the appropriate officers were available to answer the more technical questions. Alderman Smith agreed and while he was concerned about the delay, Members had raised concerns and it would be difficult to progress on a nod in the hope that everything in the future would be fine. Members were aware that this was time sensitive.

Alderman Graham asked for clarification on the difficulties and the Chair explained that the issue raised was about the end of the Greenway and how it connected to the

crossing and the safety issues around that and that was the key point that had to be raised there.

At this stage the Chair noted dissent and requested a recorded vote.

On the officers' recommendation being put to the meeting with 5 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST and 4 ABSTAINED it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (5)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINING (4)
Alderman	Councillors	Aldermen
McDowell	McCollum	Graham
Councillors	McKee	McIlveen
Harbinson	Kendall	Smith
McClellan		Councillor
Smart		Kerr
Wray		

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

4.4 LA06/2023/2188/F – PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS – THE MOAT, MOAT STREET, DONAGHADEE (Appendices X-XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's Report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Public Realm Improvements

Site Location: The Moat, Moat Street, Donaghadee

Recommendation: Approve

The Principal Planner advised that this was an application for Items 4.4 and 4.5 which related to the application for full planning permission (LA06/2023/2188/F) and application for Listed Building Consent (LA06/2023/2189/LBC) for Public Realm Improvements at The Moat, Moat Street, Donaghadee.

Items 4.4 and 4.5 were before Members as these were Council applications. Item 4.4 was the application for full planning permission for the public realm improvement at the Moat in Donaghadee, whilst Item 4.5 was the related Listed Building Consent application.

The application site was located inside Donaghadee Settlement Limits at The Moat, a Grade B2 listed building and was within Donaghadee Conservation Area and an Area of Archaeological Potential as set out in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

The public realm improvements included the provision of railings and gates, resurfacing works of paths and steps to improve drainage, stability and long term durability; improvements also included the proposed repointing of stone walls with a lime based mortar between the Old Gunpowder Store and Moat Street; to plant new

hedging to enhance appearance and security where boundaries were currently weak with adjacent neighbouring properties; to erect proposed security fence to the underside of the bridge to deter anti-social behaviour; and to provide informational and directional signage within the site.

Slides were shown of the proposed works to the steps and provision of new railings at certain points within the site for safety to reduce risks of falling, a cross-section of the proposed railing, the proposed security fence to the underside of the bridge and details of the kissing gate.

The Planning Department's Conservation Area Officer was consulted regarding the proposal and offered no objection with the public realm improvements having no detrimental visual impact on the surrounding conservation area.

HED was consulted and offered no objections subject to conditions on a programme of archaeological works and that appropriate materials were used.

The proposed development had no impact on existing parking provision, neighbouring residential amenity, designated sites or protected habitats and species.

Therefore, full planning permission and listed building consent were accordingly recommended.

Councillor McCollum made a proposal that both recommendations were agreed but the Chair advised that they needed to be taken separately.

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

4.5 LA06/2023/2189/LBC – PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS – THE MOAT, MOAT STREET, DONAGHADEE (Appendices XIII&XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's Report.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Public Realm Improvements

Site Location: The Moat, Moat Street, Donaghadee

Recommendation: Approval

Members would note the details above at Item 4.4 and repeated an application for Listed Building Consent. The HED had been consulted and there were no objections. Consent was recommended.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing the recommendation Councillor McCollum stressed the value of the site and, along with the Chair, endorsed the work of Councillor MacArthur in progressing

the work here and that should be commended. The steps would improve safety and encourage greater public use and she urged Members to accept.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing:

Appeal Decisions

There had been no appeal decisions received since the last report to the Planning Committee.

New Appeals Lodged

There had been no new appeals lodged since the last report to the Planning Committee.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

6. Q2 SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity 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 had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. 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 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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 April – September 2024 was attached.

Key achievements:

- Further to achieving the 15-week processing time for Quarter 1, in respect of applications in the local category of development, YTD was recorded as 16.4 weeks (relating to 377 decisions issued).
- To date two applications in the major category of development were determined – with an average processing time of 81.2 weeks.
- There were 175 decisions issued in the householder category of applications, with 52% issuing within 8 weeks (the internal performance indicator), with 141 issuing within the 15-week target (81%).
- 5no. appeals against the Council's Refusal of Planning Permission were dismissed between 1 April and 30 September 2024. 3no. appeals against service of Enforcement Notices were considered by the Planning Appeals Commission and the Notices upheld.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- Delay in publication of draft Plan Strategy – whether by outcomes of parallel Sustainability Appraisal, DFI consideration and referral for Independent Examination (IE) and lack of resources within the Planning Appeals Commission for IE.
- Managing statutory performance targets in context of stretched resources and fiscal challenges.

Action to be taken:

- Implementation of the NI Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) – stemming from recommendations made by Public Accounts Committee in March 2022 with regard to development plan, development management and enforcement functions – working on various workstreams to address processes and legislative change.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
EC 01 PL 04 (major applications)	Lack of resource within DM Team	Active recruitment for Service area – backfilling of posts	DM Principal Officer	6 months
EC 01 PL 05 (local applications)	Delay in consultee responses			
	Lack of quality submissions both in consultee responses and information submitted by applicants	Collaborative working with statutory consultees to identify blockages in processing and how can be addressed		
		Implementation of validation checklist in legislation to ensure frontloading of applications		

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

7. UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDER AND WORKS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that this report represented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. The update provided information from 16 August 2024 (date of previous report) to 14 November 2024.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the following items be taken in exclusion of public and press.

8. **QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS**
(Appendix XV)

IN CONFIDENCE

9. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – TOURISM**
(Appendix XVI)

IN CONFIDENCE

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.09 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 4 December 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McAlpine

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings

Councillors: Blaney Irwin
Boyle Kerr (7.08pm)
Douglas McKee (Zoom)
Edmund Wray (Zoom)
Harbinson

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

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Alderman McAlpine) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received Councillors Cathcart and Morgan.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

3. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES FOR THE OFFENCE OF ABANDONING VEHICLES AND REVISION OF ABANDONED VEHICLES POLICY (FILE 92014)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Offence of Abandonment outlined in Article 29 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 made it a criminal offence to abandon a motor vehicle or anything that had formed part of a motor vehicle on any land in the open air or on any other land forming part of a road.

A person found guilty of such an offence may be punished on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding Level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000), or in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to such a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or both.

For certain types of abandoned vehicles, district Councils were required to take steps to trace the owner of a vehicle and, if successful, give them seven days written notice that the Council intended to dispose of the vehicle if it was not collected within that time. If the owner was traced, the Council had the option of serving a fixed penalty notice as an alternative to prosecution for the offence of abandoning the vehicle.

Section 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 inserted a new Section 29A into the 1978 Order, allowing an authorised officer of a district Council to issue a fixed penalty notice as an alternative to prosecution for the offence. The fixed penalty was set at £200, and an authorised officer must be an employee of a district Council authorised in writing by that Council to issue fixed penalty notices.

It was sometimes difficult to identify an offender when a vehicle had changed ownership and DVLA records were not accurate and the added use of a fixed penalty enforcement option would be beneficial, when evidence existed, to enable officers to deal expeditiously with a vehicle without the necessity of a court case.

There had been 290 abandoned vehicle reports investigated by the Neighbourhood Environment Team in the last 12 months. It would be expected that only a small percentage of those would attract an FPN.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The fixed penalty amount was set statutorily at £200 however the Council may permit a discounted fine for 14 days to encourage early payment.

Officers did not currently have Council authority to issue FPN for this offence and similarly the discounted rate had not yet been set by the Council.

A district Council may use its fixed penalty receipts only for the purposes of:

- (a) its functions under this Part; (29C Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978)
- (b) its functions under Part 8 of the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997;
- (c) its functions relating to the enforcement of Sections 2 and 3 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011; and
- (d) such other of its functions as may be specified in Regulations made by the Department.

For Information - The Removal and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

The Regulations prescribe the period during which the occupier of land may object to the removal of an abandoned vehicle from that land (Regulation 3) and the period during which the owner of a vehicle may remove it from the custody of a district council. This is seven days from the day on which the notice is served (Regulation 4) and the period commences on the date the district council notifies the person in writing that he may remove the vehicle and ending on the seventh day after that date, or at the time when the vehicle is disposed of, whichever is the later (Regulation 5).

The following proposals were made in relation to the Council's enforcement of offences relating to abandoned vehicles:

1. Officers be authorised to issue fixed penalty notices for persons abandoning vehicles under Section 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 where sufficient evidence is obtained.
2. The discounted fixed penalty notice fine be set at £150 if paid within 14 days of issue.
3. The Abandoned Vehicles policy was to be revised:
 - a) To permit a maximum holding period of 21 days prior to disposal as a scrap value vehicle or auction/sale were judged to have more than scrap value, where the owner could not be traced or the traced owner has failed to respond to the seven day notice served on them.
 - b) To substitute the current £10 fee with "The owner of a vehicle impounded by the Council shall be liable for any expenses that the council or contractor incurred in respect of its removal, this may also include a daily storage fee determined by Council or authorised Contractor."

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to the proposals set out in this report relating to the enforcement of offences relating to abandoned vehicles.

Alderman Cummings proposed, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Cummings welcomed the suggestions which had been put forward to redeem some of the costs associated with abandoned vehicles. He asked if officers had been able to identify where those hotspot areas were in the Borough.

In response the Head of Regulatory Services indicated that it would be possible for officers to identify any hotspot areas but added that the issue was predominantly widespread throughout the Borough. He added that he could provide the member with those details via email in due course.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Harbinson also indicated that he would be interested in having sight of those details referred to by the previous speaker. Continuing he referred to Page 3 of the report and in particular 3b which stated:

“a)To substitute the current £10 fee with “The owner of a vehicle impounded by the Council shall be liable for any expenses that the council or contractor incurred in respect of its removal, this may also include a daily storage fee determined by Council or authorised Contractor.”

He sought further clarification around that.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that a contract was in place for the removal and storage of such vehicles and the figures referred to formed part of that contract. He indicated that he would confirm those figures and report back to the member in due course.

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

4. GRANTING OF AN AMUSEMENT PERMIT (FILE 90101)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that an application had been received for the Grant of an Amusement Permit as follows:

Premises: Jewel Casino Ltd, 105 Bloomfield Road South, Bangor

Applicant: Mr Francis Brady, 5 Dunamallaght Park, Ballycastle

Application for an amusement licence had been made under Article 108 (1) (ca) of the Order to provide gaming machines with a maximum cash prize pay-out of £25. Access to the premises would be restricted to over 18-year-olds only.

The application had been publicly advertised as required by the Order and there had been no objections.

The PSNI had also confirmed that they did not have any objection to the grant.

Should the Council be minded to refuse this application or wish to impose further restrictions on the applicant then the Council was required to serve Notice on the applicant stating the proposed grounds for the refusal or additional restrictions. The applicant then had 14 days to inform the Council in writing their desire to show cause, in person or by a representative as to why the application should not be refused or the additional conditions applied.

RECOMMENDED that the Council considers the application and confirms if it wishes to grant an amusement permit or indicate its intention to refuse it.

Councillor Boyle proposed that the Council grants the amusement permit. There being no seconder the proposal fell.

At this stage Councillor Edmund indicated that he did not think he could support the application. He expressed the view that it was a strange location for this type of premises adjacent to a large retail park and he believed it would not add anything to the locality.

(Councillor Kerr entered the meeting at this stage – 7.08pm)

Councillor Edmund proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that the Council confirms to the applicant, its intention to refuse the Amusement Permit application.

The proposer Councillor Edmund expressed the view that the location for this was wrong adding that it would not bring any betterment to the local area.

Supporting those comments, the seconder Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to a recent University Study which had been undertaken and found that many gaming establishments were located in deprived areas, and as such what was before them was an excellent example of that. She stated that she would have her concerns with this application particularly given the close proximity of Bloomfield Primary School and she did not believe this was the right location for such an establishment.

Sharing those concerns Councillor Wray noted the maximum cash prize pay-out of £25 commenting that given the ongoing issues with anti-social behaviour in the area this could only add to those ongoing issues. He asked if the proposals had been advertised and if any feedback had been received.

The Director of Environment confirmed that the application had been previously advertised and no objections had been received.

Continuing Councillor Wray expressed some concern that those within the local community may not be aware of the proposal.

In response the Director commented that it was not in the Council's gift to consult on matters such as this.

At this stage Councillor McKee stated that he could not recall if the Council had ever previously denied such an application and as such he asked if there could be any consequences in doing so.

The Director advised that it was up to the Council to make a decision on such applications following the appropriate advertisements being made and engagement undertaken with the PSNI. He indicated that concerns raised by members would be taken into account and if the Council was minded to refuse the application, notice would be given to the applicant of the intention to deny and they would be offered the opportunity to attend a future meeting of the Committee to put forward their views. The matter would then be brought back to Council for further consideration.

Thanking the Director, Councillor McKee expressed his support for the proposal adding that he too would have concerns about the location particularly as he had never even heard of the business.

At this stage the Head of Regulatory Services advised that the premises referred to was part of a complex and had included a public house and a garage. The business

itself being considered was not yet in operation and noted that a previous application had been made in 2022.

Councillor Blaney agreed with the concerns which had been raised by his colleagues adding that to site a premises such as what was being suggested in this location would not be considered a good move in his opinion.

The Director added that if the Council was minded to refuse the application, the applicant would be given the opportunity to attend a future Committee meeting to put forward their views prior to a final decision being made. If the Council refused the application, the applicant has a right of appeal.

By way of summing up the proposer, Councillor Edmund thanked officers and members for their comments and support. He reiterated his concerns with the application particularly given its close proximity to the Primary School, a large retail park and housing estate and the impact it could have on the local community.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Council confirms to the applicant, its intention to refuse the Amusement Permit application.

5. ELECTED MEMBER TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP – STRATEGIC REVIEW OF HRC ESTATE (FILE 47049)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that members may recall that in October 2024, the Council agreed to undertake a strategic review of its HRC estate. It was suggested that a Members' Working Group of Members should guide this process, in similar fashion to the review of the kerbside waste collections model.

The Members' Working Group for the review of kerbside waste collections model was established using the d'Hont method, and it was therefore proposed that this be used once again for the establishment of the HRC review group.

Members may wish to utilise the same Kerbside Waste Collections Review Working Group membership for the HRC estate review group or nominate new representatives, again using the d'Hont method.

The current membership of the Elected Member Kerbside Waste Collections Working Group was, Aldermen Adair, Graham, McAlpine and McIlveen and Councillors Cathcart, Harbinson, Irwin, McKimm, Morgan, Smart and Wray.

RECOMMENDED that nominations be made for membership of an Elected Member Task and Finish Working Group for the Strategic Review of Council's HRC Estate, using the d'Hont method.

Alderman Cummings proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the membership of the Elected Member Task and Finish Working Group - Strategic Review of HRC Estate should be the same as that of the HRC Kerbside Working Group.

Councillor McKee advised that the Independent and Small Party Group wished to nominate Councillor Boyle onto the Working Group.

The Director sought clarification that Councillor Boyle would replace Councillor McKimm, and Councillor McKee confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor Boyle asked if there was a timing structure for this piece of work, to which the Director replied no, adding that they were still trying to finalise the work undertaken by the Kerbside Working Group. He advised that it was planned to see what the next few months brought in respect of that piece of work, before commencing the work associated with the Strategic Review of Council's HRC Estate. He added that the reason for that was purely down to resources.

Continuing Councillor Boyle asked that if by chance on occasion he was unable to attend a meeting of the Working Group could someone from the Independent and Small Party Group attend in his place. The Director advised that he would need to check that with the Council's Director of Corporate Services in line with the Council's Standing Orders but indicated that could be explored.

At this stage Councillor Blaney stated that he was content with that as long as one of his Party representatives could attend in his place if need be. He added that other Party's should not be disadvantaged by not having the ability to do so particularly if the Independent and Small Party Group were permitted to do that.

At this stage the Director reminded members that the other main Party's would already have a number of representatives on the Working Group while the Independent and Small Party Group only had one representative on the Group. As such if that person was unable to attend, that Grouping would not be represented. Continuing the Director indicated that he was keen to hear the views of the Committee and take the request back to check if it was in line with Standing Orders.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commented that she believed this principal applied to each Council Committee and as such if she was unable to attend a meeting there was no capacity for her to nominate someone to attend in her place. She added that she believed that it was not a matter to be considered by the Committee and instead was a procedural issue which required management consideration. However having said that she agreed that it was a question which should be asked.

Concurring with what had already been said, Councillor Irwin suggested this could open a can of worms however she agreed that it would be interesting to learn what the procedures were and what the Standing Orders said on such matters. Continuing she did suggest that it may be considered differently to Committees particularly in respect of voting rights.

At this stage the Director summarised the comments made by members reminding them that they had agreed for the Working Groups to be set using the d'Hont method. He indicated that he would seek clarification and report back to members in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the membership of the Elected Member Task and Finish Working Group - Strategic Review of HRC Estate should be the same as that of HRC Kerbside Working Group with the exception of Councillor McKimm to be replaced by Councillor Boyle. Furthermore that clarification was sought around if a member was unable to attend for any reason that a substitute may attend in their place.

REPORTS FOR NOTING


6. Q2 NET ACTIVITY REPORT (1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024) (FILE 92009)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 July to 30 September 2024. The aim of the report was to provide members with details of some of the key activities of the Team, the range of services it provided along with details of performance levels.

Applications to the Neighbourhood Environment Team

Dog Licences

Concessionary licences remained at 81% of dog licences issued over the period. This includes the categories of neutering (£5) / over 65 (Free – 1st dog) / over 65 subsequent dog (£5) and income related benefits (£5). Standard dog licence £12.50 and block licence £32. The application fees were set by statute. It should be noted that the figures included block licences where one licence could be issued for multiple dogs in specific circumstances.



	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Period of Report July – Sept 2023	Comparison
Dog licences issued during the three months	5414	5062	

DOG CONTROL – Dog Licences	2024	2023
Full Cost	990	938
Reduced – Neutered	2731	2646
Reduced – Benefits	628	506
Free – Over 65	949	851
Reduced – Over 65 Subsequent Dogs	101	106
Block Licence	15	15
TOTAL	5414	5062

Investigations



The Neighbourhood Environment Team responded to a range of service requests. In terms of time spent, some types of service requests would be completed immediately whilst others required a longer-term strategy to find a resolution. The

breakdown within the categories for the types of service requests received had been detailed in Appendix 1.

SERVICE REQUESTS			
	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Same 3 months July – Sept 2023	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	201	447	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	351	332	



Fixed Penalty Notices

The Neighbourhood Environment Team issued **79** Fixed Penalty Notices for various environmental offences in the Borough.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES			
	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Same 3 months July – Sept 2023	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	40	47	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	39	24	

Prosecutions

Breakdown of cases being prosecuted through the Court.

PROSECUTIONS			
	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Same 3 months July – Sept 2023	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	1	0	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	2	1	

Educational Programme

Correspondence was sent to all primary schools within the Borough attaching a link to the on-line flyer which provided details of Project **ELLA** and inviting teachers to contact the department to arrange for school visits, presentations and workshops.

For the period of this report which included the school holidays of July and August - the following activities took place:-

JULY	School Holidays
AUGUST	School Holidays

EC.04.12.2024



81

SEPTEMBER	Donaghadee Primary School – 1 Rock Pool; 1 Beach Clean; 1 Scavenger Hunt
------------------	--

To date the uptake of the **ELLA** Programme had been lower than anticipated. The method of delivery was currently being reviewed and the team would be reaching out to local schools and communities.

Attached (Appendix 3) was an impact card from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful containing information for the Live Here Love Here and Eco-Schools programmes within the Ards and North Down Council area.

APPENDIX 1 – JULY – SEPTEMBER 2024

SERVICE REQUESTS			
	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Same 3 months July – Sept 2023	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	201	447	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	351	332	

DOG CONTROL – Service Requests	2024	2023
Dog Attack on Other Domestic Animal	21	13
Dog Attack on Person	19	12
Dog Attack on Livestock	0	0
Barking	51	48
Breeding Establishments	3	6
Collection/Stray	39	42
Control Conditions Issued	11	11
Dangerous Breed	7	3
Detection No Licence	0	5
Dogs Education / Awareness / Events	0	18
Dogs Off Lead	2	2
Expired Dog Licence Calls *	3	239
Greyhound Control	0	0
Inadequate Dog Control	13	15
Straying	28	16
Welfare Initial Response	4	17
TOTAL	201	447

*Those calls were carried out to cleanse the database as and when required.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL – Service Requests	2024	2023
Abandoned Shopping Trolleys	4	0
Abandoned Vehicles	97	69
Bye-Laws	0	3
Dog Fouling	68	62
Enviro Education / Awareness / Events	0	1
Fly-Posting	0	0
Fly-Tipping	104	145

Graffiti	24	22
Littering	49	30
Littering Detection (Under 18 yr olds)	3	0
Motorhomes	1	0
Nuisance Parking	0	0
Repairing Vehicles on a Road	1	0
Shellfish Gathering	0	0
Vehicles Exposed For Sale on a Road	0	0
TOTAL	351	332

Separate Fly-Tipping Incidents Recorded by Month for the Past 4 years.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020	37	31	52	59	71	60	44	51	40	38	43	32
2021	37	58	51	55	39	53	27	38	31	33	30	28
2022	38	37	41	50	19	31	36	42	36	22	27	23
2023	53	47	40	21	32	34	36	40	56	47	21	28
2024	36	34	15	31	42	32	32	32	36			

Fixed Penalty Notices

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES			
	Period of Report July – Sept 2024	Same 3 months July - Sept 2023	Comparison
DOG CONTROL	40	47	↓
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	39	24	↑

	2024 July - Sept			2023 July - Sept		
	July	Aug	Sept	July	Aug	Sept
DOG CONTROL						
No Dog Licence	24	4	5	6	9	13
Straying	4	1	2	6	7	4
Breach of Control Conditions	0	0	0	0	1	0
Control of Greyhounds	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	28	5	7	12	17	18
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL	2024 July - Sept			2023 July - Sept		

Litter	6	10	15	4	13	5
Fly-Tipping	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fouling	1	3	4	0	2	0
TOTAL	7	13	19	4	15	5

APPENDIX 2

Offence	Area	Town
No Licence	Prospect Cottage	Ballygowan
No Licence	Meadow Road	Ballygowan
No Licence	Bartleys Wood	Ballywalter
Fouling	Springvale Road Car Park	Ballywalter
Litter	Ballywalter Beach	Ballywalter
No Licence	Hawthorn Rise	Ballywalter
No Licence	Hawthorn Rise	Ballywalter
No Licence	Faulkner Heights	Bangor
No Licence	Inglewood Park	Bangor
Litter	KFC Balloo	Bangor
No Licence	Henderson Drive	Bangor
No Licence	Henderson Drive	Bangor
No Licence	Manor Park	Bangor
Straying	Lord Wardens Hollow	Bangor
No Licence	Lord Wardens Hollow	Bangor
No Licence	Springfield Road	Bangor
No Licence	Ballyholme Road	Bangor
No Licence	Cloverhill Drive	Bangor
Litter	Springhill Shopping Centre	Bangor
Litter	Springhill Shopping Centre	Bangor
No Licence	Clandeboye Estate	Bangor
Fouling	Signal Centre	Bangor
Litter	Kingsland Car Park	Bangor
Fouling	Bangor Sportsplex	Bangor
Litter	Smyths Toys Car Park	Bangor
Litter	Bloomfield Shopping Centre	Bangor
Litter	Bloomfield Shopping Centre	Bangor
Litter	Bloomfield Shopping Centre	Bangor
Litter	Balloo Link	Bangor
Litter	Asda Main Street	Bangor
Litter	Old Belfast Road	Bangor
Litter	Asda Car Park	Bangor
No Licence	Marquis Rise	Bangor
No Licence	Marquis Rise	Bangor
Straying	Marquis Rise	Bangor
Litter	Bloomfields Shopping Centre	Bangor
Fouling	City Hall, path leading to top car park	Bangor

No Licence	Ballygowan Road	Comber
No Licence	Bruce Avenue	Comber
Straying	Loughview Cemetery	Comber
Litter	The Square	Comber
No Licence	Bridgelea Park	Conlig
Offence	Area	Town
No Licence	Bridgelea Park	Conlig
Straying	Ballymenoch Park	Holywood
Straying	Seafront Road	Holywood
Fouling	Seapark	Holywood
Fouling	Seapark	Holywood
Fouling	Seapark near Playpark	Holywood
No Licence	Blackhall Street	Kircubbin
No Licence	McKenna Road	Kircubbin
No Licence	Cornmill Way	Millisle
Fouling	Millisle Beach	Millisle
Litter	Millisle Car Park beside Spar Shop	Millisle
Straying	Movilla Road	Newtownards
Straying	Movilla Road	Newtownards
No Licence	Ashbourne Park	Newtownards
No Licence	Bangor Road	Newtownards
No Licence	Abbot Court	Newtownards
Litter	Castlebawn Car Park	Newtownards
No Licence	Rathmullan Drive	Newtownards
Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
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Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	Ards Shopping Centre Car Park	Newtownards
No Licence	Ardmillan Crescent	Newtownards
Litter	Castlebawn Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	IMC Cinema Car Park	Newtownards
Litter	IMC Cinema Car Park	Newtownards
No Licence	Tullymally Road	Portaferry
No Licence	Tullymally Road	Portaferry
No Licence	Seahaven Drive	Portavogie
No Licence	New Road	Portavogie

APPENDIX 3

Capturing Our Impact Celebrating Your Story **£2.01** return on every £1 invested by the Council

KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND BEAUTIFUL | **Ards and North Down Borough Council**

The Going Wild Project - Ards Canal Path Community Group
 With the support of Ards & North Down District Council and in collaboration with other partners including Action Mental Health, the Ards Canal Path Community group has transformed an area of land into a haven for nature to thrive. Native woodland and wildflower areas have been planted to boost the biodiversity value of this space and provide practical opportunities for the local community to take positive action against climate change.

Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme
 20 projects delivered **£25,000** amount awarded by the Council

Other Grants
 4 projects **£9,207** amount awarded

Adopt A Spot 184 groups, 2,460 volunteers supported

Eco-Schools
 19 Green Flag Eco-Schools
 16 School support visits and events

5,271 Young people getting a dose of Vitamin Nature

Find out more
 Check out projects supported by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in your Council area [here](#)

8% of Northern Ireland's 30 Under 30 Climate Change Makers taking positive action

44 space and places awarded for environmental excellence

381 Surveys to monitor and help tackle the litter problem

283 hectares of land improved

Contributing to the Global SDG's

Supporting Local Delivery

- The Big Plan for Ards & North Down 2017-2032
- Roadmap to Sustainability 2021-2026
- Ards & North Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2032
- Ards & North Down Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Across Northern Ireland...

125 groups enabled with grant support to take pride in their place

339 events to support communities who love where they live

1,902 participants in Climate Change Awareness Training with...
6,847 estimated tonnes of CO2 savings

131 partnerships to achieve a world where people and nature thrive

75% of public aware of Live Here Love Here

NI Media Reach and Value

1,165,102 **£278,608** **1,211,664** **£230,597**

Reporting Period - 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024.

RECOMMENDED that that the Committee notes the report.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Wray noted the low uptake referred to in the report in respect of Project ELLA adding that he was aware how positive the Programme was. He added that he knew a number of schools which were keen to become involved but had been unable to do so due to issues with Council resources. He asked if it would be possible for updated information on Project ELLA to be circulated to members who could in turn pass that on to schools.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that the numbers in the report were low as they were reflective of the lower uptake during the months of July and August. He reported that officers had considered how Project ELLA had been delivered and efforts were currently being made to reach out to local schools. It was noted there had been a few issues within the requesting system which had been resolved and it was recognised that education was one of the most successful methods of dealing with Litter and Dog Control issues. The officer indicated that he would be happy to provide information to members which could then be circulated.

At this stage Councillor McKee referred to the Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) on Page 5 of the report and noted a decrease in Dog Control and an increase in the Environmental Control penalties. He welcomed the increase in Dog Control FPNs issued and sought further clarity around those issued in relation to a breach in

control conditions and asked if that related to those areas where there were controls around dogs being on a on lead.

In response the Head of Regulatory Services advised that those controls related to where control conditions had been placed on a specific dog due to a problem which had occurred and the conditions were an attempt to mitigate against any further incidents.

Councillor McKee referred to the figures and asked if there was any way of differentiating if anyone had been issued with a FPN for not having their dog on a lead in a controlled area.

The Head of Regulatory Services suggested no from what he could see in the report, but indicated that he would look into it and report back to the member in due course. At this stage members were reminded of an increase in visible patrols being undertaken in those areas where there were dog on lead controls in place.

Councillor McKee welcomed the increase in patrols stating that he believed it was useful for the Committee to be able to scrutinise the FPNs issued particularly in areas such as Ballyholme, Bangor Seafront and Ward Park, Bangor. He added that it was important for elected members and members of the public to be confident that the matter was being taken seriously.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that he would be happy to report back to the member in due course.

At this stage Councillor Edmund noted the amount of dog licences issued during the period was 5,414 and asked if officers knew the total number of dog licences for the entire Borough.

In response members were advised that while that information was not immediately to hand, it was the case that it would generally be a fairly even and consistent number throughout the year. The Head of Regulatory Services added that he would report back to the member with the figure as requested.

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

7. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS – APRIL TO JUNE (FILE 53042)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the official waste management statistics for the first quarter of 2024/2025 (April to June 2024) had been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The aim of this report was to:






1. Report key quarterly waste management performance statistics relative to the same period last year (found in part 1 of the report) and to the baseline comparator year of 2021-22 (found in the KPI section of part 2 of the report), and
2. Provide some detail around operational waste service management activities/actions that had been implemented during the quarter with the aim of improving performance.

In summary, all key indicators were positive for this reporting period. They showed that not only had the Council sustained the overall gains achieved since it started a renewed programme of performance improvement in 2021-22, but it had also made further significant progress. The reduction in the landfill burden seen over recent quarters had been maintained and further improved upon. Moreover, for the second successive reporting period, our HRC recycling rate had surpassed the average rate achieved in other NI Councils.

Looking at the ‘quality’ of the recycling performance, an important statistic included in DAERA’s report was the proportion of waste sent to landfill which was biodegradable (and therefore more harmful to the environment in terms of landfill gas production). Once again, the Council had the lowest percentage of biodegradable municipal landfill waste, at **35.8%** compared to a NI Council average of **46.6%**. This reflected the relative success in capturing more biodegradable waste materials for recycling, such as compostable food and garden waste.

Furthermore, in terms of assessing sustainable waste resource management performance, which must be judged in terms of not just recycling rates but also reduction and reuse of waste, it was significant to note that the Council had continued to experience the greatest fall in total municipal waste tonnage of all NI Councils. It achieved an **11.7% drop in municipal waste arisings** during this reporting period compared to the same quarter in its baseline assessment year of 2021-22. The average drop across other Councils was just **4%**.

Summary Table of Key Changes Q1 2024-25

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Change on Previous Yr
Household Waste Recycling Rate	49.5%	54.9%	58.5%	59.8%	 1.3%
Recycling Rate Ranking	9th	6th	4th	3rd	 1 place
Composting Rate	29.6%	35.1%	38%	38.8%	 0.8%
Dry Recycling Rate	19.6%	19.5%	20.2%	20.6%	 0.4%
Total HRC Waste	9249T	7235T	6873T	5769T	 16.1%

HRC Residual/Landfill Waste Received	3664T	2463T	2127T	1474T	↓ 30.7%
HRC Recycling Waste Received	5585T	4772T	4746T	4295T	↓ 9.5%
Proportion of HRC Waste Received for Recycling	60%	66%	69%	74.4%	↑ 5.4%
Total Kerbside Waste	15165T	16184T	15185T	15760T	↑ 3.8%
Kerbside Residual Waste Received	6509T	6414T	5433T	5645T	↑ 3.9%
Kerbside Recycling Waste Received	8656T	9770T	9752T	10115T	↑ 3.7%
Proportion of Kerbside Waste Received for Recycling	57.1%	60.4%	64.2%	64.2%	→ Same

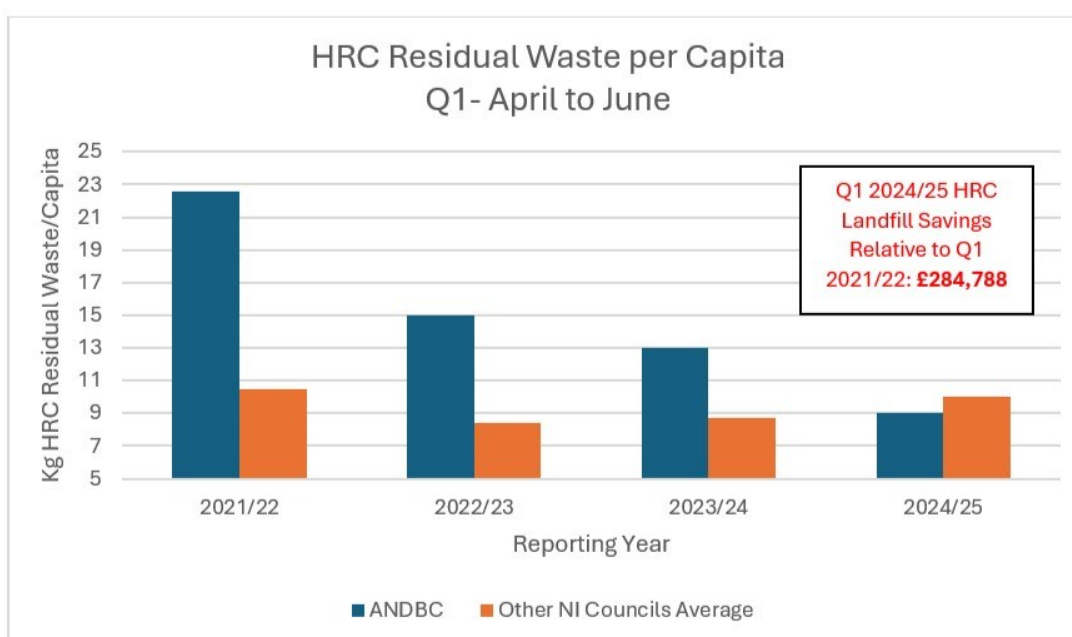
Spotlight on Landfill Cost Savings to ANDBC Ratepayers

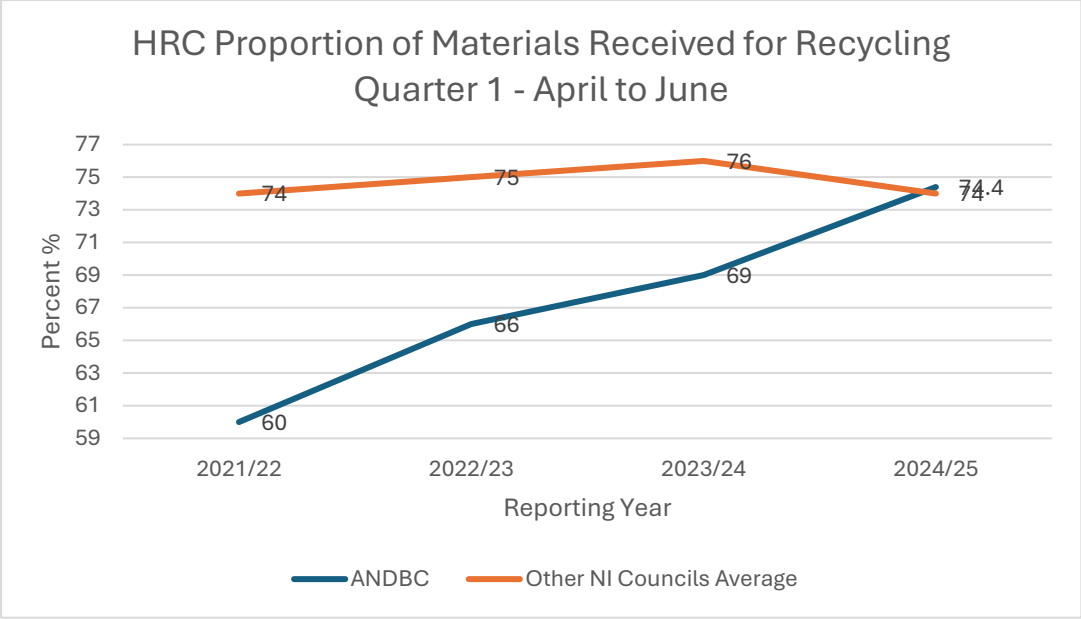
For the **12-month period** June 2023 to June 2024:
 Landfill cost saving to ANDBC ratepayers compared to the baseline 2021-22 reporting year (based upon current landfill gate fee/landfill tax):

£1,059,578

Plus, **c£100K** landfill haulage cost savings

Spotlight on HRCs – Impact of New Access Controls

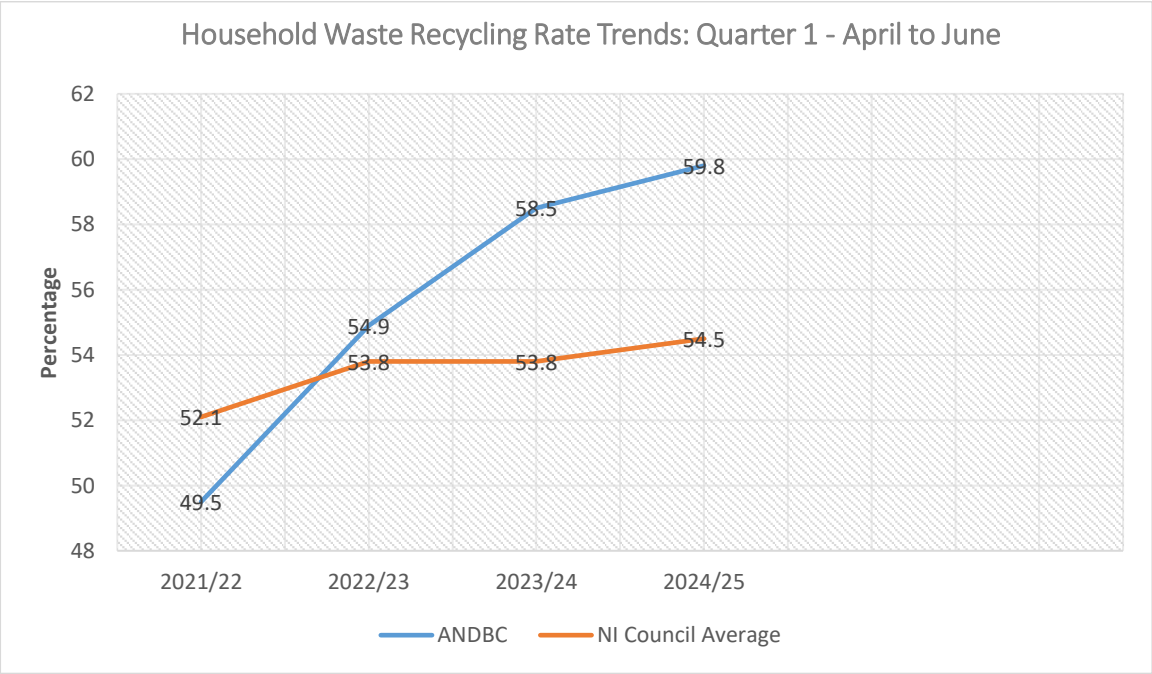




1.0 Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics – October to December 2023

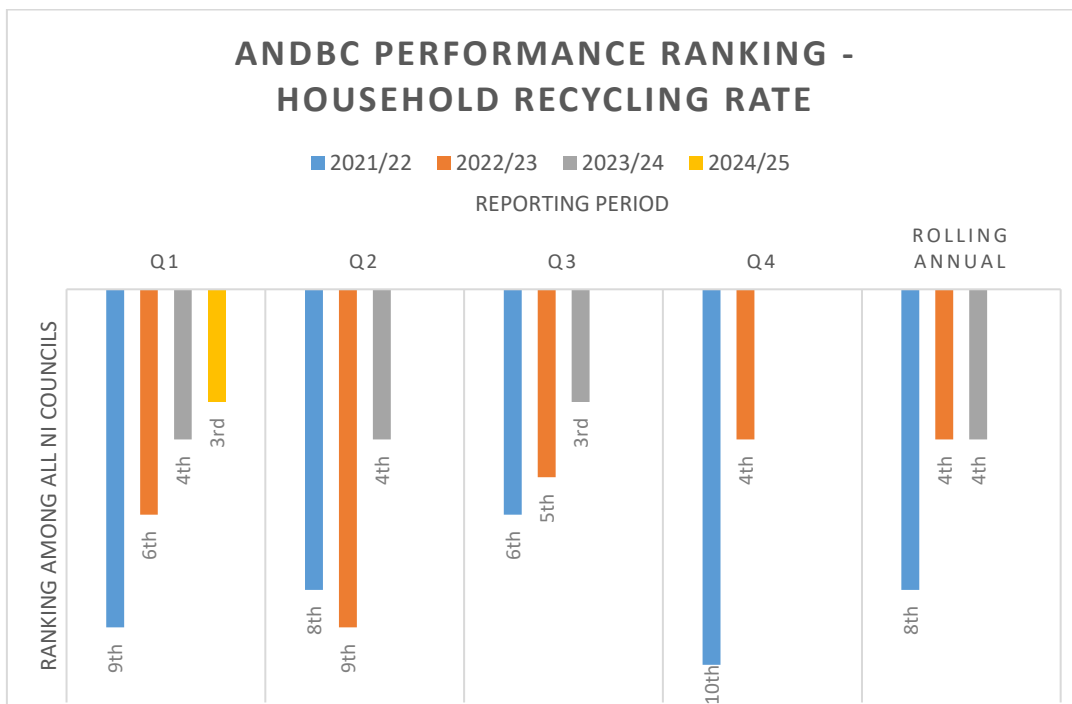
The significant headlines contained within the latest DAERA report showed that:

- i. The household waste recycling rate **rose** by 1.3% compared to Q1 last year, from 58.5% to 59.8%.

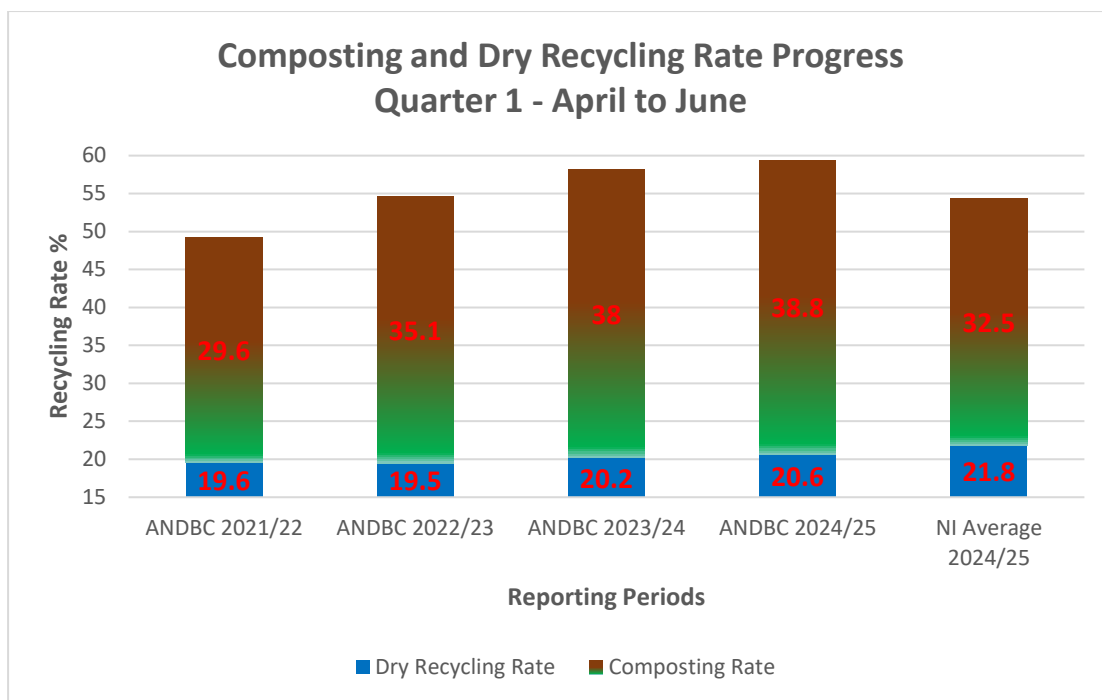


- ii. The household waste recycling rate of 59.8%, was 5.3% **higher** than the NI average of 54.5%.

- iii. The Council ranked **third** out of the eleven NI Councils for its household waste recycling rate, up one place from last year.



- iv. The Council’s household waste composting rate **rose** by 0.8% - from 38% to 38.8%. The Council’s household waste dry recycling rate **rose** by 0.4% - from 20.2% to 20.6%.
- v. The Council’s household waste composting rate of 38.8% was 6.3% **higher** than the NI average of 32.5%.
- vi. The Council’s household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 20.6% was 1.2% **lower** than the N.I. average of 21.8%.

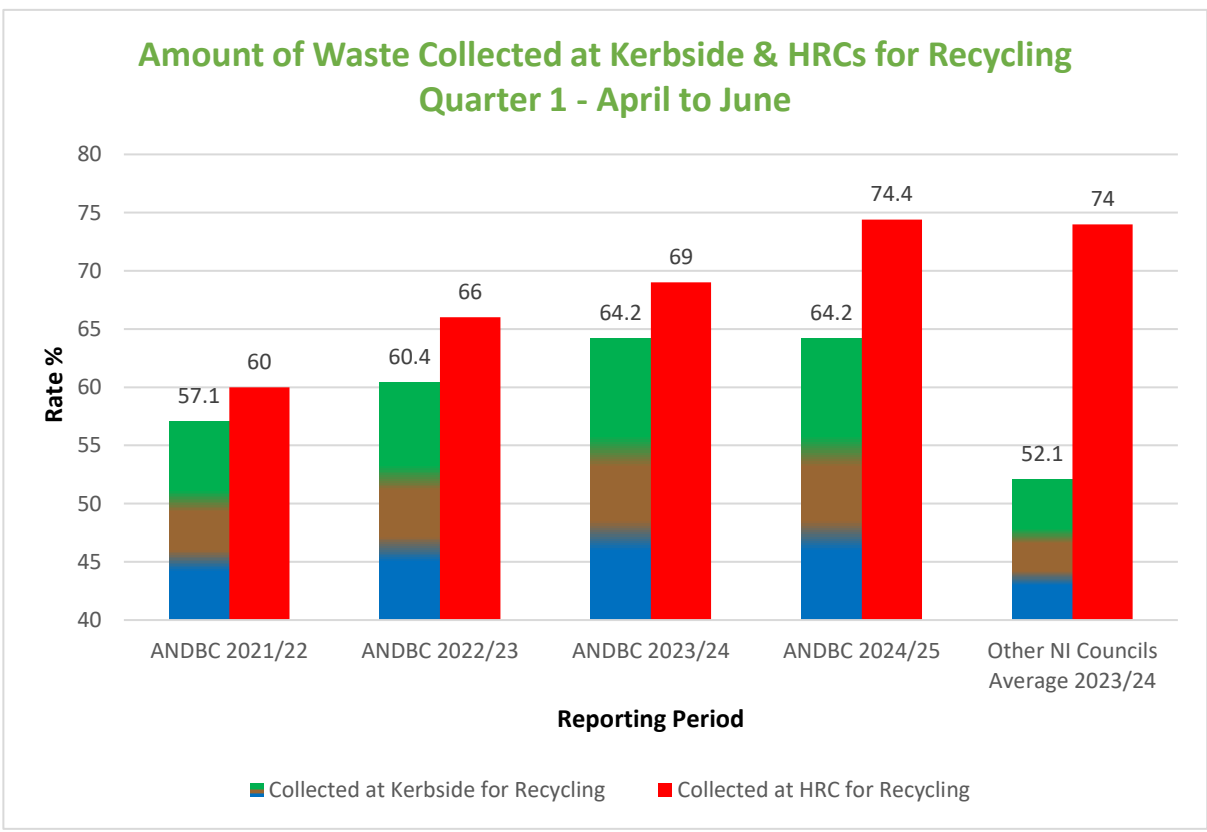


- vii. The Council’s kerbside recycling capture rate of 81.4% for household compostable waste materials was the **highest in NI** and compared to a NI Council average of 73.8%.
- viii. The Council’s **lowest** kerbside capture rate for recyclable materials was for mixed plastics, at 25.2%.

Kerbside Capture Rate for Recyclable Waste Types – October to December		
Recyclable Material	Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %	NI Average Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %
Glass	66.1	55.3
Paper & Card	63.8	53
Mixed Metals	37.9	31.6
Mixed Plastics	25.2	22.5
Organic/Compostables	81.4	73.8

- ix. The Council was ranked 9th in the Council performance table for ‘dry’ recycling rate and 1st for composting rate.
- x. The Council received 9.1% **less** total waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other NI Councils, compared to 15% **more** waste during the same period the previous year.
- xi. The received 10% **less** residual/landfill waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other Councils, compared to 49% **more** during the same period the previous year.

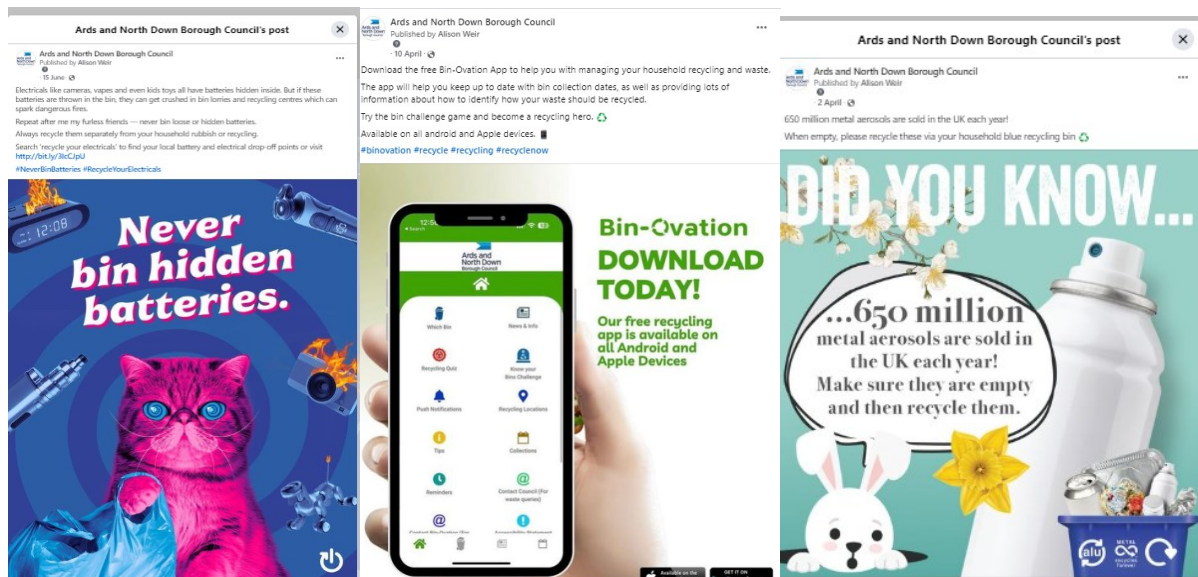
- xii. For the second successive quarter, the proportion of waste collected at its HRC sites for recycling was **more** than the average for other Councils – 70.4%, compared to an average rate of 70% for other Councils.
- xiii. The Council collected 9.6% **more** waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils.
- xiv. The Council collected 17.9% **less** residual/landfill waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils.
- xv. The proportion of waste collected for recycling through its kerbside bin collection system was significantly **higher** than the average for other Councils – 64.2%, compared to an average of 52.1% for other Councils.



2.0 Operational Performance Improvement Measures

2.1 Marketing and Communications Indicators

MC1 – Twenty social media posts were issued, with associated engagement/management of feedback across Waste and Recycling on the Council’s corporate channels. Topics included Recycling aluminium, spring cleaning, battery recycling and holiday bin collections.



MC2 – Eight Bin-Ovation ‘News and Info’ articles were published, seven Bin-ovation ‘Push Notifications’ issued, and 1683 Bin-ovation downloads recorded.



In November 2021, Ards and North Down Borough Council introduced a new ‘Paint Re-Use’ scheme to help offset some of the waste and expenses involved in getting leftover paint treated and disposed of.

By making use of a resource which would otherwise be disposed of, you will be helping the environment and helping to reduce costs to Council and the ratepayers of the Borough. If interested, please speak to one of the site attendants, after filling in some details, you can then help yourself to any of the paint which you find useful.

MC3 – Officers delivered fourteen community and engagement events, talking to over 870 people.

- 9 Community groups and schools
- 1 Community information event
- 4 Summer schemes



2.2 Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC1 – Volume of blue bin recyclable materials separated from mixed waste by residents on-site: 738,380 litres.



This equated to approximately 31 tons of blue bin waste; whilst this was a relatively modest weight of material, it represented a very large/visible volume of recyclable waste extracted from bags of mixed waste which was initially intended to be placed landfill skips at HRCs. A collateral benefit of this practice of requiring removal of blue bin recyclables from black bags of mixed waste before using the landfill skip was that it should help to ‘educate’ householders - promoting more efficient separation of waste in the home and greater use of blue bins at the kerbside. This represented just one type of recyclable waste category which was prevented from entering landfill skips at HRCs as a consequence of its more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access; many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips as reflected in KPI, HRC3.

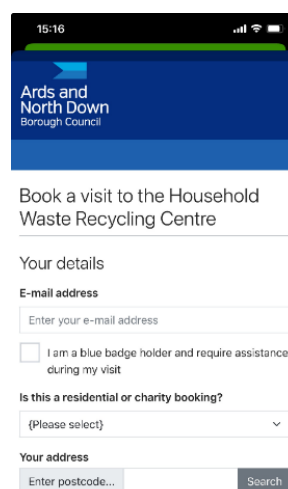
HRC2 – Number of visitors turned away from site: 573

This was a significant number in itself, but it was likely to be the case that a significant number of out of Borough residents would have avoided coming to the sites because of the widely publicised focus upon checking ID for everyone entering and those turned away would in all probability avoid further attempts to enter and use the HRCs; the impact of this would also be reflected in HRC3 and other KPIs.

HRC2a – Number of HRC bookings: 84,451



HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.18 (averaged across the 71,698 households in the Borough)



HRC3 – % change in tonnage of total waste received (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **38% decrease** in the total amount of waste received at its HRCs, from 9249T to 5769T.

HRC4 - % change in tonnage of waste received for landfill (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **60% decrease** in the amount of waste received for landfill at its HRCs, down from 3664T to 1474T.

HRC5 - % change in tonnage of waste received for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **23.1% decrease** in the amount of waste received for recycling at its HRCs, down from 5585T to 4295T.

HRC6 - % change in proportion of HRC waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **14.4% increase** in the proportion of all waste received at HRCs which was collected for recycling, up from 60% to 74.4%.

2.3 Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators



- KSI** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 2505
- KS2** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 231
- KS3** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 164
- KS4** – % change in tonnage of total waste collected (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **3.9% increase** in the total amount collected at the kerbside, up from 15165T to 15760T.

KS5 - % change in tonnage of grey bin waste collected for landfill (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **13.3% decrease** in the amount of grey bin waste collected, down from 6509T to 5645T.

KS6 - % change in tonnage of waste collected at kerbside for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **16.9% increase** in the amount of waste collected at kerbside for recycling, up from 8656T to 10115T.

KS7 – % change in proportion of kerbside waste materials collected for recycling (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- Council experienced a **7.1% increase** in the proportion of kerbside waste that was collected for recycling, up from 57.1% to 64.2%.

2.4 Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 1 (December 2022 – March 2023*) *Waste tonnage indicators reflect period Jan to March 2023 only	Monitoring Period 2 (April 2023 – June 2023)	Monitoring Period 3 (July 2023 – Sept 2023)	Monitoring Period 4 (October 2023 – Dec 2023)	Monitoring Period 5 (January 2024 – Mar 2023)	Monitoring Period 6 (April 2024 – June 2024)

EC.04.12.2024

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MC1 Social media posts	25	23	43	36	31	20
MC2 Print press and online articles	10	13	55	7	12	15
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	17	29	14	5	12	14
HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres)	1,322,000	762,460	604,600	769,002	862,000	738,380
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	1742	397	262	1258	528	573
HRC2a No. of bookings	N/A	N/A	22,199	72,423	68,353	84,451
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	N/A	N/A	0.3	1.02	0.96	1.18
HRC3 Total HRC waste compared to same period 2021/22	16% Decrease	26% Decrease	19% Decrease	34% Decrease	26% Decrease	38% Decrease
HRC4 Landfill skip waste compared to same period 2021/22	27% Decrease	42% Decrease	32% Decrease	50% Decrease	47% Decrease	60% Decrease
HRC5 Recycling skip waste compared to same period 2021/22	8% Decrease	15% Decrease	11% Decrease	24% Decrease	11% Decrease	23.1% Decrease
HRC6 Proportion of HRC waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	5.5% Increase	9.1% Increase	6% Increase	9.5% Increase	11.7% Increase	14.4% Increase
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	2784	6079	2714	2269	2939	2505
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	255	414	226	165	281	231
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	52	179	92	55	116	164
KS4 Total kerbside waste compared to 2021/22	4.8% Increase	0% No Change	5% Decrease	1% Decrease	8.2% Increase	3.9% Increase
KS5 Grey bin waste compared to 2021/22	9.3% Decrease	16.5% Decrease	17.4% Decrease	10% Decrease	2% Decrease	13.3% Decrease
KS6 Kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	20.7% Increase	13% Decrease	4.9% Increase	6.2% Increase	20.4% Increase	16.9% Increase

KS7 Proportion of kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22	7.2% Increase	7% Increase	5.2% Increase	4.3% Increase	5.2% Increase	7.1% Increase
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Summary Assessment

This report confirmed continued improvement in the sustainable waste resource management performance. Following the changes to waste service model design and the associated education and engagement campaigns, the Council was experiencing sustained falls in the amount of landfilled waste as well as improvements in recycling rates. During this reporting period, the Council experienced:

1. A significant sustained reduction in the amount of landfill waste received at our HRCs, as well as a significant fall in kerbside collected landfill waste. In total, it received/collected 3054 tons less of landfill waste at the kerbside and HRCs over this three-month reporting period compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22; at prevailing landfill cost (£130.04/T), **this represented a £397,142 landfill saving (plus other handling and transport cost savings).**
2. Sustained significant fall in the total amount of waste collected at HRCs and kerbside. In total the municipal waste arisings **had fallen by 11.7%** compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021-22; this compared to a **fall of just 4%** on average across other NI Councils.
3. A significant rise in the kerbside recycling rate. The percentage of materials collected for recycling at the kerbside **had risen by 7.1%** compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22.
4. An even more significant rise in our HRC recycling rate. The percentage of materials collected for recycling at our HRCs **had risen by 14.4%** compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22.

Whilst the information set out in this report maintained a very encouraging picture of progress and reflected a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of the waste and recycling teams, **the Council must maintain a sustained focus upon the further progress that would be required if it was to have any chance of ultimately reaching the 70% recycling target for 2030 that was laid down in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.** Continued bedding in and careful monitoring and management of the HRC access booking system, the ongoing review of kerbside collections model and a future strategic review of our HRC capital assets, would be critical.

It was important to reiterate that further ‘step change’, sustained improvements in both the HRC and kerbside recycling rates would be required to move the Council towards the new 70% target.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Councillor Edmund proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Edmund welcomed the report and congratulated officers on the savings which had been achieved.

Echoing those comments the seconder Councillor Irwin sought an update on the Textile Recycling Service.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services indicated that at present there had been no market improvements in this area and instead the situation had got worse.

The Director acknowledged that members were very invested in this particularly as textiles were a very recyclable material. He confirmed that Council facilities still accepted textiles and was keen to expand upon that as soon as possible particularly as the kerbside collection infrastructure was already in place. He assured members that officers would be closely monitoring the situation and would proceed with kerbside textile collection arrangements as soon as they were confident that they could secure market off-take for these.

Councillor Irwin welcomed officers comments adding that part of the issue was over consumption and fast fashion and suggested that people should instead consider shopping more sustainably.

At this stage Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also welcomed the report and continuing she sought some clarification around procedures at the Council's HRCs following an issue which had been raised with her by a constituent. The constituent in question advised that she had sorted her waste appropriately but on arrival at the HRC had been asked to take it to the sorting table where the HRC Operatives had opened it to find it contained various sanitary products, leaving the constituent somewhat embarrassed. As such Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked if there was anyway sanitary products could be dealt with differently at HRCs. She added that this incident had occurred at the Newtownards HRC site and while the constituent did not wish to get anyone into trouble she had felt vulnerable and as such would not wish for anyone to have to go through what she had. Continuing Alderman Armstrong-Cotter then referred to the Dry Recycling Rates which were down and asked if there were any plans to try to increase that or was it a case those rates were settling at this point.

In response the Director advised that the Council's tonnage in relation to dry recyclables was one of the best in UK, but our residual waste was also high – keeping the dry recycling 'rate' low in comparison. He advised that this was a key area of consideration for the Kerbside Collections Working Group, and the group was looking at how the collections model could help improve that alongside education. Referring specifically to the issue raised by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter the Director asked that any complaint by members of the public at any of the Council sites should be reported to officers to allow follow up on the particulars of that particular incident. This was the first time an issue of this nature had been raised as

far as he was aware. He reminded members that all households were issued with a 240l grey waste bin collected on a fortnightly basis and that would be the usual means of disposal for those items referred to by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter. Continuing he advised that it would be normal practice for HRC operatives to periodically ask members of the public to open any black bags brought to the facility and retrieve recyclable waste items, as most of the time they contained up to 90% of dry recyclables. He added however that he was not aware of HRC staff taking the black bags from members of the public and sorting through them in the manner outlined by the member.

In response Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that she had been asked by the constituent to raise the matter to ensure no one else would have to go through what she had went through. She added that two HRC Operatives one male and one female had brought her waste over to the sorting table. Continuing Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked if there was anyway a further option for bathroom waste could be added to the drop down list of options on the HRC booking system.

The Director advised that it was normal practice for that type of waste to go into the grey bin with very little amounts of this waste being brought to HRCs. He added that officers were keen not to over complicate the booking system by providing a large variety of options and thereby putting people off using the system.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter advised that the constituent in question had indicated that she would not return to the HRC which was a shame as the HRCs were there to dispose of any types of waste. Therefore she asked for further consideration to be given to how bathroom waste was dealt with.

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

8. QUARTERLY SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT Q2 2024-25 (FILE 50002)
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in June 2024 the Council agreed the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan. One of the actions within the Plan was to “Improve governance arrangements to ensure that energy management had effective oversight and accountability within the Council.”

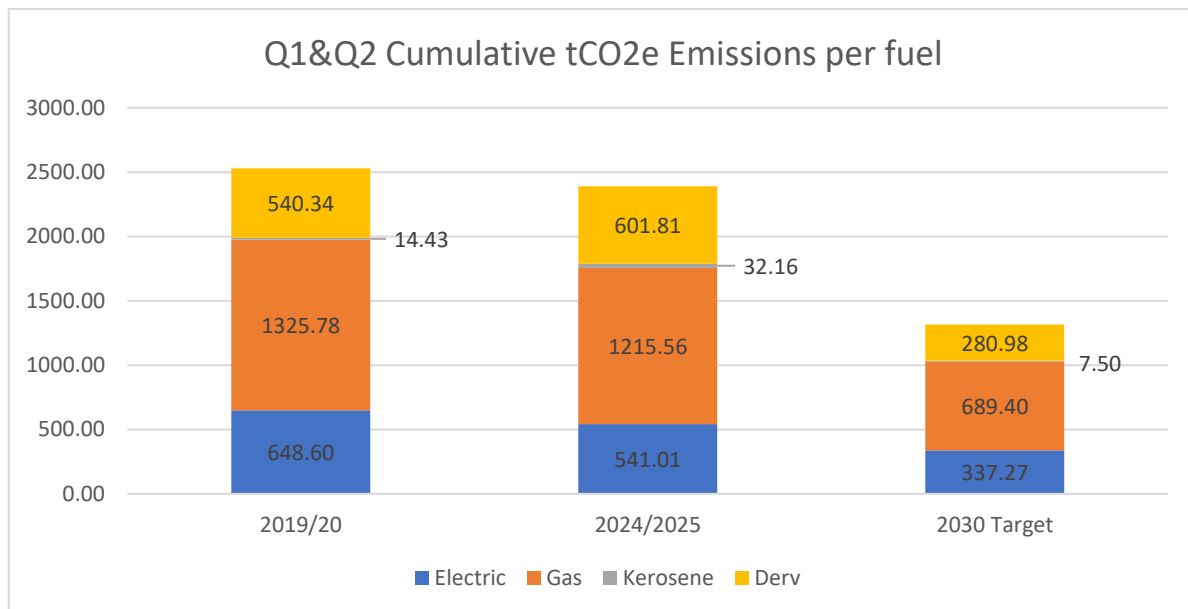
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management would ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan would be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance would improve energy performance by ensuring actions were effectively implemented and consumption trends routinely monitored, which should result in reduced consumption, costs, and emissions.

Reporting Periods

The following was a schedule of planned routine quarterly reports that looked at energy consumption against a 2019 baseline and outlined current and forthcoming energy saving initiatives and provided some detail around our progress in relation to sustainable energy management and associated carbon emission reduction targets set out in the Climate Change Act.

Period:	Reported in:
Quarter 1: April to June	September
Quarter 2: July to September	December
Quarter 3: October to December	March
Quarter 4: January to March	June

Energy Consumption for this Period



Electricity

As could be seen in the graph above the electricity consumption decreased by 16.6% for Q2 in comparison to the baseline year of 2019/2020. The Council had been reviewing its electric consumption year on year and had made conscious efforts to replace light fittings with LED as part of our general maintenance and also replace equipment with more energy efficient versions generally.

There had been a significant decrease in Q2 in comparison to the baseline year, and it would be aiming to reduce this further by introducing additional measures and educating staff to help move towards the 2030 target.

Natural Gas

With regard to the natural gas consumption this reduced by 8.3% for Q2 in comparison to the baseline year of 2019/2020. This had been the result of reviewing time controls for boilers and reducing temperatures where possible. It had also been due to a number of internal reviews that led to AHU operating times being reduced to suit higher occupancy times in buildings.

Kerosene

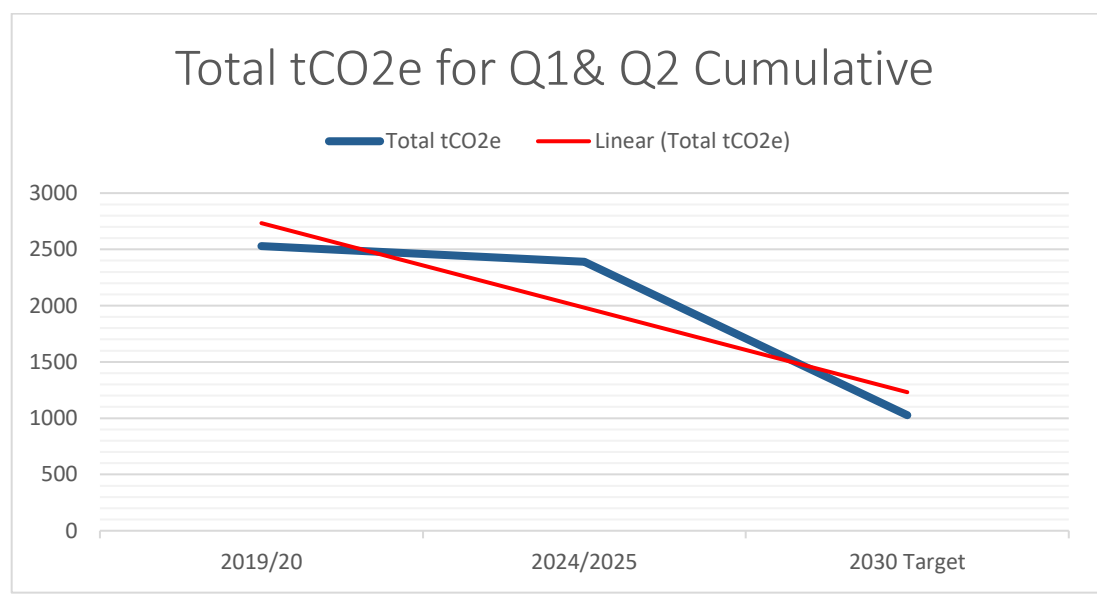
Kerosene consumption increased from the baseline year of 2019/20 for Q2, and this was similar to the buildings using electric heating. More cold snaps in the region during Q2 meant that oil fired heating boilers have had to be in operation more than was usual for that time of year.

Diesel

The figures showed that the Council also increased the use of Derv (Diesel) in the second period of the business year in comparison to the baseline year. It was hoped that could be improved further in Q3.

Targets and Trends

In the graph below it showed the current overall fuel emissions for each of the periods, and the 2030 target. The Linear trendline showed the path the Council should be on in order to meet its 48% reduction by 2030, and it could be seen that there was some work to do to further reduce emissions to match the trendline.



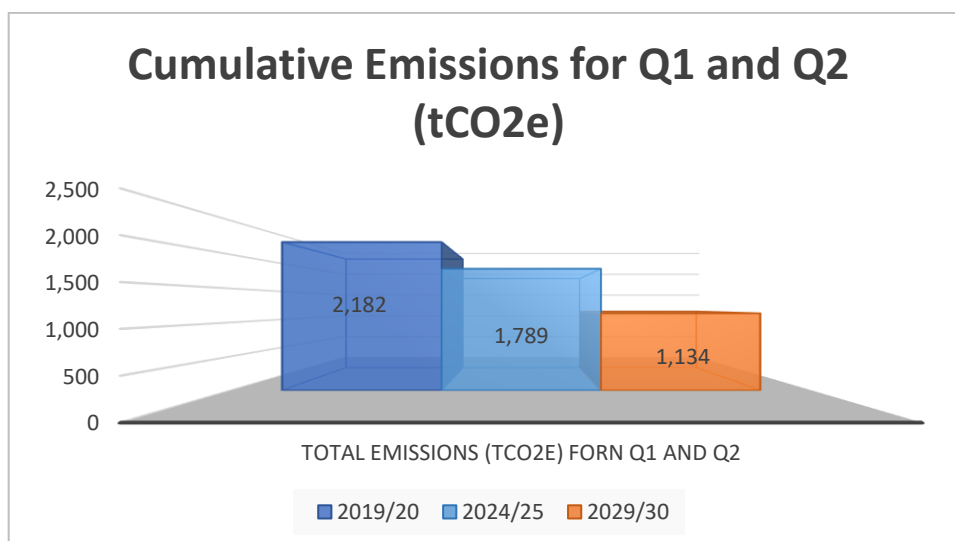
Energy Consumption Costs

The costs of the fuels could be seen in the table below for consumption in each of the years, the cost per unit of fuel had also been shown for the respective years so that the difference could be seen in the market costs.

Quarter 2	2019/20	£/unit	2024/2025	£/unit
Utility				
Electric	£149,319	£0.12	£262,040	£0.20
Gas	£154,365	£0.05	£192,088	£0.06
Kerosene	£204	£0.42	£3,093	£0.58
Derv	£194,027	£1.03	£238,934	£1.14
Total Cost	£497,916		£696,154	

Cumulative and Historic Combined Target for 2024/2025

The charts below showed a cumulative total for Q1 and Q2 in 2024/25.



The chart above showed cumulative totals for Q1 and Q2 in the baseline year of 2019/20, the current year of 24/25 and what the target would be for Q1 and Q2 in 2030. It showed that so far, the Council had a 18% reduction in emissions for 2024/25 in comparison to its baseline year of 2019/20. This meant that it needed a further reduction of circa 36% over the next five years if it was to achieve its 48% reduction on the 2019/20 baseline figures.

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Taken in This Period

- LED lighting and controls upgrade at Walled Garden Depot Work Shed
- Controls Maintenance at Londonderry Park and Hamilton Hub
- LED Lighting Replacement schemes at Community Centres
- Electric Showers, and Instantaneous Water Heaters at Ward Arras Sports Pavilion to replace existing hot water calorifiers.

- High Efficiency boiler replacements to a number of communities properties.
- Early stages of pre-planning for Data Centre at ABMWLC and Aurora for heat recovery to provide pool water heating.
- Progressing with PV installation following a cross-border grant award.
- Installation of EV charging points for small and medium vans in fleet had started at North Road Depot.

The updated Sustainable Energy Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 provided a full update on each of the actions noted.

Future Measures Currently Under Consideration/Planning

- Replacement of boilers at various Council properties and upgrade of control systems.
- Lighting control and LED replacement projects at numerous Council properties.
- PV Installation at chosen Council properties.
- Park lighting projects.
- Walk-round surveys of properties to examine existing controls and settings.
- Surveys of existing assets for insulation installation to be carried out.
- Energy targets and KPI's for service unit managers to be agreed for 2025/2026
- Possible introduction of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) systems in highest consuming buildings

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this progress report.

Councillor Edmund proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder Councillor McKee commented that it was a positive report and he welcomed it coming forward.

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

9. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

10. TENDERS FOR THE DESIGN, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SOLAR PV SYSTEMS AT VARIOUS COUNCIL PROERTIES (FILE 77001)

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

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

A report on tenders for the Design, Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Solar PV Systems at Various Council Properties, was considered.

It was agreed that a contract be awarded to Solmatix Limited.

11. ITEM WITHDRAWN

The Chairman advised that the item had been withdrawn.

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.05pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 7.2.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regulatory Services
Date of Report	22 October 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements Order (NI) 1985
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Matters Arising from Item 4 - Grant of Amusement Permit
Attachments	

At the Environment Committee meeting on 3 December, the Committee were minded to refuse the following application on the basis of proximity to the local primary school and housing.

Grant of an Amusement Permit at Jewel Casino Ltd, 105 Bloomfield Road South, Bangor

Applicant: Mr Francis Brady, 5 Dunamallaght Park, Ballycastle

Application for an **amusement licence** has been made under Article 108 (1) (ca) of the Order to provide gaming machines with a maximum cash prize pay-out of £25. Access to the premises will be restricted to over 18-year-olds only.

Not Applicable

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The application has been publicly advertised as required by the Order and there have been no objections.

The PSNI has also confirmed that they do not have any objection to the grant.

Council should be aware that it previously provisionally granted an Amusement Permit at these premises in 2022 under the name Bean BT18, but the application was later withdrawn by the applicant to facilitate Council to resolve a potential legal matter, (which has not arisen in this current application). In addition, North Down Borough Council issued an Amusement Permit at these premises in October 1998.

The premises is part of a complex comprising 103-107 Bloomfield Road which has existing planning permission and historically operated as Primacy Wine Lodge with an amusement arcade and off-sales in the ground floor units. It is between the existing car wash and former chip shop units.

The legislation provides for representation as detailed below, with further opportunity for the applicant to appeal the decision to the County Court. This application has been advertised as required by the legislation, and no objections have been received from the public in respect of that advert or from consultation with PSNI. In addition, the proximity of the primary school and housing did not affect the 2022 approval and an Amusement Permit was issued by North Down Borough Council 1998 where the premises operated as such for a number of years. Therefore to refuse on that basis now would leave the Council open to legal challenge.

As previously outlined, should the Council be minded to refuse this application or wish to impose further restrictions on the applicant then the Council is required to serve Notice on the applicant stating the proposed grounds for the refusal or additional restrictions. The applicant then has 14 days to inform the council in writing their desire to show cause, in person or by a representative as to why the application should not be refused or the additional conditions applied.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council refers this item back to the Environment Committee for reconsideration.

ITEM 7.3

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place & Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 5 December 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Gilmour

Aldermen: Adair (zoom)
Armstrong-Cotter
McDowell

Councillors: Ashe
Blaney (zoom)
Edmund
Hollywood
Hennessy

Kennedy
McCracken
McLaren (zoom)
Smart (zoom)

Officers in Attendance: Interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Interim Head of Economic Development (A Stobie), Interim Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Councillor McCollum and Councillor Thompson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2024-2025 (FILE 160127)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching report for Q1 and Q2. The covering report provided the undernoted detail:

Key points to note:

- The current budget spend against target was slightly below target due to staff retirement and the subsequent structure changes however it was anticipated to be on target at year end.
- The 2024-2025 job creation target was 123 jobs. The half yearly target was 60 jobs. Currently 32 jobs had been created through the Go Succeed Service. The target had not been met due to a number of reasons including

the late implementation of the service by the delivery agent and technical issues linked to the development of the CRM system.

The Go Succeed Service Delivery Agent had confirmed that they had in place a remedial plan to address the under-performance, and it was anticipated that the number of jobs created would increase significantly in the last two quarters of the financial year.

Key achievements:

- Despite the delay in receiving the Letter of Offer for funding for the LMP, the team managed to continue to deliver a full suite of interventions that had an immediate and positive impact on individuals needing support to get into employment.
- Despite the challenging economic climate and steep rises in utility costs, the Operators of facilities had managed their performance to continue to deliver across all contractual elements, continue to attract visitors and deliver value for Council.
- Successful delivery of DAERA allocated funding for the Seal Sanctuary

Emerging issues:

- The Department for Communities had failed to confirm an annual budget allocation to date for the Labour Market Partnership for 2025-26. However, the 2025-26 and 2026-27 action plans had been presented to the Regional LMP and a response was expected imminently. That presented issues in terms of planning and delivery of support and security for staff until confirmation was received.
- The Go Succeed Service required intensive input and resources to deliver and funding had only been confirmed 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 2-year period.

Action to be taken:

- Collective action by all the 11 Councils, led by Belfast City Council continued with SPF to ensure future funding for Go Succeed.
- The pressure from all 11 Councils must be maintained to secure future funding for the Labour Market Partnership from DfC.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Number of Jobs created through the Go Succeed Service	The late implementation of the service by the delivery agent and	The Delivery Agent has confirmed that a remedial plan to	Economic Development Manager	Jan 2025

	technical issues linked to the development of the CRM system.	address the performance is in place. It is anticipated that the number of jobs created will increase significantly in the last two quarters of the financial year.		
% spend against budget	Staff retirement and subsequent staff changes	Ongoing monitoring of budgets	Head of Economic Development	Jan 2025

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Hollywood referred to the job creation target to create 123 jobs, with only 32 of those having been created through the Go Succeed programme so far. He asked about the remedial plans from the delivery agent to address the underperformance in achieving that target to date. The Head of Economic Development advised that Officers were in constant contact with the delivery agents who had included extra resources to be able to reach the target. One of the reasons was that they did not have a CRM system in place at the start of the reporting period to track the applications and their progress. However, now the system was in place it was expected that the progress would speed up and the target would be met.

In response to a question from Councillor Edmund, the Head of Economic Development stated that the aim was to meet the annual target of 123 jobs. Officers would be able to have a better indication on the progress towards the target in the early new year.

Councillor Kennedy referred to the job target and asked how much the Council invested in the programme. The Head of Economic Development stated that the majority of the programme was not funded by Council, but she would provide the exact details to the Member in due course.

Alderman Adair recognised that while the target was below in this report, in the past Council had always met its targets in that regard. He referred to the work of the previous Head of Economic Development – Clare McGill and the sterling work she had done in the past in conjunction with Ards Business Centre bringing jobs and growth to the area. Alderman Adair highlighted the need for the Council to lobby Invest NI, as for far too long the Borough had missed out on investment and job creation, and he voiced that as unacceptable.

Referring to Local Economic Partnerships, Alderman McDowell stated that he had expected an update to have been brought to the Committee in that regard. The Head of Economic Development advised that the finer detail was still being worked upon, and officers were not in any better position than last month. She hoped more detail would be forthcoming in the New Year and an update could be brought to the Committee.

Whilst somewhat disappointed that the target had been missed, Councillor Blaney welcomed that some jobs had been created. He questioned how the target was set and how that looked in comparison to other Boroughs. In terms of the jobs, he wondered what types of businesses the jobs were coming from including more detail around salaries and locations. Councillor Blaney also questioned if there had been any feedback received from the delivery agent if the Council needed to be doing anything more to support the programme and local businesses.

With regards to the breakdown on where the jobs were coming from, the Head of Economic Development stated that she could provide that information to Members. The target originated from the statutory target provided by the Department, following a disconnect of the targets that had increased to 123 jobs.

Councillor Blaney welcomed the extra detail stating that he would be interested in seeing the information including the level in the programme that the jobs were coming from, geographic location and job companies.

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

4. TOURISM HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2024-25 (FILE TO/MAR4/160127)

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching performance report for Q1 and Q2. The covering report provided the undernoted detail:-

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to two outcomes as follows

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Zero% waste contamination at events under the recycling initiative.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Delivery of the Experience Development Programme - 11 experiences and 60% out of borough attendance.
- Delivery of 13 walks and tours with 27% out of Borough attendance.
- Delivery of Chilli Fest event in conjunction with Parks, c.5000 attendees with 99% very satisfied/satisfied and 71% of those surveyed spending £10-£49 and 6% £50+
- Delivery of Taste Summer and Taste Autumn Food Festival third party programming and core event elements in collaboration with events
- Attendance at two shows outside the borough to promote food and drink businesses via show attendance and awards entry support.
- Partnership development for the new eco event 'Shorelife Celebration' in collaboration with Castle Espie and National Trust East Down Property to showcase natural assets as per Borough Events Strategic Direction.
- All Tourism Events, Grant aided Events, Experiences, Walks and Tours and Destination campaigns have been delivered by Comms and Marketing to raise the profile of the borough as a visitor destination resulting in significant growth in relevant channels.
- Support by Comms and Marketing had afforded good results with securement of PR articles ahead of target to key markets.
- Visit AND digital channels have exponentially grown with web traffic up by 50% on prior year, and social media audience growing by 25% ahead of the growth target of 20% for 2024/5.
- Promotion for all Tourism Events have generated footfall levels which have exceeded targets.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk Register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

Staffing for outreach purposes had been successful to date; however, availability of casual staff coming into Q3 had been flagged for primary VIC cover.

Action to be taken:

- VIC staffing kept under review for optimum models of delivery in the new season.
- One KPI not on target as below.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review

No. of training sessions for event capacity building.	Vacant post to support this activity – now filled	Three more sessions before end March 25	Events Manager	January 25
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RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Adair commended the work of the Tourism team, with the Borough becoming well known for its events in Northern Ireland. Referring to the success of the Portavogie Seafood Festival, that event had exceeded its visitor numbers and was growing each year. He paid tribute to the Head of Tourism and Director of Prosperity, who had been successful in their work to achieve Shared Prosperity Funding for Burr Point. He highlighted the need for Ards and North Down to be showcased on the adverts as often as the North Coast was advertised. Greyabbey had seen over 50 coaches from the cruise liners which brought great economic benefit. Ards and North Down had a vibrant offering, and Alderman Adair could not thank the Tourism staff enough for the work that they did.

Councillor Edmund welcomed the growth in the digital channels and congratulated the team in that regard.

Councillor Hollywood also remarked on the events programme during the summer, noting that the Seafood Festival in Portavogie had been a superb and a well organised event. He congratulated the team on the organisation of the event.

Councillor Smart congratulated the tourism team on leading on the tourism events. He referred to the element within the report regarding capacity building and grants, noting that there had been a staff vacancy which had been filled. He wondered if that training would be in place for the changes coming into the grants process.

The Head of Tourism explained that particular post supported the Grants and Evaluation Officer. The adapted fund had been released, applications were being assessed and that would be completed before Christmas. The other training sessions for capacity building would be held in the New Year and applicants who had declared an interest previously and who were on the database would receive an invitation to those sessions.

Councillor Blaney referred to the overnight stays, alluding to previous issues on the allocation of bed nights and there not being enough places for people to stay overnight when there were events with the Borough. He questioned if there was appropriate capacity for overnight stays.

The Head of Tourism stated that unfortunately the accommodation providers in the area were not providing as much information back to NISRA as Officers would like, including capacity, overnights etc. which meant the sample in Ards and North Down was so small that it was not officially reported through NISRA. Officers felt there was a lack of capacity in certain types of accommodation. As an example, the Head of

Tourism referred to the EurlLCA Championships at Ballyholme Yacht Club where the Club required a broad range of accommodation, and they would have preferred to have closer accommodation. In the past Officers had attempted to work with hotels and accommodation providers to have an evidence base to work from; however, it was found that some businesses were reluctant to share that information. Tourism NI was looking at undertaking a broad accommodation piece of work in Northern Ireland and had asked for information from Officers locally.

Councillor Blaney expressed disappointment that the data was not shared. He wondered about publishing the accommodation and the gaps in the market that was short as that might be beneficial for entrepreneurs.

The Head of Tourism explained that in 2018, the Council undertook an accommodation scoping study which outlined the potential gaps in accommodation within the Borough. She undertook to share that with Councillor Blaney.

Although recognising that the findings may not have changed, Councillor Blaney felt a refresh of that data may be useful.

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

5. TASTE AND - FOOD AND DRINK SECTOR DEVELOPMENT UPDATE REPORT 2024 (FILE TOTD/182)

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Food and Drink Award Winners to date 2024. The report detailed that whilst 2024 had been a successful year for many Taste Ards and North Down Food network members, and there was generally more positivity across the sector due to more settled economic conditions, the primary challenges of staffing and much higher costs persist across the food and drink sector.

Inflationary pressures had eased; however, businesses continued to see increases in the cost of distribution and from the servicing and maintenance of equipment. The factors driving operational cost increases were shifting from energy costs to that of skilled labour coupled with the recent increase in staff costs resulting from the autumn budget.

Staff and recruitment issues were having an ever-increasing impact on the sector with restaurants continuing to face the most severe impacts. Restaurants were operating on fewer days and with reduced daily hours; the hospitality 'split shift' was becoming a thing of the past. Training and, therefore, career progression was also seeing an impact which meant there was a 'bleed' in advanced skills within the hospitality sector. 'Recruitment failure' was a growing problem for food production; businesses put that down to the double impact of Brexit and an education system that was not yielding the skills that were necessary for young people to work within the sector.

Whilst that was a somewhat gloomy background, the food, drink and hospitality sectors were learning to find new ways to appeal to customers and that was leading to increased collaboration and cooperation. Businesses were clearly more agile, resilient and willing to embrace innovation. More of what was made locally was staying local and those who lead newly formed businesses appear to be ambitious and prepared for the challenges of the food and drink sector as it was now as opposed to pre-2020.

Taste AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan (FDDDP) 2023-2027 –

The following highlights the activity and key achievements year to date.

1. Business Training Programme

Training for businesses had settled around a core of in-person training support (attended by 62 people). That included:

- SALSA Accreditation six-week course finished in January
- Food Awards Preparation Lab with SERC (February)
- Digital Marketing Masterclass (March)
- Food Photography Masterclass (March)
- Market Operators Specialised Training (March)
- Risk management: Reducing Risk in the Workplace - Level 1 (June)
- Emergency First Aid at Work Level 2 (Scheduled for January 2025)

2. Food and Drink Careers Day

One of the objectives of the FDDDP was to deliver an annual food and drink careers engagement event to help signpost careers in the sector with local schools, showcase what it was really like to work in the industry, and to demonstrate the diversity of the industry. On 9 April 2024, Tourism Development Officers delivered a first “*Hospitality and Tourism Take Over Day*” at the Culloden Hotel and Spa. SERC Culinary Arts also played a key role in delivery on the day with Tourism NI providing interactive equipment. 82 students from four schools attended (all secondary schools in the borough were invited to attend). Feedback from students and teachers highlighted the success of the event and therefore it was intended to run again in 2025.

3. Trade Shows

In 2024, there had been a total of 22 partially, or fully, subsidised spaces for industry at trade shows and events outside the borough, which were shared among 17 producers.

- March: Love Your Food Show, Belfast (8 businesses)
- June: Garden Show Ireland, Antrim (3 businesses)
- August: Hillsborough Palace & Gardens Festival (4 businesses)
- September: Salmon and Whiskey Festival Bushmills (2 businesses)
- October Dingle Food Fest/Eat Ireland in a Day Showcase (5 businesses)

The ‘Eat Ireland in a Day’ Showcase at the Irish Food Awards had increased representation with five producers and one restaurant showcased across the three-day event. No 14 at the Georgian House in Comber provided a range of Ards and

North Down-themed canapés for the launch of the event using local pork, beef, bread and dairy produce; Bow Bells, Bró Coffee, Mallow Makers, Habanero Steve's and Capparelli Cooks took part in the showcase pavilion, with tastings and talks with leading Irish Food Writers.

The first trade show of 2025 would be the Love Your Food Show with 12 businesses participating at the new location of the Maze site. It was expected to see a decline in spaces which Taste AND could take at trade shows in comparison to 2024 due to restrictions in certain council areas, in addition to costs pressures and value for money.

4. Ulster Fry Championship

Tourism Development officers provided advice and organisational input into this new annual event run by Donaghadee Community Development Association. The competition itself attracted competitors from Armagh, Monaghan, Antrim, Belfast, Fermanagh and County Down. 12 Taste Ards and North Down businesses traded at this event across the weekend helping to grow the event from 2023.

5. Taste Summer in Ards and North Down

A total of 24 food and drink shoulder experiences and activities ran across the 12 days of the festival, with a majority developed and run by local businesses. That was a significant increase from 2023 participation with a move away from the previous Council dependency on delivery. At the main Comber Earlies Food Festival, the Food and Drink Officer along with Event colleagues managed the 'Taste AND Meet the Maker' feature which involved 12 Taste AND members. The shoulder food activities specific to the Comber event featured a Comber Earlies showcase dinner, kitchen garden demo weekend at No 14 The Georgian House, as well as the return of three activities at McBride's on the Square, including The Big Food (Charity) Quiz, Indie Fude's Beer and Raclette Night and the Sunday Comber Earlies Lunch Walk.

6. Taste Autumn in Ards and North Down

Chilli Festival 14-15 September was a success attracting 5,000 attendees, with Tourism Development Officers increasing the number of providers and activity at the event. Chilli-themed artisan producers, hot food and three local international-themed restaurants/producers featured on the demo kitchen hosted by SERC on the Saturday. This collaborative event with AND Parks and Cemeteries, provided valuable lessons and helped enforce food as a key strength of the Borough. Like the Taste Summer Festival local businesses participating in shoulder activity increased to a total of 18 experiences and activities during the wider festival period.

7. Taste AND at Clandeboye

Part-funded by DAERA's NI Regional Food programme, this was developed to specifically showcase produce from members of the Taste Ards and North Down network and to promote local food producers to residents of the borough – a key objective within the FDDDP. 32 producers participated in the artisan market, whilst six local restaurants took part in kitchen theatre demos. Over 9,000 attendees were recorded at the two-day event with positive responses and high average spend of £39 per person reported with public surveyed. The trader survey showed significant support for running a similar event again, mid-autumn 2025, and accordingly

submission to the NI Regional Food Programme would take place in the new year when the Fund was released.

8. Irish Food Writers' Guild Learning Journey

During the weekend of Taste AND at Clondeboye, seven members of The Irish Food Writer' Guild took part in a food and drink learning journey within the Borough. The Guild visited Copeland Distillery, No 14 The Georgian House, Ballyboley Dexters, Capparelli at The Old Mill, The Walled Garden Helen's Bay, and Echlinville Distillery, as well as sampling food and drink from the 32 traders involved in the Taste AND at Clondeboye event. The media outputs from those guild members who attended, have been highly positive with features appearing in major Irish newspapers, podcasts and personal blogs to date. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/food-columnists/arid-41512055.html>

9. Award Winners 2024

Throughout the year the Food and Drink Officer had continued to encourage local businesses to enter local, national and international awards through providing information and technical advice for entry. The 2024 awards season drew to a close in November, but to date it had been a highly successful year for both for Taste AND producers and restaurants.

The 'gold standard' food and drink awards in produce are the UK's "Great Taste Awards" announced in August and Ireland's "Blas na hEireann Awards" announced in September. For the alcoholic drinks producers, the gold standard class of awards are the "International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC)", the "World Gin Awards" and the "World Whiskey Awards" - collectively, the "Food and Drink Oscars". Other notable awards for food were the "Irish Quality Food Awards" and the "British Quality Food Awards.

Looking forward to 2025

Taste Ards and North Down Local Food Heroes Awards

To highlight the achievements of local businesses the 'Local Food Heroes' Honours Reception with the Mayor of Ards and North Down would be held on 5 March 2025 at Bangor Castle. Also, would see the fourth Lady Dufferin Award for producer of the year and the second edition of the 'Local Food and Drink Champion' awarded to the business that gives most support to local produce selected by producer members.

Food and Drink Network

Following the introduction of amended criteria in 2024 to better structure membership, the Network currently sat at 75 members. Research into other similar Networks indicate a membership fee of £35 was appropriate and would be set for the incoming year.

Summary

Whilst faced with continued uncertain times, the local food, drink and hospitality sectors have much to be encouraged about. There was a willingness to adapt in the face of pressure and to collaborate with other likeminded businesses and Council. All 13 actions of the FDDDP had made progress in year one with key deliverables across a range of areas.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Ashe noted that the sector was facing uncertain times and commended the team for all that they were doing to support the sector.

Councillor Smart recognised the challenges that the sector was facing and the support which the Council was providing. In terms of the training programme, he noted that was substantial, with two elements of digital training being offered. A lot of footfall was now driven by social media and he wondered if information on how social media had transformed business could be provided and possibly built into future training.

The Head of Tourism stated that there had been great success inviting food journalists and those in the industry for food familiarisation trips, influencers and bloggers sharing across their social media was extending reach.

Councillor Smart stated that he did see a lot of Tiktok coverage from the potato festival.

Alderman Adair paid tribute to Glastry Farm ice-cream and Ballyboley Dexters for achieving their awards.

Councillor Blaney noted the fantastic producers in the Borough and wondered if there were any opportunities for local producers to provide at Council events. He also asked a question about Tourist Information Centres providing local produce for purchase.

The Head of Tourism stated that in terms of local producers and Council events that was something which had been looked at before and there were some restrictions for suppliers. Where possible for events the local produce element was incorporated. Within the Visitor Information Centres, local produce had been available for purchase though she noted shelf life was an issue. She was happy to take that suggestion back to the team to have another look at.

Councillor Kennedy congratulated the staff for the progress that had been made.

The Chair thanked the team for the work, welcoming the return of the Ulster Fry Championships. Having met many food providers during her year as Mayor she had heard firsthand about the positive work the team were undertaking.

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

6. **REGENERATION HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024 - 2025 (FILE 160127)**

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching Q2 performance report. The covering report provided the undernoted detail:-

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the service had contributed to 5 outcomes as follows.

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- 2 new village partnerships (Strangford and North Down) have enabled structured engagement with residents from rural communities.
- The completion of Phase 1 of the Village Plan 2025 – 2035 had resulted in over 1,500 responses. The responses are being analysed and collated with key priorities as identified by residents and businesses would contribute to each Village Plan.
- Representatives from the Borough's Chambers of Commerce were part of each of the C/TAG groups and had therefore the opportunity to influence future projects and services.

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- Support to the Chambers of Commerce through the Grants Scheme was contributing to key Chamber activities aimed at promoting a sustainable and growing economy within the Borough. For example, Christmas Events, Chamber membership workshops, and animation of the towns.
- Officers have engaged with DfC, interested groups and Chambers of Commerce to identify the interest of a Business Improvement District proposal within the Borough.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Portaferry Public Realm Scheme – the scheme was officially launched on the 30.10.2024 and was the culmination of significant internal and external

stakeholder engagement, innovation, and resource allocation. Economic, Social and Environmental benefits are envisaged as part of this £2 million investment.

- The Paddington Bear Statue had been a significant attraction to Newtownards and enabled various economic and wellbeing benefits to the town and wider Borough. That had been highlighted by the number of visitors coming to Newtownards from all over the province.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- Progress was continuing to be made on the Kircubbin Coastal Path upgrades, Greyabbey Community Park and Ballygowan Walking Trail which demonstrate a collaborative approach from residents of the villages and between internal and external stakeholders. The projects would utilise currently underutilised land and include environmental improvement elements, providing walking and cycling opportunities within close proximity to the village centres.

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Demonstrated strong economic performance by successfully securing an additional £425,000 funding (£335K Urban Regeneration Programme and £95K Rural Business Grants) which would be strategically invested in the urban and rural areas to foster growth and development

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

1. % Spend against budget
2. % Staff attendance
3. Development of works to Marine Gardens and McKee Clock Arena

Action to be taken:

1. Various tenders and quotes had been issued without return from external stakeholders delaying the completion of working up projects.
2. To continue to implement the Managing Absence policy and effectively delegate the workload amongst the team of staff.
3. A commencement date for Phase One had been provided by Bangor Marine (BG). The Directorate would continue to work with Corporate Communications

and BG to ensure the communication on the commencement date and other relevant information was effectively managed.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% Spend against budget	Unsuccessful procurement processes	Review of procurement documents, reallocation of budget to enable increased budget	SUM	9.12.2024
	The Services' spend against budget is typically below target until Q4 upon completion of various projects	Profiling of budgets will be assessed and changes implemented however this will have a minimal impact	HoS and SUM	March 2025
% Spend against budget	1 long term absence	Continue to consult with HR and OH	SUM	As and when directed by HR

RECOMMENDED that this report is noted.

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

Alderman Adair commended the work of the Regeneration team and sought an update on a start date for the Kircubbin Promenade and Greyabbey Parklands projects.

The Head of Regeneration advised that those projects were worked up to a suitable point with completion envisaged for end of March 2025. He undertook to update Members if there was to be any further delay.

Alderman Adair was reassured by that response which would be well received by the communities in Greyabbey and Kircubbin.

Councillor McCracken commended the Regeneration team for successfully securing an additional £425,000 funding which could be used for feasibility studies for projects that would make a great difference for the Borough.

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

7. PROGRESS ON VILLAGE PLANS 2025-2035 (FILE 160135)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that as Members would be aware officers within the Regeneration Service had been tasked with creating new Village Plans as the existing plans had now expired or nearing their end date. There was a need for new plans to ensure the continued growth and development of the rural villages.

The creation of the new Village Plans was a three-stage process:

- Stage 1 - Desktop Research & Public Engagement
- Stage 2 - Identify and Refine Priorities
- Stage 3 - Draft Plans for review

Stage 1- Desktop Research & Public Engagement

Desktop Research

Officers conducted extensive desktop research for each of the villages which included a review of the former Village Plan, and an analysis of statistical data such as population, employment status, health, religion, education, housing, deprivation and economic activity. This research offered insights into each village’s status, providing officers with a better understanding prior to the commencement of public engagement.

Public Engagement

A comprehensive public engagement process began in May 2024 and was scheduled to conclude at the end of September 2024, this was extended by two weeks to mid-October to allow for additional responses to be submitted.

The engagement process was designed to gather a diverse range of input through various methods, including public workshops, involvement of community groups and local schools, engagement at public events and activity groups, conducting on-street surveys and offering an online survey.

- Community Group Engagement

Before launching the public engagement process, officers engaged with community groups from each village to provide a comprehensive overview of the process, actively seek their feedback, and aimed at cultivating their support for the initiative.

Village	Date	Group
Ballygowan	08 April 2024	Ballygowan & District Community Association
Ballyhalbert	25 January 2024	Ballyhalbert Community Association

	04 March 2024	
Ballywalter	11 January 2024	Ballywalter Community Action Group
Carrowdore	1 February 2024	Carrowdore & District Community Association
Cloughey	19 January 2024 05 March 2024	Cloughey & District Community Association
Conlig	26 April 2024	Conlig Community Association
Greyabbey	11 January 2024	Greyabbey & District Community Association
Groomspoint	09 January 2024	Discover Groomspoint
Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn	05 January 2024 30 January 2024	Bayburn Community Association
Killinchy	09 May 2024	Killinchy & District Community Development Association
Kircubbin	10 January 2024	Kircubbin & District Community Association
Lisbane & Lisbarnett	23 January 2024	Lisbane & Lisbarnett Community Association
Millisle	08 November 2023	Millisle Community Association
Portaferry	18 April 2024	Portaferry Community Collective
Portavogie	13 February 2024	Portavogie Regeneration Committee

In addition to the above meetings, officers had continued to provide timely updates to the various village community groups via the Partnership Meetings (Ards Peninsula Villages Partnership - monthly updates, Strangford Villages Partnership - quarterly updates, and North Down Villages Partnership - quarterly updates).

- Primary School Engagement

Officers visited each of the local primary schools within the villages to conduct interactive workshops with the pupils including a drawing competition. An age-friendly survey was created to enable the pupils to share their views, opinions and ideas for the future of their village.

An Awards Event hosted by the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, was held in the City Hall, on the evening of Tuesday 25 June 2024 for the winners of the drawing competition and their family and teachers.

The winning drawings would feature in the new Village Plan.

A total of 321 surveys were completed. In addition to the surveys, a series of comment boards were completed within each school.

- Public Engagement Sessions

Public Engagement Sessions were delivered in each village as an opportunity for residents, community members, and businesses to voice their ideas, discuss their concerns, and make suggestions for short-, medium-, and long-term improvements.

Attendance at the workshops varied between each village, however evidence demonstrates a peak in the number of online survey responses submitted for each village at the time of the public engagement sessions.

Attendees at the public engagement sessions were encouraged to participate in sharing their views, ideas and opinions on the comment boards which were focused on specific areas to encourage thinking and promote involvement. Attendees were also encouraged to complete the Village Plan survey.

Below was a summary of the number of attendees and comments submitted at each public engagement session:

Village	Date & Time	Location	Number of Attendees	Number of Comments Received
Ballygowan	Tuesday 25 June 4-6pm	Ballygowan Community Centre	14	31
Ballyhalbert	Wednesday 05 June 4pm-6pm	Talbot House	14	63
Ballywalter	Monday 10 June 4-6pm	Village Hall	6	26
Carrowdore	Wednesday 12 June 4-6pm	Carrowdore Community Centre	4	5
Cloughey	Thursday 20 June 4-6pm	The Pavilion	32	68
Conlig	Monday 24 June 4-6pm	Conlig Community Centre	20	55
Greyabbey	Thursday 27 June 4-6pm	Greyabbey Village Hall	12	41
Groomsport	Tuesday 09 July 4-6pm	Groomsport Boat House	48	81
Helens Bay & Crawfordsburn	Tuesday 18 June 4-6pm	Crawfordsburn Primary School	5	8
Killinchy	Thursday 08 August 4-6pm	Killinchy Community Hall	32	40
Kircubbin	Tuesday 18 June 4-6pm	Kircubbin Community Centre	25	31
Lisbane & Lisbarnett	Monday 01 July 4-6pm	Lisbane Community Hub	7	11
Millisle	Tuesday 20 August 4-6pm	Millisle Community Hub	43	86
Portaferry	Wednesday 28 August 4-6pm	Market House	45	97
Portavogie	Thursday 22 August 4-6pm	Portavogie Community Centre	12	42

In response to feedback received regarding the timings of the public engagement sessions, officers arranged additional drop-in sessions to accommodate a more convenient timeslot. Three additional sessions were delivered in central locations:

Saturday 14 September 10am-12noon Comber Leisure Centre
 Saturday 21 September 10am-12noon Aurora Aquatic & Leisure Complex
 Saturday 28 September 10am-12noon Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex

▪ On-street Surveys

Officers visited each village to conduct on-street surveys during the engagement process, allowing the opportunity to increase awareness of the Village Plan process, increase community engagement and gather valuable feedback from residents and businesses.

Ballygowan - 14 August 2024 and 08 October 2024
Ballyhalbert - 06 August 2024
Ballywalter - 05 August 2024
Carrowdore - 07 June 2024 and 12 June 2024
Cloughey - 14 August 2024
Conlig - 09 August 2024
Groomsport - 01 August 2024
Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn - 9 August 2024
Killinchy - 14 August 2024
Kircubbin - 14 August 2024 and 15 September 2024
Lisbane & Lisbarnett - 08 October 2024
Millisle - 25 July 2024 and 01 August 2024
Portaferry - 23 July 2024, 06 August 2024 and 25 September 2024
Portavogie - 06 August 2024 and 16 August 2024

▪ Attendance at Public Events

To maximise outreach and enhance community engagement, officers attended public events, providing an opportunity for residents to engage directly, ask questions, and participate in discussions, ultimately fostering stronger relationships within the community.

Events attended during the Engagement Process:

10 August – Artisan Market, Greyabbey
24 August – Lisbane Summer Fair
26 August – Peninsula Kite Festival, Millisle
13 and 14 September – Portaferry Heritage Festival

▪ Engagement with Activity Groups

Throughout the month of September officers contacted various activity groups within each of the villages to provide an opportunity to engage and ensure that their views are heard and valued.

It should be noted that although the following groups were contacted and offered a range of ways that they can participate in the engagement process not all groups responded.

Ballygowan	Youth at Ballygowan Presbyterian Children and Young People Programmes & Events Ballygowan FC Ballygowan Girls Brigade Ballygowan Boys Brigade Ballygowan Community Choir
Ballyhalbert	Glastry College Glastry Boys Brigade Ards Peninsula Community Chat & News Page
Ballywalter	Ballywalter Flute Band Ballywalter Youth FC Ballywalter Community Action Group Ballywalter Rec FC Ballywalter Bowling and Rec Club Ballywalter Young Farmers Club Ballywalter Presbyterian Church Ballywalter Mens Shed
Carrowdore	Carrowdore Parish Church Carrowdore & Ballyfrenis Presbyterian Church Strangford College Carrowdore Shooting Club Carrowdore Girls Brigade
Cloughey	Cloughey Heritage Group Cloughey & District Tennis Club Ballycran GAC Cloughey Football Club
Conlig	Conlig Presbyterian
Greyabbey	Greyabbey is Great Trinity Presbyterian Church Rosemount Rec Football Club
Groomsport	Groomsport Presbyterian Groomsport Parish Groomsport Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Helens Bay & Crawfordsburn	Mums & Tots Helens Bay Helen's Bay Presbyterian Church Helen's Bay Tennis Club Helen's Bay Golf Club, St Johns Church Helens Bay
Killinchy	Young Farmers Whiterock Yacht Club Killinchy Cycle Club Killinchy Community Hall PTA Killinchy Primary School Killinchy Presbyterian Church The Livingston Centre at Killinchy Parish Killinchy and Kilmood News
Kircubbin	Peninsula Healthy Living Kircubbin Community Church Kircubbin Parish Kircubbin Sailing Club
Lisbane & Lisbarnett	Lisbane and Lisbarnett Community Association and After School Club
Millisle	Abbey Villa FC Millisle FC Millisle Youth Forum Millisle Presbyterian Church Millisle Baptist Church Millisle Regeneration
Portaferry	Portaferry Gala Festival Ballygalget GAC Portaferry GAC Mens Shed Portaferry Sailing Club
Portavogie	Portavogie Ebenezer Gospel Hall Portavogie Presbyterian Church Knit and Natter Group

- Online Survey

A user-friendly online survey was created. The survey consisted of eight targeted questions, designed to gather valuable insights into the community's perspectives, aspirations, and innovative ideas for the development of the villages in the short-medium-long term, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of residents' needs and priorities.

A total of 1,534 surveys were completed, reflecting active engagement from the community.

A summary of the responses per village was detailed below:

Ballygowan	243	15.84%
Ballyhalbert	104	6.78%
Ballywalter	144	9.39%
Carrowdore	92	6.00%
Conlig	50	3.26%
Cloughey	102	6.65%
Greyabbey	60	3.91%
Groomspoint	61	3.98%
Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn	59	3.85%
Killinchy	53	3.46%
Kircubbin	157	10.23%
Lisbarnett & Lisbane	37	2.41%
Millisle	131	8.54%
Portavogie	95	6.19%
Portaferry	146	9.52%

The engagement process had successfully fostered extensive public engagement across the villages, allowing residents to actively participate in discussions.

To compliment the engagement activities listed above, a monthly newsletter had been established to keep residents and businesses fully informed throughout the process.

The newsletter was issued to subscribers on the last Friday of each month, below was a breakdown of the number of recipients for each month

June	69 recipients
July	83 recipients
August	88 recipients
September	98 recipients
October	136 recipients

Stage 2 – Identify and Refine Priorities

Officers had commenced the process of analysing the data for each village, with efforts focused on compiling the information and identifying emerging themes, that would help establish a set of prioritised actions and insights.

Following the completion of the data analysis, officers would hold additional public engagement sessions to validate that the emerging themes and priorities reflect the community’s needs, providing a platform for residents to contribute feedback and further refine these priorities.

Public engagement sessions would commence early 2025.

Officers would organise workshops with internal departments to gather their insights and contributions, recognising that many of the identified priorities would necessitate collaboration across various departments and sectors.

Additionally, it was proposed to convene a workshop for Elected Members to discuss the priorities for each village, ensuring that Members perspectives and expertise were integrated into the decision-making process.

It was hoped Stage 2 would be completed early March 2025, with Stage 3 – Draft Plans for Review commencing end of March/ early April 2024.

RECOMMENDED that this report is noted.

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

Alderman Adair commended the Head of Regeneration and his team on the public engagement that had occurred on the village plans. He remarked that the Rural Development Manager and Officer had walked the streets of Ballyhalbert with some residents talking about the various issues in the village. He felt that had been a better way to do the village plans as the Council Officers had the expertise and local knowledge. Alderman Adair looked forward to the plans being published and for them to be used to source funding for the villages.

Councillor Ashe remarked on the public engagement, that had been well thought out and targeted a wide range of groups particularly the engagement that had occurred in the Primary School. The online monthly newsletter was a great idea, and she asked if it was available in an alternative accessible format.

The Head of Regeneration confirmed that could be made available if required.

Councillor Edmund agreed that the consultation had been fantastic, the people had felt that they had been listened to. He noted that the response rate for some of the surveys had been low and encouraged residents to complete such surveys.

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

8. STRATEGIC CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT H1 2024-25 (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Place detailing the undernoted:-

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- **Portaferry Public Realm:** Effective communication was a cornerstone of the project's success. By asking targeted questions and prioritising specific qualities during the tender process, we secured an experienced contractor with strong public engagement strategies and phased work methodology minimising disruption. Additionally, the project team maintained transparency and engagement through a fortnightly project newsletter, distributed digitally and placed in public buildings. Quarterly updates to the steering group ensured key stakeholders remained informed, fostering trust and collaboration throughout the project.
- **Ward Park:** The successful delivery of the desilting works within budget marks a significant milestone in the project and paves the way for the next phase of the larger Ward Park redevelopment. Contractor procurement for this phase was currently underway and progressing on schedule. Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, fostering co-design elements that ensure the community had a meaningful voice in shaping the redevelopment. In-person consultations have been complemented by the use of Citizen Lab allowing ongoing engagement, feedback, and collaboration with the public. This approach ensured transparency, inclusivity, and a shared vision for the future of Ward Park.
- **Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment:** Significant progress was being made on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment following the appointment of Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for the BYC Watersports Centre in May 2024 and Pickie Fun Park in August 2024. Stakeholder engagement had been integral to every aspect of the project, involving key stakeholder groups, community organisations, businesses, and environmental advocates to ensure their input shapes a shared vision for the redevelopment. In addition to targeted consultations, we have engaged with residents and the wider community through public information sessions, providing updates on proposals, the project vision, and progress in transforming the waterfront.

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- **Capital Sustainability Policy Draft:** Recognising Council's objective to become more environmentally sustainable and resilient, the Head of Strategic Capital Development had drafted a Capital Sustainability Policy. This policy promotes sustainable practices in project delivery and was set to be adopted by all directorates. By embedding sustainable initiatives such as Passivhaus, PAS2080 and BREEAM standards into capital projects from the early design and tender stages, we align with Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.
- **Newtownards Citizens Hub:** Following a strong response at the initial PQQ Stage with thirteen submissions, eight candidates have been successfully shortlisted to progress to the ITT stage. The design team contract award was expected in early 2025 with the aim of achieving Passivhaus Status.
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** Significant progress had been made in developing the performance specification and brief for the future of the

Council's Estate. This detailed and politically significant analysis had included the identification of a Council approved location for any new accommodation and the implementation of an office rationalisation programme optimising current assets and resources. These efforts align with our corporate objectives of becoming an environmentally sustainable and high-performing organisation.

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- **Bangor Waterfront:** Following the appointment of the Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for both BYC Watersports Centre in May 2024 and Pickie Fun Park in August 2024, momentum was building on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment. We are currently out to tender for an ICT to deliver the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm which would transform five-character areas along the two mile stretch of coastline. This project would play a pivotal role in advancing the strategic objectives of the broader redevelopment programme, aligning with Council and Belfast Region City Deal's goal *"to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the whole region and deliver more and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities"*.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- **Portaferry Public Realm:** The successful delivery and completion of the works significantly under budget, allowing reallocation of surplus funding to other small settlements schemes within the Borough. The project had been well received by the local residents and business communities.
- **Ward Park:** The successful delivery and completion of the desilting works within budget, allowing progress to the next phase, where contractor procurement was currently underway and on track for the larger Ward Park redevelopment.
- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and had begun onsite.
- **Whitespots Country Park –** Successful transition to RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design.
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** Site shortlisting complete with Brief Development in progress. This includes the appointment of a Cultural and Heritage Consultant to complete an OBC for the future of the Castle.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:

- **Social Value:** As part of the procurement process, we are integrating social initiatives in our public tenders for construction and design services. These

initiatives can help to promote community well-being, enhance social value, and support local development by:

- Promoting & Creating Local Employment Opportunities
- Supporting Skills Development through training & apprenticeship programmes
- Encourage Social Inclusion
- Enhance Community Benefits by delivering additional benefits such as improved public spaces, community facilities, and services.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and had begun onsite.
- **Ward Park:** The successful delivery and completion of the desilting works within budget, allowing progress to the next phase, where contractor procurement was currently underway and on track for the larger Ward Park redevelopment
- **Portavogie 3G Pitch:** Planning approval progressing.
- **Multi Use 3G Pitch Ards Peninsula:** Design Team appointed.

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- **Cross Directorate Collaboration:** The successful ongoing initiative of the Capital Projects Advisory Group (CPAG), chaired by the Head of Strategic Capital Development, continues to enable comprehensive engagement, sharing best practice and synergy across all Council Services. CPAG facilitates the sharing of information about work at hand, and lessons learned on all current and planned Capital Works.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

1. **Significant delays in project delivery due to challenges posed by the Procurement, Planning, Land Acquisition and Stakeholder Engagement processes e.g. legal challenges and statutory consultee responses.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Preparation of appropriate project information / documentation based on a clearly defined brief and business case in line with the Structured Project Delivery as detailed in our Service Objectives and Delivery Framework.

- Applying lessons learnt to ensure the planning application prepared by the ICT contains sufficient information to satisfy potential queries posed by Statutory Consultees.
 - Actively contribute to stakeholder engagement, transparent communication and community participation at an early stage.
 - Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements, processes, and procedures
- 2. Budget: Significant additional costs (forecast or incurred) above allocated budget with potential impact on project delivery, benefits realisation, and Value for Money.**

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Apply internal governance procedures to monitor and report on identified issues.
- Regularly review and maintain Individual Project Risk Registers and Cost Report with regular reporting to the Project Board.
- Test investment decisions via business cases (OBC & FBC) & Implement 5 case model.
- Appropriately test Strategic Need and Economic Viability at an early stage.
- Regularly monitoring budgetary forecasts in conjunction with appointed design teams.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements and incorporate lessons learnt.

3. Unplanned need to support delivery of non-strategic capital projects impacting on delivery of strategic capital programme of works.

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Increase awareness by participating at forums such as CPAG. Adopt consistent approach to capital delivery across the organisation by implementing best practice and sharing lessons learned.
- Develop and maintain collaborative relationships across all Directorates to review and confirm anticipated pipeline of capital works (irrespective of scale / scope / complexity).

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
No KPI's considered at risk within H1 2024-2025				

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

(Councillor Smart withdrew from the meeting – 7.37 pm)

Proposed by Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCracken referred to the existing projects that were underway. Portaferry Public Realm had just been delivered, a project was underway at Ward Park along with the Greenways with lots of exciting projects entering feasibility, put together that was a fundamental transformation across the Borough, and he commended the Officers who were working on the projects. With regards to Marine Gardens, a sense of negativity would remain until progress could be seen and encouraged Officers to ramp up communication creating an exciting picture for the Borough. Councillor McCracken referred to the social value element detailed in the report which was an emerging issue being looked by the NI Executive. He asked if Officers were linked into the policy makers within the NI Executive and what the direction of travel would be for interpretation within the Borough.

The Director of Place explained that Officers, particularly within the Capital Projects team, were linked in due to grant aid and the conditions in that regard. They had also attended seminars to get a better understanding so to be proactive and include the social value element across the Council for other activities.

Councillor McCracken noted that there were some exciting social value projects that had been pioneered elsewhere. He asked if there were any targets in terms of local procurement. The Director of Place was of the understanding that could not be as prescriptive to local businesses due to the procurement regulations.

Councillor McCracken was of the understanding that training was to be undertaken for businesses to allow them to apply for the grants. The Director of Place stated that there was an element of social values within the tender exercise. He advised that the Head of Regeneration was undertaking a place making academy and part of that was in understanding how social values could be implemented into projects. He continued that social value implementation was broader than just in tender exercises and was being rolled out into other projects.

The Chair recalled that a couple of years ago Councillor Cathcart had brought forward a Notice of Motion to encourage awareness of tenders for local businesses.

Alderman Adair thanked the Officers for the report and remarked on the transformation that the Portaferry Public Realm had made. He also wished to put his thanks on record to the Director and the Planning team who were working in difficult circumstances. He noted that in the past he would have been critical of the planning team and apologised for that. He had seen the work the planning team were doing to move the capital projects forward and were let down by government departments as statutory consultees in their responses to planning applications. Alderman Adair referred to the Portavogie 3G pitch and the delay that recently had been caused by DfI submitting a late objection. Alderman Adair sought an update in that regard.

The Director of Prosperity thanked the Member his comments and undertook to pass those onto the team. She also undertook to email Alderman Adair an update on the Portavogie 3G pitch from the Head of Planning.

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

9. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL

9.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan, Alderman Cummings, Councillor Douglas, Alderman Smith and Councillor Ashe

“The Comber representatives are delighted that Comber has won the Best Kept Medium Town Award this year and want to thank all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this happen.

There is, however, a long-standing dilapidated hoarding in Castle Street which badly detracts from this important area of Town.

The Comber representatives recognise that Council officers and the Comber Regeneration Community Partnership have tried to address this issue, but this has not been successful. Considering this, Officers should do a report exploring all further options available to resolve this issue with some urgency.”

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, that the Notice of Motion be deferred to the January meeting for discussion.

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.

10. QUEEN’S PARADE UPDATE REPORT

(Appendices VI, VII, VIII)

*****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)

The report asked Council, after considering the report received from its ICT, to agree the plans and specifications for the works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena

11. ARDS TT 2028 EVENT WORKING GROUP MINUTES 12.9.24
(FILE EV136)
(Appendices IX)

*****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)

The report updated on the first Council Event Working Group planning meeting for the Ards TT 2028 Centenary event which included early-stage planning arrangements. The report was recommended for noting.

12. PICKIE QUARTER 2 REPORT JULY - SEPT 2024-25

*****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)

This report contained commercially sensitive information and details of the financial performance of the Operator, which is not appropriate to have in the public domain.

13. BANGOR MARINA Q2 REPORT JULY – SEPT 24
(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)

This report contained commercially sensitive information and details of the financial performance of the Operator, which is not appropriate to have in the public domain.

14. EXPLORIS Q2 REPORT JULY – SEPT 24 (FILE DEV3C)

*****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)

This report contained commercially sensitive information and details of the financial performance of the Operator, which is not appropriate to have in the public domain.

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 8pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cochrane
Councillor Irwin (7.53pm)

Aldermen: Brooks (Zoom) McIlveen
Graham McRandal (Zoom)
McAlpine Smith

Councillors: Chambers Kennedy
S Irvine Thompson
Moore W Irvine
Gilmour (7.06pm) McCracken

Officers: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Administration (A Curtis) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

The Vice Chairman (Councillor Cochrane) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies for lateness had been received from the Chairman, Councillor Irwin and Councillor Gilmour.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were notified.

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

3. CHANGE OF FEES FOR REGISTRATION SERVICES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the fees charged for marriages & civil partnerships in Northern Ireland were calculated in two distinct parts. The first being the fees set by the General Register Office (GRO), that predominantly cover all the legal paperwork. The second were the fees set by each individual District Council that cover the costs of

the Registrar, the room hire, time taken, travel costs etc – the inherent costs associated with organising and hosting the ceremony itself.

The Council had no control over the fees set by the General Register Office, and those were exactly the same throughout Northern Ireland. Their fees had not changed in nearly ten years so it was likely, although not confirmed, that there would be an increase from 1 April 2025. The Council last set the fees in 2015 at the time of Local Government Reform. The fees were amended slightly in 2018.

In the past ten years there had been significant changes in energy costs, wages, building maintenance etc.

Other Councils were also looking at increasing their prices, at the very least, in line with inflation. Belfast City Council had recently changed their fees and their basic price for a Monday to Friday, City Hall, ceremony was now 130% higher than marrying in Bangor Castle.

The Council took provisional bookings for up to two years in advance and had already seen an increase in bookings and enquiries from people who lived outside of the Borough.

Below was a table showing the Council’s statistics for 2023. Those figures were only what the Council recouped and excluded GRO fees.

Table 1

	2023 No.	2023 Income
City Hall – Monday to Friday	125	£13,375
City Hall – Saturday	10	£1,550
Approved Venue -Monday to Friday	27	£3,240
Approved Venue – Saturday	18	£4,140
	180	£22,305

It was recommended that charges were increased to be 50% of the level in Belfast City Council in 2025/26 financial year and 66% in the 2026/27 year. Indicative fees were set out in table 2 and indicative income in table 3 below. This would support the recouping of costs as well as managing the demand, particularly from non-residents which had significantly increased in recent years.

Table 2

	Current	25/26	26/27	BCC
City Hall - Monday to Friday	£107	£170	£230	£350
City Hall - Saturday	£155	£245	£330	£500
Approved Venue - Monday to Friday	£120	£185	£250	£383

Approved Venue - Saturday	£230	£315	£400	£600
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Table 3

	2023 No.	2023 Income	Indicative 2025/26	Indicative 2026/27
City Hall - Monday to Friday	125	£13,375	£20,910	£28,290
City Hall - Saturday	10	£1,550	£2,450	£3,300
Approved Venue - Monday to Friday	27	£3,240	£4,995	£6,750
Approved Venue - Saturday	18	£4,140	£5,670	£7,200
Total	180	£22,305	£34,025	£45,540

Additional Service Proposal

As a new offering and following requests that had been made previously where couples were legally marrying in advance of a ceremony at another date, officers proposed that couples could have the option of having a ‘basic ceremony’. The Couple and their two witnesses could get married in a small, private accessible office in the City Hall.

This option would increase bookable opportunities, could take place in office hours and only require one member of the registration team. Officers suggested a fee of £120, which was £50 cheaper than the current most basic option and would again support the covering of costs and generate additional income.

	Current	25/26	26/27
City Hall - Monday to Friday	Not Offered	£120	£120

Review

It was proposed that the fees were reviewed after one year to ensure that the Council remain competitive in the market and cover the costs of provision of this service.

- RECOMMENDED that with effect for all ceremonies on or after 1 April 2025 that:
 - A - Council increases the charges in respect of marriages & civil partnerships as detailed in this report
 - B - Council introduces a ‘basic ceremony’ option at charges detailed in this report

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

4. INFORMATION ACCESS POLICY
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the attached Information Access Policy determined the practices, principles and processes by which the Council would fulfill its responsibilities to make information publicly available and promote best practice information governance

procedures throughout the organisation. It provided guidance on response times for FOI, EIR and Data Subject Access requests.

The version for approval was V1.7 (See Appendix). For ease of reference the changes from the previous version 1.3 had been highlighted in red.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve this policy.

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

5. REQUEST FOR CIVIC RECEPTION – COMBER RECREATION FOOTBALL CLUB

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that a letter had been received from Councillor Rachel Ashe, Councillor Vicky Moore and Councillor Patricia Morgan requesting that Comber Recreation Football Club (Comber Rec) be considered for a civic reception to acknowledge its 75th anniversary.

The Club qualified for a Civic Reception based on the criteria of exceptional service to the local community (including sporting success) and a significant anniversary. The Club was first formed in 1950, playing under the name 'Comber Youth Club'. The football season of September 2025 – June 2026 would mark the Club's 75th anniversary, a significant milestone which would be a major celebration.

Over the past 75 years, the Club had grown from a small, single-team Club to the modern-day Comber Rec which boasted four senior men's teams, senior women's team and multiple youth teams. The 2nd XI currently played in the Amateur League Division 3A while the 3rd XI were in Division 1 of the Down Area Winter Football League.

The Club also had many junior teams and encouraged participation in football, but also good physical and mental health and the importance of teamwork. In last year's football season, Comber Rec won the Steel and Son's Cup and were runners-up in the Border Cup. This season, Comber Rec were again in the final of the Border Cup, hoping to lift the trophy in December. The success of the Club had been a boost for Comber, with the whole community getting behind them.

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

The Council's Policy for Civic Receptions required requests to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive and signed by at least three Elected Members. The request, once received, was assessed against set criteria and an officer's report, with an appropriate recommendation, was prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria for a Civic Reception

The criterion against which each request would be assessed were as follows:-

1. Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary

The exceptional service should be in the areas of Voluntary or Charitable work AND the anniversary should be a milestone of 25 year increment anniversaries.

OR

2. A Very Significant or Unique Achievement

An achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient has a strong association with the Borough.

This request had been submitted in line with the agreed procedures and met criteria 1 of the policy - Exceptional Service to the Borough/Local Community and a Significant Anniversary. The Club would celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2025 and had enjoyed exceptional sporting success since its formation. The cost could be met from the 2025-26 civic budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to offer Comber Rec a Civic Reception to acknowledge 75 years since the formation of the Cub and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

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

The proposer Alderman McIlveen welcomed the report and the request which he felt was very fitting to acknowledge the Club's 75th anniversary. He added that he was aware of an internal dispute in the Club around the exact time of its formation and he asked that officers contacted the Club to ascertain when the best time would be to host it for a Civic Reception. Alderman McIlveen noted that it was a large Club which had strong links with the local community and having enjoyed much success they were deserving of this.

Echoing those comments, the seconder Alderman Smith also commended the signatories for bringing this forward for consideration. He agreed that 75 years was a significant milestone adding that it was so much more than a Football Club, making a great contribution to the local community. He noted the Club's vision to create a Sports Hub at Parkway, Comber adding that he hoped the Council would be supportive of that. Alderman Smith wished them well with their future plans.

Councillor Moore thanked her colleague Councillor Ashe for bringing this matter forward for consideration. She agreed that it was a very accomplished Club which deserved this recognition.

(Councillor Gilmour entered the Chamber at this stage – 7.06pm)

At this stage the Vice Chairman, Councillor Cochrane informed members that Councillor Ashe had requested speaking rights at the meeting but regrettably did not seem to be in attendance.

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

6. REQUEST FOR A MURAL AT REDBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the Council had received a request from Holywood Community Network, a local community group, seeking Council approval for an anti-drug mural on a wall at the Redburn Community Centre (See Appendix). They were currently working on an initiative aimed at engaging the children in the Holywood area and they hoped to implement a six-week anti-drug programme early in 2025. They had received funding for the programme from Woven Housing Association.

They had provided the following information in support of their request:

“We believe this location is ideal for the mural, as it has frequently been subjected to vandalism and graffiti, particularly on the wall we wish to enhance. We are confident that the approval of this community mural could deter further vandalism while simultaneously conveying a powerful message about the impact of drugs on individuals and their families. As a collective, the Holywood Community Network is eager to propose the creation of a community mural. We plan to collaborate with various age groups within the community to develop this mural, which will address significant themes that the group wishes to highlight, including drug awareness and mental health. This initiative will empower young people in the community to express their perspectives on the consequences of drug misuse. The project will commence with design workshops in partnership with BLAZE FX, where participants will engage in design sessions. During these sessions, they will explore themes and imagery to convey their vision for the mural and the message it will communicate. We have already conducted a preliminary workshop to draft an initial design with the artist. The artist has incorporated all the images and themes discussed during the design sessions into a draft mural design. This project is planned as a six-week course to be held at the Redburn Community Centre. We have submitted a funding application to support this initiative.”

They provided the attached mock-up of the mural and photo of the wall (Appendices 2 & 3). Details were:

- The dimensions of the mural were a height of four feet and a length of thirty-two feet. They planned to utilize acrylic exterior paint for this project.
- The painting process could be executed directly onto the wall, or alternatively, they could paint on boards that would be affixed to the wall surface.
- It was anticipated that the commencement of the project would be sometime in the new year 2025, with a projected duration of six weeks.

Council officers had been consulted and had no objections but had made the following comments:

- Council officers must review and sign off on the final design before it went on the wall as there was a query over whether Holywood Community Network’s logo could be used on a Council building.

- From a building maintenance, the preferred option would be for the mural to be affixed to the wall on a board, as it would be easier to remove and replace should there have to be works undertaken on the building.
- The boards should be affixed into the mortar between the bricks, rather than drilling into brickwork.
- This would require a planning application, and the group may be able to avail of an application fee exemption if they meet certain conditions (Holywood Community Network had been directed to the Planning service for further information).

Therefore, approval should be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- I. Providing a risk assessment.
- II. Display appropriate notices to inform the public of the works and notices must be removed immediately on completion of the work.
- III. Provide evidence of relevant insurances and fully indemnifying Council against all risks or claims associated with the use of land or property.
- IV. Holywood Community Network agreeing to a lifespan of three years being placed on the mural, at which point the Council would review the mural and determine it should be refreshed or removed.
- V. The mural must be affixed to the wall on a board, and the board(s) should be affixed to the mortar between the bricks and not by drilling into the brickwork.
- VI. Council officers must review and sign off the final design before the project commences.
- VII. The Council reserves the right to withdraw consent, and / or to ask Holywood Community to remove the mural at any point in the process.
- VIII. Make good any damage caused during the use to the satisfaction of Council officers. Should the Council have to undertake remedial works the costs will be recoverable.
- IX. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage is present.
- X. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all debris arising from the use of the land. Should the Council have to do any additional cleaning, the costs will be recoverable.
- XI. Organiser to put in place plans for recycling waste and / or disposing of waste correctly.
- XII. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the work.
- XIII. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the path at the same time as the work.
- XIV. Obtain and provide evidence of permits/licences/registrations and approvals.
- XV. Ensure that adequate staff were placed throughout the area to ensure that members of the public are not endangered by the work.
- XVI. No petrol generators were to be used.

RECOMMENDED that the Council accedes to the request from Holywood Community Network for a mural on the wall at Redburn Community Centre, subject to agreement to the terms and conditions outlined in this report.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor W Irvine, welcomed the initiative and the anti-drugs message it was sending out particularly in light of the recent tragic events in Belfast.

Alderman McIlveen noted it was proposed to place the mural on a board which would then be attached to the wall and asked if there would be any Planning implications with that.

In response the Head of Administration indicated that officers were aware of that adding that it had been noted.

At this stage Alderman Graham commented that he was undecided in respect of any benefits this project could bring. He added that while he would not vote against it he was not sure that it would actually do any good as the problem it referred to remained ongoing, particularly given recent events. As such he asked to be noted as abstaining from this matter.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. BANGOR ENTRANCE SIGNAGE (FILE NOM 181) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that Bangor was awarded City Status as part of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in May 2022.

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

That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.

In relation to signage, a report was brought to Council in January 2024 advising:

- Bangor had five current entrance signs, which were in keeping with all other town gateways signs in the Borough and were funded by DfC. Planning permission had to be secured for the erection of those signs and if the design were to change significantly (primarily in terms of dimensions) this process might have to be completed again.
- To remove the requirement for a further planning application and to keep the signs complimentary to those in the other towns it was recommended that an update to the current design, rather than a complete redesign, was undertaken. This would allow the existing steel brackets and supporting structures to be reused with just a replacement of the polycarbonate panels – reducing the overall replacement costs.

- The new signage design included the updated City of Bangor logo and reference to the platinum jubilee (official logo and the wording 'A Platinum Jubilee City'). The overall height of the sign had been increased to better accommodate those additional elements from the Notice of Motion, but this change did not impact the support structure or require any further planning review.
- Members were asked to consider whether the design should also include the strapline 'by the Sea', which was agreed with the Bangor stakeholder group as part of the town and City branding exercise. Please see Appendix 1- Option A without 'by the Sea' and Option B with 'by the Sea'.
- At the meeting members had mixed views and asked that further engagement was undertaken with the City Advisory Group to garner opinions.
- The signage had been discussed twice by the Bangor CAG with agreement reached at the November CAG meeting that 'by the Sea' should be included on the new entrance signage.

Members were asked to consider the views of the CAG and confirm their choice of Signage Option A or B.

The costs of the manufacturing and installing the new signs would be £7,600 – budget was available in the 2024-25 financial year for this.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree to Signage Option A or B.

Councillor McCracken proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Council agree to Signage Option B.

The proposer Councillor McCracken suggested that in reality there were three options before them for consideration, the third being not to change the existing signage. However he indicated his preference for Option B which retained the Bangor by the Sea strapline adding that he believed the expenditure of £7,600 for five new signs to be cost effective. He added that he agreed it was important to retain that strapline particularly given the investment in the Watersport Centre of Excellence at Ballyholme. Councillor McCracken also believed it was important to celebrate Bangor as a Platinum Jubilee City and as such welcomed the inclusion of that on the proposed new signage.

The seconder Alderman Graham fully concurred with the comments made by the proposer.

Councillor W Irvine noted the matter had been ongoing for some time and he therefore welcomed the report and looked forward to seeing the signage installed in due course.

By way of summing up the proposer Councillor McCracken expressed the view that Option B was the right choice for the city of Bangor.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Council agree to Signage Option B.

REPORTS FOR NOTING

8. RESPONSES TO NOTICE OF MOTION

(a) NOM 623 UPDATE:VE DAY- 80TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that at May Council meeting the following Notice of Motion was heard.

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.

It was agreed that officers would bring back a report to Committee which detailed the proposed programme for consideration.

Update

Correspondence from Bruno Peek, Pageantmaster

The Council had received correspondence from Bruno Peek, Pageantmaster, to participate in VE Day 80 on 8 May 2025 in celebration of the 80th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe and WWII as a whole. Communities were encouraged to take part in this important occasion, remembering those who gave so much to ensure the freedom everyone shared today.

Officers had discussed how best to celebrate VE 80 ensuring civic and community involvement and the proposed programme was detailed below:

Civic Programme

VE Day Flag

The Council had been asked to raise the unique VE Day 80 flag on Thursday, 8 May at 9am to unite the nation and remember the sacrifice made by so many. The flag will be flown at The Castle, Bangor and Conway Square, Newtownards.

Beacon Lighting

The Council had been invited to participate in the beacon lighting initiative. The beacons would symbolise the light of hope that emerged from the darkness of war. It was proposed that beacons would be lit at 9.30pm on Thursday, 8 May at The Castle, Bangor, Conway Square, Newtownards and Burr Point, Ballyhalbert for the

International Tribute. The costs associated with lighting the beacons was approximately £1,500 to include pipers, choirs and staff costs.

VE Day 80 Concert

As agreed at the Council meeting in October 2024, the Council would host a concert in Castle Park, Bangor on Friday, 9 May 2025 featuring the Band of the Royal Irish. Discussions had taken place with the Royal British Legion and relevant Military personnel and the military band had been secured. The costs associated with the concert were likely to be in the region of £2,500.

Local Community

Grant Scheme - A simplified grant scheme could be developed for small grants of up to £500. The grants could be used to fund up to 60 events for constituted community and voluntary groups. By limiting the budget to £500 per grant 100% of the award could be released to groups upon approval.

Celebration Packs - Packs would be made available to all non-constituted community and voluntary groups on a first come first served basis.

The costs were based on circa £50 per party pack for 100 non-constituted groups.

Local People Engagement

- Schools Education Pack – produced in-house by Museum Team
- Historical Talk
- Living History event at North Down Museum with Valhalla Street Theatre
- Community Recollection Project - Call out and article in the paper looking for photos and recollections of the day from local people and work with the Heritage Cluster groups. The focus would be on the importance and legacy of VE Day on the generation that were young children at the end of the war.

Detail	Budget Required
Civic Programme	£4,000
Community Grant	£30,000
Celebration Pack	£5,000
Local Engagement Packs	£1,000
Museum Programme	£2,000
TOTAL	£42,000

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to the programme outlined above subject to budget setting process.

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

The proposer Councillor Gilmour welcomed the report and noting the proposal to award £500 to community and voluntary organisations she expressed the view that it would be somewhat challenging to deliver anything with that amount of funding. As such she asked for further clarity around this and any potential thresholds.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that following guidance from the Community Development Team the funding of £500 had been agreed. As such he indicated that further guidance would need to be sought from them and he would report back to members in due course.

Councillor Gilmour welcomed this adding that it would be useful to have clarification around grant thresholds and when those would become more arduous.

At this stage the Director reminded members that the report was before them for approval but suggested that in light of members comments they may wish to defer it to the Council meeting.

Councillor Gilmour indicated that she was content to withdraw her proposal and make a new one.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the matter be deferred to the Council meeting to seek further clarification around Grant funding.

Councillor W Irvine agreed that the matter of funding should be reconsidered given the significance of the occasion.

Concurring with those comments Alderman Smith agreed that £500 would not enable any significant events to be staged. He added that instead it would be better to have fewer but better events. As such he expressed the view that it would be better to have a competitive process to acquire any available funding and as such he would also welcome further feedback from officers around this.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Thompson, to defer to the Council meeting to seek further clarification around Grant funding.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORTS (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Performance reports for the following:

- a) Community Planning (Report attached)
- b) Corporate Communications (Report attached)
- c) Finance (Report attached)
- d) Strategic Transformation and Performance (Report attached)
- e) Administration (Report attached)
- f) Human Resources (Report attached)

RECOMMENDED that the reports be noted.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder Councillor McCracken referred to the Corporate Communications report and noted the reference to the many significant events which had taken place throughout the year to date. He sought some further clarification around the

percentages in relation to improvements in the Council's social media, suggesting that it may be more beneficial to benchmark this against other similar Councils in Northern Ireland. He added that engagement was also important and therefore believed that further consideration should be given to new ways of describing it in order to understand any impacts or improvements which may be made.

The Director indicated that he would discuss those comments with the Head of Communications and report back to the Committee in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF 2024/25 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (FILE 26051 - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 placed a duty upon Councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to account for it. At the beginning of each financial year, the Council was required to determine its priorities for improvement which were aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Plan and to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) by 30 June, which set out improvement objectives for the year ahead, and by 30 September to publish a Self-Assessment Report to review performance against the improvement objectives set in the preceding year.

Performance Planning and Management

To fulfil this requirement Council had in place a Performance Management Policy and a Performance Management Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years
- PIP – published annually in June
- Service Plans – developed annually

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.

Section 90 of the Act required a Council, during each financial year, to collect information which would allow it to assess its performance in achieving its improvement objectives and to measure its performance against performance indicators or standards set by the Department or any other indicators or standards which the Council chooses to use.

The Council had governance arrangements in place to assure accountability for improvement and to ensure the delivery of its plans took place in an open, effective, honest and accountable manner.

Those arrangements included:

- Alignment of the service planning and budget process to ensure all costs were included in the estimate process
- An electronic performance management system (Ideagen), which could:
 - 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
- Half yearly reporting on Service Plans to relevant standing committees; in December and June.
- Half yearly reporting on progress against the Performance Improvement Plan to Corporate Services Committee
- Monthly reporting on Capital Projects to Corporate Projects Portfolio Board
- Reporting to Strategic Policy and Finance Group on at least three occasions per year
- Appropriate risk management in relation to main programmes of work

Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25

This year Council's PIP identified four improvement objectives with a corresponding 53 actions together with seven Statutory Indicators and four self-imposed indicators. It should be noted that this report reflected performance of the PIP only and was not necessarily representative of the overall performance of the organisation. Where PIP measures were not being met, Action Plans would be presented to parent Committees as part of half yearly Service Plan performance reporting.

An update on performance against the 2024/25 PIP to date was attached at the Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached Performance Update Report for the 2024/25 PIP (Quarter 1 & Quarter 2).

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

11. STEP BOARD UPDATE (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the Transformation Service was established in September 2023 and was responsible for:

- Delivering the Council's Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme (STEP).
- Supporting individual services with service-specific projects aligned to key strategic transformation priorities and continuous improvement.

- Council's statutory commitments relating to Performance Improvement including the Performance Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment Report.

The Transformation team continued to be staffed by a Transformation Manager, supported by three Transformation Officers:

- The Transformation Manager and one Transformation Officer were on temporary internal secondments until 31 May 2025 (may be extended).
- One Transformation Officer was on a temporary contract until 31 May 2025 (may be extended).
- One Transformation Officer was currently on maternity leave and would be on a temporary contract on her return (1 March 2025) until 31 May 2025 (may be extended).

By way of summary, the following outlined the key projects that had been undertaken since the Transformation Service was established in September 2023.

Continuous Improvement

The Service had undertaken a number of continuous improvement projects linked to both the statutory commitments and the Council's appetite to develop and progress its internal systems and processes to ensure it was operating optimally as an organisation. Specifically, the team:

- Developed the 2024/25 **Performance Improvement Plan** (published 30 June) and completed the 2023/24 **Self-Assessment Report** (published 30 September).
- Completed a review of the performance management process and designed a new **service plan handbook, including template and guidance** for the Council (and was currently supporting its second cycle of the annual service planning process).
- Developed a **Business Continuity Plan** for the Council. An independent consultant had been appointed to carry out an independent review of its Business Continuity Plan and to deliver training to CLT, HoST and SUMs.
- Completed a **Post Project Evaluation** for the **Core2 Project** with lessons learned being considered and implemented in future projects. The team also undertook a review of the residual issues associated with the Core system to improve efficiencies associated with HR and payroll interactions with the system.
- Developed and implemented **standardised project governance structures and documentation** across the portfolio of transformational projects.

Transformation and Efficiency Projects

In addition to the above continuous improvement projects, the Transformation Service had collaborated and engaged with a number of services across Council in the delivery of a range of transformation and efficiency projects. The projects were categorised as follows:

- Digitalisation
- Estates (Office Rationalisation)
- Redesigning Delivery and Restructuring Staff.

Digitalisation

- **Digital Strategy** – the Digital Strategy was approved by Council in April 2024. A programme of work was currently being developed to progress the implementation of the projects identified within the strategy. Priority had been given to the data and document management requirements. An **Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS)** would modernise the Council's document management practices, ensuring data security, regulatory compliance and enhance operational efficiency. An independent consultant had been appointed to develop a **Data Strategy** for the Council – the first stage of any EDRMS. The Data Strategy Workshops had been completed a draft strategy was expected in early November.
- **Migration of Council Telephone System** - the migration of the main telephone numbers to the new Mitel Cloud system and softphones for laptop users was implemented in June 2024. This new system provided the potential to handle calls more efficiently and Digital Services, with the support of Transformation staff, had progressed this project from the implementation stage through to business as usual from 1 October 2024.
- **Transition of new mobile phones** - Transformation had provided project management support to Digital Services for the migration of c.300 phones from Vodafone to EE. This was 80% complete by end September 2024.
- **Corporate Website/ Platform** - The new website had been live since April 2024 and positive feedback had been received from residents. Transformation and Communications and Marketing were now working with different Services to transfer content online e.g. Regulatory Services to put their licencing applications online and move away from paper-based applications and Licensing to get their application forms online. In addition, the Transformation team had provided internal training to relevant members of staff.
- **Office RnD Hybrid (Room Booking Software)** - The Council did not have an effective mechanism for managing workspaces, booking hot desks, meeting rooms, and other spaces. Office RnD Hybrid had been implemented, which would provide insights into how the workspaces were being utilised across the main Council buildings. It would support the Council's hybrid working model and provide tools for employees to book desks and meeting rooms, ensuring optimal use of office space. Data from the system would be used to inform the office space requirements of the new Civic Office building. The system had been live since 2 September 2024. Statistics were being collected from this date, with monthly reports produced.
- **New Finance System** - 50 staff were surveyed regarding support for the introduction of an interim basic electronic purchase ordering system. 65% responded and all were in favour of progressing with this two-stage approach. On the foot of this, the project board meeting on the 27 July approved this approach and work commenced in September with a view to phasing this system in over the next six months.
Pre-contract engagement with the Council's selected provider had now concluded with agreement of a specification and costings. A report went to Corporate Services Committee in September to award a contract. It was expected that work on implementation would commence in December.

Estates (Office Rationalisation)

- **Relocation of South Street Staff** – The Community Development and Funded Project Teams were successfully relocated to the Signal Centre in April 2024 and a Post Project Evaluation, including lessons learned, was completed.
- **Relocation of Parks and Cemeteries Staff** – One of Parks and Cemeteries three teams (of office-based staff) relocated to the Castle, from Church Street, during the summer.

Redesigning Delivery and Restructuring Staff

- **Parks and Cemeteries Restructure** – a new structure with three SUMs was now in place.
- **Community Centre/ Halls Review** – This project had been paused until there was staffing stability.
- **Development of a Leisure Strategy** – Transformation team were providing project management support to Leisure to develop a ten-year Leisure Strategy. Project initiation took place in May with the project currently at the interim report stage and on target to meet the final submission date of January 2025.
- **Leisure Benchmarking Review** - The first NI APSE leisure benchmarking process had been completed for Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, Comber Leisure Centre, Portaferry Sports Centre and Londonderry Park (2022/23 data) which now provided leisure with APSE baseline data. The second NI APSE leisure benchmarking process (2023/24 data) was now commencing along with leisure submitting to the UK APSE model also. This process would be completed, and reports received from APSE in February 2025.
- **Leisure Staff Restructure** - Phase 3 (Lifeguards and fitness associates) was now complete. Phase 4 (Administration and front of house operations) was now commencing with discussions ongoing prior to a business case being developed for consideration by CLT. Any financial implications to this phase would be incorporated into budget setting considerations for implementation from 1 April 2025.
- **Waste Review** - The Working Group met in September to receive a number of update reports in relation to two issues that had been raised by members in respect of the highest scoring scenario identified through the study. Those related to the following issues:
 - Markets for Fibres (Paper and Card) – WRAP commissioned a separate report regarding both local and UK market capacity and market prices over the last 10 years. This was largely positive and suggested that separately collected fibres could offer the Council an income stream as opposed to a gate fee under current co-mingled collection arrangements.
 - Mitigation for residents who may have issues with a revised collection system – a list of measures both current and possible new measures were presented to allay some of the members concerns.

It was agreed that the Working Group had gone as far as it could, and a report was going to the next Environment Committee to seek more wider support and to agree to the development of a public engagement/ consultation programme to be launched early next year via Citizen Lab.

- **Legal Services Review** – A strategic review of the Council’s legal services provision was nearing completion to determine the best model for structuring Council’s requirement for legal services i.e. a fully in-house model; a hybrid in-house/ outsourced model; or a fully outsourced model. It was anticipated that an Options Paper would be presented to CLT in November to make a decision on a way forward.
- **Grants Review** – Transformation were providing project management support to the grants review project. To date, the Grants Policy had been reviewed and updated and was approved at September Corporate Services Committee/ September Council meeting. Next steps involved the Transformation team working with the Working Group to formalise an Action Plan to roll out the implementation of the Policy and standardise grant documentation (where appropriate) to facilitate the development of an online grants system.
- **Events Strategy mid-point review** – Transformation were providing project management support to the Head of Tourism to deliver a mid-point review of the Events Strategy (Involving 10 Work streams). Particular focus currently on the following work streams/recommendations: Tourism Events Sponsorship opportunities, Bid for Events and Growth Events.

A summary of each of the above ongoing projects was detailed in the attached STEP Board Report (See Appendix).

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached STEP Board Report.

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

The proposer Alderman Smith took the opportunity to acknowledge the work which had been undertaken to date as well as the financial investment in this important area of work. He also welcomed the progress which had been made to date.

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

12. ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABILITY (SUS 1)

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating 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 two 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 at the Appendix.

Officers were currently reviewing the Roadmap with SNI. This review would be in line with recommendations from internal audit and the revised version would include the Climate Action Plan.

Climate Action Plan update

Officers were working closely with Sustainable NI to develop the Council's Climate Action Plan. Currently a framework was being prepared to ensure that the plan aligned with the existing Roadmap to Sustainability. It was hoped that both the CAP and Roadmap would form one document going forward. This would incorporate existing actions as well as additional ones.

As part of this project, carbon footprint (scope 1, scope 2 and 3 emissions if possible) would be calculated using the Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool for best practice.

There would be workshops for input from officers and Elected Members as part of this process.

BITCNI annual NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey

The Council Retained SILVER status in the BITCNI Benchmarking Survey. The Survey was a self-disclosure exercise that offered organisations a way to be externally assessed and scored on their environmental efforts and performance. Participating organisations had access to a Gap Analysis Report to help them to identify areas that needed action and highlighted where they were performing well, so it was a comparison tool and real driver for improvement." (Appendix 2)

George Dawson Award

On 20 November 2024, Emma Adair, the Council's former Sustainability Officer (now Assistant Development Manager (Environment)) was awarded The George Dawson Award. This award celebrated the significant contribution a businessperson had made to improving the environmental performance of their organisation, and the Award recognised the impact of that contribution on the environment and on the wider community.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

Councillor Thompson proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder Alderman McRandal welcomed the update noting the success which had been achieved to date. He noted that the Council's former Sustainability Officer had been awarded The George Dawson Award and sought some further details about that Award.

In response the Director of Administration advised that George Dawson had been a former director and he had introduced this Award for those who 'walked the walk and talked the talk'. She added that she had personally nominated the Officer for the Award.

Alderman McRandal expressed his congratulations to the Officer on her Award.

Councillor W Irvine commented that while sustainability was very laudable, the practicalities of attaining net zero were not so. As such he encouraged a more balanced approach to be taken to sustainability and to be mindful of that.

At this stage Councillor McCracken stated that he was very keen to become more sustainable but was concerned that some of the impact of doing so was being lost in the detail in the report. He suggested that it would be beneficial to 'not to sweat the small stuff'. He stated that he did have some difficulty with framing certain things with a sustainability lens. Workplace management he suggested was a good example when considering the Council's requirements such as flexible working to ensure the most efficient delivery for the organisation. He stated that if consideration was given to how much carbon was being used by staff driving to and from the office that had the potential to skew what the important issues really were. Councillor McCracken stated that while he welcomed the work which was being undertaken in respect of sustainability he felt it was equally important to get the balance right.

In response the Director indicated that he would take those comments on board adding that he believed they were very valid. He advised that officers held similar thoughts on the fact that there were so many actions and how to highlight the more significant ones. As such further work would be carried out with consideration on how best to present those actions visually be it through charts or diagrams when the report was next presented to the Committee.

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

13. NOTICE OF MOTION

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

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the post office to propose to close its branches in Main Street, Bangor and Frances Street, Newtownards as part of a widened UK overhaul. We would call on the Post office to reverse this decision and meet with Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss the proposal and the impact it will have on staff and customers. This Council notes how important post office services are to our communities and the huge role it plays in serving constituents.

The proposer, Councillor W Irvine suggested that the issue with Horizon and the subsequent compensation claims would undoubtedly have influenced the proposed closures in order to make cost savings for the Post Office. The proposed closures in Bangor and Newtownards would undoubtedly have a significant impact on both customers and staff. He noted that the Post Office in Bangor had been housed in a historic building for many years and questioned what its future use would be. He stated that many residents relied on the Post Office for a wide variety of everyday services such as sending letters and packages, collecting pensions, paying bills and financial services. The proposed closure would make those services less accessible

particularly for those with less access to any alternative location. This he stated could create real issues for the elderly and vulnerable who may not have their own transportation. Continuing he agreed that the Post Office did need to make itself a more twenty first century organisation given the competition which was out there currently. Many local businesses would also be affected as Post Offices were integral to small town economies and overall footfall. As such he believed it would be beneficial for the Council to hear from the Post Office about what alternatives it planned to put in place. He added that he believed the Council needed to fight for local services for local people.

Rising as seconder, Councillor S Irvine indicated that he was more than happy to support his colleague and to emphasise the urgent need to protect the Post Office branches at Main Street, Bangor, and Frances Street, Newtownards.

Councillor S Irvine stated that those branches were not merely transactional spaces but instead they were community hubs that brought people of all ages together. From young parents sending care packages, to older residents collecting pensions or seeking a friendly face, those Post Offices served as a vital thread in the fabric of the community. Removing them would create a void that no alternative could fill, leaving many, especially the elderly and those without digital access, facing isolation and practical challenges.

Continuing Councillor S Irvine commented that it was worth noting that other Councils and community groups across the UK had already started to resist similar closures, recognising the devastating impact this would have on local life. At this stage he acknowledged that the DUP in Ards and Bangor had taken the bull by the horns and already met with representatives of the Post Office. By passing this Motion, the Council would reaffirm its alignment with those efforts, strengthening the collective stance against such sweeping decisions. As such he believed that it was important to ensure that the Post Office heard a unified voice demanding the protection of services that so many depended upon. Furthermore, Councillor S Irvine stated that the proposed closures would affect not only customers but also the hardworking staff who served those branches. Their livelihoods were at stake, as well as their contribution to the community and as such they deserved the Council's support.

By way of summing up Councillor S Irvine urged the Post Office to engage with the Council immediately, to fully consider the unique role those branches played as social and economic lifelines, and to work with it to find viable alternatives to closure. He added that this Council would not stand idly by while essential community services were stripped away.

Thanking both Councillors W and S Irvine, Alderman McIlveen confirmed that he had met with local Post Office representatives to discuss the matter. During those discussions it was confirmed that all of those Post Offices on the list for closure were Crown Assets and that was where it was hoped savings could be made with future investment then to be made in Sub Post Masters. It was also suggested that the Post Office was keen to protect those facilities which were in rural areas. Continuing Alderman McIlveen stated that Post Offices were very important particularly so since the withdrawal of so many Banks from High Streets adding that they were key

drivers also in terms of footfall for many town centres. He reported that during his meeting the question was asked what could be done in an attempt to save the two Post Offices and the reply had been to double or quadruple the footfall in each of the branches. It appeared to be a case of 'use it or lose it' and as such Alderman McIlveen reiterated his support for the Motion.

Adding his thanks to the both the proposer and seconder of the motion, Councillor Chambers noted that the Bangor Post Office in Main Street provided an excellent service but added that there were also nine other branches in the city. There was no doubt those smaller branches offered convenience and therefore that was part of the reason why customers rarely needed to visit the branch in Bangor Main Street. He added that he had noted it had been quiet any time he had recently been in the branch and stated that regrettably if footfall continued to remain low its closure would be inevitable. As such he encouraged members of the public to support their local Post Office branch.

Also expressing her thanks to the proposer and seconder, Councillor Moore acknowledged the importance of the Borough's local Post Offices given the array of services they offered and the expertise of the staff who worked there. While there were many local branches throughout the Borough they did not offer the full range of services offered by those in Main Street, Bangor and Frances Street, Newtownards. She added that she believed both branches were anchors in their respective locations and it would be a huge loss for them to no longer be there. While appreciative of the pressures the Post Office may currently be experiencing she believed that it was important for the Council to be part of any conversations about the future of local branches going forward.

Alderman Smith also rose in support of the Motion noting that the challenge with this was that Post Office management had taken the decision to close the branches, all of which were Crown Post Offices. He noted that four from Northern Ireland had appeared on the list and it was unfortunate that two of those were within the Ards and North Down Borough. He agreed that it would be useful to ascertain if the Post Office would be willing to engage with the Council in the first instance to see if there would be any flexibility in those proposed closures in an attempt to try to change their minds.

Councillor Gilmour similarly rose in support of the Motion and expressed her thanks to the proposer and seconder for bringing it forward. She agreed that everyone had been taken aback when the announcement had been made, adding that Peter Martin MLA had also met with Post Office representatives who had indicated that it may not be a done deal. Indeed she advised that reference had been made to exploring franchisees for the two branches in order to retain them. Continuing she also acknowledged the many Post Offices there now were within local shops but was mindful that those branches in the main City and Town Centres provided a degree of certainty for many within local communities. There was also the question around who owned both the buildings in Bangor and Newtownards, particularly as there were Royal Mail sorting offices based at both premises. The building in Bangor was of particular historical significance being only one of two remaining with a Post Office plaque for Edward the eighth therefore she believed there were questions to be asked around the future of the building. She thanked the two members for bringing

forward the Motion commenting that there were without doubt many questions to be answered and assurances to be provided.

(Councillor Irwin entered the Chamber at this stage – 7.47pm)

Sympathising with the Motion, Alderman Brooks commented that having grown up in Lisburn where the Post Office had been a huge building, it too had now closed and he was surprised that Bangor had survived for so long. He suggested there were advantages to this however with many Post Office franchises throughout the local communities making it easier for people to go about their business rather than have to visit a main branch. He did however state that it was an unfortunate state of the times with many banks also closed and no longer on High Streets. He went on to suggest that he could see a time when Banks would be located in cities and only accessible via appointment. Alderman Brooks sympathised stating that no one wanted to see the closure of the two Post Office branches reiterating that he had been surprised the one in Bangor had remained in situ as long as it had.

At this stage Councillor Kennedy asked if the Council availed of Post Office services locally.

In response the Director advised that the Council did not use the services of the local Post Office and instead used a private firm to handle its mail.

By way of summing up the proposer Councillor W Irvine thanked members for their comments and support adding that he looked forward to a future meeting with representatives of the Post Office to discuss the matter further.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the post office to propose to close its branches in Main Street, Bangor and Frances Street, Newtownards as part of a widened UK overhaul. We would call on the Post office to reverse this decision and meet with Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss the proposal and the impact it will have on staff and customers. This Council notes how important post office services are to our communities and the huge role it plays in serving constituents.

RESUMPTION OF CHAIRMAN

At this stage the Vice Chairman, Councillor Cochrane vacated the Chair to enable Councillor Irwin to adopt her position as Chairman of the Committee – 7.53pm.

NOTED.

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

REPORTS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

15. EXTENSION OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT

*****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 approve the contract extension for all Lots of the Legal Services tender, for a further one-year period from 1 February 2025 to 31 January 2026 with the contracted legal panel.

The recommendation was agreed.

16. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF CORPORATE UNIFORM, CASUAL UNIFORM, LEISURE UNIFORM AND PROTECTIVE WORKWEAR (Appendix VIII)

*****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 approve the contract award for the Provision of Corporate Uniform, Casual Uniform, Leisure Uniform and Protective Workwear.

The recommendation was agreed.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

17. REQUEST FROM QMAC CONSTRUCTION LIMITED TO USE PART OF HIBERNIA STREET SOUTH CARPARK (Appendix IX)

*****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 consider renewing the licence in relation to land at Hibernia Street carpark. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

19. REQUEST FOR A LEASE AT COOK STREET BOAT YARD – PORTAFERRY COASTAL ROWING CLUB

(Appendix XI)

*****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)

The Council was asked to grant a lease of part of the Boat Park at Cook Street, Portaferry. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

20. BANGOR CASTLE OPTIONS APPRAISAL (FILE PCU08)

(Appendix XII)

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

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

The report provided a situational analysis for the future.

Their remit is to produce Outline Business Cases for the repurposing of Bangor Castle and the potential relocation of North Down Museum, should the whole site be required for a future viable proposition. The Consultants have completed Phase 1 of 6, the Situation Analysis, which is summarised in Appendix 1 and are now moving into Stage 2.

The Council agreed a criteria for scoring future options and agreed to proceed to the next stage of the appraisal process.

REPORTS FOR NOTING

21. ESTIMATES UPDATE (Appendix XIII)

*****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 consider a report following the first meeting of the newly formed Capital Strategy Working Group consisting of four Elected Members. The meeting considered the key issues which the Council needs to consider in relation to its Capital ambitions.

A recommendation to note the report was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.58pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 7.4.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	'-
Date of Report	16 December 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	Matters Arising item 8 - NOM 623 Update: VE Day – 80th Anniversary
Attachments	'-

A Notice of Motion discussed at Corporate Services Committee in June 2024 was that 8th May 2024 will be 80 years since VE Day – the official end of the Second World War in Europe. Officers were asked to outline potential ways the historic anniversary could be commemorated. It was suggested that this should include any national plans for beacon lighting and with Council working with local people and local community groups to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.

A query was raised by Cllr Gilmore and Ald Smith around why proposed grants should only be £500 per group – it was felt that this wasn't a sufficient sum particularly for those events which were much larger. The Director of Corporate Services said he would consult with the Community Development Team and come back with additional information. The following information is for further consideration by Members.

Not Applicable

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The new Grants policy as approved by Council in 2024 states the following:

4.1 Issuing of grant advances Depending on the amount of grant awarded advance payments can be issued by the Council where a specific written request is submitted demonstrating the need for the payment. The need for an advance payment may require a projected cash flow for the life of the project, along with an up-to-date bank statement. For awards: • up to £500 the full amount can be paid in advance; • up to £3000, up to 50% can be paid in advance; and • up to £10,000 up to 30% can be paid in advance; over £10,000 an agreed payment schedule should be put in place and detailed in Letter of Offer. Subsequent payments must only be made following satisfactory verification of interim claims. How surpluses are dealt with should be outlined in your grant scheme, but any funds carried forward should not exceed the lesser of £3000 or 10% of the annual award. For multi-annual awards there can be no carry over at the end of the award period.

In the paper presented to Committee, £500 was suggested as the upper limit for grants from the perspective that this can be paid in full in advance in line with policy. Anything above this would require the applicant to have the ability to have sufficient cashflow to pay for 50% of their claim before claiming it back. However, if applicants were able to do this then administering grants above £500 would be possible. It was felt from past experience, that this fund would more likely be utilised by those groups, whereas larger groups could avail of the Community Festivals Grant.

If the Council approves the VE day paper, a further paper will be brought to Community & Wellbeing Committee to outline options for the scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council reconsider Item 8 from Corporate Services Committee on 10 December 2024 and approves the programme and funding, noting that a further report will be brought to Community and Wellbeing Committee outlining options for how VE Day grants will be administered.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Brooks

Alderman: Adair
Cummings (Zoom, 7.18pm) McRandal

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom, 7.49pm) S Irvine
Boyle W Irvine
Chambers Kendall
Cochrane McBurney
Douglas McClean
Hollywood Moore

Officers in Attendance: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development (A Faulkner), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Strategic Capital Development (A Dadley), Parks and Cemeteries Operations Manager (J McConnell) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

Other Officers in attendance: Mr C Kelly (Serco)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for lateness was received from Alderman Cummings and Councillor Ashe.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following declarations of interest were notified:

Councillor Hollywood – Items 24 and 25
Councillor Moore – Items 24 and 20
Councillor Chambers – Items 8, 18 and 25
Councillor W Irvine – Items 8 and 18

Councillor Boyle sought clarity on Item 3 and asked if any Members would need to declare an interest based on previous involvement with the PEACEPLUS process or the DEA which they represented. The Director explained that the legal advice received previously related specifically to those individuals who may have been involved in the scoring of projects and his view did not apply to this meeting.

NOTED.

3. PEACEPLUS (FILE PEACV-1)

(Appendix I – XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the PEACEPLUS Partnership co designed a PEACEPLUS Plan for the Borough under the following three themes:

- **Theme 1 - Local Community Regeneration and Transformation**
- **Theme 2 - Thriving and Peaceful Communities**
- **Theme 3 - Building Respect for Cultural Identities**

The content of theme 1 was approved by Council in March 2024 and Themes 2 and 3 by the Partnership in the Autumn of 2023 when it operated under delegated authority to do so. The Plan was initially to be considered by the Steering Committee of SEUPB in the autumn and a Letter of Offer anticipated in November 2024.

Following submission the Secretariat began work on drafting of tenders for each of the revenue projects in relation to themes 2 and 3 of the Plan.

In relation to Theme 1 staff discussed the way forward with SEUPB and were advised to submit all five shortlisted projects in order of preference and that SOC's would be requested in due course. Strategic Outline Cases (SOC's) (attached) for each of the 5 capital projects were developed and submitted to SEUPB on 6th September 2024. SEUPB agreed to carry out its own due diligence in relation to the capital projects before confirming to Council which projects it deemed suitable to proceed further.

Council would, thereafter, taking on board this advice from SEUPB, be required to make a final decision on which capital project or projects it wished to implement taking account of the theme 1 budget of £1,555,205.

The Head of Community and Culture wrote to SEUPB on 18th November 2024 to inform that the project in relation to Open Water swimming had secured funding from elsewhere and that it should be removed from the list for further consideration. A letter dated 21st November 2024 was then received from SEUPB stating –

“I wish to confirm that following a number of internal meetings to consider options around how best to proceed, I have been advised that SEUPB cannot assess the current application in full at present.

The rationale for this decision was stated as follows:

- An initial review conducted during the early stages of assessment has confirmed that each capital project, whilst sound in principle comes with its own set of potential risks and necessary mitigations. As such Ards and North Down Borough Council, as the local authority remain best placed to select the final projects to be included in the Action Plan. These will reflect the conclusions drawn as part of the co-design process, based on local need and aligned with agreed Council objectives.
- The removal of any project will substantially alter the current Ards and North Down application as submitted formally on the Jems system and alter the final submission date. The outputs and indicators for each application must be determined in full, in order to facilitate a robust assessment.

- As detailed in the 1.1. Local Area Action Plan Call Document (Pg 45),

'The PEACEPLUS Partnership will select priority projects for inclusion in the PEACEPLUS Action Plan for the area.

The council will prepare the detail of the final co-designed PEACEPLUS Action Plan for submission to the SEUPB.'

As a result, SEUPB therefore cannot formally assist in the selection of priority projects for your local authority area and can only complete assessment on completed applications in line with agreed guidance.

It is fully appreciated that substantial engagement has already taken place and that compound approvals have been secured by Council, however at present we must ask you to review capital projects contained with the current Action Plan.

SEUPB will subsequently issue a clarification request over the coming weeks, seeking confirmation of the projects that will be considered as part of the final assessment process.

I would like to put on record my gratitude for working with SEUPB to help resolve these matters and look forward to receiving your updated proposals so we can complete the assessment in full and proceed to Steering Committee approval and issuing a Letter of Offer".

1. Next steps and Guidelines

A meeting was held with SEUPB on 27th November to discuss the implications of the letter received. SEUPB had confirmed that, despite previous assurances it would consider the projects and respond, Council now had to decide which project or projects it wished to include in the final application in relation to Theme 1, or in other words which one or ones it wished to remove from the application.

Members would be aware that the removal of the Open Water Swimming capital project left the following 4 projects on the Council approved submission:

Programme element	#	Name of Project	Indicative Cost of Project (pre-SOC)	Costs following SOC
Potential Capital Project 1 - CRT1	CRT1	Borough Wide Shared Space Swimming Infrastructure	£85,000	
Potential Capital Project 2 - CRT2	CRT2	Hollywood Shared Pitch Project	£1,102,750	£1,866,391
Potential Capital Project 3 - CRT3	CRT3	Donaghadee Pump Park Shared Space	£195,000	£219,351
Potential Capital Project 4 - CRT4	CRT4	Portaferry Parklands Shared Space	£600,000	£744,312
Potential Capital Project 5 - CRT5	CRT5	Bangor Cycle Park Shared Space	£948,750	£1,149,347
Total Budget as part of TPC =	CRT1 to 5		£1,555,205 (Available total capital budget inclusive of contingency)	

SEUPB Objectives and Funding Guidelines

Whilst SEUPB had set their own objectives for the fund, the projects' ability to meet these objectives had already been assessed by the process undertaken to date and all 5 projects had passed the threshold to demonstrate that they could achieve them to an acceptable standard. The two objectives below were critical to each project and were common to all 5 SOC's. Failure to meet either of those could result in the offer of funding to Council being withdrawn. It was therefore essential that the projects taken forward were able to deliver both of these objectives:

1. Construction complete and facility "in use" by Dec 2026, within the budget available. (leaving 1 year for animation)
2. To successfully host an animation programme that would contribute proportionately* to the total of 2,500 participants, prior to Dec 2027.

(This equates to approximately 167 people per £100,000 spend.)

Council was required to underwrite the PEACEPLUS Plan when accepting the Letter of Offer for funding. Any additional costs incurred over the lifetime of PEACEPLUS must be met by Council no matter how much they equated to. This related to both the initial capital, ongoing running costs (revenue) and ongoing maintenance costs. Discussions with SEUPB had confirmed that whilst match funding could be included it must not have been equal or been more than that of the principal funder, SEUPB.

2. Projects

2.1 CRT 2 – Hollywood Training pitch

The site (100m x 57m and 5m run-off) was located along the Hollywood Bypass (A2). Currently overgrown and unsightly, it was situated adjacent to Kerr Park, HRFC's grass rugby pitch and SPGAC grass Gaelic pitch. Capital works would include site clearance and drainage, followed by the installation of a flood lit, all weather surface training pitch, complete with retractable goal posts, ball stops, dug outs, shelters and spectator and security fencing.

The project would transform a prominent but disused open green space into a shared sports facility, developed and managed by a cross-community partnership comprising HRFC (established in 1885) and SPGAC (established in 1927).

Hollywood Cross-community Sports Association indicated it would provide £100,000 match funding towards the cost of the capital build. Further discussions would be required to ensure this funding was still available.

A shortfall of at least £211,186 would need to be met by Council. Previously Council had indicated a provisional capital allocation of £2m for a Leisure scheme in Hollywood which members may have considered. (Although as Members would be aware the Strategic Capital Budget was currently under review.)

In line with the SEUPB guidance the match funding would not be equal or more than the principal funder so would be allowable under the funding guidelines.

To progress with CRT 1 would use all of the budget available and would be the sole PEACEPLUS capital project delivered for the Borough.

3.2 CRT 3 – Donaghadee Pump Track

In 2018, design consultants, AECOM, were appointed by the Council to develop a Masterplan with a commercial study for Donaghadee Commons Park. The proposed project, Donaghadee Pump Park, was a project identified within the Commons Park Masterplan.

The indicative design of the Donaghadee Pump Track included:

- 2m wide track forming a continuous circuit
- 3m wide surrounding safety area
- Landscape planting/seating area

The Donaghadee Pump Track facility would provide a catalyst for an improved healthy lifestyle for the community, by working in partnership it would empower the local community to regenerate this underutilised area. The project would engender a sense of community and pride and as a free to consume activity it was anticipated that it would appeal to people of all backgrounds and ages.

As part of the Donaghadee Commons Park Masterplan this project would act as a catalyst for ongoing improvements to the area.

3.3 CRT4 – Portaferry Parklands

The Project endeavoured to breathe new life into the site. Encompassing the former bowling green, adjoining woodland, historic walled garden, and the walkway from the car park to the Gate Lodge at Lough Shore Road, this initiative sought to use PEACEPLUS funding to complete the following scope of works.

The project would be executed in two phases, with Phase 1 concentrating on technical design and securing planning consent, followed by Phase 2, which involved construction works. Spearheaded by Ards and North Down Borough Council in partnership with Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, the project aimed for completion by September 2027.

Scope of Works (to include some but not all of the following):

- **Shared Community Meeting Spaces:** The redevelopment would repurpose the old bowling green into a versatile event space conducive to concerts, markets, and educational classes. With tiered, amphitheatre-style seating, it would encourage social interaction and could facilitate cross-community engagement and experiences.
- **Biodiversity Area:** A dedicated biodiversity area would emerge, housing a community planting space, a sensory garden, and facilities for schools to delve into biodiversity education, promoting environmental stewardship and cross-generational learning.
- **Art Installations:** Art installations strategically positioned throughout the site would celebrate the area's rich heritage and maritime legacy, serving as storytelling platforms and fostering cultural exchange.
- **Amenity Block Refurbishment:** The existing amenity block would undergo refurbishment to provide enhanced facilities for park visitors, ensuring their comfort and convenience. Improved restroom facilities, seating areas, and accessibility features would elevate the overall visitor experience.
- **Motorhome/ Touring Pitches:** Modernizing existing motorhome touring pitches would cater to contemporary motorhomes, offering alternative accommodation options. Improving an area's tourism attractiveness inherently promotes cross-community endeavours by fostering increased interaction, collaboration, and mutual understanding among diverse groups.
- **Culture, Peace, and Heritage Programmes:** The project would integrate culture, peace, and heritage activities celebrating Portaferry's diverse history and maritime heritage. These programmes would foster social cohesion, reconciliation, and mutual understanding among all communities.

Members would be aware that the Portaferry Ropewalk Scheme had been in Planning since December 2021, which included elements of this proposal (Amenity Block and Art Installation.)

3.4 CRT 5- Bangor Cycle Park

Bangor Cycle Park's (BCP) objective was to create pathways for increased levels of cross community interaction via five separate cycling facilities (pump-track, BMX racing track, Inclusive-Cycling-Area, Accessible Learn-To-Ride area, and cross-country (XC) trails). Each appealing to a different community demographic, with all users coming together in the sixth element: a community café/workshop.

The concept of this scheme was to provide cycling opportunities for everyone, regardless of age or ability. It was a safe space where anyone could go to have fun, learn new skills, get exercise and meet new people.

Sportsplex had been selected as a preferred location for this project with cognisance of its long-term unsuitability for athletics due to subsidence issues caused by the decomposing landfill upon which it was built- meaning athletics would eventually have to relocate. This relocation would beg the question of what council should do with this land and options were extremely limited due to planning constraints and the inability to build on the poor ground. It therefore had potential to lie vacant unless a suitable alternate use could be found. However, the project could take place alongside all of the current user groups without any significant adverse effect. Then, whenever athletics was relocated, the cycle park could continue. Cycle tracks were mostly loose-fill materials that were less effected by subsidence and were very easily repaired if and when needed. Furthermore, the site was ideal for use as a Cycle Park as the land was relatively flat, with no significant tree cover and with many existing services in place that could be reused.

Previous Peace Programmes in ANDBC included summer-schemes for urban-sports to engage with young-people. BCP would be an ideal venue to build on these schemes and with Cycling Ireland, Belfast BMX Club, Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign Group, and numerous other voluntary/community groups all pledging their support for the project, BCP would empower local people to regenerate and transform communities on a cross-community basis. Owned and maintained by Council, it was anticipated that BCP would be at no extra cost than running the current facilities, although this would need tested at OBC stage and a revenue budget for running costs may have been required in the future.

Unlike Comber, Portavogie, Portaferry and Holywood (twice), Bangor had never previously received Peace funding.

3. Options for way forward

A number of options needed to be considered prior to agreeing which capital project or projects to include in the final action plan. Detailed information on each project, including opportunities and risks outlined in the SOC's, attached.

Project	Planning permission obtained	SOC cost	Capital Cost to Council	Notes
CRT2 Holywood Shared Pitch Project	Application lodged	£1,866,391	£211,186	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be used by Holywood GAA and Rugby Club Bookable for public use for a charge Planning permission may not be achievable within the timeframe required
CRT3 Donaghadee Pump Park Shared Space	No – may be considered permitted development	£219,351	None anticipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be free to use and be open to public 24 hours per day Council owns the land Maintenance budget will be required

<p>CRT4 Portaferry Parklands Shared Space</p>	<p>No yet applied for</p>	<p>£744,312</p>	<p>None anticipated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning permission may not be achievable within the timeframe required • Scheme is scalable depending on budget • Will be free to use and be open to public 24 hours per day • Council owns the land • Maintenance budget will be required
<p>CRT5 Bangor Cycle Park Shared Space</p>	<p>Not required</p>	<p>£1,149,347</p>	<p>None anticipated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be free to use as well bookable paid for facilities for exclusive use • Council owns the land which is currently leased to and run by SERCO • Scheme could begin as soon as letter of offer obtained • May require ongoing Council maintenance and operating (revenue) budget

There were a number of different options for Council's consideration.

1. Proceed with one scheme for the Ards and North Down Borough - Hollywood Shared training pitch with Council covering the any additional costs required (circa £211,196).
2. Proceed with Donaghadee Pump Track at £219,351 leaving £1,335,854. Proceed with Portaferry £744, 312 and use £519,542 for an element of Bangor Cycle track.
3. Proceed with Donaghadee Pump Track at £219,351 and Bangor Cycle Park £1,149,347 and use £186,507 for a small element of the Portaferry scheme.
4. That a special meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee is held in order for members to consider more fully which capital project or projects should be included in the PEACEPLUS Action Plan.

Project CRT 3, CRT4 and CRT5 were scalable but members needed to consider the need to meet the required participant numbers in order to draw down funding and reducing schemes may have resulted in the funding objectives not being met and thus the funding being withdrawn.

An economist for SEUPB who had considered each of the 5 SOC's, pointed out that no capital funding had yet been awarded to Donaghadee or Bangor.

As construction needed to be completed and the facilities in use by December 2026 a decision was required as soon as possible. SEUPB had confirmed they required a Council decision in January 2025 at the latest.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the report and agrees which project/s to put forward to SEUPB for PEACEPLUS Theme 1 funding.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing explained that previously the Council had put five projects forward under this theme for the PEACEPLUS action plan and had awaited SEUPB to respond with a suggested way forward. However, a letter was received from SEUPB at the end of November which asked the Council to take a different approach than previously advised and make a decision on how to proceed in relation to Theme 1 as the decision-making body.

A number of options and a large volume of information had been put together for Members to consider in the short time available between receiving the letter and preparing reports for the committee. It was appreciated that Members had only had access to the information over the last few days and were being asked to reconsider the capital development projects included. He explained that there were some questions over the running costs of projects and other issues which presented some risks to the Council. These had not yet been bottomed out in the time available so it was now the recommendation of officers that the Committee proceed with Option 4 and defer the item to a special Committee meeting in January. That would still enable the Council to meet its January deadline for a decision while allowing the officers to gather further information.

Alderman Adair queried the outstanding requirements for planning permission on the Bangor, Donaghadee and Portaferry schemes and the Head of Community and Culture advised that she had been advised that the Donaghadee project could proceed without any planning permission, while Bangor may only require planning consent for fixed structures such as the coffee shop element while the Portaferry scheme would require full planning permission for all elements.

Alderman Adair would have preferred to see the Council proceed with Option 2 but given that response felt that on balance Option 3 was the most sensible way forward.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Council proceeds with Donaghadee Pump Track at £219,351 and Bangor Cycle Park £1,149,347 and use £186,507 for a small element of the Portaferry scheme.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman Adair felt that an urgent decision was required both in the interests of the PEACEPLUS objectives and the ratepayers of the Borough. Given that Portaferry had not yet acquired planning consent, he felt that the third option was the most realistic on balance due to the December 2025 deadline for the works commencing.

He ruled out Option 1 because he believed that the Holywood scheme would not meet the participation requirements of the PEACEPLUS funding and would only add further burden on the Council's already stretched capital projects programme. He also felt there was no benefit in delaying the decision to a special meeting of the Committee in January so he discounted Option 4.

The proposer felt that proceeding with Option 3 would therefore allow Donaghadee to benefit from PEACE funding for the first time and he also saw merit in the Bangor scheme. He asked Members to support the proposal, fearing that further delay could risk losing funding all together.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, rose to second the proposal and hoped that Members would avoid the danger of making this about their own DEAs and potential impacts on votes for future elections. Supporting Option 3, he felt would benefit three areas of the Borough and there would be a fallback that would still allow two to proceed if the Portaferry scheme was unable to progress.

While he praised the work of all involved in the Holywood project, he hoped it would go ahead by other means if the numbers stacked up for the Council, but he could not support it as a PEACEPLUS project. He also referred to the risks of projects not getting underway before December 2025 and the embarrassment that would cause for the Council. He agreed that there was no benefit in delaying a decision any further by holding a special meeting.

(Alderman Cummings joined the meeting remotely – 7.18pm)

Alderman McRandal could not support the proposal and felt that the report lacked sufficient detail to enable the Committee to come to a decision at this stage which he reminded members was also the view of the officers who had also advised that there

was enough time to hold a special meeting in January. He was therefore supportive of Option 4, to defer the matter to a special meeting and that would allow time for himself and others to get answers to many questions.

Alderman McRandal went on to challenge the assessments presented for each project and claimed there was a contrast between the Holywood scheme which he argued had been assessed more critically than the Bangor Cycle Park scheme, feeling that the latter had been assessed through rose tinted glasses.

Continuing, he explained that it was the first he was aware that the Bangor scheme would require a small amount of planning permission and he pointed out that was the first time the Committee had been presented with that information as it was not included in any of the documentation provided.

He argued that there were many different reasons why that element of the Bangor project would probably require planning permission and listed a series of considerations, referring to change of use, a traffic assessment, construction of significant size and complexity, laying of hard standing around the perimeter and potential overlooking of surrounding properties and impacts on drainage. He asked if the Planning Service had been consulted and the Director advised that the Chief Executive had been engaging with the relevant Director who was responsible for Planning on those matters.

Alderman McRandal wanted further answers however and wondered to what extent those elements of planning had been critically assessed and if the Bangor Cycle Park project had been assessed to the same extent as the Holywood scheme. There was still £250,000 sitting against a BMX track and the justification for that project was on the basis of advice from Cycling Ireland.

He argued that the Holywood project had presented evidence of several 3G pitches which had been constructed recently and that evidence was not accepted and instead a third-party quantity surveyor was appointed. He wondered if the Bangor project had been scrutinised to that level.

The Head of Strategic Capital Development advised that the Council had agreed on the rates that were provided for the fencing and the floodlights but there was disagreement on contingencies which the Council had included in terms of inflation and optimism bias along with statutory connection charges for the electrics. He advised that this inclusion had all followed good governance guidelines.

Alderman McRandal felt that the £250,000 for a BMX track that would be at a standard to attract competitors from all over Ireland seemed a paltry figure and the officer advised that there had been no dispute with those figures and an independent QS was therefore not required. He explained that the only disagreement had occurred in relation to the Holywood scheme.

Alderman McRandal felt it was impractical to scrutinise such an important matter in a meeting which contained 20 plus items. He felt it was unfair just to make a decision in 45 minutes when the applicants of the Holywood project had put their heart and soul into it. He therefore supported the officer's recommendation to hold a special

meeting where this could be given much-needed scrutiny. He explained that it was important to have consistency when considering the risks of each project including the reputational risk to Council of making a decision without all of the information that could be available in one month's time.

Taking a similar view, Councillor Kendall agreed that it was critical to make a quick decision but it was important to use the time available to make the right one. The process had not been straight forward or ideal to date but she did not want to see that compounded with a snap decision. She therefore believed there would be plenty of time to defer the item to a special meeting in January to reach a decision that the Council was happy with. She declared no personal interest in any projects but she wanted to consider the risks involved. Scalability was also a key factor along with not repeating the mistakes of making a snap decision and it needed to be done with consideration of facts. A single item focused meeting was therefore a better way to make the decision, she believed.

Councillor Boyle queried if deferment would allow the Committee to be in a better position to make the right decision with additional information and Director clarified that the Committee would still be able to meet the January deadline.

While he admitted to not totally disagreeing with the proposal, Councillor Boyle felt that he needed further clarity on the planning issues surrounding the Portaferry scheme which he was aware dated back to 2021. He felt that holding a special meeting would still allow adequate time and it was about getting the decision right and having the full facts.

Councillor McClean felt that the two key issues were deliverability and footfall, and he queried the risks around the Holywood scheme in that respect and the Head of Community and Culture confirmed that the Holywood application had declared expected participation levels of 1500, however the target sat at 2500. She advised that it would be hoped that the project would increase participation through an additional animation tender project.

Councillor McClean went on to query the deliverability of Option 2 versus Option 3 and the officer felt that between the two, option 3 was the most achievable in terms of the timeframe and meeting required participation targets.

Responding to a final query from Councillor McClean around flexibility of funding, the officer explained that at this stage the Council would be held against the sums submitted for each project.

While he would have liked to have seen all projects progress, Councillor McClean felt it was wrong to jeopardise three projects so gave his support to the proposal for Option 3. In a final comment, he referred to contracting issues in the past and hoped that officers would make contracts as tight as possible, both legally and to the full amount required.

Councillor W Irvine was minded to support Option 3, based on the value for money element. He asked if other users of the Bangor Cycle Park facility would be accommodated and the Head of Community and Culture advised that would be

possible but would require coordination between those groups as to who used what and when.

Responding to a further query, the Head of Strategic Capital Development confirmed that there was a concept design in place that had been used for pricing.

In summing up, Alderman Adair argued that the report did contain sufficient information and the view, in respect of the Hollywood scheme not meeting the participation criteria of PEACEPLUS, would not change within a month. He reiterated his call for urgency in making a decision and that Option 3 was the best way to proceed.

A recorded vote was requested.

On being put to the meeting with 9 voting FOR, 3 voting AGASINT, 3 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (9)	AGAINST (3)	ABSTAINED (3)	ABSENT (1)
Aldermen:	Aldermen:	Alderman:	Councillor:
Adair	McRandal	Brooks	Ashe
Cummings	Councillors:	Councillors:	
Councillors:	Moore	Boyle	
Chambers	McBurney	Kendall	
Cochrane			
Douglas			
Hollywood			
Irvine, S			
Irvine, W			
McClellan			

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that that Council proceeds with Donaghadee Pump Track at £219,351 and Bangor Cycle Park £1,149,347 and use £186,507 for a small element of the Portaferry scheme.

**4. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (EVAWG)
(FILE PCSP209)**

(Appendix IX – XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework 2024-31 was launched by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on the 16th of September 2024, following a Ministerial Statement to the Assembly. The Strategy included a first Delivery Plan (2024-26) which would support those organisations working to prevent and challenge the attitudes, behaviours and culture that could lead to violence against women and girls.

Letter dated 7th October 2024 (Appendix I) was received from Clare Archbold, Director of EVAWG Department requesting Council supported for distribution of two separate funds:

Momentum Support (January – March 2025) of up to £60,000, and Change Fund (April 2025 – March 2026) of up to £120,000.

Momentum support would allow expansion of existing good work by Councils and communities during the current financial year leading up to the launch of the Change Fund in the area from April 2025.

The community focused Change Fund was to equip community groups to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

Given the importance and urgency of the issue, Ministers would like a call for applications to open early in 2025. This would require completion of internal approvals within council.

In order to deliver this action, The Executive Office (TEO) would like to develop a partnership approach with each local Council, which included providing a funding allocation to support community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations in each local government area. This approach would maximise the impact of funding by ensuring support to and delivery in local communities across the region. This could contribute to Community Planning priorities and complement EVAWG relevant initiatives already being supported by local Councils. TEO were, therefore, seeking the assistance of Council in delivering a localised Change Fund scheme open to CVS organisations and grassroots groups in the area.

Momentum funding would be used in preparation for the launch of a local change Fund opportunity as follows:

- Events to raise awareness of the Executive Office Change fund 2025-2026,
- Provide training to the local Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) on EVAWG to build their capacity to apply for Change fund,
- Establish a Council EVAWG media campaign before March 2025.

In line with the Councils grants policy, a draft Change Fund application pack would be brought to Committee in January 2025 in preparation for a Letter of Offer being received and the scheme being launched.

Letter dated 27th November 2024 (Appendix II) had been received with Change Fund Action Plan template (Appendix III) which must be submitted in order to draw down funding from TEO. All funding was subject to a business case from EVAWG for funding being approved by the Executive.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the draft Change Fund Action Plan attached.

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

Councillor Douglas was happy to propose the recommendation and gave her support to the action plan. Violence and abuse cut across all communities and ages so it was important to work together with the voluntary and community sector and challenge this behaviour and culture. The draft action plan would raise awareness and provide training for people in the sector.

The seconder, Councillor Moore added her support and welcomed the funding. She was delighted that the issue was receiving the level of attention it deserved while the Deputy Mayor Councillor Chambers agreed and welcomed that this planned work, which included some very good initiatives, would now be undertaken. He referred to statistics which showed that Northern Ireland was lagging behind the rest of the UK and Ireland but he was now glad that initiatives were being implemented. He felt there were still a lot of recommendations outstanding though.

Expanding on that view, Councillor Kendall while welcoming that 'some' funding had come she felt that plenty more was required to support this fully. She had recently stood with North Down Women's Aid in its vigil to remember the 24, potentially 26, women who had been murdered since 2020 alone. The prevalence of domestic violence and abuse was far greater than that and the horrendous statistics she referred to for those murder victims was only the most extreme end and there was a lot more action required.

Councillor Kendall queried if officers had prepared the action plan with the input of organisations such as Women's Aid or if it had been done internally or through a consultant. She was aware that Council sometimes paid considerable money to consultants to undertake this type of overview but she felt the perfect people to inform this type of plan were those organisations working on the frontline to deal with domestic violence and to support women through difficult times.

Council Kendall also queried a further £10,000 Council staffing element, when there was already a sum allocated for raising awareness with staff and other groups. She asked if the additional £10,000 strand could be put to other uses.

(Councillor Ashe joined the meeting remotely – 7.49pm)

The Head of Community and Culture advised of timing pressures that required the funding to be spent by March 2025 so the plan had been pulled together to meet that deadline. Voluntary and community organisations were aware however and discussions had taken place with them around it. That engagement would be followed up again once members had agreed to the action plan. There would be an open grants process included too.

The officer explained that the staffing budget referred to had been earmarked to develop an online training package that would be available to all staff.

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

(Alderman Cummings left the meeting – 7.52pm)

5. **NEWTOWNARDS TOWN HALL (ARDS ARTS CENTRE) ROOM HIRE CHARGES (FILE ART 07- 11/24)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that currently Newtownards Town Hall (Ards Arts Centre) offered a number of rooms for public hire, though availability was limited due to existing regular users and Council led activity at the Centre.

There had been no increase in room hire charges since 2015/16 and therefore the recommended increase was above the current rate of inflation. An intended increase in 2020/21 was delayed due to the disruption to the service caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, subsequent capacity restrictions and recovery.

Existing hourly room hire charges were below that of comparable organisations and comparable sized rooms in other Council facilities and therefore an increase was recommended as follows.

Proposed Room Hire Charges at Newtownards Town Hall (Ards Arts Centre).

Rooms	2024/25	2025/26	% increase
Londonderry Room			
Monday to Thursday	£17.00	£18.50	8.82%
Friday and Saturday	£23.00	£25.50	10.87%
Room 1	£10.00	£12.50	25%
Studio	£10.00	£12.50	25%
Boardroom	£23.00	£25.50	10.87%
Kitchen	£18.00	on request	
Equipment Hire			
TV/DVD	£30.00	£33.00	10%
Piano	£30.00	£33.00	10%
PA system	£20.00	£22.00	10%
Data pro and screen	£30.00	£33.00	10%

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the above increase in room hire charges at Newtownards Town Hall (Ards Arts Centre).

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

On proposing, Councillor Boyle accepted that that this was another occasion where the Council had to increase its charges to meet growing financial pressures to deliver services. He felt that while the recommended percentage increases of 25% for Room

1 and the Studio appeared to be high, this only related to costs of £10 which would only rise to £12.50 which he felt was acceptable.

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

6. DISPERSAL FUNDING 2024-2025 (FILE CW154)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in December 2021 the Council was made aware that a number of asylum seekers were to be housed in a hotel in Bangor.

Following their arrival, Council was asked to channel support of £152,939 of dispersal funding which was awarded from the Home Office and administered via The Executive Office (TEO). The funding was to be used towards integration, assist with language barriers and resettlement into safe areas.

Funding was administered on behalf of Council by the Good Relations team through a local Refugee and Asylum Forum which was established by community organisations. The Forum included members from local churches, community networks and groups and statutory agencies including representation from PSNI, Health, Education and Mears Housing, which was responsible for the hotel accommodation.

Further funding of £17,907 for 2024-2025 had been offered subject to receipt of a completed bid. This had been allocated by the Home Office using a baseline funding amount of £15k per Council area plus an amount based on the percentage of people seeking asylum in the Council area, which for Ards and North Down was £2,907.

It had been suggested that Council used the funding to continue to support the local Refugee and Asylum Forum which would in turn provide language classes, visa support, orientation programmes, pastoral support and engagement for asylum seekers together with information sessions in relation to the laws and cultures of Northern Ireland.

In addition to the above, Council had been offered an additional £4,000, subject to a completed bid, to produce information and promotional literature for the Borough in different languages. This would be distributed at two fairs attended by staff to be held in February 2025 and organised by TEO. One fair was to be held in a hotel in Belfast and one in a hotel in Newtownabbey.

A further £4,500 had been offered, subject to a bid, to enable Council to produce material in different languages to promote the Borough to newcomers. All funding needed to be used by 31st March 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the submission of:

- a) a Good Relations bid for dispersal funding of £17,907 to continue to support newcomers arriving in the borough,

- b) a Good Relations bid for funding of £4,000 to produce leaflets in different languages and for staff to attend 2 promotional fairs to promote the Borough; and
- c) a Good Relations bid for dispersal funding of £4,500 to produce materials to be used locally to promote the Borough to all newcomers.

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

Councillor W Irvine asked to be recorded as against the decision.

7. COMMUNITY CENTRES & HALLS CHARGING POLICY 2025/26 (FILE CW66)

(Appendix XXI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council owned and manage 21 Community Centres and Halls located throughout the Borough. These Centres and Halls facilitated a vast range of activities for customers, charities, Health Trusts, and Council departments. These activities were crucial in providing customers and residents of the Borough with opportunities to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing and could be directly aligned to several Council aims and objectives. For example, the Centres and Halls provided facilities that all users could “Improve wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequalities”, one of three Council priorities illustrated in the Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028.

Similarly, the Community Centres and Halls positively contributed towards all people in Ards and North Down being able to fulfil their lifelong potential, enjoy good health and wellbeing, and live in communities where they were respected, were safe, and felt secure (Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in the Council’s Big Plan 2017 – 2032).

Usage at the Centres and Halls had continued its upward trajectory evidenced by positive 2024/25 KPI figures. For example, the Total Hours Booked figure Q1 and Q2 is 16,677, significantly higher than target and significantly greater than the same period 2023/24 which was 14,697. The Footfall Figure across all Centres and Halls over the same period was 79,177, compared to 75,682 in 2023/24.

The Community Centres and Halls management aimed to efficiently and effectively manage all available budgets, particularly given the Council’s and ratepayer’s financial pressures.

This financial year, 2024/25, was summarised below:

- Income target = £246,600, an increase of £13,700 from 2023/24
- Year to Date (YTD) Actual Income =£132,969,
- Net expenditure budget (excluding utility and maintenance costs) = £877,700,
- Year to Date (YTD) Utility costs total £61,449, with Maintenance costs totalling £140,684

- Therefore, assuming the income target is achieved, and actual Net Expenditure spend was equal to budget, the Council and rate payers would pay a subsidy of £631,100, plus utility and maintenance costs.

The potential options on income for the 2025/26 budget were included in the appendix and were summarised below:

Option 1. Income target 2025/26 with 2.2% increase on EOY prediction = £267,600, an increase of £6,000

Option 2. Income target 2025/26 with 6.53% (average) on EOY prediction = £278,900, an increase of £17,000

The agreed Council Charging Policy outlined an inflationary rise, which this year equated to 2.2%. However, officers could recommend Council adopted a higher price in certain circumstances. In this case the Community Centres and Halls management deemed it appropriate to increase its charging by an average of 6.53%. This increase would assist in maintaining the current level of service provision within the much-valued Community Centres and Halls facilities. In addition, the proposed price increase would contribute to achieving the increased income target and therefore reduce the deficit. This proposed charging policy would provide the Community Centres and Halls service the opportunity to positively impact the rate setting process of 2025/26 by decreasing the significant subsidy paid by Council and ratepayers, without excessively impacting customers.

Modernisation, transformation, and commercialisation processes had begun within the service with the aim of further increasing usage in each of the Centres and Halls in an attempt to ensure income targets are achieved. However, Centres with only a small room and higher usage, resulted in an unsustainable payroll cost in comparison to the income received for the booking. For a broader context, all room hire prices were illustrated in appendix 1 which provided the rationale of this proposed revision of the charging policy. The variation in income above the inflation figure to the proposed average 6.53% price increase would assist with further reducing the subsidy on the 25/26 net expenditure budget.

Members would note that Portaferry CC was not having its “smaller hall” charges increased as it was already at the higher proposed rate of £7.50. Its larger hall (but smaller than the large halls in other centres) was subject to a similar price increase as other halls.

Customers of the Community Centres and Halls had benefited from the installation and activation of free Wi-Fi at twenty facilities (not Kiltonga Hall) following the Economic Development team successful securing external funding. In addition, several Community Centres benefited from significant refurbishment work funded by Council. Further surveys and inspections had been completed this financial year to establish additional refurbishment projects and requirements within the Centres and Halls portfolio during 25/26 financial year in conjunction with Council's Assets team.

Approval of the proposed price increase would therefore result in a more appropriately priced portfolio of Community Centres and Halls within the Borough without impacting on its competitiveness within the marketplace.

All prices needed to be divisible evenly to facilitate pricing on the booking system and this accounted for part of the proposed percentage increase.

If approved, all user groups would be contacted to advise them of the new pricing policy details and a date for implementation.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Community Centres and Halls preferred average 6.53% pricing increase proposal as detailed in Appendix 1 for implementation in the 2025/26 financial year.

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

Proposing, Councillor Boyle felt this represented a minimal increase and appreciated that the facilities were expensive to maintain while the seconder, Alderman McRandal agreed that it was a responsible decision.

Councillor W Irvine asked for clarification on the table which showed two different options and the Head of Leisure Services clarified that Option 2 presented a more rounded figure but officers had felt this was a small increase to ensure that the costs of running the centres were not all taken on by the ratepayer. If running costs rose further that would offset that increase.

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

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) and Councillor W Irvine withdrew from the meeting due to a declaration of interest in Item 8 – 7.58pm)

8. SERCO PROPOSAL- LYNXIGHT ASSISTED LIFEGUARD TECHNOLOGY (FILE CW24)

(Appendix XXII – XXIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that

In September 2024, Management at Bangor Aurora informed Leisure Officers that, as an organisation, Serco Leisure was embracing new assisted lifeguard technology in pools across its leisure sites and, furthermore, Serco would propose to install the Lynxight Pool Camera System at pools in Bangor Aurora with the aim to improve the safety and enable efficient operations.

Installation and use of AI based Assisted Lifeguard Technology (ALT) represented a significant change to current pool operating models within Ards and North Down Borough Council owned leisure facilities, moving to a new “blended approach” to

lifeguarding that combined human supervision of the pool with computerised monitoring and detection systems. Given the scope and possible impact of this deviation from current operating procedures, Leisure Officers believe it to be important to bring a report to Elected Members to inform and provide information on this proposal by Serco Leisure.

To date, Serco Leisure have installed the Lynxight ALT in seven of the facilities which they operate, with plans to continue to grow this number to 20 facilities within the coming year.

NCLT had commissioned a site survey with the system installers, Omega, who had confirmed the suitability of the site for the proposed installation.

It had been proposed that there would be no installation costs to be passed to Council, with the proposal being funded, in full, through NCLT/Serco Leisure. Annual License fees for the system were £1,600 per year and these will be payable by NCLT/Serco leisure until the current leisure services contract expires in 2028. All associated maintenance and servicing costs would be payable by NCLT/Serco Leisure.

Upon conclusion of the current Leisure Services contract, post 2028, ANDBC could decide whether or not to retain the system, either taking on the annual licencing fee or requesting that Serco Leisure remove all associated equipment at their cost.

Overview of the Lynxight ALT System

Serco Leisure submitted an initial overview of the system being proposed (Appendix 1). This detailed that Lynxight was an assisted lifeguard safety technology utilising artificial intelligence (AI) that continuously tracked swimmers within a swimming pool via overhead cameras, identifying and alerting staff in the event of an incident. Realtime images were recorded back to a main PC server on site and to a secure cloud-based server. The aim of Lynxight was to aid the lifeguards, notifying them and other designated first aid staff members of any signs of distress with different levels of warnings via controlled smart watches should intervention have been required.

The development of the Lynxight ALT system had been supported by The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS) and GLL during a rigorous testing period (see Appendix 2.), providing support and guidance to ensure safety remained at the forefront of this new technology. A statement on the RLSS website noted that:

“The system complements the highly skilled work of trained lifeguards, as recommended in the new National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) Gen 10, supported by world-leading international research. It continuously monitors pool users and promptly alerts lifeguards via smartwatches about anyone who may require assistance, enhancing overall pool safety.”

Current Guidance on Pool Safety

HSG179

The Health and Safety Executive had produced guidance to assist pool operators to manage their pools safety. The guidance document was called HSG 179: Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools (Appendix 3). This publication provided guidance for all those involved in the operation and management of swimming pools and was considered as the primary guidance document for all Pool Operators on how they should manage their swimming pools safely.

Sections 4 and 5 of HSG 179 provided detail on pool supervision, noting tools to be used including, Risk assessments and Lifeguard Zone Visibility Testing (LZVT) to ensure robust systems were in place for pool safety that focus on:

- preventing pool users getting into difficulty by intervening early and promoting responsible behaviour.
- identifying pool users in difficulty.
- procedures to effectively perform a rescue.

The document highlighted that *“It is the responsibility of the pool operator to ensure that there are enough lifeguards and that they are competent, effectively organised and diligent in their duties,”* and provides guidance relating to indicative lifeguard numbers required at various sized swimming pools as shown in the table below:

Approximate pool size: m	Area: m2	Number of lifeguards indicated by LZVT	Number of lifeguards indicated by LZVT for busy conditions
20.0 x 8.5	170	1	2
25.0 x 8.5	212	1	2
25.0 x 10.0	250	1	2
25.0 x 12.5	312	2	2
33.3 x 12.5	416	2	3
50.0 x 20.0	1000	4	6

Following the most recent revision, the fourth edition brought the guidance up to date with changes in health and safety law and new developments in relation to equipment and facilities. Notably, the fourth addition had updated the guidance on the use of technology to aid observation, point 118 stating that:

“A wide range of devices and systems are available to help lifeguards observe a pool. Equipment extends from convex mirrors that increase the field of view where there are small obstructions to active computerised detection that will identify a body on the pool basin floor.

While these technologies have limitations, they have helped lifeguards identify potential drowning accidents they had not observed.

These systems are not intended to reduce observation and monitoring by lifeguards, unless a suitable and sufficient risk assessment demonstrates that you can maintain at least the same level of risk control that would be provided by a lifeguard. Where your risk assessment has already determined that you do not need constant poolside supervision, some technologies can provide additional reassurance. It is important to remember that while these devices can be useful, they cannot communicate with

swimmers; intervene to prevent inappropriate behaviour or perform a rescue. This means that arrangements to respond to an incident will always be necessary."

Whilst Serco/NCLT had not yet carried out a risk assessment for the new proposed system, they had advised that this would be completed once the facility had installed the Lynxight system and carried out the LZVT's testing according to HSG guidance with the proposed system in place. Serco/NCLT had advised that undertaking this process to update site risk assessments post installation would enable facility management to determine the sufficient lifeguard number requirements for each pool/programmed activity when considered in terms of a the "blended approach". In the initial Serco submission (Appendix 1.) Serco Leisure noted the intention that the installation of the proposed system "allows a safe reduction in requirement of lifeguard numbers".

Council Officers in Health and Safety and Leisure noted that whilst the updated HSG 179 guidance did recognise the use of technology as a lifeguarding tool and the latest amendments did not specifically rule out lowering the number of pool lifeguards present on poolside, it was very clear that ALT systems were not intended to reduce or replace lifeguards and that any facility introducing the use of such a system must ensure that the level of risk control in place should not be reduced. Officers further noted that, given the range of limitations noted in relation to ALT systems in terms of managing pool use/behaviour and interacting with customers, the starting point for required number of lifeguards should be taken from the recommendations in HSG 179 table outlined above, with the proposed ALT system being utilised to enhance safety of swimmers and to provide Lifeguards with an additional invaluable tool to support them in their role.

Use of Cameras on Poolside & GDPR

Given that the Lynxight system utilised overhead security cameras to monitor bathers in the pool basin, Council Leisure Officers requested further information on the impact of the proposed installation with regards to capturing/storing images and subsequent GDPR regulations.

Serco Leisure advised that Lynxight had gone through a full triage via Serco data protection and IT before installation was rolled out at other Serco facilities. The company had completed the Serco Security Questionnaire, and Serco had completed a Legitimate Interests Assessment, a Record of Processing Activity and a Data Protection Impact Assessment on their Data Protection system One Trust, and the system had been scrutinised at the highest level.

Serco had advised that a procedure for the management of the system would be implemented in line with other Serco managed facilities, strong controls would be put in place both technically and operationally, signage erected informing customers that the system was in use, and the system was also covered by the Serco Leisure privacy policy. There was no under-water footage or live images that the Lifeguards or any other staff members could see. There was no live feed at all from the cameras, only images of alerts where intervention would be required. Furthermore, that, these images were only retained for 7 days, after which they were automatically deleted unless they were required to be saved due to a lifesaving incident occurring.

Conclusion

Having reviewed relevant documentation and undertaken initial internal and external consultations, Council Officers appreciated the opportunity offered by technology such as the Lynxight system to enhance the safety of bathers and appreciate the willingness of Serco Leisure to make this investment in customer safety. Whilst it was acknowledged that these devices were a useful addition to pool safety, they could not communicate with swimmers, manage inappropriate/dangerous behaviour or perform a rescue and, as such, it was the view of Council Officers any such installation should only be introduced in addition to current Pool Lifeguarding numbers as noted in document HSG 179.

RECOMMENDED that Council consider and approve the Serco/NCLT proposal for the installation and use of the Lynxight Assisted Lifeguard Technology at Bangor Aurora Aquatics and Leisure Complex, provided that NCLT/Serco commit to undertake all testing in terms of LZVTs and risk assessments as required and provide assurance that the system will not lead to a reduction in lifeguard numbers below that which have been recommended in HSE guidance document HSG179 or are currently in place.

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

Councillor Boyle assumed this system was for greater protection to assist lifeguards and he sought assurances that it was not intended to replace them.

The Head of Leisure Services referred to statutory guidance that recommended embracing anything that supported safety but that was not to the detriment of lifeguards.

Councillor Moore asked what the motivation was for the system installation as she was concerned that the report referred to scope to reduce lifeguard numbers. She felt it was important to be mindful of jobs and the implications and why Serco was making this investment. She queried the anticipated benefits to the organisation and the officer, while unable to comment for the outsourced Leisure Operator, explained that it was in response to industry health and safety guidelines. He advised that its staffing levels also needed to comply with industry regulations and any changes to that it would need to justify in its risk assessment.

Councillor McBurney asked about the number of lifeguards and how the Council could be assured that lifeguards would not be reduced and along with measures to ensure that would not be the case.

The officer advised that any reduction in staffing levels would be a matter for Serco in meeting the Health and Safety guidance outlined.

Councillor Kendall would have preferred to see a risk assessment before this request was brought to the Council. While she welcomed the benefits of AI technology as a supplement to improve safety, she was also wary of ongoing maintenance costs

given that the technology could be patented and maintenance only available from one specific supplier in terms of ongoing maintenance for example. She feared this could result in hiked up costs.

The officer advised that the risk assessment could not be done until the system was installed. This was a proven technology which Serco had installed in multiple leisure centres across the UK and the investment was at its own risk and it would remove at its own cost if Council did not want it. He added that Bangor would be the first leisure centre in Northern Ireland to introduce the technology and if successful it could be a possibility that officers would be making this same request for Ards Blair Mayne leisure centre.

Councillor Kendall suspected that if the operating model changed in future, she could not imagine officers or the Council taking a decision to reduce existing safety technology, so she would have appreciated to have the ongoing cost details at this stage.

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

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) and Councillor W Irvine returned to the meeting – 8.09pm)

9. CEMETERY POST BOXES 'LETTERS TO HEAVEN' INITIATIVE (FILE PCA119)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council agreed to a trial of the 'Letters to Heaven' post-box initiative in cemeteries at the June 2023 Council meeting and Officers implemented this decision in November 2023. This one-year pilot has been successfully implemented with 447 letters posted - 160 in Movilla and 287 in Clandeboye. Those visiting the cemetery were invited to write a letter as if to loved ones they had lost, through the Post box to Heaven. Children and others were able to post letters and cards at any time of the year but particularly on birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas when their loss is felt so much greater. Each post box will have a plaque explaining that the initiative is managed by the cemetery team.

The aims of this initiative are:

- To give support to grieving young people and their families when visiting our cemetery facilities.
- Give young people and their families the opportunity to express their thoughts in writing about their deceased loved ones.
- Compliment other Council initiatives such as chatty benches and the Here-2-Help app.

The 'Letters to Heaven' memorial post box idea was developed by a nine-year-old girl in Nottingham, who wanted to put her thoughts about her deceased grandparents in writing. At request of the girl's mother, a post-box was installed in Gedling Crematorium. These post-boxes had since been installed in cemeteries across the

UK and in countries as far away as Australia and are used by families who want to express their thoughts in writing about loved ones they have lost.

Since beginning the pilot, Council had received one informal 'complaint' (i.e. they requested not to make it a formal complaint) from a resident regarding religious belief. The individual provided a summary of their concerns in October 2024 as follows: "Council's initiative promoting the idea of communication with the dead is offensive to many families as it is antithetical to their religious belief. Many families will feel they are denied opportunity to visit their family grave(s) in a religiously neutral cemetery. If Council holds that the letters idea is not serious, then it trivialises the bereavement experience for those who, because of their religious beliefs, expect cemeteries to be accorded a high level of respect."

Derry & Strabane District City Council had also identified a number of issues with their initiative, mainly around concept and location of boxes.

Council was not prescribing how to use these mailboxes therefore people could choose to use them in whatever way they felt most comfortable for their own beliefs whether they were religious or not. However, given the issues above, Council Officers Equality Screened the initiative and this identified that a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) was not required (i.e. it is 'screened out'), because there were only minor equality impacts identified during the screening process and these could be mitigated by engaging with stakeholders including local churches. The Officer Screening Panel found that 'Letters to Heaven' was ultimately a positive initiative that complemented other existing council policies and initiatives.

The 'Letters to Heaven' initiative did involve the handling of personal letters and cards and this was sensitively handled and in line with GDPR and other relevant legislation. Letters were posted in the locked post box and a senior council officer held a key who unlocked and removed the letters. They were then shredded through the confidential waste bins and the council's contractor. There was a standard operating procedure in place for this and associated risk assessment.

At the June 2023 Council meeting Council agreed "*That Council approves the installation of Cemetery Post boxes in Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries. Further Council task officers to source funding for the installation of Letters to Heaven Post Boxes to all cemeteries across our Borough.*"

Given the above and the individual informal complaint received, Officers recommend that consultation would need to be carried out for any expansion of the initiative to other cemeteries to ensure that any concerns were noted, particularly around concept and location. However, Officers recommend that the Clandeboye and Movilla 'Letter to Heaven' post-boxes continue given the success of the initiative and positive support for the scheme.

RECOMMENDED that Council continue to support the Clandeboye and Movilla 'Letter to Heaven' initiative and that Officer start consultation to extend the 'Letter to Heaven' post-boxes to other cemeteries across our Borough, with a further report brought back for Council's consideration and determination.

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

Proposing, Councillor Hollywood gave his support for the recommendation and felt anything that could help to ease the pain of loss should be done and he noted that the cost was minimal.

The seconder, Councillor Boyle added that Committee members would have received correspondence from a ratepayer that was not happy with the initiative and it was important that Members were here to listen, but on balance that was one complaint while there had been 447 users to date that had found this initiative helpful and he could understand why people wanted to use it.

He was concerned about references from the complainant to officers being wrongly advised and sought clarity. The Director explained that it referred to their being no Section 75 screening undertaken before the pilot, but it was an opinion only that such advice was wrong. Now that pilot had proved successful the proposal was indeed screened under equality legislation.

Councillor Boyle queried the consultation regarding Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries. The Parks and Cemeteries Operations Manager explained that the consultation would follow from the success of both the trial sites and it was felt good practice to expand on the success of that pilot scheme. He advised that the consultation would involve engagement with relevant stakeholders including funeral directors and faith groups and would take a broad approach to get a feel from the local area.

Councillor Kendall did not have personal objection but she welcomed the consultation. She had been contacted when this had been agreed and one person had suffered bereavement and found it difficult to explain the concept to their children, so it was important for the Council to listen to those who were not happy too.

Councillor Kendall hoped that there would be potential to expand the consultation to other groups - to families with graves for example - in order to stand over this project and be assured that it was welcomed so she was therefore happy to support the additional consultation.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers referred to the complaint and he respected that person's belief. He felt though that the scheme was modest and not pushed upon people. It had been in place for some time and he had not recalled any other negative comments but had recalled the public anger at the damage caused to one of the post boxes. He asked if a record was kept on the number of letters posted and the officer advised that personal data was not retained and disposed of confidentially. He added that a running monthly total was kept for the two sites and referred to 447 letters being posted to date.

Councillor Moore did not feel strongly but she felt it was right to give people the opportunity to engage in consultation. She referred to faith groups and felt it was important to have a robust process.

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

10. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG SEPTEMBER 2024) (FILE SD151)

(Appendix XXV – XXX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that on the 26th August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council up to £250. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2024/2025 revenue budget for this purpose.

In October 2024, Officers advised Members that an additional sum of circa £11,000 could be required above the £45,000 budget agreed for 2024/25 to meet the expected level of applications based on current trends of the grants scheme year to date and subsequently, Council approved the allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year, with the budget being sourced from the ABMWLC success in being above income targets.

During October 2024, the Forum received a total of 42 applications: 4 Coach Education, 16 Equipment, 1 Event, 8 Goldcard, 1 Club Travel/Accommodation and 12 Individual Travel/Accommodation Grants. A summary of the **33** successful applications was detailed in the attached Successful Coach Education, Successful Equipment, Successful Goldcard and Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

2024/25 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded October 2024	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	-£1,999.90
Coach Education	£3,000	*£500	£895.00
Equipment	£14,000	*£9,439.06	-£5,618.32
Events	£6,000	£0	£869.46
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£1,350	-£5,996.64
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£5,000
7 Goldcards Awarded in October (43 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)			

*The proposed remaining budget for Coach Education of **£895.00** was based on a proposed award this month of **£500**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£5,618.32** was based on a proposed award this month of **£9,439.06** and withdrawn costs of **£1,000**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£5,996.64** was based on a proposed award this month of **£1,350** and withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£452.93**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 was **-£5,350.40** (112% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDED that 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) are noted.

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

Councillor Boyle praised the level of sporting achievement in the Borough and thanked Leisure staff for the work they were putting in. He highlighted the Borough's upcoming Sports Awards and had recently been overseeing the sponsorship for the 21st March ceremony. He encouraged Members to attend the awards ceremony and view what this money was providing right across the Borough in terms of the many different sports clubs and participants.

The seconder, Councillor Cochrane echoed those sentiments and congratulated Donaghadee Sailing Club and Donaghadee Youth Football Club who had received funding through the programme. He also echoed the comments of Councillor Boyle in terms of the Sports Awards and encouraged people to nominate clubs in their areas.

He referred to a Notice of Motion relating to tennis court maintenance in the Borough and asked when a follow up report would be due back to the Committee. The Head of Leisure Services advised that a report would follow next month and the reason for the delay had been due to a meeting with a local tennis club in order to obtain its input into what officers would be recommending.

Councillor W Irvine queried three applications in relation to coach education from Ward Park Runners and asked if that club was connected to the Park Run at that location.

The Head of Leisure Services explained that the Park Run was run by volunteers but a new athletic club had been formed called Ward Park Runners which was a fantastic success story and one of the benefits of the Park Run programme. Unfortunately the club had been late with its applications but the club would receive support and guidance from Sports Development staff in the future around completing and submitting applications.

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

11. PERFORMANCE Q1/Q2 2024-2025 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (FILE CW22)

(Appendix XXXI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing 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 had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. 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 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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 Quarter 1 and 2 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to;

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Monthly survey to service users to assess levels of satisfaction and areas of improvement reported at 96.6%
- Processed 61 service requests made by members, MLA’s and MP’s
- Quarterly meetings of the Over 50s Council (2 afternoon & 2 evening meetings, average 22 attending) with representations from NI Public Services Ombudsman Office, NI Assembly Engagement Team and Capital Projects Team, ANDBC

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Air pollutants in the Borough remained below the threshold for action throughout the year
- Nitrogen Dioxide sampling tubes changed weekly at 18 sites throughout the Borough with no actionable levels recorded
- Over 400 pledges from pupils in Primary 5 classes to help the environment through the “Engine Off – No Idling” campaign
- Consultation response to Dept of Communities on proposed changes to minimum EPC values for Private Rented Properties
- Processed 6 flooding service requests where emergency remedial works to heating systems and structures were required
- During the reporting period supporting Air Quality assessments were considered as part of the planning consultation process for large residential developments.
- This Service also responded to planning consultations for sustainable projects including, Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Biofuel Electricity generation and Storage Units, Wind Turbines and Air Source Heat Pumps which contributes to the Councils commitment to the path to net zero.
- The assessment, through the planning process, of the associated risk assessments for several Brownfield sites. This assists in the promotion and reuse of land affected by contamination, resulting in the return to use of vacant and underused land which can help address local housing need in areas well served by existing infrastructure.
- Inspection of 17 premises licensed for the storage and use of petroleum and assessed compliance with requirements of the relevant permits issued for vapour recovery under the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (NI) 2013

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- Supported businesses providing advice and guidance on compliance with food safety, health and safety and consumer safety;
 - ✓ 179 total visits for Health and Safety, including inspections of workplaces, revisits, advisory visits and visits to investigate accident reports received.
 - ✓ 391 Food Hygiene and Food Standards inspections were completed during the reporting period
 - ✓ 22 Visits were carried out to premises in relation to Consumer Safety compliance.
- Provided Food Safety and Allergen Management seminar for the Chinese community (with Mandarin translator) with 16 businesses attending
- Awarded Mind, Body Business health & wellbeing grants to 14 businesses
- Engaged with 30 businesses in Newtownards- Dementia awareness raising for staff and information sharing for public.
- 126 of the 142 planning consultations received were responded to within the target time of 15 working days. Timely and thorough responses impact the overall ability of the Council to provide a planning service that is fit for purpose and attracts developers to the Borough.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Inspected 100% of our caravan parks during Q1 and Q2
- All 9 designated beaches remained safe for swimming in during the bathing season.
- Carried out 25 Fitness Inspections of rented homes in the borough including an assessment of the heating systems.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:

- Intergenerational Picnic in Ballymagee Youth Centre with 31 people
- Three joint sessions between Youth Voice and Over 50s council with focus on ageism, intergenerational work and development of future projects
- Dementia Action week session in Newtownards with 15 exhibitors and 30 people
- Development and launch of a Memory Booklet (a signposting resource)
- Dementia Awareness sessions to 30 staff and development of training on eLearning portal for all staff.
- Tea Dance in Queens Hall with 85 people in attendance
- Launch of 7 information hub stands and three desktop stands with information in them including information on SEHSCT Dementia Navigator, Alzheimer's Society Support Services and Memory Booklet
- World Alzheimer's Day engagement stands in Ards and Bangor
- Representation at all Anti-social behaviour forum monthly meetings
- 160 Home Safety Checks provided (114 OP/Vulnerable adults and 46 U5/vulnerable children) resulting in over 929 individual pieces of home safety equipment being provided and over 101 onward referrals to organisations including NIFRS, OT, falls team etc.
- Visited more than 80 tobacco/vape retailers to promote compliance with age of sale legislation and test purchased 25 for vapes (4 sales)

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- Devised & delivered healthy eating activities to 2-week summer scheme programme (300 – 400 children)
- Delivered 2 slow cooker training courses to communities
- Mind, Body Business health stand at SERC Skills for Success event
- Undertook 2 walkability sessions in Castle Park with 23 people of all ages

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Meeting and exceeding KPI's
- Responded to over 95% of service requests within 2 working days (exceeding the target)
- Improved staff attendance level, bringing the service into the target range.
- 2 staff members certified on completion of odour sensitivity training
- 3 staff members became qualified coaches for colleagues

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- Staff absence rates remained challenging in Q1 and 2 with long term absence, maternity leave and resignations. Recruitment to fill vacant posts, particularly temporary posts has been difficult and this had led to an underspend position on salaries and a missed target in health and safety inspections.
- Significant progress had been made on clearing the backlog of food control inspections. The backlog should be eliminated by the end of the financial year.

Action to be taken:

- A further recruitment campaign in quarter three to backfill vacant posts.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% spend against budget	Vacant posts which have not been filled	Recruitment campaign to fill vacant posts	Adele Faulkner	January 2025
Complete H&S targeted inspection initiatives	Temporary Vacant posts due to maternity leave and long-term sick	Staffing levels have resumed and officer training is underway. Initiatives will be delivered in Q3 and 4.	Hazel McKee	March 2025
% Planning comments made within 15 working days	This has been a busy period with multiple complex cases. One officer deals with the planning responses. Of 142 applications, 126 were responded to within	When staffing levels resume progress with training a second officer in planning applications as part of succession planning and knowledge management.	Hazel McKee	March 2025

	the target timeframe.			
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RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

Alderman Adair praised the hard work of the Environmental Health team which had solved issues where other responsible central government departments had failed. He referred to assistance provided during recent flooding.

Referring to the reported 25 fitness inspections of rented accommodation, Councillor Kendall asked what the outcomes were, conscious of a housing crisis and the demand for rented accommodation.

The Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development did not have specific details but explained that generally landlords would make a fitness application themselves when they had done the work so approval rates were high. If approval was not given then minor works would be required. There were a number of properties with less compliant landlords and the challenge now would be identifying those private sector landlords that were unknown to the Council and undertaking inspections.

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

12. PERFORMANCE Q1/Q2 2024-2025 LEISURE (FILE CW22)

(Appendix XXXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing 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 had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. 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 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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 Quarter 2 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to 4 outcomes as follows:

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- The number of Clubs affiliated to the Sports Forum is 96. This was significantly higher than the 77 clubs as a target and provides those Clubs with an influence with the leisure team to effectively deliver sport across the Borough.
- There were three out of four engagement sessions held by the leisure team during the six-month period.
- The leisure strategy development process included significant stakeholder engagement across the entire leisure sector and wider stakeholder group.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:

- The Quest quality award was obtained by all four centres that undertook the process
- The number of bookings by groups/people utilising our Community Centres was significantly higher than the target. Twenty eight percent above target. This also resulted in almost twenty thousand additional residents (79,000) utilising our Community Centres above the target of 60,000.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Key achievements:

- Over one million, one hundred thousand people utilised our leisure sites during the first six months of the year. This is significantly above target.

- Two thousand seven hundred people enrolled in the Boroughs learn to swim programmes
- Four hundred people enrolled in the active aging programme at Leisure Ards sites
- Almost double the number of fitness classes being delivered as the demand for Classes returned to high levels post COVID and the leisure teams responded to these demands by delivering over four hundred classes (428) every week across the Centres in the Borough.

Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- The Councils leisure service continued to perform exceptionally well against budget. This efficiency was resulting in a significant saving to the ratepayer whilst still providing a quality service.
- The Kpis measuring efficiency and effectiveness of the Councils leisure team were all highlighting the positive impact of the Staff within this sector.
- The Councils Community Centres team were also performing very well against financial targets whilst still providing a more utilised service than target.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed monthly. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- The demand for leisure activities to be provided across the Borough was increasing and the leisure team would need to consider how this could be achieved without a significant burden on the ratepayer.
- Attracting a well-qualified workforce to work in a service that had significant demands with shift work was still proving very difficult and would need further work if the service delivery model was to be sustained. The workforce market was proving very competitive and working for Councils leisure service may no longer be seen to be a career choice.

Action to be taken:

- The leisure strategy would need completed and produced over the remainder of the year in preparation for delivery commencing in 2026/26.
- The Community Centres transformation project had to be delayed due to staffing constraints and a necessary focus on service delivery. This would need consideration in the next six months once staffing transformation was completed.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, welcomed the huge participation levels reported at Council facilities. This reflected a more health-conscious society and he praised the work of leisure staff in delivering those services. He asked how it would be planned to meet the need if demand continued to increase and the Head of Leisure Services explained that while there was a Council Leisure Strategy in place which encompassed a wider view of services over the longer term, the challenge now was meeting the short term need. He pointed out that the Ards Blair Mayne facility was close to capacity in terms of gym membership and the number of swimming lessons and classes had been increased. He explained that Bangor Aurora would also be able to provide for more numbers once the long running issues with the pool floor were finally resolved within the next month. He explained that another option would be to make leisure services more accessible at a local level such as developing fitness/sports programmes within the Council's community centres but that would require considerable investment.

Alderman McRandal welcomed the participation levels reported. He referred to the final page which had a question mark in relation to employee appraisals and the officer clarified that this was because the deadline was March 2025 so they had not yet been undertaken.

Councillor Boyle congratulated Leisure on an excellent report. He recalled that leisure centres were struggling not too long ago but he gave full credit to the leisure staff in turning that situation around. He also welcomed that the number of AND Sports Forum affiliated sports clubs exceeded the target.

Councillor Kendall echoed those comments and praised the reported figures across multiple categories. She noted higher income targets placed on Leisure and she asked if maximum capacity was reached, what measures would be put in place.

The Head of Leisure Services referred to opportunities which included taking initiatives out to the public. It would be in line with objectives within the Council's Leisure Strategy but would cost more money to spread services wider. Community Centre provision was much more costly to deliver services though they would take capacity issues away from the bigger leisure centres.

In a further query, Councillor Kendall asked what type of opportunities could be offered and the officer referred to a community halls transformation project which explored cost effective measures in terms of bringing community groups together to look at delivering services.

He was aware that Leisure staff were also keen to deliver fitness classes in community centres and local parks and other open spaces. The Leisure Strategy would give a clear direction on that but Council would need to budget accordingly.

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

13. **PERFORMANCE Q1/Q2 2024-2025 PARKS AND CEMETERIES (FILE CW22)**

(Appendix XXXIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing 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 (current plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually and published in March

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.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to;

Outcome 1: *An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment*

Key achievements:

- Ards & North Down in Bloom Community Competitions took place over the summer with categories for citizens and businesses with a Community Awards Event delivered at local hotel.
- Play Strategy Workshop was held in the City Hall on 30th May.
- Community Engagement for Ward Park Projects undertaken including out of scope initiatives such as the Dementia Friendly Sensory Garden and moving the existing play park.
- Membership of the North Down Coastal Path extended to external community groups and business organisations.
- Roundabout Policy being implemented with seven locations sponsored.
- Hot Drinks and Ice Cream Vender Contract successfully implemented at seven locations.

Outcome 2: *An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets*

Key achievements:

- Spring 'Go Peat Free' campaign launched and promoted to stakeholders.
- Replaced bedding plants (grown in peat compost) at Bangor Castle Walled Garden with attractive willow sculpture that has attracted compliments and seen as a significant improvement for the facility.
- 15,000 plus trees to be planted this winter in multiple locations including Jacks Cut (Newtownards), Greyabbey, Londonderry Park, Ballywalter, Comber, Kerr Park, Cloughy and many more sites.
- A programme of Winter Events including Tree Week, tree seed gathering workshops and other STAND4TREES activities being planned.
- New Orchards planned for Groomsport, Linear Park and Helens Bay
- Local Biodiversity Actions Plan progress update was presented to Elected Members in May and a series of events undertaken including a Bioblitz at Whitespots Country Park.
- Grassland Management Strategy agreed, and the rewilding scheme has increased to over 120,000sqm.
- Food growing celebration event held at Bryansburn allotments.
- Electrification of tool, plant and machinery expanded.
- Continue the reduction of herbicides and sustainable alternatives used.
- Vigorous removal of invasive species undertaken including Japanese Knotweed.

Outcome 3: *A thriving and sustainable economy*

Key achievements:

- Over 90 events held to increase skills and knowledge for local people.
- Successful free family Halloween event attracting 10,000 visitors to the Bangor Castle Walled Garden.
- Partnership working with tourism and local businesses to host events such as Chilli Festival, Garlic in the Garden, Awaken the Garden, Open House etc

Outcome 4: *A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors*

Key achievements:

- Floodgates Park progressing towards planning application, surveying work undertaken.
- Charles Brand Limited appointed as greenway contractor and work had now started on the Newtownards to Bangor (Green Road) stage of the greenway project.
- Ward Park dredging completed and design consultant appointed. The procurement of works contractor had begun.
- Whitespots Country Park – team working through RIBA Stage 2 with further environmental surveys being prioritised to inform the concept design.

- Memorandum of Understanding with Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership agreed September and Members updated regarding Community Trails.

Outcome 5: *Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing*

Key achievements:

- Schools Growing Club – four additional schools selected: Kircubbin Integrated Primary School, Alexander Dickson Primary School, Ballygowan, Killard Primary School, Donaghadee & St Patricks Primary School, Hollywood
- Walkability Audit undertaken at Castle Park with over 50's group.
- Engagement with Dementia support groups undertaken to aid the effective design of our parks.

Outcome 6: *Opportunities for people to be active and healthy*

Key achievements:

- Play Park improvements planned for Millisle Outdoor Gym, New Harbour Road (Portavogie), Londonderry Park, Seapark (Hollywood) & Ward Park.
- Borough took part in the UK wide PlayDay, with events carried out in Londonderry Park, Ballywalter Beach & Castle Park.
- A series of pop-up creative play events were delivered in late Summer and Autumn.
- Borough took part in Love Parks Week with events throughout the Borough.
- Over ninety events held to get people outdoors and take part in activities that improve their health and wellbeing.
- Funding for In Bloom Projects undertaken

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

Key achievements:

- Bangor Castle Walled Garden is the cities top tourist attraction according to Trip Advisor.
- Green Flag Awards retained for Castle Park, Londonderry Park, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Linear Park and Ballymenoch Park. Plus two additional green flags for Clandeboye Cemetery and Cairn Wood.
- Ulster in Bloom awards received for Donaghadee (Town Winner) & Comber (Town Runner-up)
- Northern Ireland Amenity Council Awards for Comber (Best Kept Medium Town), Bangor (Best Kept City) & Donaghadee (Best Kept Small Town).
- Planning for Staff Business Planning Day on 29 November underway with all 100 plus Parks & Cemeteries staff involved to influence the Service Plan for 2025/6.
- Meeting and exceeding KPI's

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed monthly. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required as detailed below:

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% spend against budget	Running costs slightly higher than budget (3.4%) but offset by payroll and income favourable variances of 24.6%.	Team to continue to monitor monthly the budget.	Stephen Daye	January 2025
% staff attendance	Although staff absence rates have significantly improved, it remains challenging.	Service management team continues to meet regularly with HR, vigorously implement procedures and changed made to reporting sickness has improved rates.	Stephen Daye	January 2025

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

The proposer Councillor McClean recalled that two months ago the Community and Wellbeing Committee had agreed to a Notice of Motion that it would put down lines on Clandeboye pitch but was concerned that had not yet happened.

He urged the Parks team to undertake this work as it had become embarrassing for DEA Members of Bangor West. He was aware that more politicians had now become involved and local representatives were now being asked by the Minister of the local church if volunteers there could put down lines as a result of the Council failing to do so. He referred to the Notice of Motion that was agreed and referred to antisocial behaviour and it was felt that the pitch would help address that matter.

The seconder, Alderman Adair wanted to thank the Head of Parks and Cemeteries who he claimed had been a breath of fresh air in terms of addressing maintenance issues at some of the Borough's cemeteries. He praised the staff there that had addressed those issues. In addition, he welcomed the new play parks in Portavogie and Kircubbin and believed they had been well received.

Councillor Douglas noted the hard work that went on daily and she wanted to congratulate volunteers in Comber and the Comber Regeneration Partnership that won Best Kept Medium Town and runner up in Ulster in Bloom.

Councillor Kendall welcomed the report and much of its content, highlighting herbicide reduction, tree planting initiatives and invasive species removal. On behalf of her Green Party colleague for Bangor West, Councillor McKee, who had signed the Notice of Motion, asked why the pitch markings agreed to be implemented at Clandeboye had not yet been installed. The Parks and Cemeteries Operations Manager advised that officers would revisit and consult the wording of the Notice of Motion and action it accordingly.

Councillor Hollywood added that a commitment to mark the playing field at Clandeboye was agreed 10 years ago, still lines were removed and this Notice of Motion still had not been actioned. He urged officers to deliver the work outlined within the Notice of Motion.

Councillor Boyle thanked staff, including the Head of Service and the Parks and Cemeteries Operations Manager who was in attendance along with his team. He had found that staff were responsive even at weekends and that showed that staff were staying on top of matters.

Councillor Cochrane welcomed the report overall but referred to Linear Park and damage to tree plantings in the recent storm. He asked if officers could commit to make plantings more secure and the officer advised that the team had prioritised other issues since the storm but would be assessing the damage and undertake necessary remedial work while looking to future proof those areas.

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

14. PERFORMANCE Q1/Q2 2024-2025 COMMUNITY AND CULTURE (FILE CW22)

(Appendix XXXIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing 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 had in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. 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 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

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
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 1 and 2 was attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service had contributed to;

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Consultation underway to design a new Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan.
- Consultation underway to design a PCSP Strategy and Action Plan.
- Staff continue to attend community meetings to represent Council across the whole Borough.
- Community Development continue to fund and engage with the Youth Council.
- A series of public information stands have been held in large stores across the Borough.

Outcome 5

Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key achievements:

- Continue to support North Down YMCA to offer service to all newcomers
- Weekly patrols carried out by the Community Safety Officers
- Monthly meetings held with the ASB Forum
- Monthly meetings held of the Support Hub
- Shared Voices Programme underway in schools around the Borough.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan was reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register had also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- Recruitment to fill vacant posts, particularly temporary posts has been difficult and this had led to an underspend position on salaries.
- The introduction of a new CD Strategy and Action Plan had been paused to bring consultation in line with the review of community centre provision.

Action to be taken:

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Implement a new CD Strategy and Action Plan	Consultation will be carried out in line with community centre review	Work will progress in Q4.	Nicola Dorrian	31.3.25

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

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

The proposer wished to praise the Head of Community and Culture for her work, adding that she was respected and had a good working relationship with everyone.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council previously agreed the following Notice of Motion –

“This Council recognises the importance of Bangor’s early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell’s Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience”.

A site meeting was held on 9th August 2024 and was attended by officers from Parks and Leisure, Tourism and Community and Culture.

A further site meeting was held on 26th November 2024 with the proposer of the motion, and officers from Parks and Leisure, Community and Culture, Tourism and Assets and Property in attendance to walk the site and discuss plans for the site.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that a business case was to be submitted as part of the rate setting process for 2025-2026 to improve the condition of the path network in certain areas of the park including a new path to Cross Hill. These paths had been identified as very challenging to users through walkability audits completed in 2024. Some of these pathways had started to age quite significantly, reducing the aesthetics of the park, impacting on health and safety, and impacting on public perception on the upkeep of this local asset.

The business case had been further developed to include an improvement to informational signage throughout the site. The walkability audits completed in 2024 and user feedback had shown a need to improve in this area with some of the key assets hard to find.

The Head of Assets and Property confirmed that some general maintenance could be carried out to clean of the bell sculptures within this year's budget and improvements to lighting and seating could be done at a future juncture should budget become available.

Officers from Community and Culture, Assets and Property, Parks and Leisure and Tourism would form a Task and Finish Group to consider:

- Uplighting of Fluctus Angelorum at night,
- Uplighting of St Malachi's Wall to make more of this historic feature (the oldest standing structure in Bangor).
- A better link / wayfinding / signage between St Malachi's Wall and the first Bell of Bell's Walk.
- Exploration of Bangor Abbey, with improved access and new interpretative signage.
- Exploration of extended opening of Bangor Abbey via their volunteers.
- Fluctus Angelorum – a staging post for an enhanced walk to Smelt Mill Bay via Stricklands Glen (St Columbanus Walking Trail).
- Existing Bells – sculptures to be cleaned and signage replaced.
- Exploration of Castle Gardens and the monastic sundial.
- Repositioning of two Bells, those leading to public toilets/car park, to within the park to create a new pathway into Castle Gardens.
- Cross Hill to be cleared / landscaped with new interpretative signage installed to explain the significance of the site.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report and that further updates be brought to Council in due course.

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

Alderman McRandal spoke to welcome the report, recognising that it had come from a motion from Councillor McCracken. He referred to a rich Christian heritage in the Borough and the Council should be making the most of it. He referred to the St Columbanus festival and credited former colleague Deborah Girvan for her continued work in its development.

Councillor W Irvine agreed it was an important tourist asset and should be developed further. He was aware of recent local interest from St Gallen football fans who had come to Northern Ireland to support their club in a European match with Larne.

Councillor McClean rose to fully endorse the comments of the proposer in terms of the work of Deborah Girvan who had fully understood the value of St Columbanus to this Borough. He hoped that Council could support this opportunity and he recognised the tourism benefits it could bring.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

16. CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS PROGRAMME (FILE GREL415)

(Appendix XXXV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council's Cultural Expression programme supported inclusive local events and festivals that enable communities and groups to celebrate their culture and identity through grant aid. 75% of this financial support was provided through The Executive Office and 25% was provided by Council. Where bonfires/beacons were associated with these local events and festivals, Council support was available where communities agreed to core conditions which aimed to lessen the negative social and environmental impact of community bonfires.

Update for 2024-2025

The grant budget ringfenced for the Cultural Expression programme was £60,000 but was subject to sufficient funding being received from The Executive Office (TEO) to support the Good Relations Action Plan. In both 2023-2024 and in 2024-2025 the amount of funding to support the Good Relations Action plan was significantly reduced which led to a reduction in funding to each of the groups involved in the Cultural Expression programme. Council contribution and support from NIHE of £26,000 enabled a payment of £1,519 per site, rather than the £2,300 normally provided.

Discussions with individual site representatives resulted in 23 sites engaging in the Cultural Expressions programme in 2024-2025, 21 in July and 2 in October. (Annex 1). This was a reduction of 4 sites compared to the previous year due to the demise of East End Residents Association at that time which managed the funding on behalf of sites at Millisle, Castle Gardens, Ballywalter Gardens in Kilcooley and Slidy Rock, Conlig.

Council continued to offer alternatives to the Cultural Expressions programme which were introduced following restrictions put in place during Covid-19. Alternatives meant funding could be up to 31 March 2025 for:

- A local cultural festival **or**
- Educational programmes, either through facilitation/ talks online **or**
- A combination of both.

During 2024-2025 a total of 7 sites requested the use of willow burners, (Annex 2) including Ballywalter Beach, Ballyhalbert, Clandeboye, Killinchy and Rathgill for July and Portaferry and Kircubbin for October. The Bowtown Estate trialled a beacon in 2023-2024 but the community decided to return to a traditional bonfire in 2024-25.

Monitoring

In the lead up to 11th July 2024 the Good Relations team worked in partnership with a range of Council services and statutory agencies to address issues as they arose. This included for example the Councils Enforcement Officers, Councils Parks

Officers, NIHE, SEELB, DAERA, PSNI and NIFRS. Weekly meetings enabled agencies to collectively discuss any concerns or perceived risks during and in the lead up to the 11th July.

The Good Relations team regularly monitored bonfires signed up to the Cultural Expressions agreement and those not signed up.

Most bonfires both in and out of the programme adhered to the requirements contained in the cultural expressions agreement and staff worked closely with the builders to try and alleviate any issues arising.

Bonfires sites with issues recorded were:

- Castle Gardens (not in programme) – Concerns due to its size and proximity to surrounding houses and businesses.
- Strand Avenue, Holywood (not in programme) – a lot of fly tipping at site removed at the request of local resident.
- Slidy Rock, Conlig (not in programme) - No contact with local builders. Site was not managed and became a source for fly tipping (see pictures below). The cost to Council for clearance of this site was c £5,315.



Costs

The total cost to Council for set up, clearance, reinstatement, beacons and barriers for the 2024-25 programme is circa £98,853. Costs were increasing annually. The table below identified the breakdown since 2021-2022.

Year	Total Cost	Beacons on council land	Set up/ clearance, barriers
2024-2025	£98,853	£51,100 (7)	£47,753
2023-2024	£94,719	£49,000 (7)	£45,719

2022-2023	£87,834	£50,184 (8)	£37,650
2021-2022	£77,300	£44,400 (8)	£32,900

This cost to Council did not include the cost of clean-up for those built on NIHE land which was met by the Housing Executive.

Complaints

In 2024-2025 bonfire related complaints to the Good Relations team reduced to 11 in comparison to 34 in 2023-2024, equating to approximately 68% decrease. This figure did not include recurring complaints about the same issue.

Feedback from Statutory Agencies

Following 11th July 2024, statutory representatives met to review lessons learnt and to consider improvements for 2025-2026.

PSNI – there were no reports of flags or effigies on bonfires in ANDBC. There were no reports of anti-social behaviour on the 11th night.

NIFRS – On the 11th night, 2 fire engines were deployed to a business near to the Castle Gardens bonfire site (NIP). Embers from the bonfire, damaged parts of the premise roof. 2 x fire engines were at the lighting of the Ballligan Gardens, Kilcooley (NIP) bonfire site as a precaution.

NIHE – fewer complaints were received than in previous years. There had been delays with the contractors clearing bonfire sites. The NIHE cost of boarding houses was increasing especially where bonfires increased in size.

DAERA

Did not engage in meetings but were updated regularly.

Education Authority reported that they would be considering their plans for the site at Castle Gardens, which could include better securing the site, disposing of the site or changing the use of the site.

ANDBC – the Council received 10 complaints relating to flags and 11 to bonfires including Cloughey (IP), Ballywhiskin (NIP), Churchill (IP), Ballyrea/Ballyvester (NIP) and Innishargie (NIP).

What worked well

Collaborative working between the agencies worked well in effectively dealing with issues of concern, reducing fly tipping and should continue to be built upon for 2025-2026. All statutory agencies agreed that whilst there were still some concerns especially around the size of some bonfires, the programme continued to provide positive results.

All statutory agencies agreed community engagement in association with the Cultural Expressions Agreement had significantly reduced negative incidents that previously occurred during bonfire season.

Most sites in the programme and not in the programme continued to engage with the GR team e.g. to enable the removal of unwanted fly-tipping.

West Winds, Newtownards – a mural at the end of a gable wall was covered up for the festival in response to a request to make the festival more family friendly.

All statutory agencies agreed there was less fly tipping taking place at the sites and sites are generally tidier.

Review

Since early autumn, officers have begun to engage with groups and over the next few months officers would continue to meet with community representatives to consult on the lessons learned and discuss what can be done to address on-going challenges. Discussions with builders on possible changes to the Cultural Expressions Agreement were ongoing and the outcomes and recommendations would be brought to Council early in 2025 for further consideration.

The challenges for 2025-2026 will be:

- How to encourage sites which had withdrawn from the programme back into programme.
- How to manage sites not eligible but would like to be included in the programme.
- The reduction in funding from TEO, but a need for additional funds if additional sites sign up to the Agreement.
- How to ensure the height and footprint of the bonfires stays within boundaries, in order to minimise damage.
- How to ensure that no collection takes place before the agreed date.
- How to manage flag expectations with a lack of guidance or protocol.

FICT -The Flags, Identity and Culture report released in December 2021 did not give direction or result with regards to a protocol on Flags therefore did not give sole responsibility to any one statutory agency.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Welcoming the report, Councillor W Irvine noted that some sites that remained outside the programme but still engaged with officers and he hoped that steps could be taken to engage them further. He also praised the work of all statutory partners involved and it was important to keep that work going.

Councillor Douglas queried the attached list of bonfire sites and noted Scrabo Residents Association and the sites listed beside. The Head of Community and Culture clarified that funding was paid to that group for those locations listed beside it.

Whilst agreeing that the Borough was in a better place, Councillor Boyle felt that there was still work to be done. He was perplexed that zero complaints in relation to

flags issues had been reported to the PSNI which did not reflect the number of complaints made to the Council. He appreciated it was probably a question that the PSNI would need to answer but he asked how the Council dealt with complaints around flags.

The officer explained that it would depend on who owned the property where the flag had been displayed. If it was Council owned property officers would speak to representatives in the area but the majority were placed on streetlights which were under the ownership of the DFI.

Councillor Boyle recalled previous challenges faced in addressing flags issues and was perplexed by the PSNI's statistic. He asked if Council had had any communication with the organisation and the officer clarified that the PSNI reports related to complaints regarding flags placed on bonfires.

The officer went on to explain the process of passing on the complaint to the relevant authority but Councillor Boyle felt that failed to result in any action. He wondered how someone could demonstrate its own culture by insulting other cultures and how this created a big problem for the people who had to drive past those flags. He argued that it was an annual problem and nothing ever happened in terms of addressing the complaints.

The officer explained that Council did have limitations in terms of the action it could take and it was prevented from removing flags from other non-Council owned property. She had met previously with the Chief Executive and PSNI to seek assurance on what action could be taken and an update would be provided to Members in due course.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

(The meeting went into recess at 9.03pm and resumed at 9.15pm)

17. ITEM WITHDRAWN

The Chair advised that Item 17 had been withdrawn from the agenda.

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) and Councillor W Irvine withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 18.

18. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN LEISURE/SERCO LEISURE PRICING POLICIES (FILE SD151)

(Appendix XXXVI – XXXVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would recall the report brought to Council in November 2024 which detailed the pricing increase that would be applied by both Leisure Ards and NCLT/Serco for the coming year.

Council agreed that annual price increases in line with or below inflation were brought to Committee for awareness and that only in the event of significant increase above this level was Council authorisation required.

That report detailed that, at our directly managed sites across the service, 2025/26 proposed pricing was set according a maximum approximate 2.5% increase on 2024/25, rounded to a more workable figure in terms of cash handling and /or facility subdivision, i.e., if a hall was divided into courts etc, and reflecting that Officers believe activity pricing was close to the maximum that the market would take.

That report also provided details of the proposed Serco pricing changes across the portfolio of facilities managed by the operator on behalf of Council.

As a result of discussion resulting from the November 2024 pricing update report, Members requested that a further report be brought back to Council detailing differentials between 2025 pricing for NCLT and Council operated facilities as follows.

1. Differentials in 2025 proposed pricing between Serco and Council directly managed sites. What was the comparative cost to the average user?
2. What was the approximate overall price increase being applied by Serco effective 1st January 2025?
3. If it was the case that users of Serco managed facilities were, on average, paying more than users of Council directly managed facilities, then Council Officers should detail what benefit those users get from the outsourcing of their leisure services.

Appendix 1 provided a comparison of activity pricing across the 2 previously reported pricing policies and demonstrates that, whilst it had been previously noted that Council did not have authority over NCLT price setting, for the most part pricing for leisure activities had been closely aligned across the two providers.

Appendix 2 detailed prices Serco would be charging its customers from 1st January 2025. Additional information had been added to this appendix to demonstrate the % increase that these prices represented when compared to 2024 pricing for each activity. SERCOs 2025 pricing represents an average increase of 3.3 % across all NCLT operated facilities.

Officers were unable to comment on question 3 as the decision to extend the leisure contract was made by Council on the basis of the cost and value to Council at the time. However, in many areas the pricing was the same/comparable and as Members would be aware the benefits to customers, the Council and ratepayers was based on a range of factors.

NCLT management had noted that a recent change of the National Insurance threshold had impacted NCLT salary contributions and subsequently significantly impacted Payroll costs. This impact had had to be considered in price setting, especially when looking at activities that required staffing.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the detail of the report and price increases being applied by Serco from 1st January 2025.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council notes the detail of the report. Furthermore that the overall increase being applied by SERCO and comparison of differentials between SERCO and Council directly managed sites are provided in Leisure Pricing reports going forward.

The proposer thanked officers for bringing the information quickly and felt it was important to be able to have these comparisons which allowed for transparency.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Council notes the detail of the report. Furthermore that the overall increase being applied by SERCO and comparison of differentials between SERCO and Council directly managed sites are provided in Leisure Pricing reports going forward.

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) and Councillor W Irvine returned to the meeting – 9.17pm)

19. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

In order to facilitate the attendance of Mr Chris Kelly, who was representing Serco, the Chair would hear Item 25 at this stage.

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 25 – 9.19pm)

25. NCLT Q2 2024-2025 (FILE CW51)

(Appendix XXXVIII – XVIX)

****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 & Wellbeing detailing NCLTs quarter 2 activity and performance.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

The recommendation was agreed.

(The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Chambers) returned to the meeting – 9.31pm)

(Mr Kelly withdrew from the meeting along with Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore who had both declared an interest in Item 20 – 9.31pm)

20. MULTIPLY FUNDING AWARDS AND UPDATE (FILE CW170)

****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 providing details of the government's new £560 million programme to help transform the lives of hundreds of thousands of adults across the UK started in Spring 2022 and will be delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as Multiply Funding. Northern Ireland's Multiply funding was delayed due to the absence of the Assembly. Funding is now being made available, but the Department for the Economy has a short timeframe to deliver funding before the closing date of March 2025.

Multiply is a fully funded government scheme that offers maths courses to adults aged 19 years and older. The aim of the funding is to reach the hardest to reach learners/residents, to engage in basic maths for everyday life, delivered in the heart of the community.

It was recommended that Council approves the distribution of multiply funding as outlined in the report.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore returned to the meeting – 9.34pm)

21. TENDER FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF PARKS PLANT AND MACHINERY (FILE PCA18)

****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 providing details of the tender process for the Supply and Delivery of Parks Plant and Machinery.

A tendering opportunity was advertised in the Belfast Telegraph, on the Council website, Find and Tender Service and on the eTendersNI website.

To ensure a best value approach to the tender, the award was based on a combination of quality and price criteria and therefore the most economically advantageous tender was selected.

It was recommended that Council approve the contract for the supply and delivery of Parks Plant and Machinery be awarded to the highest-ranking company.

The recommendation was agreed.

22. FLORAL CONTAINER TENDER EXTENSION 2025 (FILE PCA82)

****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 providing details of the Supplier contract currently in place for the Provision of Floral Containers.

It was recommended that Council approves a 12-month extension until 31 December 2025, with the requested price increase.

The recommendation was agreed.

23. SPORTS PITCH TENDER EXTENSION 2025 (FILE PCA81)

****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 providing details of the Supplier contract currently in place for the Provision of Sports Pitch Maintenance.

It is recommended that Council approves a contract extension for 2025 with the requested price increase.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore left the meeting having declared an interest in Item 24 – 9.43pm)

24. **EXTENSION OF ADVICE SERVICE CONTRACT BY 1 YEAR
(FILE CDW20)**

****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 providing details of the Supplier contract currently in place for Advice Services.

It was recommended that Council extends the contract for provision of front-line advice services with Community Advice Ards and North Down for a period of one year until March 2026.

The recommendation was agreed.

RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.45pm.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	10 December 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	Climate Change Act
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Establishment of Just Transition Commission Consultation
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Draft Response to Consultation

Background

DAERA seeks to gather views on the establishment of the Just Transition Commission for NI. The Commission, once established, will give effect to the powers proposed in the Act and provide an advisory and oversight function to ensure all departments are having due regard to just transition in their emissions reduction policies produced under the Act. The Commission will also provide advice on just transition matters to all Northern Ireland departments.

Responses to this consultation will be used to inform the work being conducted by DAERA to establish the public body, as well as informing the new Commission of the views of the public as to what duties and responsibilities are seen as being important in conducting its role.

The draft response to this consultation is attached in Appendix 1 for consideration.

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the consultation response (Appendix 1) on the Establishment of Just Transition Commission Consultation is issued to DAERA.

DRAFT ANDBC response to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission

Q1. Do you agree with the proposal that the Commission should be established as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body with the chair and its members recruited in line with the guidance issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

ANDBC agrees that the Commission should be established as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body, and that its chair and members are recruited in line with guidance issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Q2. Do you agree the Commission membership should be between 7-20 members?

ANDBC agrees that membership should be between 7-20 members to be proper and consistent with the Irish and Scottish Just Transition Commissions membership size. Too small a number would not result in good cross sector representation and any larger than 20 will make it very unwieldy.

Q3. Do you agree the Commission membership should meet on average 15 days per year?

ANDBC agrees that 15 meetings per year would be appropriate.

Q4. Do you agree that the Commission should be similar to the Scottish model and supported by a small team to provide a secretariat function to allow the Commission to function effectively?

ANDBC agrees that the Commission should be similar to the Scottish model as it has proven to be successful and therefore should be replicated where possible.

We believe a small administrative department is essential to support the work of the Commission to aide with research, decision-making, coordination, and the organisation of meetings and publications.

Q5. Do you agree that members appointed to the Commission should serve a term of 5 years?

ANDBC agrees that 5 years is consistent with the terms of other Advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies within Northern Ireland.

Q6. Do you agree that the Commission would fulfil the oversight function required of it in the Act by reviewing and reporting on the development and implementation of

- any sectoral plan published under sections 13 to 21 of the Act;
- any climate action plan published under section 29 or 51 of the Act; and
- any scheme established by Regulations under section 31 of the Act.

DRAFT ANDBC response to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission

ANDBC agrees that the Commission should fulfil the oversight function required of it in the Act by reviewing and reporting on the development and implementation of the drafting and implementation sections 13 to 21, 29 or 51, and schemes established by Regulations under section 31 of the Act.

Q7. Do you agree that the Commission would be fulfilling its advice function by:

- **Responding to a Northern Ireland department's request for advice within agreed timeframes.**
- **Issuing research and guidance documents for departments to review and consider when developing emission reduction policies.**

ANDBC agrees that the Commission would fulfil its advice function by responding to requests for advice within agreed timeframes and issuing research and guidance documents for departmental review to develop emission reduction policies.

Q8. Should the Commission include representation from the Transport sector

ANDBC agrees that the Commission include the Transport sector representation and would recommend representation from both domestic and public sectors.

Domestic transport is the second-highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland (18%), therefore representation of this sector on the Just Transition Commission is crucial to ensure prompt, productive and impartial action toward achieving emission reduction targets.

Transport is a large and varied sector that includes public transport, private vehicles, freight, and infrastructure, all of which must be addressed productively. Representation of both the public and private transportation sectors is crucial to ensure policies consider all challenges and opportunities presented by all modes of transport. This will facilitate a coordinated and fair passage to sustainable transport solutions.

Q9. Should the Commission include representation from the Energy sector?

ANDBC agrees that the Commission include representatives from the Energy sector.

Electricity supply is the fourth highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland (14%) and therefore representation from the energy sector in the Commission is crucial. A fair transition in the energy sector involves decarbonising the sector, and this in turn will improve people's quality of life and addressing inequalities.

DRAFT ANDBC response to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission

Ideally, representation from both renewable energy as well as the traditional energy industries will allow for a just transition by guaranteeing balanced views, addressing workers need and communities affected by the energy transition, and promoting collaboration to develop sustainable and fair results.

Q10. Should the Commission include representation from the Financial/Green Finance sector?

ANDBC believes a representative from the finance/green finance sector would reinforce the Commission in meeting its objectives and would be in line with best practice in Scotland.

To finance a Just Transition, it will take several forms, including the macro to the micro. The capacity of the government to borrow at a low cost over the long-term means public finance will play a pivotal role in funding a just transition for workers, communities and consumers, ensuring the financial burden is shared fairly and is manageable.

Private finance can also help by redirecting financial resources towards green technologies, adaptation solutions, and innovative businesses. Financial institutions can support emission-intensive businesses to reduce their emissions and provide communities with access to finance to invest in measures that will help them transition. The representative on the Commission will need to have vast experience and knowledge of both public and private finance tools.

Q11. Are there any other sectors in addition to the Transport, Energy, Finance and those listed in 37(4) of the Act that should be represented on the Commission – and if so, please provide reasons for your answer.

ANDBC proposes that the Construction Industry and product manufacturers are represented on the Commission.

The Construction industry and its products have the third-highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland (15%). A representative from this sector is recommended on the Just Transition Commission to address this effectively due to the extent of emissions produced. While the sector is briefly mentioned under Energy on page 38 of the Consultation, we would recommend a variance between the supply of energy and the actual use of energy within buildings. A clear representative would ensure that there is a focus on the broader range of emissions associated with the fabric of buildings and associated product use, as underlined in the *Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022* report.

A sectoral representative would provide the expertise to inform strategies such as building energy performance, retrofitting, sustainable design and construction practices,

DRAFT ANDBC response to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission

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and the decarbonisation of heating systems. Embodied carbon accounts for a large portion of a building's carbon footprint so therefore a building expert's input would be critical in promoting further innovation to reduce embodied carbon in building materials and enhance building and product life cycle analysis. The representative should champion targeted, actionable measures tailored to industry needs.

Q12. Do you agree the Commission should have a power to establish Ad-Hoc Committees or working groups to secure additional knowledge or expertise that may not be available with the Commission

ANDBC feels that it would be unfair to presume that the expertise and knowledge within the Commission covers every aspect that will need to be comprehensively considered and therefore agree that the ability to establish *ad-hoc* committees is essential.

We agree that ad-hoc committees will allow “members with specific interests and expertise an opportunity to work flexibly and drill down into detail as required,” as highlighted in Section 4.1 of the Terms of Reference of Scotland's Just Transition Commission. This will ensure high-quality engagement, thorough inspection, and knowledgeable advice across the wide range of topics under the Commission's scope. The groups will be instrumental in supporting the Commission's work and to ensure its targets are met effectively. ANDBC would therefore recommend that the proposed Commission adopts the objectives and operational principles already outlined by the Scottish Just Transition Commission to amplify its functionality and impact.

Q13. What do you think the key initial priorities should be for the Commission?

ANDBC feels that the Commission's initial priorities should centre on high-impact sectors, including agriculture, transport, buildings and energy. These sectors are the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland and present the most significant opportunities for transformative actions to achieve the required emission reductions.

A strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement is crucial, particularly involving communities and groups most affected by the transition. This will ensure that the perspectives shape the Commission's plans to help build an inclusive and equitable framework. This engagement should be supported by a detailed strategy that specifies steps on how to engage hard-to-reach groups effectively and promoting active participation. Stakeholder involvement should involve co-producing actions or recommendations based on these findings, which will ensure transparency and shared ownership of the transition process.

DRAFT ANDBC response to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission

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ANDBC feels that addressing cross-cutting issues, such as financial mechanisms to support the transition and enhancing social infrastructure, is essential for guiding the Commission's work as highlighted in the Scottish *Initial Report of the 2nd Just Transition Commission*. In addition to this, the Commission should establish a vigorous monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should clearly define milestones and indicators for the tracking progress which would be developed in collaboration with stakeholders.

Unclassified

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ITEM 9.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	25 December 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	10 December 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	NAC Conference - NAC Conference - Youth Services, Safeguarding, Radicalisation & Knife Crime, 24th – 26th January, South Shields
Attachments	Copy email from NAC

Correspondence has been received from the National Association of Councillors to advise of their NAC Conference which will be held on 24th – 26th January 2025. The conference focus is on Youth Services, Safeguarding, Radicalisation & Knife Crime and will be held in the Little Haven Hotel, South Shields, Tyne & Wear.

Youth services exist to provide a sense of belonging, a safe space and the opportunity for some of the most vulnerable young people to enjoy being young. The conference will be looking at what services are provided for young people in different parts of Great Britain. Along with the dangers to young people, Safeguarding, Radicalisation and Knife Crime. The weekend will have a range of speakers who are heavily involved in working with young people and at-risk groups.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council consider the invitation.

From: General Secretary
Sent: 28 November 2024 11:33
Subject: NAC Conference, South Shields

Youth Services, Safeguarding, Radicalisation & Knife Crime
The Little Haven Hotel,
South Shields, Tyne & Wear
24th-26th January 2025

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to invite you to our Conference at The Little Haven Hotel, South Shields. The venue has great facilities and it is located on the mouth of the River Tyne. We have used this hotel in the past and it is well recommended.

Youth services exist to provide a sense of belonging, a safe space and the opportunity for some of the most vulnerable young people to enjoy being young. We will be looking at what services are provided for young people in different parts of Great Britain.

We will also look at dangers to young people, Safeguarding, Radicalisation and Knife Crime

This weekend we have a range of speakers who are heavily involved in working with young people and at risk groups.

We will be discussing how these schemes are working and what the practicalities are. We will also have question and answer sessions.

The conference will be of interest to members and officers from all types of local authority. To book your places at this important Conference please complete the form attached and return it to me by email or post.

Yours Faithfully

B.Nelson
Councillor Brian Nelson

Councillor Brian Nelson
National Secretary
National Association of Councillors
0191 3789947 office
0779 1574879 mobile

Unclassified

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ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	02 September 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	Changes to the Standing Orders
Attachments	

Background

Further to a number of recent changes to the Standing Orders, the Chief Executive decided to undertake a full review of all Standing Orders.

The full list of proposed changes are outlined in Appendix 1 within this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers the recommended changes to the Standing Orders as set out and agrees that they are stood down without debate for one month, being brought back to the Council meeting in December 2024.

Not Applicable

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Appendix 1

Proposed changes to Standing Orders with proposed changes in red.

Glossary of Terms

“2014 Act” means the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

“2014 Executive Arrangements Regulations” means the Local Government (Executive Arrangements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

“2020 Regulations” means the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

“Call-in” means a requisition for the reconsideration of a decision as provided for in section 41(1) of the 2014 Act

“Elected Member” / “Member” means a Councillor, including those appointed as Aldermen

“Presiding Chairperson” means the Elected Member chairing the Council or Committee Meeting

“Quorum” requires 1/4 of the Council/Committee membership to be in attendance (six for Planning Committee). If the figure arrived at is not a whole number, the figure must be rounded up to the next whole number

“Remote access” means the ability to attend or participate in a meeting by electronic means, including by telephone conference, video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming

“The Department” means the Department for Communities

“Working days” excludes Public or Bank holidays, a Saturday or a Sunday **or the additional two Council holidays which are fixed on an annual basis.**

For the purposes of submitting an item of business (a Notice of Motion, an amendment or a call-in requisition), the day of submission is excluded from the definition of a Working Day. Days in which Meetings of the Council are held are not included in the definition of a Working Day.

The deadline in respect of call-in is 5.00 pm.

The deadline for Notice of Motions is **5.00pm 11.59 pm.**

In Standing Order 24 “2000 Act” means the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

“Member” means Councillor;

Not Applicable

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“nominating officer” in relation to a Party, means (a) the person registered under the 2000 Act as the Party’s nominating officers; or (b) a Member of the Council nominated under the 2000 Act for the purposes of Schedule 1 to the 2014 Act;

“party” means a party registered under the 2000 Act in the Northern Ireland register (within the meaning of that Act).

“Chief Executive” – refers to the Chief Executive leave for occasions where the Chief Executive is not contactable then the Chief Executive will deputise to a designated Director.

11. Attendance of Members at Committees

Any Elected Member may attend a Committee meeting of which he/she is not a member but may not take a Council seat within the main meeting area and instead should sit in the public gallery save where he/she wishes to speak on an item or items.

To register an interest to speak, a Member should submit a request in writing to the relevant Director at least one working day in advance of the date of the Committee meeting at which they wish to be heard.

Where such a written request has been submitted that Member shall be given special dispensation, subject to permission of the Chair, to speak on the item or items requested but shall not (unless he/she is a Member of the Committee) vote in any division or propose or second any resolution or amendment.

Elected Members attending a Committee that they are not a member of, pursuant to 17.1(10), may propose or second the motion and shall have speaking but no voting rights.

Once the item for which the Member has been granted dispensation has been dealt with the Member shall return to the public gallery. If the public and press are excluded from the meeting the Member is not required to leave the room but rather be bound by the restrictions imposed at that part of the meeting.

This section does not apply to planning applications before the Planning Committee which are instead subject to the Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee.

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 **prior to the date of the meeting** of the intended deputation-and a statement of its objective, **and subject to the agreement of Council. The Deputation will be** subject to the agreement of the Council **under the same relevancy test as listed in 17.1.**

(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.

Not Applicable

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(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 (**members of the deputation will remain subject to Standing Order 8**). Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

17. Motions

17.1 On notice

(1) Notice of every motion, other than a motion which under Standing Order 17.2 may be moved without notice, shall be given in writing, signed by at least two Members of the Council giving the notice, to the Chief Executive not later than at least five working days before the next meeting of the Council. **Each motion must have a proposer and seconder. To be valid, a Motion must state the name of the proposer and the seconder.** The motion must be clear in meaning otherwise it shall be rejected until such time as it is resubmitted in clear language. Prior to lodging a notice of motion, Members should take the opportunity to engage with the relevant Director on current action being taken and options available to have the subject matter addressed including any budgetary **and legislative implications, and in line with Council policies and service plans. Should the Notice of Motion have a budgetary, legislative or policy implication, it will be subject to a report being brought back for Council's consideration.** This may assist Members in formulating the terms of notice of motion. **The motion must be submitted no later than five working days before the meeting.**

(2) A motion shall be rejected if, in the opinion of the Chief Executive (having taken advice), the wording or nature of the motion is considered unlawful, improper or irrelevant.

(3) All notices shall be dated and numbered as received, and entered in a register to be kept for that purpose. This register shall be open to inspection by every Member of the Council.

(4) Notices of motion, **including the names**, shall be entered by the Chief Executive in their proper place upon the Summons Paper in the order in which they are received.

18. Amendments

(1) When a motion is under debate at any meeting of the Council, an amendment or further motion shall not be received, with the exception of the following:

- a) to amend the proposal, unless Standing Order 17.1(12) applies in which case the amendment must be submitted in advance; or
- b) that the Council do now adjourn **the meeting**; or

Not Applicable

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- c) that the debate be adjourned; or
- d) that the question be now put; or
- e) that the Council do proceed to the next business.

18.1 To amend the Proposal

(1) An amendment must be legitimate and within the scope of the notice convening the meeting. It must not be a direct negative; must be relevant to the proposal which it seeks to amend, and not inconsistent with anything already agreed upon at the same meeting. An amendment must relate solely to the proposal which it seeks to amend, and not be, in effect, a new proposition on a different matter, and must not place a greater responsibility on the meeting than the original proposal.

(2) An amendment to a motion shall be either:

- a) to refer a subject of debate to a Committee or to an officer for consideration or re-consideration;
- b) to leave out words;
- c) to leave out words and insert or add others; or
- d) to insert or add words

But such omission, insertion or addition of words shall not have the effect of directly negating the motion before the Council. This does not apply to Council meetings when ratifying Committee recommendations, as Council may agree to negativise a Committee decision or send it back to the Committee for further consideration.

(3) When an amendment upon an original proposal has been moved, the question to be put shall be "That the amendment be made". Where any amendment is agreed, the question to be put shall be "That the proposal, as amended, be agreed". Where any amendment is rejected the question of the substantive proposal shall be put.

20. Rules of Debate

20.1 Motions and amendments to be reduced to writing and seconded

(1) A motion or amendment shall not be discussed unless it has been proposed and seconded and, unless notice has already been given in accordance with Standing Order 17.1 or the Standing Orders otherwise state that the motion need not be reduced to writing, it shall be put into writing to **the Chief Executive and relevant Director**, before it is further discussed or put to the meeting.

(2) A Member when seconding a motion or amendment may, if they then declare their intention to do so, reserve their speech until a later period of the debate.

20.15 Duration of speeches

Except with the permission of the Council, a Member, in **introducing proposing** a Motion (**including amendments**), shall not speak for more than ten minutes and in replying, for more than five minutes. Other speakers shall be allowed one interaction which will last no longer than five minutes.

21. Voting

21.3 Qualified majority [Mandatory]

A qualified majority **vote (80 percent of the votes of the Members present and voting on the decision)** shall be required in relation to a Council's decision on—

- (a) the adoption of executive arrangements or prescribed arrangements as the Council's form of governance (Section 19 of the 2014 Act);

Not Applicable

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- (b) the method, other than d'Hondt, to be adopted for filling positions of responsibility (Schedule 1 of the 2014 Act);
- (c) the method, other than Quota Greatest Remainder, to be adopted for appointing Members to Committees (Schedule 2 of the 2014 Act);
- (d) the exercise of the general power of competence in accordance with Section 79 of the 2014 Act;
- (e) a call-in made in accordance with Section 41(1) (b) of the 2014 Act; and
- (f) the suspension of Standing Orders.

26. Rescission of a Preceding Resolution

- (1) No motion to rescind any resolution passed within the preceding six months, and no motion or amendment to the same effect as one which has been rejected within the preceding six months, shall be proposed by a Member unless the notice thereof given in pursuance of Standing Order 17.1 bears the names of at least 15% (6 Members) of the Members of the Council. Such Motions, including the names, shall be entered by the Chief Executive in their proper place upon the Summons Paper in the order in which they are received.
- (2) When any such motion or amendment has been disposed of by the Council, it shall not be open to any Member to propose a similar motion within a further period of six months.
- (3) This Standing Order shall not apply to motions moved in pursuance of a recommendation of a Committee or a Call-in.

27. Members' conduct

27.3 Member not to be heard further

If at a meeting any Member of the Council, misconducts himself/herself by persistently disregarding the ruling of the Presiding Chairperson, or by behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively or by wilfully obstructing the business of the Council, the Presiding Chairperson or any other Member may move "that the Member named be not further heard". The motion need not be reduced to writing and, if seconded, the motion will be voted on ~~shall be put and determined~~ without discussion.

27.4 Member to leave the meeting

If the Member named continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the Presiding Chairperson or any other Member may move that either the Member leaves the meeting or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. The motion need not be reduced to writing and if seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

29. Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders

29.1 Suspension

A Member may move a motion which need not be reduced in writing, for the suspension of one or more of these Council Standing Orders. A motion under this Standing Order shall require the support of a qualified majority vote within the meaning of Section 40 of the 2014 Act. Suspension can only be for the duration of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting must record the reason for the suspension. Mandatory Standing Orders may not be suspended by ~~the a~~ Council. ~~Non-mandatory~~

Not Applicable

~~Standing Orders may not be suspended by a Committee unless there is delegated powers in place to do so.~~

Substantial changes to the order and wording of the Standing Order on the Call-in of Decisions:

Original Wording / order	New Proposed Wording / order
<p>23.Call-in of decisions [Mandatory] 23.1 Decisions subject to call-in (1) The following decisions may be subject to call-in in accordance with this Standing Order: (a) a decision of the Council; (b) a decision taken by a Committee under delegated authority in accordance with section 7 of the 2014 Act; and (c) a decision taken by a Committee to make a recommendation for ratification by the Council.</p> <p>(2) No decision may be subject to call-in more than once for each of the grounds specified in section 41(1) of the 2014 Act.</p> <p>23.2 Initiating the call-in process (1) A decision to which Standing Order 23.1(1) applies must be reconsidered if a requisition is presented to the Chief Executive of the Council signed by at least 15 % of the Members of the Council. This process is known as a ‘call-in’ of the decision.</p> <p>(2) A requisition for a call-in may only be presented on either or both of the following grounds: (a) That the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues (as per section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act); and/or (b) That the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district (as per section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act).</p> <p>(3) A requisition for a call-in must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive by 5pm on the fifth working day following the issuing of the Council or Committee decision log that records the decision to which the call-in relates. If the requisition is received after this date, it shall be deemed inadmissible.</p>	<p>23.Call-in of decisions [Mandatory] 23.1 Decisions subject to call-in (1) The following decisions may be subject to call-in in accordance with this Standing Order: (a) a decision of the Council; (b) a decision taken by a Committee under delegated authority in accordance with section 7 of the 2014 Act; and (c) a decision taken by a Committee to make a recommendation for ratification by the Council.</p> <p>(2) No decision may be subject to call-in more than once for each of the grounds specified in section 41(1) of the 2014 Act.</p> <p>23.2 Call-in Procedure (1) A decision to which Standing Order 23.1(1) applies must be reconsidered if a requisition is presented to the Chief Executive of the Council signed by at least 15% (6 Members) of the Members of the Council. This process is known as a ‘call-in’ of the decision.</p> <p>(2) A requisition for a call-in must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive by 5pm on the fifth working day following the issuing of the Council or Committee decision log that records the decision to which the call-in relates. If the requisition is received after this date, it shall be deemed inadmissible, and the Chief Executive must notify the Members making the requisition of the decision.</p> <p>Where the reasons have not been specified on the requisition, the Chief Executive must notify the Members making the requisition that it shall be considered inadmissible if reasons are not specified in writing within the timeframe.</p> <p>(3) A requisition for a call-in may only be presented on either or both of the following grounds:</p>

Not Applicable

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(4) A requisition for a call-in shall:
 (a) specify the reasons why a decision should be reconsidered; and
 (b) subject to Standing Order 23.2(7), be deemed to be inadmissible if the reasons are not specified.

(5) In the case of a call-in submitted under section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, Members must in the reasons specified under Standing Order 23.2(4)(a) specify—

(a) the section of the inhabitants of the district that would be affected by the decision; and
 (b) the nature and extent of the disproportionate adverse impact.

(6) Within one working day of receipt of a valid requisition for a call-in, the Chief Executive must confirm that:

(a) the call-in has the support of 15 per cent of the Members of Council; and
 (b) the reasons for the call-in have been specified on the requisition.

(7) Where the reasons have not been specified on the requisition, the Chief Executive must notify the Members making the requisition that it shall be considered inadmissible if reasons are not specified in writing within the timeframe provided for by Standing Order 23.2(3).

(8) Where the Chief Executive is of the view that a call-in is not valid, the Chief Executive must notify the Members making the requisition why he/she considers it inadmissible and must report this decision to the next meeting of the Council. In reaching any such view, the Chief Executive may seek legal advice from a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, a copy of the advice must be furnished to the Members making the requisition and tabled at the next meeting of the Council.

23.3 Call-in of Council and Committee decisions on community impact grounds

(1) Within two working days of receipt of an admissible call-in of a Council or Committee decision made under section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, the Chief Executive must seek the

(a) That the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues (as per section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act); and/or

(b) That the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district (as per section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act).

(4) A requisition for a call-in shall:

(a) specify the reasons why a decision should be reconsidered; and

(b) ~~subject to Standing Order 23.2(7)~~, be deemed to be inadmissible if the reasons are not specified.

23.3 Call-in of Council decisions on procedural grounds

(1) If an admissible call-in of a Council decision is made under section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act, the Chief Executive will place the call-in, **including a copy of the signed requisition form** on the agenda of the next meeting of the Council.

(2) The decision will be subject to reconsideration by the Council and normal voting rules will apply.

(3) If the Chief Executive believes that legal advice will assist the Council in reconsidering the decision, the Chief Executive may seek the opinion of a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, it must be tabled at the meeting of the Council at which the decision is being reconsidered.

23.4 Call-in of Council and Committee decisions on community impact grounds

(1) In the case of a call-in submitted under section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, Members must in the reasons specified under Standing Order **23.2(4)(a)** specify—

(a) the section of the inhabitants of the district that would be affected by the decision; and
 (b) the nature and extent of the disproportionate adverse impact.

(2) Within one working day of receipt of a ~~valid~~ **admissible** requisition for a call-in, the Chief Executive must confirm that:

Not Applicable

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opinion of a practising solicitor or barrister in accordance with section 41(2) of the 2014 Act. (2) When a legal opinion obtained in accordance with Standing Order 23.3(1) is received, the Chief Executive must— (a) furnish the opinion to the Members; and (b) include the decision that has been called-in on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Council for reconsideration, at which the called-in decision must be voted upon and may only be passed by a qualified majority.

23.4 Call-in of Committee decisions on procedural grounds

(1) If an admissible call-in of a Committee decision is made under section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act, an Ad Hoc Committee of the Council must be appointed to reconsider the decision. (2) The membership of the Ad Hoc Committee will be: (a) the chairpersons of all Committees of the Council; and (b) the deputy chairpersons of all Committees of the Council. (3) The chairperson and deputy chairperson of the Committee which was responsible for the decision which is the subject of the call-in will not have voting rights at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee. (4) The Members of the Ad Hoc Committee who are present at the meeting to consider the call-in shall choose a Member to preside as chairperson of the meeting. (5) The Members who submitted the call-in, or a Member on their behalf, must be invited to attend the Ad Hoc Committee meeting at which the decision subject to the call-in is considered and may, upon the request of the chairperson, address the meeting, but must not have voting rights, unless they are voting Members of the Ad Hoc Committee. (6) The Ad Hoc Committee, having reconsidered the decision subject to the call-in, will then do one of the following: (a) agree that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues, and refer the decision back to the Committee which took the decision for reconsideration; (b) disagree that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues and either: i. in the case of a

(a) the call-in has the support of 15 per cent (6 Members) of the Members of Council and provide the names of the Members in support of the request; and (b) the reasons for the call-in have been specified on the requisition based the grounds outlined in 41(1)(a) and/or 41(1)(b)

(3) Where the Chief Executive is of the view that a call-in is not ~~valid~~ **admissible**, the Chief Executive must notify the Members making the requisition why he/she considers it inadmissible and must report this decision to the next meeting of the Council.

In reaching any such view **on admissibility**, the Chief Executive may seek legal advice from a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, a copy of the advice must be furnished to the Members, making the requisition and tabled at the next meeting of the Council.

(4) Within two working days of receipt of an admissible call-in of a Council or Committee decision made under Section 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, the Chief Executive must seek the legal opinion from a practicing solicitor or barrister in accordance with section 41(2) of the 2014 Act, **before reconsideration of a decision on a requisition is made wholly or partly.**

Once legal opinion is received, a copy of the opinion and the signed requisition form must be furnished to the Members and include the decision that has been called-in on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Council for reconsideration, at which the called-in decision must be voted upon and may only be passed by a qualified majority.

23.5 Call in of Committee decisions on procedural grounds

(1) If an admissible call-in of a Committee decision is made under section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act, an Ad Hoc Committee of the Council must be appointed to reconsider the decision. (2) The membership of the Ad Hoc Committee will be:

Not Applicable

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decision taken under delegated authority, support the decision; or ii. in the case of a decision requiring ratification by the Council, refer the decision to the Council.

(7) Where a decision has been supported in accordance with Standing Order 23.4(6)(b), that decision is deemed to be approved and will be operative from the date of the meeting at which the Ad Hoc Committee confirmed support for the decision.

(8) If the Chief Executive believes that legal advice will assist the Ad Hoc Committee with its deliberations under Standing Order 23.4(6), the Chief Executive may seek the opinion of a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, it must be tabled at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

(9) Where possible, when a call-in of a Committee decision is made, the Ad Hoc Committee will hold its meeting and make its determination as per paragraph (6) of this Standing Order prior to the next Council meeting. If timing does not permit this or if the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee determines that a further meeting is needed in order to consider legal advice, the meeting or further meeting should be held as soon as is reasonably practicable. The decision that has been called-in will remain deferred until such time as that first or further meeting takes place and a decision has been made in accordance with paragraph (8).

23.5 Call-in of Council decisions on procedural grounds

(1) If an admissible call-in of a Council decision is made under section 41(1)(a) of the 2014 Act, the Chief Executive will place the call-in on the agenda of the next meeting of the Council.

(2) The decision will be subject to reconsideration by the Council and normal voting rules will apply. (3) If the Chief Executive believes that legal advice will assist the Council in reconsidering the decision, the Chief Executive may seek the opinion of a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, it must be tabled at the meeting of the Council at which the decision is being reconsidered. 23

23.6 Call-in of Council and Committee decisions

(a) the chairpersons of all Committees of the Council; and

(b) the ~~deputy-vice~~ chairpersons of all Committees of the Council.

(3) The chairperson and ~~deputy-vice~~ chairperson of the Committee which was responsible for the decision which is the subject of the call-in will not have voting rights at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

(4) The Members of the Ad Hoc Committee who are present at the meeting to consider the call-in shall choose a Member to preside as chairperson of the meeting.

(5) The Members who submitted the call-in, or a Member on their behalf, must be invited to attend the Ad Hoc Committee meeting at which the decision subject to the call-in is considered and may, upon the request of the chairperson, address the meeting, but must not have voting rights, unless they are voting Members of the Ad Hoc Committee.

(6) The Ad Hoc Committee, having reconsidered the decision subject to the call-in, will then do one of the following:

(a) agree that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues, and refer the decision back to the Committee which took the decision for reconsideration;

(b) disagree that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues and either: i. in the case of a decision taken under delegated authority, support the decision; or ii. in the case of a decision requiring ratification by the Council, refer the decision to the Council.

(7) Where a decision has been supported in accordance with Standing Order 23.5(6)(b), that decision is deemed to be approved and will be operative from the date of the meeting at which the Ad Hoc Committee confirmed support for the decision.

(8) If the Chief Executive believes that legal advice will assist the Ad Hoc Committee with its deliberations under Standing Order 23.5(6), the Chief Executive may seek the opinion of a practising solicitor or barrister. If legal advice is received, it must be tabled at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Not Applicable

<p>on procedural grounds and community impact grounds (1) If an admissible call-in of a Committee or Council decision is cited as being made under section 41(1)(a) and 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, the procedure that shall apply when dealing with the whole of the call-in is that set out in Standing Order 23.3 (Call-in of Council and Committee decisions on community impact grounds)</p>	<p>(9) Where possible, when a call-in of a Committee decision is made, the Ad Hoc Committee will hold its meeting and make its determination as per paragraph (6) of this Standing Order prior to the next Council meeting. If timing does not permit this or if the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee determines that a further meeting is needed in order to consider legal advice, the meeting or further meeting should be held as soon as is reasonably practicable. The decision that has been called-in will remain deferred until such time as that first or further meeting takes place and a decision has been made in accordance with paragraph (8).</p> <p>23.46 Call-in of Council and Committee decisions on procedural grounds and community impact grounds</p> <p>(1) If an admissible call-in of a Committee or Council decision is cited as being made under section 41(1)(a) and 41(1)(b) of the 2014 Act, the procedure that shall apply when dealing with the whole of the call-in is that set out in Standing Order 23.4. 23 (Call-in of Council and Committee decisions on community impact grounds).</p>
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Unclassified

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ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	11 December 2024
File Reference	DIR/ADM4
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Elected Members 2025
Attachments	NILGA Letter and Enclosure of 11 December 2024

Members are asked to consider nominations to the following programme, commencing on 31 January 2025, for half a day, once a month until August 2025, with 6 of the 8 sessions being delivered online.

NILGA Leadership Development Programme	Places Available	Cost
8 half-days, Jan to Aug 25 (CPD Standards)	Demand driven	£730 per delegate (indicative based on cohort of 20)

Members being nominated are asked to pre-book the dates in their calendar to ensure they can commit to all 8 sessions.

Not Applicable

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The programme aims to develop the practical skills necessary for a strategic understanding of the context within which Members work (people, place and systems) and the capabilities they need, using relevant models and concepts to help them improve their strategic leadership approach in a local political environment.

Venues for the face-to-face modules are yet to be determined. Further details are set out in the enclosed NILGA correspondence of 11 December 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council consider and approve nominations to the NILGA Leadership programme with costs to be met from the approved Member Development budget.

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

11th December 2024

Dear Susie

Re: NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Elected Member Development 2025

As you know, NILGA coordinates an all-council Regional Programme of Elected Member Development annually, complementing your Council's specific training, designed to provide the local government sector's elected members with a co-ordinated toolkit of learning, aligned to the political skills framework. This builds on the NILGA delivered - nationally accredited Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus initiatives, has been co-designed by councils' elected member development groups, councils' member services and human resource officials, through the NILGA Elected Member Development Network.

As part of this, accredited provision is available to elected members related to Leadership.

NILGA is delivering CPD Standards, **8 Module Accredited Leadership Development Programme** for elected members, which aims to develop the practical skills necessary for a strategic understanding of the context within which councillors work (people, place and systems) and the capabilities they need, using relevant models and concepts to help them improve their strategic leadership approach in a local political environment. The Leadership Programme will commence on the 31st January 2025 and will run each month up until the Autumn 2025. NILGA seeks nominations based on your own determinations, which we ask you seek at the earliest possible full council meeting.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB

Tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA

Module	Title	Time	Date	Venue
Module 1	Programme Induction The Roles of Councillors	1-4pm	Friday 31 st January 2025	In-person, venue tbc
Module 2	Leadership of Your Local Area	tba	tba February 2025	Online / Digital
Module 3	Leadership of Your Local Community	tba	tba March 2025	Online / Digital
Module 4	Leadership with Partners – We are all in this together?	tba	tba April 2025	Online / Digital
Module 5	Leadership of Place	tba	tba May 2025	Online / Digital
Module 6	Leading the Improvement of Outcomes	tba	tba June 2025	Online / Digital
Module 7	Leading the Improvement of Efficiency and Service Delivery	tba	tba July 2025	Online / Digital
Module 8	Developing your Future Leadership Role	tba	tba August 2025	In-person, Venue tbc

Please note, there are costs per participant associated with the Programme and I have included an indicative costs model to assist in your consideration of participation, based upon previous delivery.

Thanking you in anticipation of your continued positive approach and nominations for participation on the accredited Provision. Please feel free to contact my colleague Fiona Douglas (f.douglas@nilga.org) or myself if you or a senior colleague wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Allen
Chief Executive

CC. Samantha Rea

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB

Tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA



NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Councillors 2025

What is this programme about?

The NILGA Leadership Development Programme provides a unique training and development experience for councillors in Northern Ireland to help them address the challenges of their role.

The programme is based on a tested and highly accessible model, which helps councillors to improve their understanding of:

- *Context*: how to adapt their leadership styles and practices to the context and challenges of their own place, people and systems.
- *Theory*: what knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to be effective, based on rigorous conceptual and theoretical frameworks.
- *Practice*: how to increase their personal resilience and improve their practical response to challenges.

The programme therefore enhances councillors' strategic leadership and decision-making skills, making more effective their Council role, community champion activities and 'personal brand'.

How will this programme benefit me?

The programme will help you to develop the practical skills necessary to be a more effective councillor, to highlight what roles you currently play and should look to play in the future, and to overcome the major challenges and barriers you face in playing these roles.

You will have the chance to catch up with the latest thinking on local government leadership and to develop new approaches to your work as a councillor.

The Programme is deliberately ambitious – it aims to enable you to take a strategic approach to identifying, balancing and addressing the needs in your local area and making more effective use of the assets of local residents, community groups, local business, your political party (if you belong to one) and the Council.

The programme is also designed to help you to deal successfully with the operational problems faced by your constituents. Case studies and discussions with visiting speakers who have directly relevant experience of the issues will introduce new approaches, so that you are assisted to think and act differently and have more impact in tackling the problems you face.

Finally, the programme is CPD-accredited, so upon completion you will accumulate CPD credits to demonstrate your achievement.

Programme of workshops

Modules
Module 1: Programme Induction The Role of the Councillor
Module 2: Leadership of Your Area
Module 3: Leadership of Your Community
Module 4: Leadership with Partners – We’re All in This Together
Module 5: Leadership of Place
Module 6: Leading the Improvement of Outcomes
Module 7: Leading the Improvement of Efficiency and Service Delivery
Module 8: Developing Your Future Leadership Role

During the eight modules, we will be exploring the following knowledge and skill sets – and you will have a chance to identify your own strengths and ‘learning opportunities’ in relation to each of these:

- Local leadership (All Modules)
- Political understanding (Modules 1, 2 and 5)
- Partnership working (Modules 3 ,4 and 5)
- Effective communication for influence (Module 3 and 7)
- Scrutiny and challenge (Module 2 and 6)
- Regulating and monitoring (Module 6)
- Effective use of digital technologies and social media (Module 7)
- Personal resilience (Module 8)

What commitment will the programme entail from me?

You will be expected to attend eight 3-hour workshops over 8 months, beginning in January 2025, preparation is required for each workshop (reading a short article or blog and preparing the answer to some questions relevant to the session). You will then gain CPD credits for your

attendance. In addition, you will get 12 extra CPD credits if you make a short presentation in one of the final workshops, focusing on how you are improving your leadership in line with the lessons you have learnt from the programme.

What other participants have gained

NILGA believes this programme brings major benefits for all participants. And previous participants agree here are some comments from councillors who participated in previous programmes:

“The programme has been brilliant from start to finish, I have learnt a lot from it and from that learning I can actually make better decisions and get more involved in my role as a Councillor as I no longer shy away from the big decisions.”

“The use of data sources and the approach of identifying key skills in people where I do not have the strength in such. Also, the continual developing and learning in myself has been a great asset in both council and my professional role.”

“I found the course informative, and it helped me to understand my role as a Councillor and leader in my community. It was also really good to hear experiences and tips from Councillors in other areas.”

“... pushed me to make me even more self-aware ..., especially of my leadership style and how best to utilise this in different groups and situations. Particularly the power of influence and not control!”

“As a newly elected councillor I am still very much learning in the role. Content in the Programme helped me gain a better understanding of process and how to achieve outcomes.”

Costing Estimate

The cost for the overall Programme, based on 2023-24 delivery and current forecasted requirements, is approximately £14,600 +VAT. Individual participant cost will be subject to the overall number of the cohort nominated for the Leadership Programme 2023-24; based on a cohort of 20, we can provide an indicative cost of £730 +VAT.

There will be an opportunity for those Councillors who are interested in and committed to achieving CPD accreditation from the CPD Standards Office. This will involve additional costs to the figure provided above - indicative costs at this stage are a further £590 +VAT. Those who wish to register and commit to CPD accreditation will have a deadline within which to do so (typically, at the end of the second module).

Unclassified

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ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	18 December 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	06 December 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 tracker

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:	Responsible Committee	Date Received	Submitted by	Notice (Original and any amendment)	Council & Committee Meetings (Date & Item)	Status (Most recent status update at the top followed by detail of what has been accomplished to date)	Responsible Officer	Final Outcome
11	Community & Wellbeing	31.05.15	Councillor Muir & Alderman Keery	Rory McIlroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers discussing options with McIlroy Organisation	Graeme Bannister	
330	Environment	21.01.19	Councillor Brooks & Councillor Smith	This Council brings back a report on providing a shelter or sheltered area near the slipway in Donaghadee which would provide cover for the growing numbers of open water swimmers that use the area on a daily basis.	Council January 2019 Environment Committee 06.02.19 Item 16.3	Report to be brought back to Committee	Peter Caldwell	
370	Environment	13/09/2019	Councillor Cathcart & Alderman Gibson	That this Council acknowledges that Council byelaws are in need of review. Many of our Council byelaws are now outdated and do not cover new housing developments and playparks in the Borough. The Council therefore will carry out a comprehensive review of Council byelaws	Council - September 2019 Referred to Environment Committee - October 2019 Environment Committee 02.09.20 Item 12	Review of the byelaws to commence and be undertaken in three stages. Phase 1 - Scope, Phase 2 - Council Review and Phase 3 - Recommendation and Decision	Richard McCracken	
419	Community & Wellbeing	20.10.20	Councillor Brooks & Councillor Chambers	"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."	Council October 2020 Community & Wellbeing Committee December 2020	Report to November C&W Committee. Consideration of Masterplan and application of play strategy with local consultation when it takes place in Donaghadee	Stephen Daye	

514	Community & Wellbeing	19.05.22	Councillor Cummings & Councillor Johnson	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Council agreed Comber 3G pitch is ranked 21st in project prioritisation. Stakeholder engagement to commence at the appropriate time	Ian O'Neill	
516	Corporate Services	20.06.24	Councillor Greer & Councillor McKee	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.	Council June 2022 Corporate Services Committee October 2022 Corporate Services Committee November 2024	Report to Corporate Committee November 2024. After ratification remove from tracker.		
519	Community & Wellbeing	20.06.22	Councillor Kendal, Councillor McRandal & Councillor McClean	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen's Leisure Complex	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Report to November C&W Committee. Community Engagement took place on 24th September 2024	Nikki Dorrian & Ian O'Neill	
522	Corporate Services	05.07.22	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery Amendment received from Councillor Cathcart	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. *** Amendment - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Council July 2022 Environment Committee September 2022 Corporate Services January 2024	April 2023 - Letter requesting permission to use the Royal Name sent to the Cabinet Office and awaiting response January 2024 - Report brought to Corporate Committee Amendment Agreed and advice sought from Cabinet Office December 2024 - Advice still outstanding		

525	Community & Wellbeing	24.08.22	Councillor Cooper, Councillor T Smith & Councillor Irvine	Amended 11.10.2022 Corporate Committee: That Council officers bring back a report on relevant Council policies with a view to withdrawing funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums, or competitions and such a report will be appropriately guided by legal advice in relation to this course of action	Council August 2022 Corporate Committee October 2022	Legal advice to be sought by the Councils Equality Officer and a report to be brought back to Community & Wellbeing Committee in February 2025	Nikki Dorrian	
529	Environment	22.08.22	Councillor Dunlop & Councillor Douglas	<p>That this Council agrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pedestrians should feel safe on our pavements, yet street clutter can make walking and wheeling unsafe, forcing people onto the road which is dangerous; • Street furniture should be clean, have a purpose and be consistent; and • Street clutter should be removed. <p>Therefore, Council tasks officers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an audit of street infrastructure including street signage, project information; posts, etc: • Remove historic street clutter which has no current purpose or future benefit; • Ensure relevant signage is cleaned and fit for purpose; • Ensure signs have the appropriately-named Council on it, where this applies; • Identify a nominated officer within the Council to lead on the audit to ensure items are listed and removed; and • Write to the Department for Infrastructure to request they complete a similar de-clutter across the Borough. 	Council September 2022 Environment Committee October 2022	Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway.	Peter Caldwell	

545	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.22	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	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.	Council November 2022 Community & Wellbeing December 2022 and March 2023 and June 2023	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	Nikki Dorrian	
549	Community & Wellbeing	09.12.22	Councillor Douglas & Councillor Walker	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.	Council December 2022 Corporate Services Committee January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024	Report to December C&W Committee after Officer meets with TEO. Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&W Committee. Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee ratified at Council.	Nikki Dorrian	

550	Environment	13.12.22	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor MacArthur	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 21.12.22 Item 16.4</p> <p>Environment Committee</p> <p>January 2023</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>12.12.23 Letter sent to DAERA by CEx</p> <p>08.11.23 Response received from DFI</p> <p>13.10.23 - Acknowledgement received from PSNI</p> <p>12.10.23 - letters sent to DFI & PSNI by CEx</p>	Nigel Martin	
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555	Community & Wellbeing	08.12.22	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas	<p>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</p>	<p>Council January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee February 2023 and June 2023</p>	<p>Officers working on business case and elements for cycle to work and infrastructure planning. Budget not secured for 2024/25. Further report to future C&WC if budget made available in 2025/2026 including the report to recommend declaration</p>	Stephen Daye	
562	Environment	18.01.23	Councillor Morgan & Councillor McRandal	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council January 2023 Environment Committee February 2023 October 2023</p>	Supplementary report requested - TBC	Nigel Martin	

564	Community & Wellbeing	08.02.23	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.	Council February 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Officers awaiting response from EA in order for report to be brought back to future C&W Committee. EA has responded to say they '...would be in contact when they are ready to progress...'	Ian O'Neill	
567	Corporate Services	14.02.23	Councillor Adair & Councillor Edmund	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Council February 2023 Corporate Services Committee March 2023	A response has been received from the Cabinet Office and a report went back to Committee 30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update. Letters sent to the Cabinet Office requesting use of the Royal Name July 2024 - Advice now received - Report presented at September CSC. Agreed that combined EQIA more appropriate. A further report to be brought to CSC when EQIA ready to go.	Alison Curtis	

568	Place & Prosperity	06.02.23	Councillor Smart & Councillor Irvine	<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>	<p>Council 29 March 2023 (Item 22.1)</p> <p>Place & Prosperity Committee 15 June 2023 (Item 28.1) 13 June 2024 (Item 15)</p>	Further report to be brought back to Committee		
535	Environment		Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	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>Council August 2023</p> <p>Environment Committee September 2023</p>		Peter Caldwell	

585	Community & Wellbeing		Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024</p>	<p>Officers working on report to C&W Committee in January 2025. Further report requested being considered by officers with a report to future C&W Committee</p>	Stephen Daye	
588	Environment		Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Amendment: 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.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini public realm or streetscape project in</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023 Council August 2024 Item 20</p>	<p>Officers to liaise with Greyabbey Community Association. Amendment Agreed at Environment Committee. 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, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini public realm or streetscape project in Greyabbey.</p>	Peter Caldwell	

586	Corporate Services	16.10.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin	<p>That this Council, further to recent positive discussions with landowners, agrees to reexamine the April 2014 decision of North Down Borough Council to accept a gift of open space at Ambleside, Bangor, which was never completed and tasks Council Officers to bring back a report looking at (i) acquiring the land and (ii) options around future uses for the land.</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor. July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor. Report to Corporate Committee in September 2024. November: Proceeding through compliance team.</p>		
595	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	<p>This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience.</p>	<p>Council 29.11.2023</p>	<p>Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee. Second report to March 2025 C&W Committee</p>	Nikki Dorrian	

598	Community & Wellbeing	20.11.23	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 29.11.23 Community & Wellbeing January 2024</p>	<p>Report to November 2024 C&W Committee. Officers continue to work with DfC application for external funding.</p>	Stephen Daye	
599	Community & Wellbeing	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	<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>	<p>Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024</p>	<p>Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Next report will be to January 2025 Committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian	

607	Corporate Services	13.01.24	Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith	<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 safety of our roads network.</p>	<p>Council 31.01.24 Corporate Services Committee June 2024. Corporate Services Committee September 2024. Corporate Services Committee November 2024.</p>	<p>Update report to Corporate Services Committee in June 2024. Letter to DfI re 'weighted indicators' used to allocate funds. Report to Corporate Committee September 2024. 9.10.2024 further letter sent following Corporate September, reply received and Response to NOM to November 2024 Corporate Services Committee. 4th letter to be issued.</p>		
610	Community & Wellbeing	19.02.24	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 26.03.24 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2024</p>	<p>Officers working on a Business Case. Report to November 2024 C&W Committee</p>	Stephen Daye	
613	Community & Wellbeing	04.03.24	Councillors Wray, Kerr, Boyle, Edmund, Aldermen Adair and McAlpine	<p>Rescinding Notice of Motion - Playpark, Parsonage Road, Kircubbin</p>	<p>Council March 2024</p>	<p>Report to November 2024 C&W Committee. To be combined with play strategy future recommendations following Council decision in June 2024.</p>	Stephen Daye	

616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	<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>	<p>Council 26.03.24 Environment Committee 10.04.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 04.09.24 Item 14 Environment Committee 06.11.24 Item 3</p>	<p>Agreed that the Council proceeds with the 'Phase 1' further investigation work regarding potential Donaghadee sea defence enhancements, as identified in the report brought to the Council in September 2024. Agreed that Council proceeds as proposed in section 4 of the report, with the outcome of engagement outlined being reported back to Environment Committee by January 2025. April 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.</p>	Peter Caldwell	
619	Community & Wellbeing	30.04.24	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 29.05.24 Community & Wellbeing Committee June 2024</p>	<p>Report to January C&W Committee.</p>	Ian O'Neill	

620	Community & Wellbeing	05.03.24	Councillor Ashe & Councillor Morgan	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Council 29.05.24</p> <p>Community & Wellbeing Committee</p> <p>June 2024</p>	Report to November C&W Committee	Stephen Daye	
623	Corporate Services	14.5.24	Councillor Gilmour & Councillor Martin	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 29.05.24</p> <p>Corporate Services Committee</p> <p>18.06.24 Item 17.2</p>	<p>June 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee. Report to Dec CS Committee.</p>	Alison Curtis	

625	Environment	21.05.24	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	<p>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 today and well kept to welcome visitors to the Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further Council bring forward in report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage.</p>	<p>Council 26.06.24 Item 15.1 Council 31.07.24 Item 15</p>	<p>Amended and agreed at July Council that Council proceed with the above-mentioned works at a cost of approximately £13,000 and further Council write to NIEA to request a site meeting to discuss the need to repair access to beaches at Cloughey, Millisle and Portavogie. Heard and Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Council meeting 26.06.24</p>	Peter Caldwell	
626	Corporate Services	13.06.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council 26.06.24 Item 15.2</p>	<p>Referred to Corporate Services Committee for hearing at September 2024 committee. Agreed that report brought back to relevant committee. Report at Nov CS committee. Remove after ratification.</p>		

627	Community & Wellbeing	01.08.24	Councillor Creighton & Councillor Moore	<p>This Council notes the importance of organ donation in saving lives and improving the quality of life of residents of this Borough.</p> <p>This Council further notes that there are plans for the production and installation in the Borough, of a bench celebrating organ donation. This project began in 2013 and is supported by a number of organ transplant charities. Council resolves to work with the charities involved to finalise the detailed design and expedite installation of this bench in a prominent place in the Borough. A fund to cover all the manufacturing costs and any necessary support structures has already been raised. The hope is that this will be a place for people to engage in conversations about and spark interest in this important issue and somewhere to reflect and remember loved ones.</p>	<p>Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.1)</p> <p>September 2024 C&W</p>	<p>Report to November 2024 C&W Committee</p>	<p>Stephen Daye</p>	
628	Place & Prosperity	18.08.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	<p>That Council Officers be instructed to consider options for appropriate signage to direct the public to the Camera Obscura in Donaghadee. That Council Officers should explore and consider opportunities for securing sponsorship for the signage from local businesses and organisations</p>	<p>Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.2) referred to Place & Prosperity Ctte - 5 September 2024 (Item 14.1)</p>	<p>Donaghadee Signage Working Group established. Audit completed of existing signage to provide rationale for additional signage. Update report to future P&P Committee</p> <p>Agreed at 5 Sept P&P and ratified by 25 Sept Council</p>	<p>Greame Bannister?</p>	

629	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	<p>That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clandeboye road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed."</p>	<p>Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3) September C&W Committee</p>	<p>Report to January 2025 C&W Committee</p>	Stephen Daye	
630	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	<p>That Council notes the increasing complaints from local sports clubs regarding the poor annual summer maintenance of football pitches across the Borough and tasks officers to bring forward a report on options to improve the maintenance of our football pitches to ensure our pitches are maintained to a high standard to meet the sporting needs of local clubs and league requirements</p>	<p>Council August 2024 (Item 25.4) September C&W Committee</p>	<p>Report to November C&W Committee</p>	Stephen Daye	

631	Corporate Services		Alderman McIlveen, Councillor Boyle, Alderman McDowell, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, Councillor Smart, Councillor Kennedy, Councillor S Irvine	That this Council bestows the Freedom of the Borough upon Rhys McClenaghan - European, Commonwealth, World and Olympic Gold Medallist - in recognition of his outstanding achievements in sport.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.1)			
632	Environment	21.08.24	Councillor Irwin and Alderman McRandal	That this Council tasks officers with producing a report outlining how pedestrian access to Household Recycling Centres in the Borough could be facilitated. This report should include consideration of health and safety requirements, the HRC booking system and the ability to provide pedestrian access in other council areas in Northern Ireland.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.2) Environment October 2 October 2024 (Item 11.1)	Agreed at Environment Committee 2 October 2024	Nigel Martin	

633	Community & Wellbeing	05.09.24	Alderman P Smith and Councillor Wray, Councillor W Irvine	That this Council strongly opposes the UK Government's recent Winter Fuel Payment policy change. We resolve to write to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to reverse this harmful decision which will have a far-reaching and devastating impact on pensioner households across the UK. Furthermore, we seek assurance that, at the very least, the Pension Credit minimum income guarantee will be increased, ensuring that more low-income pensioner households, particularly those who narrowly miss out, become eligible for pension credit.	Council September 2024 (Item 13.3) Community and Wellbeing Committee	Letters sent November 2024	Nikki Dorrian	
634	Place & Prosperity	1.10.24	Councillors Blaney & Hollywood	This Council notes with deep concern the fraudulent activity impacting local businesses through the manipulation of bank account information on Just Eat partner centre accounts, resulting in substantial financial losses; recognises the critical role these businesses play in supporting the local economy and acknowledges the severe impact these losses have on their ability to operate and resolves to write to Just Eat, expressing our deep concern over the financial harm caused to local businesses and calling on the company to urgently engage with affected businesses to resolve this devastating issue and prevent further incidents.	Council October 2024 Item 23.1 - Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024	Agreed at 7 Nov P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council		

635	Environment	11.10.24	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Douglas	<p>That this Council notes the 70% recycling target set out in the Climate Change Act 2022 and that the current household recycling average is 50.7%.</p> <p>Further notes the aims and intentions around the consultation on “Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” includes the reduction in grey bin capacity by either volume of bin or three weekly collections;</p> <p>Further notes that nappy collection scheme was not referred to in Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” despite around 4% of residual waste being made up of disposable nappies and other absorbent hygiene products;</p> <p>Further notes with concern the impact reduced grey bin capacity will have on those households disposing of nappies and/or other absorbent hygiene products as well as the amount of recyclable materials such products contain;</p> <p>This Council writes to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs expressing its view that there is a need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland in order to meet recycling targets and to support households if grey bin capacity is reduced as a result of any future Departmental strategy and,</p>	Council October 2024 - Item 23.2 Environment Committee November 2024	Agreed at Environment Committee in November 2024		
636	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.24	Councillors Boyle & Wray	<p>That officers bring back a detailed report surrounding options to celebrate the huge success of the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. Options would include a Civic Reception to celebrate 6 years of the huge success of the facility in 2025</p>	Council October 2024 Item 23.3 - Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Agreed at Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Ian O'Neill	

637	Community & Wellbeing	21.10.24	Councillor S Irvine & Councillor W Irvine	<p>This Council agrees to consider as part of the upcoming rates setting process sufficient support to the cultural expression programme. Subject to this process, consideration should be given to committing funds from Council which are sufficient to meet the costs of planning activities without the uncertainty of funding coming from other sources, as has been the case for the last two years. Should in year funding become available from other sources, Council's contribution would be adjusted accordingly. This commitment reflects the Council's support for local cultural initiatives in an attempt to ensure that groups can prepare for their events.</p> <p>This will guarantee that each group agreeing to abide by the cultural expression agreement will receive a letter of offer in advance of 31st May, regardless of whether external funding is available via the Good Relations Action Plan, or any other third-party source.</p> <p>This commitment reflects the Council's support for local cultural initiatives, ensuring that all the participating community groups can prepare for their activities without uncertainty regarding funding.</p>	Council October 2024 Item 23.4 - Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Agreed at Community & Wellbeing Committee November 2024	Nikki Dorrian	
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638	Place & Prosperity	22.10.2024	Councillors Harbinson & McCracken	<p>that this Council should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen’s Parade, Newtownards Citizen’s Hub and the Council’s Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments. 2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use. 3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive disposal policies. 	Council October 2024 Item 23.5 - Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024	Agreed at 7 Nov P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council	Interim Director of Place to lead	
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