

February 20th, 2025

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 26th February 2025** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall, Bangor & via Zoom.**

# Agenda

## Agenda

[C 26.02.25 Agenda.pdf](#)

Page 1

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month (Copy attached)

[Mayoral Engagements February 2025.pdf](#)

Page 5

6. Minutes of Council Meeting held on 29 January 2025 (Copy attached)

[C 29.01.2025 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[C 29.01.2025 MinutesPM.pdf](#)

Page 7

- 6.1. Matter Arising - Item 7.4. Seeking nominations for Green Growth Working Group

Report attached

[6.1. Green Economy Working Group Nominations.pdf](#)

Page 29

7. Minutes of Committees

- 7.1 Planning Committee dated 4 February 2025 (Copy attached)

[PC.04.02.25 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[PC.04.02.25 Minutes PM.pdf](#)

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- 7.2 Environment Committee dated 5 February 2025 (Copy attached)

[EC.05.02.25 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

## 7.3 Place & Prosperity Committee dated 6 February 2025 (Copy attached)

PP 06.02.2025 Minutes.pdf

Not included

PP 06.02.3035 MinutesPM.pdf

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### 7.3.1. Matter arising – Item 4 Local Employment Partnerships

Report attached

7.3.1. - LEP Nominations.pdf

Page 133

## 7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 11 February 2025 (Copy attached)

CS 11.02.2025 Minutes.pdf

Not included

CS 11.02.2025 MinutesPM.pdf

Page 135

## 7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 12 February 2025 (Copy attached)

CW 12.02.2025 Minutes GB.pdf

Not included

CW 12.02.2025 MinutesPM.pdf

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## 8. Requests for Deputation

### 8.1. North Down & Ards Women's Aid

Report attached

8.1 - Deputation Request Women's Aid.pdf

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8.1. Appendix NDAWA Deputation Request Form.pdf

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### 8.2. Society of Saint Vincent de Paul – North Down and Ards Area Council

Report attached

8.2. - Deputation Request SVP.pdf

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[8.2. Appendix Deputation Request Form.pdf](#) Page 220

### **8.3. Community Advice Ards and North Down**

Report attached

[8.3. - Deputation Request CAAND.pdf](#) Page 224

[8.3. Appendix Deputation Request Form.pdf](#) Page 225

### **8.4. Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK**

Report attached

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[8.4. Appendix Deputation Request Form.pdf](#) Page 231

## **9. Consultations**

### **9.1. Consultation on Proposed Private Member's Bill – Trees (and associated draft response)**

Report attached

[9.1. Consultation on Proposed Private Members Bill- Trees.pdf](#) Page 235

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## **10. Nomination to Outside Bodies**

Report attached

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## **11. Sealing Documents**

## **12. Transfer of Rights of Burial**

## **13. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)**

Report attached

[13. NoM Status Report.pdf](#) Page 246

[13. NoM Tracker.pdf](#) Page 247

## **14. Notices of Motion**

### **14.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall**

This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band 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 required to host major events, for example 14,000 people attended the Donaghadee Lights Up event, 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 NI, this Council will bring back a report considering the potential for the ANDBC Pipe Band Championships to be held across the Borough on a rotational basis in Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee.

### **14.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Cummings & Councillor Douglas**

That this Council brings back a report outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber, to accommodate a list of historically researched names, currently being collated as per War Memorial Trust guidelines, of the fallen in the Great War 1914-1918, which were previously not included.

### **14.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Wray & McLaren**

That this Council recognises the impact that recent severe weather events have had on residents and business owners within our Borough.

Council will develop an information, advice, and education initiative that will be accessible to all residents across Ards and North Down. The aim of this initiative will be to ensure residents are prepared for severe weather events such as storms and floods. This will include advice around precautions they can take, services they can avail of, and signposting.

Officers will produce a report to members with suggested methodology such as a dedicated section on the Council website, workshops, and visual media, along with projected associated costs if any.

#### **14.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund**

That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Islandview Road Greyabbey to ensure future intermediate football standards by the local sporting clubs and community of Greyabbey.

#### **Circulated for Information**

- a) Electoral Office for Northern Ireland - NEW ELECTORAL OFFICE WEBSITE & ELECTORAL IDENTITY CARD APPLICATIONS ONLINE New Electoral Office Website & Electoral Identity Card Applications Online (Correspondence attached)
- b) Committee for Justice – Justice Bill: Call for Evidence (Correspondence attached)
- c) Ards FC Stakeholder Consultation - Letter of Support from The Mayor (Report attached)

 a) *CEO Letter - Elected Representatives Website ID Card Review.pdf* *Page 266*


 b) *Justice Bill.pdf* *Page 267*

 c) - *Ards FC Consultation - Letter of Support from the Mayor.pdf* *Page 269*

**\*\*\* IN CONFIDENCE \*\*\***

#### **15. Tender for the Provision of Cleaning Services at 2no Council Buildings**

Report attached

 15. *Tender for Cleaning Services.pdf* *Not included*

## **16. Single Tender Action - Supply BMI Ejector Trailers**

Report attached

 **16. Waste Transfer Trailer Single Tender Action.pdf**

***Not included***

## **17. Storm Damage at Aurora**

Report attached

 **17. Storm Damage at Aurora.pdf**

***Not included***

## **18. Queens Parade**

Report attached

 **18. Queen's Parade update.pdf**

***Not included***

## **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

19 February 2025

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 26 February 2025 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
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  - 6.1.Matter Arising - Item 7.4 Seeking nominations for Green Growth Working Group (Report attached)
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  - 7.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 12 February 2025 (Copy to follow)



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  - 8.1. North Down & Ards Women's Aid (Report attached)
  - 8.2. Society of Saint Vincent de Paul – North Down and Ards Area Council (Report attached)
  - 8.3. Community Advice Ards and North Down (Report attached)
  - 8.4. Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK (Report attached)
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16. Single Tender Action - Supply BMI Ejector Trailers (Report attached)
17. Storm Damage at Aurora (Report attached)
18. Queens Parade (Report attached)

#### 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 FEBRUARY 2025**

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

- 11:00      Seacourt Print Workshop Re-Launch, Old Ulster Bank, Main Street, Bangor
- 18:00      Late Night Art, Bangor (Several locations across the City)
- 19:00      Flo Physio Official Opening, Thornleigh Gardens, Bangor

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025**

- 15:30      Self Defence for Women Final, Hybrid MMA, Comber

**Tuesday 4th February 2025**

- 08:00      Business Breakfast, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel

**Wednesday 5th February 2025**

- 11:00      Bangor SureStart Annual Health Fair, Bangor Library (The Curve)
- 12:00      Savoy Advisory Group, Hamilton Hub, Bangor

**Thursday 6th February 2025**

- 19:00      Live Here Love Here Community Awards, Belfast Castle
- 19:15      Groomsport Village Association AGM, The Boathouse, Groomsport Harbour.

**Friday 7th February 2025**

- 18:20      Community Development Play Club: Children's Mental Health Week, Skipperstone Community Centre

**Saturday 8th February 2025**

- 19:00      We're All Mad Here - Keith Drury Exhibition, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel

**Tuesday 11th February 2025**

- 15:00      Tea Dance, Queen's Hall, Newtownards
- 19:00      Donaghadee Community Development Plans 2025, Meadowbank Club, 38 Parade, Donaghadee

**Wednesday 12th February 2025**

10:00 BeeSafe PR Photo, Ards Arts Centre

19:00 Abbey Villa Football Club Reception, Bangor Castle

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

12:00 Donaghadee Historical Walking Tour Photo Op, Pier 36

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

16:00 Meeting with High Sheriff, Bangor Castle

18:00 Rare Disease Community Network Reception, Bangor Castle

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

11:00 Public Conveniences Staff Recognition, Bangor Castle

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

09:30 BeeSafe Photo Op, Ards Arena

19:00 Tughan Court Reception, Bangor Castle

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

19:00 Ballygrainey BB Tour, Bangor Castle

## 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 and via Zoom, on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)	
Aldermen:	Adair Armstrong-Cotter Brooks Cummings Graham (7.06pm)	McAlpine (Zoom) McIlveen McRandal Smith
Councillors:	Ashe Blaney Boyle (7.15pm) Chambers Cochrane Douglas Edmund Gilmour Harbinson Hennessy Hollywood Irwin S Irvine W Irvine	Kendall Kerr McBurney (Zoom) McClean McCollum McCracken McKee (Zoom) McKimm McLaren Moore (7.08pm) Morgan Thompson Smart (Zoom 8.13pm) Wray

**Officers:** Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (B Dorrian), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

### 1. PRAYER

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

### 2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage. Apologies were received from Councillor Kennedy and apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Smart and Councillor Moore.

**NOTED.**

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**NOTED.**

### **4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS**

The Mayor welcomed Members to the first Council meeting of 2025 and hoped that everyone had had an enjoyable and restful Christmas and New Year.

Before he went on to further business, he wanted to acknowledge the impact of Storm Eowyn which had hit Northern Ireland the previous Friday. He was aware that Members would have been receiving regular updates from the Chief Executive on the impact of the storm on the Borough and what the Council had been doing to support local residents.

The storm had left devastation across the Borough, in particular in its parks and open spaces, Aurora Leisure Centre, Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, and had left thousands of residents without power or water. He wanted particularly to extend his thanks to all of the Council's staff who had worked tirelessly in preparing for, and most importantly, managing, the aftermath of the storm over the past week and for the ongoing work that would be required over the weeks to come. It had been a tremendous effort to ensure the Borough's facilities and open spaces were safe, clean and accessible for the public once again.

He was delighted to read in the newspapers this month that eight Ards and North Down citizens had been awarded in the New Years Honours list for their dedicated public service, from education to health and social care, the food and drink industry, the Youth Justice Agency and young people in music. The list of recipients was as followed:

Sharon Philomena Smyth, Chief Executive of Construction Procurement Delivery at the Northern Ireland Civil Service – Services to Procurement

Michael Bloomfield, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service – Services to Health and Social Care

Lorraine Finlay, Principal Officer, Head of Area Planning at the Department of Education – Services to Education

Jonathan William McDowell, Founder of Indie Fude – Services to the Food and Drink Industry in Northern Ireland

Dr Linley Patrick Hamilton, for services to the music industry – Services to the Music Industry in Northern Ireland

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Kathy Maureen Finlay, staff officer and claims manager in the roads claims unit of the Department for Infrastructure – for Public Service

Paula Klein for Services to Young People in Classical Music

Robert Ruth Quinn, Catering Manager at the Youth Justice Agency for Services to the Youth Justice System.

On behalf of the Council, he wished to extend to them his sincere congratulations.

**NOTED.**

Alderman McRandal commented that it had been worrying to see so much destruction around the Borough including the damage to the roof of Aurora and on behalf of the Alliance Party he offered his thanks to all those included in the statutory response team and commended the Council's leading role in that. He also gave thanks to the Chief Executive for the detailed and timely updates that had been provided.

Alderman McIlveen echoed those words and was aware that there was much work still ongoing in relation to trees and electricity connections and that that was sensitive and dangerous work. He expressed his gratitude for all the efforts provided across the statutory agencies and the teams who had come in from other areas to provide support to them. He referred to the difficulties still being faced particularly by the elderly and vulnerable and those without a power and water supply and appreciated the outreach and additional support being offered to those people. The Council opening up community centres and leisure centres had been incredibly helpful and he thanked the Chief Executive for updating Members on the unfolding position.

(Alderman Graham entered the meeting at 7.06 pm)

Alderman Smith also thanked the response teams and reported that he had been without power for five days and understood the hardships being faced, particularly to the vulnerable, noting that there were still twenty thousand households within the Borough without power. He had been encouraged to see the leadership shown by the Council in providing information to the public and in working to get services back so quickly. He and his family had welcomed the opportunity to use the facilities at Comber Leisure Centre for washing and he gave credit to the Council for the services and assistance that had been given to residents.

Councillor Kendall reported the excellent feedback both to her personally and also on social media and the message coming back was that people had felt cared for during a difficult time. She thanked the Council and statutory agencies and hoped that that work would continue, and it had been very encouraging to see the community come together to help one another.

The Mayor agreed with all those sentiments and added his own thanks to the Council staff and statutory agencies and was aware that it would take some time to recover from what had been a powerful and devastating storm.



(Councillor Moore entered the meeting at 7.08 pm)

Concluding the Mayor's business the Mayor wished to extend the sympathy of the Council to Mr Leslie Cree, former UUP Councillor, MLA and Mayor of North Down, on the sad loss of his wife Irene. Irene had also been a Mayor of North Down and he wished those sympathies to be put on record.

In the run up to Christmas the Council had also lost a valued colleague, Mr Leslie Turner, who was a true gentleman and the thoughts and prayers of those within the Council remained with his wife, Jill Hunter, who was a Council colleague. Another valued colleague, Mr Colin Casswell, from Community Halls also died and the Council wished to pass on its deepest sympathy to Mr Casswell's family as well.

The Mayor asked the Council to be upstanding for a moment as a mark of respect to those who had died.

**NOTED.**

## **5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2025**

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of January 2025.

Referring to his leave of absence on honeymoon earlier in the month he thanked the Deputy Mayor for his assistance but had been pleased to return in time to attend a number of Holocaust Memorial events. The first being at Bangor Library where it had been good to see young children and community groups involved in making art displays reflecting that event and the Holocaust Memorial event at Bangor Castle which had been well done and he thanked the Good Relations team for that. It had been thought provoking hearing of the story of a second-generation survivor of the Holocaust and it was important to remember that the same story could be replicated millions of times. He reflected that it was personally difficult to deal with the scale of the atrocity and stated that if a moment's silence was paid to every victim, it would take eleven and a half years.

He and the Chief Executive had also had the pleasure of attending the ceremony for the handover of the Sheriffs at Montalto Estate. The Council worked closely with the Sheriff of County Down on several ceremonial events throughout the year and he wished the outgoing Sheriff, Sue Wild, his best wishes and welcomed the incoming High Sheriff, Peter Leckey, and hoped he would have a successful term.

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

(Councillor Boyle entered the meeting at 7.15 pm)

## **6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 18 DECEMBER 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by the Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the minutes be adopted.

In respect of Item 7.4.1 Matters Arising item 8 - NOM 623 Update: VE Day – 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Councillor Gilmour raised a point of accuracy where the minutes referenced the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day stated as 8 May 2024 when it should be 8 May 2025.

In respect of Item 3 - Peaceplus

Alderman McRandal referred to where it said ride off when it should have said write off.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the minutes be adopted.**

## **7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

### **7.1 Audit Committee dated 16 December 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be adopted.**

### **7.2 Special Corporate Services Committed dated 17 December 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

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

### **7.3 Environment Committee dated 8 January 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the minutes be adopted.**

#### **7.4 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 January 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the minutes be adopted.

##### In respect of Item 9.1 – Notice of Motion (639)

Alderman Smith referred to the hoarding at Castle Street, Comber, stating that he had planned to bring forward an amendment to that Notice of Motion in an attempt to take firmer action to tackle the issue. Particularly since the recent storm he thought that the hoarding may be on its last nails, and he was concerned about the danger that could arise if there were further strong winds. He had engaged with officers and colleagues and understood the complexity over what he was suggesting and proposed that the item be returned to the Place and Prosperity Committee for further discussion and a more substantial proposal.

That proposal was seconded by Councillor Morgan.

Continuing Alderman Smith stated that there was unanimous agreement amongst the Councillors serving the Comber DEA about the potential danger of the current site and that it presented an eyesore locally. He was aware that officers were doing their best to resolve the issues being faced with the challenges of ownership of land and liability for any work that would be done. Another option was that a community group had expressed willingness to replace the hoarding in an effort to spruce up the area and that could be massively impactful and an option for the Council to explore in more detail.

Seconding his proposal, Councillor Morgan shared that it had been made abundantly clear at the Committee that the matter of the hoarding needed to be sorted out. She added that this was not a unique matter to Comber and a similar situation existed at Ballygowan. If options were coming forward, she was more than happy to examine them again at a future Committee but as things stood the position was unacceptable.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the minutes be adopted and that Item 9.1 be deferred back to the Committee for further consideration.**

#### **7.5 Corporate Services Committee dated 14 January 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes be adopted.

Councillor Irwin also proposed that any questions relating to the Estimates with the Committee be taken in public and heard after the minutes were agreed.

She also asked to suspend Standing Order 13 order of business so that Items 16a and 16b which were on the Council agenda and in confidence be also heard in public.

In respect of the minutes the Mayor asked the Director of Community and Wellbeing if there would be funding made available for a cricket pitch at Ward Park since it was not showing in the budget. The Director replied that it was the intention to do this if funding could be found from any underspend elsewhere and it was certainly a project that leisure wished to deliver.

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

Councillor Irwin's proposal to suspend Standing Orders to consider Item 16a and 16b was seconded by Councillor Morgan and the Mayor noted that there was no dissention and since all Members were in agreement it was agreed to take those items in public.

**AGREED.**

## **16A. ESTIMATES REPORT – DISTRICT RATE AND SERVICE BUDGETS**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that this report was to present to Members the proposed district rates for the 2025/26 financial year.

The Corporate Services Committee at its meeting on 14 January recommended, subject to ratification, a district rate increase of **3.65%** for the 2025/26 financial year. Appendix I set out the formal calculation. Appendix 2 set out 2025/26 Service budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council sets for the 2025/26 financial year a non-domestic district rate of 28.8537p in the pound and a domestic district rate of 0.4244p in the pound. It is, further, recommended to approve 2025/26 Service budgets as outlined in Appendix 2.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Morgan that the recommendation be adopted and that Members strike a district rate for this year, which was an increase of 3.65%, which was 0.4244p in the pound, and that the non-domestic rate was also increased by 3.65%, which was an increase of 28.8537p in the pound.

Proposing the rate increase Councillor Irwin thanked everyone involved within the Council for the work which had been undertaken to get to this point. There had been much scrutiny of the figures in recent months and this proposal was in line with what had been agreed in September and it reflected the need to control costs while making strategic investments within the Borough. She gave thanks to the members of the Corporate Services Committee, the finance team and in particular thanked the Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Finance.

Seconding that Councillor Morgan also put on record her thanks for all the work that had gone on and she was hopeful that the rate could be agreed by Members at the Council meeting.

Alderman Smith welcomed the proposal and while accepting that no one wished to see a Rate increase the reality was that the Council was under significant pressure and while the figure was above inflation it was required to sustain services in a challenging environment. He added that the Council had one of the highest capital plans in Northern Ireland and while that was good in terms of ambition it was a financial challenge to grow the capital requirement by £60M over the next 10 years. That was combined with the fact that the Council also had one of the lowest reserves which it was also attempting to remedy.

He stated that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had also played a role in the Council's Rate setting process when she had made the recent decision to increase employers' National Insurance payments. He added that without that decision the Council would not be in the position it was and could have set a Rate 1.2% below what was now being suggested. Overall, he felt that the level of increase was lower than colleague Councils across Northern Ireland.

He referred to the Borough's falling non-domestic Rate base and the ongoing challenge of supporting businesses locally and wished to add an amendment to the recommendation to add:

It was a strategic goal of the Council to build its non-domestic rate base and to that end a Tax Base Development Fund has been established. To send the clear message that Ards and North Down is open for business, that Council asks officers to produce a report in consultation with our business community to inform rates decisions for the remainder of this mandate. This will include the options of decoupling the non-domestic rate from the domestic rate and the development of a targeted small grant scheme to sustain and grow the local business base. A report will be produced for initial review at September's Corporate Services Committee meeting to allow time for the outcome to be factored into the 2026/27 rates decision making process.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Blaney.

Alderman Smith stated that he wished to make this amendment for two reasons and was of the belief that it sent a message to the business community that the Council took its needs seriously and recognised that businesses were going through a difficult time, particularly the retail and hospitality sectors. He wished to send out the message that Ards and North Down was open for business and was calling on the

report to come back with options to consult with the business community. The amendment, in his view, offered a structure and timetable to work within but ultimately it was about saying to this community that they were supported, and the Council was on their side.

Alderman McIlveen raised a point of order indicating that the Member had spoken twice on the same item at great length. The Mayor had been uncertain as to the direction the Member was taking his amendment and agreed that what had been done was in very poor form since the Member had reset the clock effectively with his amendment and had continued to speak at length. The Mayor apologised to the Committee if his interpretation of the Standing Orders had been applied wrongly.

Seconding the amendment Councillor Blaney said that he was happy to give it his support since everyone would be aware that the local business community was struggling with many businesses recently having announced their intention to close. He referred to a café owner locally who in the first week of January had taken £20 profit for a week's work after all expenses had been paid. That was obviously unsustainable, and this owner and other local entrepreneurs were struggling, and the Council should consider all it could to lend support. The situation had been difficult for some time now but was now critical.

Alderman McIlveen felt that it was unfortunate that this amendment was being brought forward in the middle of the Rate setting process. While he had no problem supporting the amendment he believed that the matter had been discussed already and was a known aim of the Council to look at the decline in the Borough's non-domestic rate. That had been discussed in detail and nothing new was being brought forward. He knew that no one would vote against the amendment since the Council agreed with the sentiment and he also urged a note of caution about the decoupling of the rate and now was not the time to do that.

Referring to the proposed Rate Alderman McRandal thought that in the context of the Council this was a sensible and appropriate Rate to strike, he noted that services had been aligned with the Corporate Plan which pleased him so on behalf of himself and his Party group he thanked those who had worked so diligently to get the Council to this point. He shared the concerns about how the amendment had been brought forward but would give it support.

Councillor Gilmour rose to speak on the amendment stating that she would of course support it but questioned the motivation behind it and if it was an attempt at looking for a headline or was it being constructive to the process. It was clear that there was a need to grow the non-domestic Rate and that was the strategic direction for the Council which had ruled out the decoupling of the rates. She was therefore confused since she was expecting the report which was being called for and thought the timing of the amendment was inappropriate.

Speaking in respect of the proposed Rate Councillor Kendall repeated that finances were challenging, and no one could yet estimate what the outworkings of the Chancellors budget would be so the Rates had been set based on broad assumptions and decisions taken by the Corporate Services Committee. Hopefully everyone could stand over the proposed increase. In respect of the amendment,

she had no problem supporting and knew it had been discussed previously and wished to see prosperous and lively towns with a sustainable economy and incentivised SMEs. She shared the concern for Bangor City and the difficulties particularly apparent there.

Councillor McCracken thanked colleagues for the comments that had been made and for introducing the 3.65% rise and it was a clear message that a lot of work had gone into that across the political parties. Local businesses wanted a clear indication that the Council would be striking one of the lowest Rate rises in Northern Ireland. He shared the comments already made by the DUP about the amendment muddying the waters of the Rate setting process and urged caution against raising expectations among the business community with performance politics. Earlier that day he had attended a government round table discussion with those working for the Department of the Economy and Department of Finance and wide political representation on matters such as the minimum wage, National Insurance increases and Rates reform. He felt that was the forum for those sorts of decisions since local government and the Council was somewhat limited in what it could do to help businesses. He believed it to be a matter ultimately for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

(Councillor Chambers left the meeting at 8.02 pm)

Councillor Wray had taken on board some of the comments made on Alderman Smith's amendment and in reference to Alderman McIlveen stating the matter had been discussed, he was right, it had been. He thought a report would give some structure that could hold the Council to account. Councillor Blaney had asked for an opportunity to explore the decoupling of the Rates and that was why more information was requested. In response to the comment that the UUP was looking for a headline, he agreed that it was, and the headline was that Ards and North Down Borough Council was doing all it could to support the business community.

Alderman Graham stood to share that in his many years' experience serving on the Council he had never attended a Rate setting meeting like this one and believed it had been almost farcical. He thanked the Directors and the officers in the finance department for the work that had gone in to achieving the Rate. The Alderman thought that the behaviour of the Council had been atrocious, and some Councillors needed to hang their heads in shame. He hoped that in future the Rates could be set in a more structured and professional way.

(Councillor Chambers entered the meeting at 8.06 pm)

The Mayor agreed and thanked the excellent team working on a challenging task within limitations and he knew that the Council would do its best to support both businesses and ratepayers.

Councillor Irwin had nothing further to add.

(Councillor Boyle left the meeting at 8.10 pm).

Alderman McIlveen stated that he had spoken on the amendment but not the substantive item and he too thanked officers for the smooth process. He was aware that he and the DUP had always been keen to set a Rate which would protect frontline services and where there were rises, they were to be affordable and justified. He thanked the Chair and Corporate Services Committee for the scrutiny given throughout the process.

(Councillor Smart entered the meeting at 8.13 pm)

The Mayor thanked Councillor Irwin for proposing the Rate and also the Members of the Corporate Services Committee for their careful review of the Council's financial situation to reach this point. He knew it was a challenging process, with a significant amount of work having been put in by both Councillors and officers.

He said that striking the Rate was always a balance – between agreeing a figure that allowed the Council to deliver quality of services and to make the investments that residents wanted while seeking to ensure the financial burden placed on local ratepayers was as low as possible. He echoed Councillor Irwin's thanks to senior Council officers and the wider staff team who had worked hard to reduce the Rate increase whilst ensuring the Council could continue to deliver its services effectively.

For the 2025/26 year, the Council had agreed an increase in the domestic and non-domestic rate of 3.65% - that meant an increase of approximately £1.75 per month for the average household and approximately £5 per month for the businesses in the Borough.

Alongside all the statutory local government duties this budget would enable the Council to deliver on some very significant priorities that were critical to the future health and prosperity of the Borough.

The Mayor felt a great sense of pride and excitement as the Council embarked on a transformative journey towards a Sustainable Borough, as outlined in the new Corporate Plan for 2024-2028. The vision was clear: every decision the Council would make would consider the economic, environmental, and social impacts, ensuring a brighter future for everyone.

The decline in the non-domestic Rate base in Ards and North Down was a significant challenge that needed to be addressed. More would be required, but the Council was taking the first steps in budgetary terms to support increased economic growth and prosperity.

The Council was making significant strides in economic sustainability with major investments in the Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Bangor Waterfront Scheme. Those projects, along with the Council's support for the Bangor Business Improvement District and the strategic development of the former NIE site, would breathe new life into the local economy. The 'vacant to vibrant' scheme aimed to revitalise derelict commercial properties, while the Belfast City Deal Innovation Hub at Hollywood would drive innovation and growth within the Borough's creative sector. The Council was also streamlining operations and providing a catalyst for change with the office rationalisation and new civic office project, and funding prestigious



events like Sea Bangor, Comber Earlies, Portavogie Tide and Turf and Armed Forces Day in Ards, which would boost the local economy and community spirit.

The Council's commitment to social sustainability was unwavering. It was increasing grants for arts and heritage, community projects and sports development. A new community facilities strategy was in the works, along with expanded summer schemes and enhanced pitch maintenance, as well as funding to take forward the Council's new Leisure Strategy with the focus on ensuring thriving communities.

On the environmental front, the Council was allocating further funding for energy efficiency initiatives, introducing electric vehicles and charging points, and investing in biodiversity, tree planting strategies, outdoor recreation, and 'in-bloom' grants. It was increasing funding for parks and Greenway infrastructure and promoting sustainable waste measures at events. Those efforts would help it create a greener, more sustainable environment for future generations.

Financially, the Council was maintaining a general reserve of 7.5%, deploying over £1M in strategic reserves for key initiatives, advancing digital strategy, achieving £1.7M in efficiencies and savings, and funding long-term capital ambitions. Those measures demonstrated the Council's commitment to economic growth, social wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and financial prudence.

Together, the Council was building a Sustainable Borough that residents could be proud of and there was much to be done and much to look forward to in the year ahead.

The Mayor thanked Members, officers, and in particular the Finance team, under the Director of Corporate Services, Michael Steele, and Head of Finance, Stephen Grieve, for their work on the Rates and budget setting. It had been challenging, but lessons had been learnt from the process and prioritised effectively for the year ahead.

Finally, the Mayor wanted to reassure ratepayers that the Council would continue to scrutinise Council spending and remained committed to making further efficiency savings wherever possible while maintaining and enhancing services and continuing to invest in the Borough.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted and that it is a strategic goal of the council to build its non-domestic rate base and to that end a Tax Base Development Fund has been established. To send the clear message that Ards and North Down is open for business, that Council asks Officers to produce a report in consultation with our business community to inform rates decisions for the remainder of this mandate. This will include the options of decoupling the non-domestic rate from the domestic rate and the development of a targeted small grant scheme to sustain and grow the local business base. A report will be produced for initial review at September's Corporate Services Committee meeting to allow time for the outcome to be factored into the 2026/27 rates decision making process.**

## **16B. ESTIMATES REPORT – ROBUSTNESS**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Section 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2011 required the Chief Financial Officer of a Council to submit a report on the robustness of the estimates and for the Council to have regard to the report when considering the estimates.

In addition, Section 6 required the Chief Financial Officer of a Council to submit a report on the adequacy of reserves and for the Council to have regard to that when considering the estimates.

### **Robustness of Estimates**

The aim of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was to give the Council a realistic and sustainable plan that reflected the Council's priorities and the policy of reasonable Council Rate increases as reflected in the Corporate Plan.

The detailed estimates had been formulated in the context of the budgeting strategy agreed in August 2024 and detailed work had been carried out with Directors, Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers for the various services. The work underpinned the MTFP, taking into account forecast outturn, current spending plans, the likely future demand level pressures for both revenue and capital expenditure and the risk environment. The major risks to the MTFP were:

#### **Pay issues**

- Pay budget significantly increasing (but workforce numbers staying largely static despite new demands)
- Medium term – Trade Unions demanding pay and grading review.

#### **Waste Management**

- Additional costs associated with the Extended Producer Responsibility income are unknown, but there is an expectation that quality standards of waste will have to improve through new investment.
- The level of income received each year is likely to reduce year on year, as producers improve their approach to the creation of packaging materials to limit their cost exposure.
- If Council collection quality does not meet efficiency and effectiveness targets it may be exposed to fines.

#### **Financial resilience**

- Low reserves and high capital appetite leaves the Council exposed to interest rate fluctuation.
- The Council is not resourced financially or operationally to deal with all of the challenges of the Climate Change Act and moving to net zero, although

incremental steps are being taken in this direction through the delivery of various strategies.

#### **Prioritisation**

- Continuing work is required to align budget setting more coherently with the Corporate Plan.
- The long-term decline in the non-domestic rate base presents a significant financial challenge to the Council. Although progress has been made this year, the budget is not sufficiently orientated towards resolving the non-domestic rate problem.

A number of iterations had been reported to meetings of the Corporate Services Committee during the estimates process, before being agreed at the meeting on 14 January. As part of that process management had carried out some 'stress testing' of the budgets. The results were set out in the table below:

Category	Test	£'000
Payroll	2025/26 pay increase 1% higher than budget	399
Capital Financing	Interest Rates 1% higher than budget	38
Waste Disposal	Residual waste haulage 10%	68
Maintenance	Maintenance costs 15% higher than budget	370
Energy	Prices 10% higher than budget	338
Other Expenditure	5% increase	946
Service Income	5% reduction	662
Rates Income	Actual income 1% less than estimated	670
	<b>Average</b>	<b>437</b>

The Council had contingency amounts set aside in its Earmarked Fund to mitigate any potential in year energy cost increase. In addition, if two of the risks materialised that maximum exposure that Council would be subject to this would be in the region of £1.6M. The increased general fund balance and a reallocation of Earmarked Funds would be adequate to absorb those costs in the short term, although both would need replenished in the following years.

On the basis that:

1. the capital and revenue budget estimates for 2025/26 presented to this meeting, have been prepared in line with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code, Prudential Code and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting;

2. the stress tests do not identify any substantial risks;
3. in the coming year the Council will commit to continuing:
  - a. with its thorough review of the 10-year capital plan, given the significant impact on future rate setting and the risk exposure noted through this rate setting process.
  - b. within the realignment of its budgets to meet the strategic outcomes set out in the corporate plan in order to address the risks already identified;

the Chief Financial Officer was satisfied that the budgets set were robust.

#### Adequacy of Reserves

The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 required the Chief Financial Officer of a Council to submit a report to Council on the adequacy of any proposed level of financial reserves for a financial year.

In line with its budgeting strategy the Council had considered the adequacy of reserves throughout this Estimates process. The appendix set out the forecast year end reserves position for the current and next financial years and the Chief Financial Officer was content with the adequacy of those. It was noted that the forecast General Fund balance as forecast met the Reserve Policy target level of 7.5%.

Cognisance had also been taken of the CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Panel Bulletin 99 (issued July 2014), which gave guidance on the level of reserves and the financing of Council expenditure.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

At this point the Mayor asked for a proposer to restore Standing Orders and it was proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that Standing Orders be restored.

**AGREED.**

#### **7.6 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 15 January 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the minutes be adopted.

#### **In respect of Item 5 – Tennis Courts Provision – Response to NOM 619**

Alderman Adair asked to make an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Edmund.

That the Council agree the recommendation of the Committee but further tasks officers to explore the feasibility of incorporating a MUGA as part of the redevelopment of Greyabbey Tennis Courts including engagement with current users, sports clubs and community groups to ensure use for all sports and maximum investment and sport participation for the community of Greyabbey.

Alderman Adair proposed that the Committee still stand over the decision to explore lighting for those facilities but referred to a meeting he had attended recently in Greyabbey for the village plan and the number one priority that residents had expressed was for a MUGA for Greyabbey. The Council had passed a recommendation to refurbish the tennis courts that had served the community well but that now needed to be refurbished so suggested a MUGA that could be used for many different sports to be played on that site. Alderman Adair was asking for a report to see if that was possible and asked if the courts were to be refurbished that it was an ideal time to look at the option of a MUGA to provide facilities for many different sports. He said that Greyabbey was a centre of sporting excellence. He had spoken with football teams, schools and community groups, and local people wanted to ensure that sports needs were met and he asked for the support of Members for that.

Seconding the amendment Councillor Edmund agreed with those comments and stated that sport locally was held in great esteem, and he called for a report to outline what was feasible.

Councillor Wray rose to support and thanked Alderman Adair for bringing his amendment. Each facility was taken on its own merit, but a MUGA was the priority for the people he had engaged with, and it was incumbent on Members to listen to the community and carry out a feasibility study.

Following a question from Alderman McAlpine it was confirmed that the Council did not own the community hall, but it did own the tennis courts, and she knew this was a well-used facility and hoped that future lighting would respect the needs of the neighbouring local community.

Councillor Boyle rose to support and referred to the large turnout of residents in Greyabbey for the meeting. He asked if a MUGA was agreed would the same site be used and the Director understood that it would, but it was very much under consideration for the moment. He also explained that many MUGA courts were tarmac, not necessarily plastic, but consultation and engagement would of course take place with the community.

(Councillor S Irvine left the meeting at 8.29 pm)

Councillor Kerr also rose to support his Council colleagues and said it was great to see the enthusiasm of sporting talent in the village.

Alderman Brooks, as Chair of the Committee, was happy to support this stating that the local community had spoken, and he had no objections, and it was right that good managers make the best use of the resources available to them.

**AGREED.**

Councillor Kendall took the opportunity to refer to the tennis courts at Seapark and if those would be restored and made good. The Director said that he would clarify that but was of the understanding that two of the courts would be maintained and the others would be used for Padel.

The Mayor referred to the tennis courts at Kingsland and welcomed the redevelopment of a few courts. It was explained that the two courts currently used would be upgraded and the other two would not be because within Bangor it was clear that there was sufficient provision both at Kingsland and Ward Park.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the minutes be adopted and that in respect of Item 5 that it agree the recommendation of the Committee but further tasks officers to explore the feasibility of incorporating a MUGA as part of the redevelopment of Greyabbey Tennis Courts including engagement with current users sports clubs and community groups to ensure use for all sports and maximum investment and sport participation for the community of Greyabbey.**

**7.7 Special Planning Committee dated 20 January 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the minutes be adopted.**

**8. THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME PILGRIMAGE 2025**

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

That had usually also included wreath laying at the Menin Gate, Ypres, a visit to the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines and laying a wreath in the honour of Edmund de Wind VC, from Comber, at the Pozieres British Cemetery. In addition, a visit to the Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux, where the Australian National Monument of the Great War was located. Last year, the Centre was attended as a case study for the planned redevelopment and investment in the Somme Museum, Newtownards.

In line with previous years, it was recommended that the Council approves the attendance at the commemoration events departing on 29 June and returning on 3 July 2025 of the incoming Mayor (or if unable to travel, the incoming Deputy Mayor), another Member and an Officer. Nominations for the Member were now sought.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council approves the attendance at the annual Battle of the Somme Commemorations in 2025, as set out in this report, of the incoming

Mayor (or Deputy Mayor) plus one additional Member to be nominated by Council, and an Officer.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Cochrane be nominated as the additional Member.**

## **9. WITHDRAWN**

## **10. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION – NEW THRESHOLDS FOR INHERITANCE TAX AND AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY RELIEF**

(Appendices II – V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that a Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council at its meeting in November 2024:

“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”.

On 6 December 2024 a letter was sent to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs from the Chief Executive. The Minister responded on 13 January 2025. In his response, the Minister enclosed a copy of a letter sent by the Executive Office and signed by him, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer dated 18 November, as well as a copy of their response dated 22 November. All Letters were attached.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the attached responses.

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

Alderman Adair commended the government in Northern Ireland and the all-party support that had spoken with a united voice on behalf of the farming community. He was appalled by the actions of this Labour government who seemed to be targeting the most vulnerable.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **11. CHANGES TO THE STANDING ORDERS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that 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 was outlined in Appendix 1 within this report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to amend the Standing Orders as set out in this report.

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

## **12. SEALING DOCUMENTS**

**RESOLVED:** - On the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Graham

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

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials: D40711-D40728, D40580, D40729-D40772, Duplicate Clandeboye HX3061
- (b) Robinson Services LTD with ANDBC
- (c) Coffee Cure, Museum Café, North Down Museum, Bangor with ANDBC

## **13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL**

The following transfers were received:

Terence Reardon – Simon Reardon, Clandeboye Cemetery section HX grave 3061

Roberta Mills – Sandra Hogan, Movilla Cemetery section 50 grave 157

John Thompson – David Burns, Clandeboye LX 4626

Terence Logan – Daniel Hawkins, Redburn Cemetery – Grave 321

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the transfer be noted.**

## **14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT**

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive detailing that attached was a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.



That was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep Members updated on the outcome of Motions. It should be noted that as each Motion was dealt with it would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

## **15. NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor McCollum**

That this Council notes the transformative benefits that street art, such as painted utility boxes, can have on communities including the potential to become tourist attractions or foster a sense of civic pride and notes the recent success of the painted utility boxes in Ward Park.

That this Council also acknowledges the frustration and concern that graffiti, such as tagging, can cause and the subsequent costs of removal. Council notes it is important to facilitate the creation of local art in a safe, legal, and positive way enabling artistic creation and local regeneration while also reducing the proliferation of antisocial graffiti.

That this Council returns a report which:

- Identifies suitable utility boxes which could be prospective 'canvas sites' for local art;
- Identifies prospective local artists who could participate in the project, with the input of the Council Arts officer; and
- Identifies any external sources of funding, such as from the Department for Communities or the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee.**

### **15.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Irwin and Councillor McCracken**

That this Council expresses its disappointment at the Education Minister's decision to refuse the development proposals from Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College and Rathmore Primary School to transform to integrated schools, notes the overwhelming parental support for transformation, further notes the duties in the Integrated Education Act to aim to meet demand for Integrated Education, considers that the Minister has failed to act on this duty, and in doing so has failed to listen to

parents from these schools, and resolves to write to the Minister and request he reconsider his decision as a matter of urgency.

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

**15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Chambers and Councillor Hollywood**

That this Council brings back a report detailing the associated costs, viability and public desirability to install a low level positioned lighting scheme along the promenade at Groomsport beach.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee.**

**15.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee**

This Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression.

However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Article 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessary cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011.

Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the XL Bully legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.**

**CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION**

(Appendices VII – XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Undernoted items of information:

- a) Department of Finance – Census 2021 Public Microdata Teaching Sample for Northern Ireland (Correspondence attached).

C.29.01.2025PM

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- b) Department of Justice - Call for Evidence on Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention (Correspondence attached).
- c) Northern Ireland Housing Council – Minutes

### **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 8.43pm.

Unclassified

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**ITEM 6.1.****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	13 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: N/A
Subject	Green Economy Working Group - request for nomination of elected members
Attachments	None

**Background**

The Council at its meeting of 29 January 2025 agreed the minutes of the January Place and Prosperity meeting at which the following Notion of Motion (NoM) was debated and agreed to recommend:

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

**Detail**

Further to discussion with the proposer of the above NoM, in order to further expedite the establishment of this working group, it is considered appropriate to seek

Not Applicable

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nominations from the Council as soon as possible, to meet with relevant officers to explore these matters accordingly.

It is suggested that nine members participate in the Working Group.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council nominates nine members to the Green Economy Working Group.

## **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 4 February 2025 at 7.00 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Alderman McIlveen

**Aldermen:** Graham  
McDowell (zoom)  
Smith

<b>Councillors:</b>	Cathcart	McClellan
	Harbinson	McKee (zoom)
	Kendall (zoom)	Morgan
	Kerr	Smart
	McBurney	Wray
	McCollum	

**Also in attendance:** Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas

**Officers:** Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Senior Planners (A Todd and C Rodgers) and Democratic Services Officers (R King & J Glasgow)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Hennessy.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor McKee declared an interest in Item 4.5 - LA06/2023/1658/F – Land adjacent to & approx. 17m South of 27 Auburn Park, Bangor - Single dwelling.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 02 DECEMBER 2024 AND SPECIAL PLANNING OF 20 JANUARY 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

**AGREED, that the minutes be noted.**

#### **4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

##### **4.1 LA06/2024/0381/F - 110m SE of No 73 Green Road, Bangor** **Retention of extension to building providing separate unit used as a gym, retention of associated car parking, and proposed subdivision and part change of use of existing storage unit to provide extension to gym**

**ITEM WITHDRAWN – The application had been withdrawn from the agenda in advance of the meeting.**

##### **4.2 LA06/2024/0174/O - Vacant lands between Nos 7 & 11 Ringcreevy Road, Comber** **2No. one and a half storey infill dwellings.** (Appendix I)

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.**

**DEA: Comber**

**Committee Interest: A local development application "called-in" to the Planning Committee by a member (Councillor Cathcart) in order for the Committee to consider whether the application constitutes a gap site, considering precedent set by approvals LA06/2020/0600/F, LA06/2024/0373/O, LA06/2020/0600/F.**

**Proposal: 2No. one and a half storey infill dwellings**

**Site Location: Vacant lands between Nos 7 & 11 Ringcreevy Road, Comber**

**Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission.**

The Head of Planning provided the detail of the application. She noted the application was for outline permission with the principle of development only being considered. If the recommendation was overturned to an approval she noted that any detail for the proposal would require to be submitted at reserved matters stage.

Members would see that the application site was located within the countryside. The site lay within the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as designated in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 . The Ringcreevy Road was a narrow rural road with isolated dwellings and pairs of buildings .The site consisted of an area of flat grass land bounded to the north, east and west by hedgerow. The south was undefined and the site was flat. The surrounding area consisted of agricultural fields and isolated single or pairs of dwellings with varying plot sizes. There was no planning history on the site. The Head of Planning displayed a series of images of the site and area. Travelling south-east along the road the first building viewed was No.7 Ringcreevy Road, then there was a field where the site was located, then a small paddock, then No.11 Ringcreevy Road and then an outbuilding adjacent to No.11.

In terms of policy under consideration, the Head of Planning explained that CTY8 of PPS21 – which deals with infill development, lists criteria to be met. The buildings within the substantially built-up frontage were considered to be 7 Ringcreevy Road which was a dwelling, 11 Ringcreevy Road also a dwelling and a building adjacent to

11 Ringcreevy Road. Planning was satisfied the plots within which those buildings stand about the road and therefore had frontage to it. So, given there was a line of three or more buildings along this section of Ringcreevy Road which all share common frontage with the road, this part of the policy had been met. The second part of the assessment was to confirm an infill opportunity existed for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses with clarification text provided. The amplification text goes on to state that, for the purposes of the policy, the 'gap' was between buildings.

The buildings either side of the site proposed were No.7 and No.11 Ringcreevy Road. The gap was measured between the south-east elevation of No.7 and the north-west elevation of No.11 and measured at approximately 150m. The three plots which shared frontage located on either side of the site, had an average frontage width of 25m. Members should be aware that the assessment of whether a site was suitable for infill development was not purely a mathematical exercise, but rather it was a matter of considering and balancing all the evidence, including site inspection, against policy requirements. Taking all considerations into account it was the professional planning judgement that more than two dwellings would be able to fit within the distance between No.7 and No.11.

The gap between No.7 & 11 represented an important visual gap could be seen in an image shown between two visually separate buildings. Guidance on the interpretation of CTY8 provided in a judicial judgment (Gordon Duff Vs Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (2022) NIQB 37]) stated Justice Scoffield KC held that whether a site offers a visual break of such importance or significance was '*a matter of planning judgement; but it is a matter of common sense, and consistent with the guidance ...that the larger the site, the more likely it is to offer an important visual break.*'

CTY8 required that a proposal for infill development should respect the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size and meets other planning and environmental requirements. In its current form the roadside boundary included a mature hedgerow which screens views when passing the site. The Head of Planning noted that if the application was to be approved, hedgerow would have to be removed to provide the required sight splays which would visually open up the site and would be hard to integrate.

The proposal was also considered to be contrary to CTY 13 of PPS 21 criteria a, b, c and f in that the proposed dwellings would be prominent features relying on additional landscaping to integrate into the surrounding landscape, particularly when viewed approaching from the northwest towards the site. Views from the opposite direction would be much the same as the site was very open. Any new dwellings on the site, irrespective of siting, design, or the proposed landscaping shown, would lack the necessary enclosure to integrate them into the landscape. There was no backdrop to the site as the surrounding land was flat and open and the dwellings would be open to views when the vegetation along the roadside boundary was removed. In addition, the infilling of this gap would create a ribbon of development and would result in a suburban style build-up of development detrimental to the rural character of the area and contrary to Policy CTY14 which related to rural character.



Given the site was located within an AONB and the siting and scale of the proposal was not sympathetic to the special character of the AONB in general, and of the particular locality, the proposal also failed the requirements of Policy NH6 of PPS2. The Head of Planning stated that given the considerations she had outlined and detail within the case officer report the recommendation was to refuse outline planning permission.

The Chair invited questions from Members

The Mayor noted the complication with gap site applications and the many debates that had occurred in the Chamber in respect of gap sites. Gap sites were not defined and there was no mathematical formula. The Mayor asked the Head of Planning what the judgement was based on.

The Head of Planning explained that if it had been found that the area was a small gap site then the application would have been approved. It was more than a mathematical equation as detailed in legal cases. As could be seen from the visuals, the site was very open in a very rural area. Applications were considered on a case-by-case basis and took account of a whole range of factors. This was an important visual gap and that had to be respected in the countryside.

The Mayor felt that whether a gap site was a small gap site was relatively subjective and he questioned if it was the view that the Council had a consistent approach in relation to gap site applications.

The Head of Planning would argue that the Planning Service had been consistent. It was not a blanket approach to sites, each site had to be assessed on its own merits. There would be some sites within the countryside that would fulfil that requirement however in this case it was clear that did not.

On a general point, the Mayor stated that he did not like the specific policy and it should be looked as part of the Council's local development plan.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be refused.

Councillor Morgan noted the location of the application which was within an AONB. She also did not like the policy CTY8 and was of the view that it instead created ribbon development. However, she believed that it was clear that the space was substantial, it was open countryside and the application should not be approved.

Referring the site layout, Councillor Harbinson felt the massing of the buildings proposed seemed to be quite a bit larger than the existing buildings at each side. He understood it was not a mathematical equation however viewed that as a large gap site.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 10 FOR, 3 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED. The vote resulted as follows:

<b>FOR (10)</b> <b>Alderman</b> Smith	<b>AGAINST (3)</b> <b>Alderman</b> Graham	<b>ABSTAINED (2)</b> <b>Aldermen</b> McDowell McIlveen	<b>ABSENT (1)</b>
<b>Councillors</b> Harbinson Kendall McBurney McClellan McCollum McKee Morgan Smart Wray	<b>Councillors</b> Cathcart Kerr		<b>Councillor</b> Hennessy

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be refused.

**4.3 LA06/2023/2505/F – 17b Maxwell Road, Bangor**  
**Demolition of existing garage/utility room. Two storey side extension, front balcony, driveway extension and ground works.**  
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

**DEA: Bangor West**  
**Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to officers’ recommendation.**  
**Proposal: Demolition of existing garage/utility room. Two storey side extension, front balcony, driveway extension and ground works.**  
**Site Location: 17b Maxwell Road, Bangor**  
**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

Presenting her report, the Senior Planner (A Todd) explained that the site was located in a long-established residential area in Bangor West. The area generally comprised low density development with detached dwellings on generous plots. In the immediate area on Maxwell Road, the dwellings were predominantly one and a half or two storey with a mix of brick and render finishes.

The existing dwelling had a one and a half storey appearance to the front but had a full two storeys to the rear. The site boundaries were defined by wooden fencing, hedges and shrubs.

In terms of the layout plans, the footprint itself of the dwelling would remain similar with only a small extended element to the rear as shown in grey on the displayed image.

The extension to the dwelling was proposed to the northern elevation in place of the existing single storey garage and would be two storey in height in line with the existing ridge height. The extension had been designed with a gable end to the front portion and a hipped roof return to the rear. To the front, a Juliette balcony and a small inset balcony were proposed to the two front facing bedrooms.

A further slide showed the existing and proposed floor plans with the extension providing a garage, utility and kitchen at ground floor and an additional bedroom and en-suite at first floor.

In terms of Impact on Character, 12 letters of objection from eight separate addresses had been received in relation to the proposal. The specific concerns raised were set out and considered in detail in the case officer's report. The main concerns related mainly to the impact of the development on the character of the area and on the amenity of No. 17a Maxwell Road and 45 Ranfurly Avenue. Policy EXT1 of PPS7 Addendum required the scale, massing, design and external materials of the proposal to be sympathetic to the built form and appearance of the existing property and not to detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area.

The Planning Service was satisfied that the scale, design and materials of the proposed extension would very much respect both the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. Materials would match those of the existing dwelling and the extension had been designed to continue the ridge line and roof pitch of the dwelling. In terms of the impact on the wider area, as already outlined, the proposal involved only a very minor increase in the footprint of the dwelling. While the proposal would bring the two-storey element of the dwelling closer to the adjacent dwelling at No. 17a, it was not considered that this proximity of the two storey elements was out of character with the area as the existing pattern of development along this side of the road already included a number of examples of two storey dwellings sited in close proximity to each other.

In relation to Impact on Residential Amenity, the Planning Service was also satisfied that the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents. The adjacent properties most likely to be impacted by the development included those closest at 17a Maxwell Road to the north, 45 Ranfurly Avenue to the northeast and 26 Knockmore Park to the southeast. Looking first at Nos. 45 Ranfurly Avenue and 26 Knockmore Park, both of these properties were located to the rear of the application site as could be seen on the site location plan. In terms of potential loss of privacy to these properties, the extension only proposed two small windows at first floor level serving a dressing room and ensuite, both of which would be subject to a condition requiring obscure glazing, therefore there would be no greater degree of overlooking from first floor towards either of these properties. While large, glazed doors were proposed at ground floor, the existing boundary treatments would sufficiently screen any views from these towards the adjacent properties.

The Planning Service was also satisfied that the proposal would cause no unacceptable loss of light to Nos. 45 and 26. The extension would be no higher than

the existing dwelling and would be positioned 20.5m away from the closest corner of No. 45 and 28m away from the closest corner of No. 26. These separation distances were in excess of the 20m 'back to back' recommended separation distance in the Creating Places guidelines. Given these generous separation distances, there was no potential for the development to cause any unacceptable loss of light. While the residents of No. 45 Ranfurly Avenue had expressed particular concern regarding the loss of a view from their property, this was not a material planning consideration.

Given the close proximity of the extension to No. 17a Maxwell Road, it was acknowledged that there was more potential for the proposal to adversely impact upon this property, and this had been very carefully considered in the case officer's report.

Firstly, by way of potential loss of privacy, the extension included two windows at ground floor on the northern elevation serving a utility room and kitchen. The existing boundary treatment would screen any views from these windows towards 17a. It was also noted that there was already a garage window on the existing elevation and that additional windows could be installed at ground floor without requiring planning permission.

At first floor level, no windows were proposed which would face 17a. To the front of the extension a small inset balcony was proposed. The original size of this balcony was reduced by the architect at the request of planners to prevent any potential overlooking towards the side kitchen window of 17a.

The potential impact of the proposal in terms of loss of light to 17a had also been very carefully considered in the case officer's report. The side elevation of No. 17A Maxwell Road which faced the site, contained a ground floor kitchen window, a ground floor utility room window, a dormer window at first floor serving a bathroom and double-glazed doors at ground floor serving a dining room. As per the guidance set out in the Addendum to PPS7, the effect of development on the daylight to utility rooms and bathrooms was not considered under the policy as these were not habitable rooms. Therefore, the only windows to be considered were the kitchen and dining room windows on this elevation.

While it was acknowledged that the extension would be located within 4.3m of the kitchen window and would fail the 25-degree light test when applied, this window was not the only source of light to the kitchen with the main, larger window located on the front elevation of the dwelling as shown on the slide. Paragraph A37 of the Addendum to PPS7 advised that when considering impact on daylight, a relevant factor was whether or not the affected window was the primary source of light to the room and also whether there was an alternative natural source of light to that room. Given that the primary source of natural light to the kitchen would remain unaffected by the proposal, planners were satisfied that, on balance, an unacceptable loss of light would not occur to the kitchen as a result of the development.

The second window to be considered was the set of double-glazed doors serving the dining room of 17a. These provided the only source of light to this room. The position of the extension in relation to these doors had been carefully considered. As could be seen on the plan, the two-storey element of the extension would not sit directly

opposite the doors, therefore the 25-degree light test was met in this case. While the single storey element of the extension (as shown in grey) would be partially opposite the doors, this complied with the 25-degree light test when applied. Taking these factors into account, the Planning Service was satisfied that ample daylight would still reach the dining room from the south and south easterly directions.

When considering proposals for extensions, Policy EXT1 advised that a material consideration in the assessment must also be what extent of development could occur under permitted development rights, that is without the need for express planning permission.

A further slide showed a few rough examples of the potential extent of development permissible under permitted development rights. In the first case, the applicant could build a single storey side extension of 3m to the eaves and 4m in ridge height right up to the party boundary as shown on an image. The applicant could also build a 3m deep, 2-storey extension under permitted development rights to the rear of the existing garage that would potentially have a much greater impact on the daylight to the dining room windows of No. 17a than the current proposal given its position directly opposite the windows. Lastly, the applicant could also erect a detached building within the rear garden of up to 2.5m to the eaves and 4m to the ridge height in the position shown on the final image which would have the potential, again, to impact the daylight to the dining room of 17a. Taking account of this potential impact of permitted development rights the Planning Service did not consider that the current proposal would result in any significantly greater unacceptable impact.

It was acknowledged that the closer proximity of the proposed extension would also have an impact on the small area of private amenity space to the south of 17A. However, this was a small, narrow area of amenity space with the main, private yard area located to the east of the dwelling, therefore any potentially dominant impact on the outlook from this small area of amenity space was not considered to be determining. The proposed development would not result in any unacceptable dominant impact on the outlook from any of the dwellings' main elevations or main habitable rooms.

In summary, the proposal was considered to be acceptable, taking account of the relevant policy requirements and guidance contained within the Addendum to PPS7. The proposal would cause no unacceptable adverse impact on either the character of the area or the amenity of the adjacent dwellings. Therefore, on this basis, it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted, subject to the stated planning conditions.

The Chair invited questions to the officer for clarification and the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, asked for clarity on the neighbouring property No. 17a, referring to the two windows in the kitchen. He asked how officers had determined that the front window was the main factor and the officer explained that the front window was the bigger of the two windows and weight had been given to the fact that there were two sources of light, as advised by Policy.

Further to no more queries arising from Members to the Planning Officer, the Chair invited Mr David Strachan, to speak in opposition to the application.

Mr Strachan thanked the Committee for allowing him to reiterate some of the concerns that both his own family and many other objectors had to the proposed development at 17B Maxwell Road.

Those objectors, which had included other Elected Members of the Council, had all visited his site. The views expressed during that visit were that the proposal was 'overbearing', in the view of Councillor Gilmour and 'severely restrict' had been a term used by Connie Egan MLA, he told the Committee.

Those aligned with Mr Strachan's own concerns in that the two-story development would dominate the space between the two houses. He explained that it would cut the sunshine out of the back garden where in the summertime he and his family would enjoy private family barbecues.

He recalled strong adjectives used by the planning officer on her initial site visit who had taken the view that it would dominate his property and have a significant impact. He therefore struggled with the conclusions in her report.

Mr Strachan explained that as a family, they had looked at moving closer to Belfast and had gone through the process of putting the house up for sale; however, a number of estate agents had advised that the reason they were unsuccessful was potentially as a result of the proposed development. He could not say whether that was because of the short-term disruption that a development could cause or whether it was a longer-term detractor from the proposed plans.

He acknowledged the planning officer's report, how it dealt with the points raised in objections. However, he wanted to highlight that there would be significant loss of light in his house and garden in respect of its south-facing aspects.

His dining room, which his family used throughout the day, although not immediately opposite, but that was by a matter of centimetres, would lose significant light during the course of the day. The kitchen enjoyed light from two aspects, and he struggled to understand why his property should lose the light and he referred to the officer's report stating that it would fail the light test from his property's south facing window.

In terms of the consideration that the proposed development was in keeping with the rest of the area, he said that Maxwell Road was a long road, and a number of the properties were significantly further away. He referred to the officer's wording of generous plots with houses on them.

Between 17A and 17B, there were probably four to five meters between them but that was a single storey and that would be impacted by a double extension. He spoke of another neighbour at Ranfurly, who had enjoyed views for over 25 years and those would be lost if this application was approved.

Should the Council approve this application, it would appear that it was willing to remove light from one home, views from another home so that a house could go from a four-bedroom house to a five-bedroom house, albeit he noted that he could not talk to any of the motivations behind the development.

Mr Strachan therefore urged members of the Committee to reconsider this application and if it was not able to decline it, then to perform a site visit themselves to see the impact firsthand.

Like their fellow Elected Member, Councillor Gilmour, and Connie Egan MLA, he firmly believed that they could not decide without seeing something with their own eyes first.

In closing, he suggested that nobody would buy a pair of trousers without seeing them or trying them on, so he questioned why Members of the Planning Committee would make a decision like this without seeing the site.

As there were no questions to the speaker, Mr Strachan returned to the public gallery.

Mr Philip Parker (Agent) and Ms Pauline Wylie (Applicant) were in attendance to speak in support of the application and were invited forward to address the Committee.

Ms Wylie outlined why planning permission was required, explaining that during lockdown, she and her sister had moved into the property to care for their elderly mother, and it quickly became evident that the house was not suitable or fit for modern or multi-generational living.

The family quickly realised that they needed to create more living space and bedrooms as they, and other family members, took on an increased role in her mother's care. It was her family's desire to enable their mother to live out the rest of her days at home and they were prepared to look after her.

The ground floor had many trip hazards with different floor levels between the kitchen, pantries and the garage, making it unsafe for an 84-year-old woman with increasing mobility issues.

The family now needed to bring the house up to an acceptable standard – her mother had lived there as a widow for nearly 20 years.

Ms Wylie explained that her family was aware that significant work was needed to be carried out on the house, and they were prepared to do it to a good standard. They particularly needed to look at the garage which had a flat roof that was no longer watertight and was cracked and it needed urgent attention.

During the planning process, these issues had worsened, and her mother's health had deteriorated significantly.

The applicant explained that the family had sought to draw up plans that were sympathetic to the neighbourhood. They were keen that the design solution was in keeping with the style of the existing house and they had not wanted it to look like an extension but complement it along with the houses adjacent to it.

The brief was to create an open plan kitchen, dining and living space on one level

that would be connected to the garage allowing her mother to get in and out of the car and house without being exposed to the elements. The family had needed an additional bedroom to accommodate the existing needs of a growing multi-generational household and to create smaller bedrooms for family and friends when respite was required.

Many properties on the Maxwell Road had been extended or replaced to meet modern living standards and the applicant was asking for approval for this modest extension in order to do likewise.

Mr Parker stated that the existing dwelling sat very close to the boundaries to the north and south, the only place for the new extension was on the area of the site which would be vacated by the demolition of the existing garage/utility room on the north elevation. In locating the proposed works essentially on the footprint of the existing house, that would minimise the impact on the site and on the neighbours.

All possibilities were explored but it was very quickly evident that the solution proposed was the only viable one.

In relation to the objections, Mr Parker advised that there had been objections to the proposal, and those were discussed with the case officer. With regards to loss of view, loss of light, and dominant impact, the proposed development was assessed by the Planning Office to "not result in any unacceptable adverse impact." Where there was concern about loss of privacy from the proposed front projecting balcony the design had been amended. Where there was concern about loss of privacy to the rear garden, the condition of obscure glazing to these windows was added.

Mr Parker advised that it was of no interest to him to submit a proposal which did not meet the appropriate planning criteria. It was always disappointing to upset a neighbour, but he felt his client had the right to improve/extend her home within the limitations of planning policy and guidelines. In finishing, Mr Parker stated that the principle of development was accepted in this case, and the Planning Office had determined that the proposal passed the test on all applicable policy criteria.

The Chair invited questions to the speakers and the Mayor said he sympathised with the family's situation but explained that the Planning Committee was required to make a decision based on Planning Policy. He asked how the proposed development had been designed to try and address the concerns raised by the objectors.

Mr Parker explained that the design had followed the function of the existing plan in the house and the garage needed to be where it was when the driveway served it. The logical place to put the first floor was above the new structure and if that had been placed at the rear of the house that would have resulted in more shading on the rear garden of property 17a, and while that would not have presented cause for objection, that would not have been a neighbourly thing to do. He added that 17a enjoyed the sunshine across Ms Wiley's garden and placing the extension where it was would not interrupt that.



Alderman Graham asked if there was any scope for the bedroom to have a hipped roof and Mr Parker explained that this would have resulted in cutting back the amount of floor space and the intention was to have a bedroom and ensuite with the aim of the development being able to accommodate the two sisters and mother within the house. He added that the neighbouring houses (17b to 17e) had gable ends and a hipped roof was not typical of that style.

Ms Wylie and Ms Parker returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited questions to the officer for clarification and the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, asked, in relation to the rear garden of 17a, if the rights for so many meters of amenity space extended to sunlight.

The officer advised that PPS was clear that the Planning Service could not refuse the application on grounds of loss of sunlight to a garden. It was in relation to rooms, and dominance had also to be considered but not to amenity space.

Councillor McClean noted the report stated that the primary source of natural light to the kitchen would remain unaffected and that no unreasonable loss of light would occur. There were two windows and the one in question was south facing and the other slightly northwest facing with less sunlight. In relation to the concerns raised by the objector, he asked for reasoning why officers were satisfied that there would be no unreasonable loss of light to that room.

The officer explained that it was an assessment of daylight or skylight rather than direct sunlight. The front window was the main window to kitchen and the existing side window had already failed the 25-degree light test. The policy referred to two sources of light to the room which officers had given weight to.

Councillor Kendall wondered if a judgement call could be made to the contrary if the owner of the adjacent property felt that that particular window was important for light into that room. She asked if planning judgement had been made on how that person used the room and if what was being proposed appeared to be dominant to the adjacent property and would impact light to that room. She wondered if it could be judged that the other window was equally important.

The officer appreciated that the Planning Committee could form its own judgement, but officers had considered a combination of factors to reach a professional opinion and those had included taking account of all material planning considerations that had been referred to in the officer's presentation, including what could be built under permitted development. She also referred to Planning Policy making it very clear regarding a second window. While there was an impact, it was not an unacceptable impact in this case, or enough to warrant refusal.

Councillor Wray had noted Mr Strachan's claims that views expressed by the case officer at a site visit had conflicted with some of the information in the report. He put this to the officer who explained the information taken from the site visit was considered in the round by a panel of senior officers. She added that the case officer was possibly not aware of the room which the windows served at the time of the visit.

In a further query, Alderman Graham sought clarity on the permitted development considerations that had been referred to and it was explained that this could relate to structures such as a garden room or an ancillary shed, for example.

Alderman Graham sought further assurances that officers were meeting the policy requirements around the impacts on light to property 17a and queried the impacts that it would have on the 25-degree light test which he acknowledged was already transgressed.

The officer referred to her previous comments around policy advice explaining the considerations for more than one source of light and it was felt that a refusal could not be sustained at appeal. She referred to a diagram and confirmed that the 25-degree light test would be impacted further by the development.

As there were no further questions, the Chair sought a proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

The proposer, Councillor Morgan, understood the need to improve properties to suit living arrangements, such as that intended by the applicant. She appreciated the difficulties in considering planning applications and while it would be wonderful if an extension could have no effect on neighbouring properties, the world did not work that way. She felt that the planning officers had provided great detail in terms of the application and the impacts on neighbouring properties, and she was content that everything possible had been done to minimise those impacts, and that the planning application met with the policies.

The seconder, Alderman Smith, felt that both speakers had made their cases very well, but it was planning policy that was the only consideration for the Committee. He saw the light impacts as the bone of contention, but he was content that all issues had been properly considered and was therefore happy to support the proposal.

Unable to support the proposal, Councillor Kendall felt that further information should have been sought, pointing to a strong case made by Mr Strachan that Members were being asked to approve something that they had not seen for themselves.

The Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, had great sympathy with both the applicant and objector, but it had to come down to Planning Policy, and he pointed to the key factor being the window in the kitchen and in relation to the dining room. He had also taken on board the points made around the potential for permitted development. He did not feel a site visit was necessary because there were two light sources into the kitchen and that was the key factor for him, so on balance, he was supportive of the proposal to approve.

The Chair had an objection to over-dominance and aside from the light issue, he felt that the extension would have a dominant effect on the objector's property and was unable to support the proposal to approve.

On being put to the meeting, with 10 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

<b>FOR (10)</b>	<b>AGAINST (3)</b>	<b>ABSTAINED (2)</b>	<b>ABSENT (1)</b>
<b>Aldermen:</b>	<b>Alderman:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	<b>Councillor:</b>
Graham	McIlveen	Kendall	Hennessy
McDowell	McCollum	McKee	
Smith	<b>Councillor:</b>		
<b>Councillors:</b>	Wray		
Cathcart			
Harbinson			
Kerr			
McClellan			
Morgan			
McBurney			
Smart			

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.**

**4.4 LA06/2024/0595/F - The Old Inn, 15-25 Main Street, Crawfordsburn Enclosed private amenity space (13 sqm) to ground floor bedroom (Appendix III)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

**DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye**

**Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which were contrary to officers’ recommendation.**

**Proposal: Enclosed private amenity space (13sqm) to ground floor bedroom**

**Site Location: The Old Inn, 15-25 Main Street, Crawfordsburn**

**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the application stating that 14 objections had been received from 12 separate addresses and Members should note that it was the only application being presented before them this evening that could be considered.

This was an existing hotel site, which had been in operation for many years. The Planning Service could not make a determination on matters beyond the application proposal. In terms of consultations, the Head of Planning advised that DfI Roads and Environmental Health were consulted and had no objections to the proposal.

In relation to the application site which was located within the Crawfordsburn Settlement Limit and formed part of the existing Old Inn hotel complex, the site was within the settlement of Crawfordsburn as designated in the North Down and Ards

Area Plan 1984 – 1995 and also draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015. Within draft BMAP the site was also located within the proposed Crawfordsburn Area of Village Character (Designation CFN 02). The area contained a mix of residential and commercial uses. It remained a material consideration that the site was also located within the proposed Crawfordsburn Area of Village Character (AVC) (Designation CFN 02). The policies within the Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 6 (APPS 6) and the related provisions of the SPPS refer to Areas of Townscape/Village Character.

To provide some context the Head of Planning displayed slides showing the site and surrounds. The site of the proposal was located to the side of the existing hotel building.

Regarding details of the proposal, the proposed private courtyard was sited on the east elevation of the Old Inn adjacent to a ground floor bedroom. The courtyard was 13 sqm in area and would be finished in white render to match the Old Inn with timber access gate. The cover letter from the agent, states, '*the proposal represents the enhancement of a bedroom at the hotel*'. Those works were considered minor in nature. Following assessment, the proposed development was subordinate to the existing hotel building, and it was in keeping with the surrounding area and respected the site context in terms of scale, size and design. The proposal was in keeping with Policy TSM 1 of PPS 16 for Tourism Development in Settlements which stated that planning permission would be granted for a proposal for tourism development (including a tourist amenity or tourist accommodation) within a settlement, provided it is of a nature appropriate to the settlement, respects the site context in terms of scale, size and design, and had regard to the specified provisions of a development plan. Although minor in nature, as the proposal was located within a proposed AVC in draft BMAP the impact of the proposal on the overall appearance of the proposed AVC remained a material consideration.

The proposal would have no unacceptable impact on visual amenity or character of the area. It was situated to the rear of the pedestrian arch way (entrance). Sufficient space remained to ensure pedestrian access to the carpark. The proposed courtyard could be accessed through the existing bedroom or from the car park (via a timber gate). Finishes were annotated as render to match the existing building. There were no elevation changes to the front of the hotel with main views being from the existing carpark. The design of the extension was respectful to the existing buildings while also promoting sustainable economic tourism development and it was considered that a balance had been achieved in this respect. Members should note that the proposed courtyard extension would have no impact on the residential amenity of the surrounding area, Environmental Health had been consulted and had no objection. The proposal did not have any impact on trees or other landscaping features.

In terms of access, road safety and parking - access to the car park of the hotel was unaffected by this proposal. Car parking had been raised as a concern via representations. DfI Roads had no objection to the application. There was no impact on car parking as a result of this proposal with no intensification of use or loss of parking spaces. An existing access would be used to gain access and there would be no impact on traffic entering or leaving the site.

Objections raised in relation to the proposal included road safety issues and parking, impact on wildlife in nearby country park, light and noise pollution and other matters including necessity of the proposal, impact on AVC, prematurity with regard to the village plan had all been detailed and addressed in the case officer report.

The Planning Service had fully considered all concerns raised by objectors which could only be taken to be considered against this proposed development. Given the details as presented and detailed in the case officer report, the recommendation was to grant planning permission.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Head of Planning.

Councillor McClean questioned the height of the wall wondering if that was a 2m standard rendered wall with a wooden gate. Referring to the visual showing the elevation, the Head of Planning confirmed that as correct.

In response to a question from Councillor Kendall, the Head of Planning again displayed the visual highlighting the side elevation.

Councillor Kendall noted the pedestrian entrance beside the wall on the visual. The disability ramp was located there, and she expressed concerns that pedestrians would be funnelled from the narrow archway straight into the car park with reduced visibility. She was surprised as to what was being proposed in the middle of a car park and that safety issues had not been taken into account.

The Head of Planning clarified that access would still be available into the hotel and there would be no loss of car parking.

At this stage Mr Mike Davidson was invited to come forward as he was in attendance to speak in opposition to the application.

Mr Davidson wished to raise objections on behalf of the residents of Crawfordsburn village. Residents considered the private amenity space a needless and totally unnecessary addition. As a simple screened area, it would be overlooked by the holiday cottages to be created and therefore would not be private. The site plan included in the application showed that the space was currently occupied by a wheelchair access ramp. If the ramp was surplus to requirements and was to be removed, then the space would be better served by returning to its original use as a parking space. Before the erection of the ramp that area had disabled parking bays, the markings of which were still clearly visible. Mr Davidson referred to PPS3 Policy AMP7 5.48 which detailed that there was a requirement to reserve an appropriate proportion of parking spaces to meet the needs of people with disabilities and those should be conveniently located to facilitate ease of access to the buildings they serve in order to take account of the limited mobility range of many disabled people. Residents would suggest that the space within the car park, that the proposed amenity area would occupy, was the ideal location for disabled parking as it was the closest to the entrance of the hotel. The Old Inn currently had only one disabled parking space which was clearly inadequate. The lack of sufficient disabled parking space was a real issue. Mr Davidson advised that he had witnessed when the Old

Inn car park was full, a disabled van parking on the blind corner and taking a young man in a wheelchair from the back and then leaving him sitting alone at the rear of the vehicle while the driver went back to the front of the van. The van was then parked on the blind corner for over 4 hrs almost causing a head-on collision.

Mr Davidson was of the view that the drawings submitted appeared to be incorrect and the left-hand entrance pillar was not inset as shown but was in line with the end of the existing parking spaces and so the space could easily revert to its original use as a parking space instead of the fenced-off area. Whilst the Case Officer's report acknowledged the parking problems in the village, it failed to determine the cause. Figures finally received from the planning department using Dfl parking standards detailed that before the closure of the lower ground function room, when staff parking was taken into consideration, the number of in-curtilage car parking spaces recommended for a venue of this size was 188 spaces with 71 spaces available on site. After the closure of the lower ground function room the recommendation fell to 150 car parking spaces with only 56 spaces remaining. That equated to only 37% of the recommended parking. That supported what residents had said all along – the in-curtilage parking facilities were far from adequate for the number of vehicles that the hotel attracts. The parking problems on Main Street were a direct result of a lack of parking at the Old Inn. Mr Davidson advised that over the Christmas period the Old Inn car park was regularly full to maximum capacity, the on-street parking was also full to capacity, visitors to the hotel were parking on the double yellow lines at either end of the village, multiple vehicles were parking in the bus stop, and parked in the entrance to the Crawfordsburn Brow development. That reduced Crawfordsburn Village to single lane traffic forcing cars to back up in either direction. This also made it extremely difficult for residents of Crawfordsburn Brow as backed up traffic would not give way to allow residents to exit the development. Cars were parked, overnight in some cases, totally blocking the only footpath from Ballymullan Road into the village forcing pedestrians and parents with pushchairs into the road on a busy junction. Police were informed but did not attend. Mr Davidson highlighted that those were the problems residents were facing at the moment before the number of in-curtilage parking spaces had been reduced. Residents' concern was that when the proposal occurred the difficulties being experienced at busy times would become an everyday occurrence. Mr Davidson asked the Committee to refuse the application and return the space to a disabled parking space.

The Chair invited questions from Members for Mr Davidson.

Councillor McCollum advised she was very familiar with the area and how challenging it was driving through the village and parking could be at times. The area had always been challenging and cars frequently double parked either side of the road. She asked Mr Davidson if he felt the parking issues were increasing since the redevelopment of the Old Inn. Mr Davidson was of the view that the problem had become noticeable worse. He had found that once the Old Inn car park was full, the parking was being displaced on to the street, when that happened it became as what he described as a tunnel with traffic being backed up in either direction blocking the entrance into Crawfordsburn Brow. The village had become increasingly difficult to park and drive through. Residents feared that more car parking spaces would be lost from the Old Inn car park. To put it in context, there was only 16 car parking spaces in the whole of the village. There was also a need to push for a disabled parking

space in the Main Street. Mr Davidson felt the matter needed to be given careful consideration.

As there were no further questions from Mr Davidson he returned to the public gallery.

Mr David Mountstephen and Mr Israel Robb were in attendance to speak in support to the application. The Chair invited those representatives to come forward.

Mr Mountstephen advised that the application was for an enclosed private amenity space and was compliant with planning policy and the provisions of the local development plan. It would not have any unacceptable adverse impact.

Councillor McClean asked as to why the change had been brought forward as a full planning permission and could that not be approved under permitted development rights. Mr Mountstephen explained that limited permitted development rights existed for hotels. There was a category for minor development however the height of enclosure was slightly above permitted development rights. The proposal was minor in scale and was only before the Planning Committee due to the number of objections from 12 addresses in the village.

As there were no further questions for the representatives, Mr Mountstephen and Mr Robb returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor McCollum asked what the requirements for disabled access were. The Head of Planning stated that reference was made to the space having been previously used as a disabled parking space however when a site visit was undertaken the Officers assessed what the situation what was on the ground at the time. Dfl had no objections to the application.

Alderman Graham referred to the disabled access and asked where that existed at the moment. The Head of Planning was unsure but thought it was at the side of the hotel. The representatives had returned to the public gallery and therefore were unable to clarify.

Alderman Graham felt it was unique to have a courtyard adjacent to the bedroom of a hotel and questioned the reasoning for the need. The Head of Planning stated that since Galgorm had taken over the hotel, it was looking at reconfiguring and making a more quality product rather than an expansion. It was a ground floor bedroom and the proposal would increase the amenity for people staying allowing visitors to avail of outdoor seating.

Alderman Graham expressed concerns regarding the continuous drip effect with applications and the effect those had.

Councillor McBurney wished to raise a question in relation to the disabled parking space that used to be there, there was now a ramp to allow disabled access and she wondered if the car parking space was returned would that potentially impact that

accessibility issue of the ramp. The Head of Planning stated she would not answer the question as that was a 'what if' scenario, and Members had to consider the proposal before it.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by the Mayor, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.

Alderman Smith understood the residents' concerns regarding the traffic in the village. He recognised the challenges which had been well articulated by Mr Davidson; however, as the Head of Planning had stated there was a need to assess what was before the Committee and on that basis he felt there was no choice but the accept and approve the application.

The Mayor stated that an application had to be judged on what was before the Committee and not what was thought to be there. He believed the application was straightforward and he was happy to approve.

Councillor Kendall felt the proposal showed an enclosure with a wall height that would restrict view and funnel pedestrian access from the archway onto the main road into the way of traffic therefore not promoting safety for pedestrians or other road users and also removing disability access did not promote people with disabilities.

On being put to the meeting the proposal was declared CARRIED with 12 voting FOR, 3 AGAINST, 0 ABSTENTIONS and 1 ABSENT.

The voting was as follows:

<b>FOR (12)</b> <b>Alderman:</b> McIlveen McDowell Smith	<b>AGAINST (3)</b> <b>Alderman:</b> Graham	<b>ABSTAINED (0)</b>	<b>ABSENT (1)</b> <b>Councillor</b> Hennessy
<b>Councillors</b> Cathcart Kerr Harbinson McBurney McCollum McClellan Morgan Smart Wray	<b>Councillors</b> Kendall McKee		

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.**



(Councillor McKee, attending remotely, was excluded from the meeting having declared an interest in Item 4.5 – 8.25pm)

**4.5 LA06/2023/1658/F - Land adjacent to & approx. 17m South of 27 Auburn Park, Bangor**  
**Single dwelling**

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

**DEA: Bangor West**

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

**Proposal: Single dwelling**

**Site Location: Land adjacent to & approx. 17m South of 27 Auburn Road, Bangor**

**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

The Senior Planner (C Rodgers) showed an image of the site, located at the end of a residential cul-de-sac and adjacent to West Circular Road. The site was not subject to any Development Plan zonings or environmental designations. Auburn Park was an established residential development. The wider area comprised of a mix of residential and commercial uses.

The officer advised from the outset it was important to highlight that there was a history of planning approvals for dwellings at the end of adjacent residential cul de sacs.

She showed a slide with solid red polygon representing the application site, and lighter shaded areas showing the locations of previously approved dwellings - including a pair of semi-detached dwellings immediately opposite the site. The established precedent was a significant material consideration in the determination of this application.

Further slides showed photographs of the site and the surrounding area. These included photographs from within the application site and a view of the application site from Auburn Park – a fenced area defined the location of the proposed new access.

The officer presented a further image which showed views of the application site from the adjacent carriageway – the site was to the rear of the over-grown trees. The slide also included an image of residential development previously approved and recently constructed along the carriageway adjacent to the site.

Displaying the proposed elevations, the officer explained this proposal was for a very modest, single storey dwelling with an overall ridge height of just 4.6m and an eaves height of 3.2m. The dwelling would have a painted render finish.

Due to the very modest scale of the single storey dwelling, and its end of cul de sac location (which was at a lower level to the adjacent carriageway), the development

would not be a prominent feature when viewed from the Carriageway or from within Auburn Park.

Turning to the proposed site plan, the proposed plot size respected the surrounding pattern of residential development. The level of private amenity space exceeded Creating Places standards. Hardstanding to the front could accommodate three car parking spaces which was considered ample to serve the 3-bedroom bungalow.

Due to its modest single-storey design, the proposal would have no unacceptable adverse impacts on the residential amenity of adjacent dwellings in terms of overlooking, loss of light, or overshadowing.

Objections to the proposal had been received from seven separate addresses. The main issue raised in objection letters related to the potential impact on parking along the adjacent residential streets. Other issues raised related to access and roads safety, loss of trees and associated impact on biodiversity, and the impact on NI Water infrastructure.

In terms of parking, access and roads safety, the proposal did not seek to rely on existing on-street parking capacity. As previously stated, the layout could accommodate three in-curtilage spaces which was ample to serve the modest three-bedroom dwelling and was fully compliant with planning policy.

The dwelling would be accessed via Auburn Park which was an adopted public road. DfI Roads had been consulted and had no objection subject to conditions to ensure the provision of a safe access.

In terms of biodiversity, the layout indicated that existing trees along the boundary were to be removed and replaced with timber fencing which was already a key characteristic of this particular area.

A biodiversity checklist and ecological statement had been prepared by a qualified ecologist. The ecologist advised that the trees did not qualify as a priority habitat; rather they were described as over-mature, non-native, cypress trees which were over-growing the adjacent footpath. The trees were inspected by the ecologist who found no evidence of bat roosting potential. The ecologist confirmed that no other features within the site had the potential to support protected or priority species.

NIEA Natural Environment Division was consulted and provided no objection to the loss of these trees in terms of natural heritage interests. Moreover, it was important to highlight that these trees were not subject to a Tree Preservation Order and could be removed at any time without permission.

In terms of sewage infrastructure, the officer confirmed that the application was affected by on-going NI Water capacity issues; however, it was considered that this issue could be managed by a negative planning condition requiring a solution to be agreed with the relevant authorities prior to the commencement of development. This would prevent any harm arising.

In summary, the proposal was for a very modest, single storey dwelling that respected the overall pattern of development in the wider area and would cause no harm to existing residential amenity. The layout could accommodate ample in-curtilage parking and private amenity space. Moreover, there were numerous examples of dwellings approved on similar sites along this section of the carriageway.

Having considered all material planning considerations, it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

The Chair invited questions to the officer for clarification and the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, referred to the design, noting that all other properties were of a particular design and this was for a smaller bungalow. He asked how this would integrate with rest of street and the officer explained that the dwelling would be located at the end of cul-de-sac and would not be a prominent feature in terms of the street scene. She added that it would be set down from the carriageway and there would be limited views of the dwelling.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted.

The Mayor felt this was a modest design compared to other developments in that area and he was satisfied that it fitted with Planning Policy.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.**

(Councillor McKee was returned to the meeting – 8.34pm)

**4.6 LA06/2024/0729/F - 6 Lyndhurst Gardens, Bangor  
Front and rear single storey extension and rear two storey extension.  
Conversion of attic to provide habitable bedrooms with rear balcony  
(Appendix V)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

**DEA: Bangor West**

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

**Proposal: Front and rear single storey extension and rear two storey extension. Conversion of attic to provide habitable bedrooms with rear balcony**

**Site Location: 6 Lyndhurst Gardens, Bangor**

**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

The Senior Planner (A Todd) took Members through the detail of the application. The site was located within a predominantly residential area in Bangor West. Lyndhurst Gardens contained a mix of single storey, one and a half storey and two storey

dwellings while the surrounding areas of Lyndhurst Avenue and Rutherglen Park contained only two storey dwellings.

The existing dwelling at No. 6 was a single storey with red brick and tile finishes while No. 5 to the north was one and a half storey and 12 Lyndhurst Avenue to the south was two storeys. The visual showed the existing and proposed site layout plans and demonstrated that there would be an increase in the overall footprint of the dwelling with an L shaped extension to the rear and a smaller, extended area to the front. An extended area of hardstanding for parking was also proposed to the front of the dwelling.

During the processing of the application, 20 objections from 10 separate addresses were received. Those had all been considered in detail in the case officer's report however the main concerns included:

- Proximity of the extension to 28 Rutherglen Park at the rear
- Loss of privacy caused by proposed balcony
- Overdevelopment of the site
- Loss of privacy from the proposed family room
- Proposal was out of character with the area.

The extension to the rear was part two storey and part single storey, while the extended area to the front of the dwelling was single storey. A roof space conversion to the existing dwelling was also proposed, which included new roof lights to the front and a roof extension to the rear with a balcony proposed off one of the new bedrooms. The Planning Officer displayed a visual showing the existing and proposed floor plans. The Planning Service was satisfied that the proposed extension would not result in the overdevelopment of the site. Ample private amenity space equating to approximately 150sqm would remain to the rear of the property. That would be well in excess of the minimum recommended space of 40sqm as set out in the Creating Places Guidelines. Adequate in-curtilage parking would also be provided for four cars which was also in line with the recommended standards for a dwelling of this size.

In terms of the impact on character, the Planning Officer outlined that Policy EXT1 of PPS7 Addendum required the scale, massing, design and external materials to be sympathetic to the built form and appearance of the existing property and not to detract from the appearance and character of the area. The Planning Service was satisfied that the scale, design and materials of the proposed extension would cause no harm to either the existing dwelling or the surrounding area. The proposed materials would match those of the existing dwelling. The proposed works to the front of the dwelling were very minor in nature resulting in no significant impact on the surrounding area. While the works to the rear were more substantial in size and would provide some first-floor accommodation, the height of the extension would not exceed the ridge height of the dwelling, therefore the visual impact from surrounding public viewpoints would be minimal. As the height respected that of the existing dwelling, the rear extension would not appear dominant within the surrounding area and would still be very much subordinate in scale to the surrounding two storey dwellings such as the immediately adjacent dwelling at No. 12 Lyndhurst Avenue.

In relation to impact on residential amenity, the Planning Service was also satisfied that the proposed development would not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents. The adjacent properties most likely to be impacted by the development included 5 Lyndhurst Gardens, 10 and 12 Lyndhurst Avenue and 28 and 30 Rutherglen Park. Looking first at Nos. 10 and 12 Lyndhurst Avenue to the south, both of those properties were considered to be a sufficient distance from the proposed extension to ensure that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact by way of either loss of light or privacy. The extension would be between 9.3-12.5m from the party boundary with those properties and the mature hedge and trees along the boundary provided a good degree of screening. A 1.8m high screen was also proposed to the side of the balcony, given its proximity to the boundaries of the properties, to ensure that no unacceptable degree of overlooking. The Planning Service was therefore content that there would be no adverse impact on those properties. No. 5 Lyndhurst Avenue was located to the north of the site and would be the property in closest proximity to the proposed extension. In terms of potential for overlooking into No. 5, two new first floor windows were proposed on the northern elevation which would serve a study and small box bedroom. Both of those windows would be conditioned to be fitted with obscure glazing to prevent any potential views into the rear private amenity space of No. 5. A kitchen window was also proposed at ground floor, however the existing vegetation along the party boundary would screen any views from this window towards No. 5. It was also noted that a window could be installed in this position under permitted development rights (i.e. without need for planning permission). The extension would also create no unacceptable loss of light to No. 5 with both the 60 and 45 degree light tests being met as indicated on the plan.

The proposed rear extension would come within close proximity to the party boundary with No. 28 Rutherglen Park to the rear. However, as could be seen on the elevations and sections on slide 10, this part of the extension closest to the boundary was single storey with a maximum height of 4m. The extension would also sit approximately 0.7m below the garden level of No. 28 and 10m from the rear of the dwelling itself. Given the small scale, lower finished floor level, separation distance and boundary fence, it was not considered that the extension would appear overbearing or result in any loss of light to this property.

The impact of the proposed alterations to the roof of the dwelling, including the proposed balcony, on Nos. 28 and 30 Rutherglen Park had also been carefully considered. The balcony would be located between 21-22m from the closest point of both Nos. 28 and 30 Rutherglen Park. It would be positioned to the south west of No. 28 rather than directly to the rear and while positioned more directly opposite the rear of No. 30, the existing mature conifer trees along the boundary would screen any potential views and those trees would be conditioned to be retained. The separation distance of 21-22m was in excess of the 20m back-to-back separation distance recommended in Creating Places for opposing first floors. Furthermore, the balcony was small in size and served a bedroom, therefore it would not be used for outdoor gatherings, such as those balconies or terraces off living spaces. The existing trees within the curtilage of No. 6 would also provide partial screening of the proposed balcony as would the single storey extension once erected. Taking all of these factors into account it was not considered that the proposed balcony would result in any unacceptable adverse impact by way of loss of privacy.

In summary, the proposal was considered to be acceptable taking account of the relevant policy requirements and guidance. The proposal would cause no unacceptable adverse impact on either the character of the area or the amenity of the adjacent dwellings. Therefore, on that basis, it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted subject to the stated planning conditions.

The Chair invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor McClean noted the reference that several changes had been made to accommodate the concerns of the neighbours. He noted that the original ridge height would not be exceeded even though the square footage was to be increased. He questioned why the neighbours' objections remained if so much had been done to accommodate those. Councillor McClean referred to No 28 Rutherglen Park and he felt the issue of the balcony and overlooking was being dismissed simply due to the fact there were mature conifer trees providing screening which were in need of trimming.

The Planning Officer stated that she could not comment on behalf of the objectors, and whilst Planning Service felt the proposal was acceptable under policy, objectors may have differing views. With regards the balcony, she explained that it was not just about the trees; as already alluded to, there was separate distance of 21-22m which was in excess of the recommended 20m back-to-back situation in residential areas for opposing first floors. Under permitted development rights, large dormers could be put in place and large windows with the same level of overlooking. In the professional opinion of the Planning Officers, it was about balancing the different factors, and it was a small balcony off a bedroom, and viewed as acceptable.

The Chair clarified that once an objection was lodged it remained in the planning system against the application unless it was explicitly withdrawn. Therefore, even if there were amended drawings, the objections carried forward. The Head of Planning confirmed that was correct.

Councillor Morgan sought clarity on the number of bedrooms that would be included. The Planning Officer advised that five bedrooms were labelled on the plans, therefore a significant increase in the number of bedrooms.

Referring to the conifer trees, Councillor Morgan highlighted those were notorious for falling over and becoming too big, resulting in removal. She asked if a condition was included, that if the conifer trees were to be removed would screening be required in its place. Councillor Morgan referred to No 30 Rutherglen Park in particular on the visual and the separation distance between the property and the back bedroom.

In referring to her presentation, the Planning Officer explained that the balcony would be located between 21-22m from the closest point of both Nos 28 and 30 Rutherglen Park. Condition 5 in the Case Officer's Report outlined that those trees would be needed to be retained, at a minimum height of 6 metres unless removal was necessary to prevent danger to the public, in which case a full explanation along with a scheme of compensatory planting shall be submitted to the Council for approval.

Councillor McKee asked if there had been any further objections or reinforcement of objections received after significant alterations had been made to the plans as he felt that context would be useful. The Planning Officer advised that she did not have a breakdown of the number objections received before and after; however, confirmed that the objections had continued.

As there were no further questions, the Chair invited Mr John-Michael Greeves (Applicant) to come forward, who was in attendance to speak in support of the application.

Mr Greeves advised that the neighbours' thoughts had been carefully considered with significant time invested in making changes to address their concerns. 6 Lyndhurst Gardens was the only bungalow in the street that had not yet been developed. Every other bungalow had an attic conversion and extension. Mr Greeves explained that the new accommodation was essential for his family's needs and the 1970 bungalow was in dire need of an overhaul. To address Councillor Morgan's question regarding the number of bedrooms, Mr Greeves explained the property would accommodate his 86-year-old mother who had onset dementia and Parkinsons, along with his large family.

Upgrading the bungalow to a larger, contemporary, eco-friendly home should improve local amenity and potentially increase property values. The design aligned with the best aspects of other bungalows in the street, and it remained a single dwelling intended for family use only. The proposed scheme included the removal of two original chimneys and replacing them with eco-compliant systems. Outdoor green space was retained, and a contemporary wellbeing area was included. An outdoor WC allowed for convenient usage during outdoor activities. The extended parking was needed to meet Planning guidelines and still remained smaller than that of the other bungalows in the street.

In respect of privacy, Mr Greeves outlined that the rear extension height enhanced two-way privacy and safeguarded children. Currently, there was a neighbouring view directly into a child's bedroom. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), stated: "No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or other privacy, family, home or correspondence" (Article 16). He noted that the low profile of the roof remained within the existing ridge line, to minimise loss of light. The rear balcony was well screened on most sides, by either roofing, screening or tall, dense evergreen trees. The potential view to a distant house was minimal or, at 50 metres away, even negligible.

Responding to the concerns expressed, Mr Reeves stated that with regards being able to look upwards into an upstairs bedroom, that was invalid for three reasons:

- A tall dense evergreen hedge;
- Three taller trees; and
- There was no right to 'upward' privacy.

The repositioning of established bushes and shrubs had been included to demonstrate improving privacy even further.

With regard to claims that end gable windows would overlook the next door bungalow, Mr Greeves outlined that:

- All skylights were overhead, thereby being too high to peer through;
- End gable windows were included as emergency exits to comply with Building Regulations;
- As those gable windows faced the neighbouring end gable, directional privacy film could also be easily applied to prevent any incidental views from extraneous angles over their rear garden. However, visibility was highly unlikely due to angles, distances and wall thickness. There were no windows to the North-East, therefore Mr Greeves did not understand that objection.

In respect of overshadowing, Mr Greeves stated that the extension would not overshadow existing two-storey houses, which also happened to sit on higher ground. The design had been refined multiple times to satisfy light concerns. Existing tall trees would be trimmed for better light while maintaining privacy and preserving nature. Concerns about winter light were addressed with three key facts: pre-existing tall houses already obscure the low direct sunlight, most winter light was ambient (being reflected and diffused from clouds in all directions), and the design met both the 45 degree and 60 degree light angle tests.

In summary, Mr Greeves believed that significant effort had been made to ensure plenty of light, privacy, and improved visual amenity for neighbours, with numerous adaptations to meet Mr Greeves' family needs whilst pleasing local residents as reasonably as possible. The scale, style and materials were in keeping with the best three bungalows of Lyndhurst Gardens and mature hedges were to be kept to retain the character of the street.

The Chair invited questions from Members for Mr Greeves.

Councillor McClean questioned if the proposal would be a doubling of the floor space. Mr Greeves advised that would be less than doubling and estimated that would be a third extra, adding that plenty of garden would remain.

Councillor McClean asked if it was the intention that the property would be used for intergenerational family living. Mr Greeves confirmed that was the case.

Councillor McClean referred to the changes that been made to the proposal to accommodate the objections, and he asked if Mr Greeves could provide comfort of any interactions with residents to meet concerns. Mr Greeves advised that he spoken with some of the neighbours and was of the understanding that they were satisfied with the alterations made. He was trying his best to accommodate the neighbours with the guidance of the architect. Some of the concerns were from MLA's who had been contacted by neighbours and therefore felt the number of objections was not completely reflective of the number of people objecting. The bungalow next door sat at the same level to his property, and he outlined that the roof had been carefully designed to protect sunlight and adaptations had been made in that regard.

As there were no further questions, Mr Greeves returned to the public gallery.



The Chair invited any further questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor McClean referred to the restrictions on the garden room use and he was concerned that would be used for a business. He noted that a condition was attached to the application in that regard however questioned if that was enforceable. The Planning Officer stated that the Planning Service was content that the condition was enforceable. It was a tried and tested condition, and the PAC would use similar wording.

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

Referring to the visual, Councillor Morgan noted that the bungalow was in need of improvement. She believed all the neighbours had been accommodated as best as possible.

Councillor Smart was content that the application met planning policy, and the concerns of residents had been addressed as best as possible.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.**

## **RECESS**

The meeting went into recess at 9.03pm and resumed at 9.20pm.

- 4.7 LA06/2024/0572/F - Lands at Queen's Parade and Marine Gardens, Bangor, 14m North of 45-46 Queens Parade and North of 47-50 Queens Parade, Bangor**  
**Children's play area including play equipment, safety surfaces, seating, boundary fencing and landscaping.**  
 (Appendix VI)

### **DEA: Bangor Central**

**Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to officers' recommendation**

**Proposal: Children's play area including play equipment, safety surfaces, seating, boundary fencing and landscaping**

**Site Location: Lands at Queen's Parade and Marine Gardens, Bangor, 14m North of 45-46 Queens Parade and North of 47-50 Queens Parade, Bangor**

**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

The Senior Planner (A Todd) explained that the site was located at the western end of Marine Gardens just beyond the existing car park. It currently comprised paving, a small, grassed area and a small water fountain and was positioned between Queen's Parade and the Marina.

The Committee was shown images of the site. The first was looking towards Queen's Parade, the next one looking towards the Marina and the last looking towards Marine Gardens car park.

A further image showed the proposed layout plan for the playpark which would consist of a wheelchair accessible ship structure, various swings, a roundabout, seesaw, trampoline and playhouse. The playground would also be enclosed by 1m high fencing for safety with two self-closing gates on the northern boundary and one at the south eastern corner of the site.

The principle of the proposed playpark at this location was acceptable under Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation in that the current site was in use as open space and the play park would continue this use albeit in a different form. The extant planning permission for the overall Queen's Parade redevelopment was a material consideration. Under this permission a children's natural play area was approved and indicative plans showed grass mounds and a natural play structure such as those shown on a further image. The final details of the type of play equipment to be installed was conditioned on the permission to be submitted for approval prior to commencement of development, therefore allowing a degree of flexibility in terms of the type of play equipment that could be installed. A separate planning application was, however, deemed necessary for the current proposal rather than being dealt with under the planning condition due to the slightly different site area proposed and the overall height of the ship structure. Nevertheless, the previously approved play area represented a fall back for the site and therefore must be a material consideration.

The proposed ship structure would be the main feature of the playpark and would be 15.3m in length and 8.5m in height to the top of the tallest mast. The highest part of main ship itself would be the bow at 3.6m while the platform for standing on would be only 1.4m above ground level.

During the processing of the application, 19 objections from 16 separate addresses were received. These had all been considered in detail in the case officer's report; however, the main concerns included:

- The height and scale of the ship structure and impact on the character of the area.
- Lack of parking
- Loss of privacy to front gardens of dwellings on Queen's Parade
- Noise impact

In terms of the impact of the proposal on the character of the area, the play park would be visible from numerous public viewpoints given the coastal location; however, the main views would be from the west as the play structures would be largely screened by the proposed pavilion building to be located to the immediate east of the site.

A further slide showed a couple of longer distance views from the western end of Queen's Parade where the park would be partially screened by some intervening trees and planting.

The Committee was shown an image of closer views from Queen's Parade immediately opposite the site. It was not considered that the play park would appear overly dominant from any of these viewpoints and the recreational use would be very much in keeping with the location and existing open space. Historic Environment Division was also consulted and it was content that the proposal would have no adverse impact on the setting of the various nearby listed buildings along Queen's Parade given the separation distance and low height of the structures.

The Planning Service was also satisfied that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of the nearby residential properties along Queen's Parade. The park would be located approximately 37m away from the closest dwelling across a public road and also at a lower level. As the area was already in use as public open space, it was not considered that there would be any significant increase in overlooking. Environmental Health was also consulted on the application and was satisfied that the play park would not cause any unacceptable noise impact.

In terms of parking provision for the proposal, this was previously assessed under the application for the overall redevelopment of Queen's Parade which included the public realm and play area at Marine Gardens. As already outlined, this permission remained extant and therefore a fallback position which was required to be a material consideration in assessing the current proposal. While the design of the playpark had changed from that previously proposed, it was not considered that this would result in any significant increase in visitors to the area. Furthermore, if applying the Parking Standards to the play park as a separate stand-alone proposal, it would fall under the category of 'Public Open space' which required four parking spaces per hectare. As the site was only 0.16ha, only one space would be required. The Planning Service was therefore content that no additional parking was required as part of this proposal.

In summary, the proposal was considered to be acceptable in principle complying with Planning Policy Statement 8 and taking account of the extant planning permission for a play area at this location. The proposal would cause no unacceptable adverse impact on either the character of the area or the amenity of the adjacent dwellings and would provide a valuable play facility functioning as an integral part of the overall proposed Marine Gardens Public Realm. Therefore, on this basis, it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted subject to the stated planning conditions.

There were no questions to the officer, so the Chair sought a proposal.

Proposed by Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be approved.

Alderman Graham was content with what he felt was an excellent design while the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, welcomed the application, adding that it was a positive development for Bangor and would be a great addition to amenity and play facilities in that area. He believed that all of the objections had been considered and separation distances were significant between this and residential properties. He was therefore happy to support the proposal for approval.

Speaking in support of the proposal, Councillor Harbinson welcomed in particular, the accessible features of the pirate ship and felt that this was a great step forward for the Borough.

Referring to the case officer's report, Councillor McKee noted that this was a replacement for the playpark at Pickie and he queried if there was a change of opinion since the original application that had proposed a natural play facility.

The Director of Prosperity explained that the existing playpark within Pickie Funpark, whilst Council owned and a free facility, and as Pickie was being redeveloped as part of the Bangor Waterfront scheme, which was funded under the Belfast Region City Deal, the operator had proposed significant investment in line with a Council tender requirement for the redevelopment of the park. Moving forward, all of the attractions within the park would be chargeable so it was felt that moving the playpark to this new location would also tie in with the overall public realm development of Queen's Parade and it would represent an investment of £250,000 providing a Tier 0/1 playpark.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be granted.**

**4.8 LA06/2022/0265/F - 31a Sheridan Drive, Bangor  
Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

**DEA: Bangor Central**

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

**Proposal: Demolition of existing garage workshop and erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with parking**

**Site Location: 31 Sheridan Drive, Bangor**

**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

**ITEM WITHDRAWN - The application had been withdrawn from the agenda in advance of the meeting.**

**4.9 LA06/2024/0953/A - Redburn Community Centre, 1a Ardnagreena Gardens, Holywood  
Wall-mounted boards (to create anti-drugs mural)  
(Appendix VII)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

**DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye**

**Committee Interest: Application on land which Council has an estate.**

**Proposal: Wall-mounted boards (to create anti-drugs mural)**

**Site Location: Redburn Community Centre, 1a Ardnagreena Gardens,  
Holywood**  
**Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission**

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the application. By way of background, the sign was a project organised by a local community group. There were ongoing anti-social problems in the area and the mural sought to be both a creative project and to encourage an anti-drugs message.

The Council, as owners of the Community Hall building, had formally agreed with the applicant that the mural could be on the building for a maximum of three years. The site was a community building in a residential area of Holywood. There was a small area of greenery and dedicated parking to the front. The site was within the Redburn Local Landscape Policy Area in Draft BMAP. There were no designations in relation to built heritage. No architectural or archaeological designations affect the site.

The advertisement related to a number of marine ply boards on the side of the community building on which would be created an anti-drugs mural. The sign would be 12m in length and 1.2m in height and would be screwed to the lower part of the building below the windows.

Policy in relation to advertising explained that care was to be taken to ensure that proposals did not detract from the place where the advertisement was to be located, to prevent visual clutter, and to control signage involving illumination – there was no illumination associated with this proposal.

The building faced toward the junction with the Old Holywood Road. Whilst the building was set back from the junction, there were no intervening buildings resulting in relatively clear views – albeit through some mature trees - from the main road towards the community hall. The closest dwelling was over 50m away. There would be no material impact on the outlook for any neighbouring property. Given the summary provided in the presentation and the detail contained within the case officer report, granting of consent was recommended.

The Chair invited questions to the officer from Members.

Councillor Wray was supportive of these types of artworks and felt they were a good way to promote positive messages, but he had been aware of a number of these boards coming off during recent storms. He asked where liability would fall if this happened on Council land, but the Head of Planning advised that it was not a planning issue.

In a further query, Councillor Wray asked if the Director of Prosperity would be open to meeting the funders for these projects which was typically Northern Ireland Housing Executive or other sections within the Council to discuss reimaging projects.

The Chair felt that the matter of liability fell under the remit of the Corporate Services Committee and the Council's Lands section, but Councillor Wray explained that he wanted the Planning Service to have a wider conversation around reimaging which

was a very positive development that could be seen with some of the artwork that was appearing around Bangor. He hoped that this could be a joined-up approach and involve different areas of the Council.

The Director explained there had been various queries from Members in terms of planning consent around the advertising element of it. It did require consent to fix anything to a building and while it could be prohibitive to some community groups in terms of financing, the Planning Service had accommodated many of these applications by treating them as an advertising application which was significantly cheaper than under Category 13 of the Fees Regulations. She added that Planning Service was open to discussing any such proposals with other sections including the Council's Community Development section.

Alderman Graham asked for clarity on what the Council was being asked to approve, whether it was the principle of advertisement or a specific advertisement. The Head of Planning explained that it was for a specific image, displayed within her presentation and planning consent was sought for it to remain on the building for three years. The Director explained the necessary legislation, referring to Section 250 of the Planning Act which set out the definition of an advertisement in the context of planning and it was relevant to this particular image and building.

The Mayor, Councillor Cathcart, had wondered if a definition could have been formed within the Local Development Plan but the Director confirmed that it was set out in primary legislation which she had referred to.

Councillor McCollum explained she had been at a meeting of various community groups in Holywood the previous day and noted community buy-in in terms of murals aimed at addressing not just drug issues, but wider antisocial behaviour issues. She therefore expected to see more of these types of applications received by the Planning Service. Councillor McCollum asked for clarity if the specific image deviated from what had been presented to the Committee, if that would contravene planning consent.

The officer confirmed that any illumination of that image would be a breach of planning and enforcement action would be taken.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted, that consent be granted.

Councillor Kendall knew that a lot of work had been undertaken in the community to get to this stage and that a lot of engagement went on with young people about relevant issues in the area and she was aware that it had struggled with drug issues and antisocial behaviour. She felt that Council should be willing, not just because it complied with Planning Policy, but because it was an example of direct community action to try and improve life for people in their community.

Councillor Smart rose to support what was a positive message, referring to the burden on community groups to reimagine something from a negative to a positive, which was incredibly heavy at the moment. He felt it was something that the Committee needed to focus on going forward. He recognised that there were many

limits placed on the Planning Committee in terms of how it dealt with this, but it was important to leave no stone unturned and make it as successful as possible.

Alderman Graham referred to previous reservations about the matter when it was raised at the Corporate Services Committee and in relation to Councillor Smart's comments, he felt that this was not turning something negative into a positive as there was nothing negative there to begin with.

The Chair explained that Councillor Smart, having begged his indulgence, had been speaking more widely about community groups that were working very hard to have re-imaging, so it was a different point.

Referring to his views at the Corporate Services Committee when this scheme was discussed, Alderman Graham explained that he was not comfortable with painting on Council's community centres and wished to be recorded as abstaining in relation to this application.

The remaining Members of the Committee indicated agreement to the recommendation to grant consent.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning consent be granted.**

## **5. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE**

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

### **Appeal Decisions**

1. There had been no appeal decisions received since the last update for the Planning Committee on 3 December 2024

### **New Appeals Lodged**

2. The following appeal was lodged on 30 December 2024.

PAC Ref	2024/A0098
Council Ref	LA06/2021/0490/O
Appellant	Paul McGouran
Subject of Appeal	Proposed farm dwelling and domestic garage
Location	50m NW of 100 Carrickmannon Road, Ballygowan.

Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings could be viewed at [www.pacni.gov.uk](http://www.pacni.gov.uk).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

## **6. CORRESPONDENCE WITH DFI MINISTER - LWWP AND NI WATER FUNDING**

(Appendices VIII - XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching cover report -previously presented 5 November 2024 in relation to Living with Water Programme (LWWP), letter to DfI Minister 3 December 2024 and response from Personal Secretary DfI Minister dated 3 January 2025. The report detailed that Members shall be aware of the matters raised in relation to funding of the Living with Water programme and assurances for funding for a fit for purpose Northern Ireland Water (NIW) (Planning Committee 09 April 2024 – Item 6, reporting of update at Planning Committee meeting of 06 August 2024 – Item 6.) Most recently a further report was presented in November 2024 in relation to the critical stage of Living with Water and the outcome of the DfI review of that programme. A further letter was prepared and was issued. The letter set out concerns over consequences for the environment with a knock-on effect for the Planning system with limited opportunities for future economic growth and the development of much needed housing. Furthermore, it made explicit the concerns of the Planning Committee that the matter of funding for upgrades to Kinnegar WwTW be investigated again as a matter of urgency.

The correspondence attached to the report was the most recent response dated 3 January 2025, from Emma Stockman, the Personal Secretary to the Department for Infrastructure Minister.

The response received advised that the affordability review into the Living with Water programme had concluded. The outcome of the review was that *‘the social, environmental and economic needs for the Belfast Plan continues to exist, however, without the necessary budget, the original 12-year timescale to deliver it is no longer achievable’*. The letter advises that delivery of the projects *‘in the Belfast Plan, including the upgrade to Kinnegar WwTW, will therefore be taken forward as normal business at a scale and pace achievable within available budgets’*.

In acknowledging that NIW operated under significant financial pressures, the letter referred to the Minister allocating it a budget of c.£0.5 billion in 2024/25 (just under 40% of the total non-ring-fenced budget available for DfI).

The letter concluded that *‘it is important, therefore, that NI Water works within this funding, prioritises accordingly, and seeks opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders, including the Council, to find innovative solutions wherever possible.’*

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report and the attachments including the reply received from the Personal Secretary to the Infrastructure Minister.

The Head of Planning outlined the report to the Committee, explaining that at the meeting in November, Councillor McCollum had requested that correspondence be issued to the Minister of Infrastructure with particular regard to Kinnegar and to express concern at the potential future state and current state of Belfast Lough.



Correspondence was issued and a response was received from the Minister's personal secretary, writing on his behalf. This was attached for Members and summarised in the report.

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

Councillor McCollum felt that the Council was going around in circles on the matter, but the Planning Service could not be found wanting on its efforts in terms of communication.

She recalled that the DAERA Minister had raised this and had called the response from NI Water a thundering disgrace due to the fact that raw sewage continued to be pumped into Belfast Lough.

Councillor McCollum explained that she walked regularly along Seapark and noted visual evidence of sickening, raw sewage. She warned that the Council was staring the down the barrel of a gun in terms of an environmental tragedy, but it also brought profound economic issues in that people were unable to build houses along with job creation impediments. Continuing, the Member was aware that the matter was covered under the next item on the agenda and was simply proposing to note this.

The seconder, Councillor Morgan had found the report depressing in that the Minister was effectively saying no to the Living With Water plan and she found it completely unacceptable that NI Water was polluting waterways. It was preventing new housing and the unlocking of economic development, one of the core roles of the Council. The Minister needed to provide innovative solution because the status quo was unacceptable.

The Chair noted that there was now a new Minister but suspected that nothing would change as the political party seemed to be more ideologically driven and while there were alternative ways to allow NI Water to raise funds to carry out the work required, it was not a step that the previous Minister was not willing to take and he doubted that his party colleague would be willing to take it either.

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

## **7. KINNEGAR WWTW – UPGRADE DEFERRAL** (Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching correspondence from NIW. The report detailed that Members shall be aware through Item 6 of the recent response dated 3 January 2025 from the office of the Infrastructure Minister regarding concerns of the Planning Committee that the matter of funding for upgrades to Kinnegar WwTW be investigated again as a matter of urgency.

Attached to the report was recent correspondence dated 15 January 2025,

from Paddy Brow, Project Sponsor for NIW, with regard to the proposed update to Kinnegar WwTW currently being dealt through planning application ref: LA06/2024/0309/F.

The details how, in late 2024, DfI wrote to NI Water and advised that a review had been carried out of Belfast area projects and concluded that whilst the need for the Living With Water in the Belfast Plan continued to exist, delivery of the Plan within the original twelve-year timescale was no longer achievable.

Given the lack of funding NI Water had begun to 'mothball' a number of Belfast projects, including the upgrade of Kinnegar WwTW which was now being paused indefinitely. It had been advised that a programme of maintenance was commencing in Spring 2025 to ensure that the existing facility operated as effectively as possible until it had been upgraded.

NIW had requested processing of the planning application continued should funding be provided which would enable delivery of the project.

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

The Head of Planning provided the Committee with a verbal summary of the above report.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that this Council replies to the letter from Northern Ireland Water dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025, noting with grave concern the decision to "mothball" the Kinnegar Waste Water Treatment Works Upgrade project and the confirmation that this project is now paused indefinitely and further asks Northern Ireland Water for clarification of the following issues:

1. What is the programme of maintenance which will commence in Spring 2025 and in what way will it differ from that maintenance which is currently in place?
2. If the facility at Kinnegar operates as "effectively as possible", will that achieve the key objectives in the Living with Water Plan of:
  - a. Increasing the treatment capacity to facilitate economic growth in the Borough
  - b. Reduce spills from unsatisfactory storm overflows
  - c. Treat waste water to a higher standard and,
  - d. Reduce the risk of odours

Speaking to her alternative proposal, Councillor McCollum referred to comments she made on the previous item, warning that the coastline was on the brink of an ecological disaster. The extent of the problem, including the state of Belfast Lough, had been set out in one of NI Water's own reports which had brought to attention just how NI Water was failing to deal with the issues at hand and prevent what Minister Muir (DAERA) had described as the 'next Lough Neagh'.

Continuing, Councillor McCollum pointed to what was a terrifying thought for members of the sea swimming community in terms of what was drifting up onto our shores. This was also now stifling this Borough in terms of a desperately needed building. It was not good enough to just keep kicking the can down the road and

hope that someone breaks first in a game of chicken. Council's hands were now tied until the new Minister for Infrastructure took over the reins, but it was possible for the Council to go back to NI Water and call it to account. She referred to an ongoing consultation and further comments from Minister Muir who was determined that NI Water would be held to account in the same way that any other polluter is and subject to the same sanctions.

In closing, Councillor McCollum urged Members to support her proposal which would see further contact to NI Water and see exactly what this effective maintenance programme was that it was apparently going to undertake with the same budget.

The seconder, Councillor Morgan, was supportive of the proposal, adding that it was important to get a clear understanding of what NI Water had meant in terms of how the waste plant was operating. She wondered if it only meant that the Lough was polluted less often, which she found appalling. She referred to Strangford Lough that was not talked about enough, she felt, in comparison to Lough Neagh. While Strangford Lough was coastal, it still meant that the Borough was sending its effluent out into the Irish Sea.

While supportive of the proposal, Alderman Graham felt that the underlying problem was the funding required to upgrade the infrastructure in terms of dealing with wastewater and it boiled down to NI Water being able to get the money it needed to do that. He also referred to further complications around opposition to water charges, but ultimately there needed to be a funding model available to upgrade the infrastructure.

Councillor Kendall added her support to the proposal, describing the situation as disgusting and disgraceful and pointing out that people had a right to clean water. While Council was able to blame NI Water, and it was right to write to them as proposed, it was also the fault of the Government for not making the funds available. She recalled figures from early 2024 which showed that an astronomical amount of new homes, including social housing, planned which were delayed due to water infrastructure issues, which was wholly unacceptable. She explained that private sector developers were paying to fund research but it needed a cross-departmental, multi-agency approach with budgets made available. It was still right, though, to write to NI Water not just in relation to Kinnegar and the Belfast Lough, but also for all across Northern Ireland, but more needed to be asked of the Government, too.

Alderman Smith sympathised with the proposal, but it was not possible for NI Water to magic up the funds that were needed and it did land at the Minister of Infrastructure's door and he doubted that what was an ideological decision would change under the successive Minister. Ultimately, it needed a complete change in how water was funded. He referred to a number of positive ideas, but the Minister had turned his back on them and unless the Minister and NI Executive changed that approach, then it would remain a catch 22 situation. If NI Water did not have the hundreds of millions it needed for capital works, it would continue to fight with one or both hands tied behind its back.

Summing up, Councillor McCollum agreed with Members in terms of the funding that was required for NI Water to install the required infrastructure investment, but felt the

Council needed to continue to bring it to the public's attention that the Planning Service's hands were tied in relation to the issue and also ask NI Water not to collude with DFI in what was a whitewash regarding the maintenance programme because it was clear that it would not make any progress.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that this Council replies to the letter from Northern Ireland Water dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025, noting with grave concern the decision to “mothball” the Kinnegar Waste Water Treatment Works Upgrade project and the confirmation that this project is now paused indefinitely and further asks Northern Ireland Water for clarification of the following issues:**

1. **What is the programme of maintenance which will commence in Spring 2025 and in what way will it differ from that maintenance which is currently in place?**
2. **If the facility at Kinnegar operates as “effectively as possible”, will that achieve the key objectives in the Living with Water Plan of:**
  - a. **Increasing the treatment capacity to facilitate economic growth in the Borough**
  - b. **Reduce spills from unsatisfactory storm overflows**
  - c. **Treat waste water to a higher standard and,**
  - d. **Reduce the risk of odours**

## **8. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL**

### **8.1 Received from 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.

**ITEM WITHDRAWN** - Members had previously been advised that the Notice of Motion had been withdrawn.

**NOTED.**

### **8.2 Received from 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.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

The Chair invited Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas to the meeting, who were in attendance virtually and were not Members of the Planning Committee.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Cummings outlined at the end of 2024 the Department of the Economy launched the Sub Regional Economic Plan which called for a locally led approach, enabling local communities and local government to contribute to improved economic outcomes. Whilst Alderman Cummings recognised the existence of industrial sites around the Borough, there was a disparity that had been identified in the Comber area. Over recent years there had been a persistent enquiry about industrial units, with a particular demand in support for the agricultural sector and engineering. He explained that the purpose of this proposal was to allow officers to explore the potential for industrial units with a view to contributing towards the economic vision for the area. There had been notable success with regard the regeneration of Comber town centre, it was the call for sustainability that highlighted the demand for industrial development that brought focus to the growing population of Comber. The proposal would enable officers to explore the reality of the current demand and allow them to factor that into the Comber area, when considering the request from government to help them identify suitable locations to help meet their goals. The demands for support infrastructure and emerging growth were often heard, but if the growing population of Comber was to be sustainable, then it required a balanced approach to help the local economy. That included space that allowed for opportunities for SMEs, emerging businesses and manufacturing.

Alderman Cummings asked Members to support the motion which sought a report, that would not only better inform the emerging Comber town action plan but also help address the subject of sustainable economic growth in the flourishing corner of the Borough. In doing so, that would also complement the wider Department for the Economy's Sub Regional Plan and its aspirations with Invest NI.

Councillor Douglas added her support to the motion which was asking Officers to bring back a report to identify potential sites in around Comber to accommodate units for small and medium enterprises and businesses. Local communities working in partnership with the Department for the Economy, Invest NI and other agencies, would help create more job opportunities, increase productivity and employment rates. Councillor Douglas believed that the growth of Comber's economic business sector was vitally important. The majority of residents in Comber worked outside the town and she felt the motion could create an opportunity for the young people to work locally or have their own businesses located close to home.

Councillor Douglas highlighted the need to for the Council to be mindful of the importance of bringing investment to the Borough, to try and attract more businesses

and jobs. She outlined that could be a small starter business looking cost-effective space, or a growing medium enterprise needing more room for expansion. Councillor Douglas felt it was vital that the Council continued to engage with the business sector throughout the Borough and include them in the delivery of a better place to work and live. She called for Members to support the motion and for the report to be brought back to the relevant Committee.

Alderman McDowell added his support to the motion, though he was of the view that the motion should have been referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee. For many years, Alderman McDowell had been raised the lack of business accommodation/industrial space in the Borough, particularly Newtownards and Comber. Comber used to have considerable industries, and he alluded to some of those; however, unfortunately, over the years those had disappeared and the land used for housing. Alderman McDowell stated that there had always been a demand for businesses to set up in Comber; however, due to the lack of space those businesses had to go elsewhere. He felt that there was an opportunity to make a difference with the Minister's statement and the setting up of Local Economic Partnerships (LEP). He suggested that one of the first items that the LEP should look at was the overall availability of employment land or premises throughout the Borough. There was need to have a plan and strategy in place to address the matter. Alderman McDowell highlighted the problem of market failure and the need for a joint effort and the Council needed to play a pivotal role to ensure there was proper facilities available for businesses to grow. Alderman McDowell felt that there was a need to invest in those facilities to attract jobs as opposed to becoming a dormitory town. Alderman McDowell supported the proposal, but felt the Council needed to go further in the future.

Councillor Morgan believed the motion brought an excellent initiative and it should be supported adding that Comber has had significant new housing built and the town was prospering. However, the town had lost a lot of industrial units which had not been replaced. The town action plan from 2015 highlighted the need for an innovation hub and she looked forward to a report coming back.

The Mayor wished Members well with the motion; however, highlighted his dissatisfaction with Invest NI as an organisation, noting that Invest NI had land available in Bangor and had done absolutely nothing with it for over a decade. Therefore, having the land available was not the only issue and he believed Invest NI did not care about any of the areas outside Belfast. Invest NI had recently prepared a strategy stating that there were going to focus outside the greater Belfast area. Considering Ards and North Down had the lowest job creation of Invest NI sponsored jobs, the Mayor said that he was scared what the approach would be. The Mayor felt that the Council needed to keep the pressure on Invest NI to recognise the Borough and what it had to offer in terms of the workforce and the potential job creation. In Bangor there were units which were owned by various different companies; however, those were fully occupied by SME's, therefore there was the potential scope there, but he could not count on Invest NI to assist.

Alderman Smith shared the Mayor's scepticism regarding Invest NI; however, he hoped any units built in Comber would be focused more on the SME sector and thus would fall outside of the clutch of Invest NI. Some units had been identified in the

Enler village development and he questioned the potential timescale around those and that this could be considered in the forthcoming report. That was a large development and he wondered when the industrial element would come onboard. One of the benefits of the Enler Village development was the access to the road network and he suggested that any industrial areas proposed should be integrated into the transport infrastructure. There were examples of sizeable industrial areas within Comber; however, many were unfortunately located down country lanes.

Councillor Smart added his support to the motion which he felt was very relevant for the businesses that could not grow within the Borough. He asked if Officers had the information and the ability to complete the proposal in-house or if that would need outsourced.

The Chair was of the understanding that the work could be completed in-house, and a lot of work had already been done in relation to the identification of the sites. He noted that there was a section of the motion that did not lie comfortably within Planning Committee and suggested a proposal be made in relation to referring the report to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

To sum up, Alderman Cummings thanked Members for their comments and alluded to some of those. He agreed with the need for consideration for the wider aspect of the Borough; however, his motion was brought forward in relation to Comber and the void that existed. He recognised the scepticism in relation to Invest NI and trusted on the aspirations of the Department for the Economy and the detailed report that would come from Council Officers would hopefully lead the outcome. There was great potential, emerging industries, especially in precision engineering and the Agri-Tech sector with great ideas but the space was just needed to let them flourish. Alderman Cummings was content that the motion was referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee and explained that it had been referred to the Planning Committee due to footprint element.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.**

**FURTHER AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor McCollum, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that officers report back, where relevant, to the Place and Prosperity Committee.**

### **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 10.21 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, 5 February 2025 at 7.00 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Councillor McLaren (Vice-Chair)

**Aldermen:** Armstrong-Cotter (19:06)  
Cummings  
McAlpine (Zoom)

<b>Councillors:</b>	Boyle	Kerr (zoom, arrived 20:38)
	Cathcart	McKee (Zoom)
	Douglas	McKimm
	Edmund	Morgan
	Harbinson	Wray
	Irwin	

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

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Alderman McAlpine who was unable to Chair the meeting but attended by Zoom. Apologies for lateness were received from Alderman Armstrong-Cotter.

**NOTED.**

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**NOTED.**

### **3. STREET NAMING – LOUGHRY VIEW, NEWTOWNARDS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that a small development comprising of eight dwellings was, at the time of writing under construction on lands at 118 Movilla Road, Newtownards.

Both the developer and their architect were invited via email to suggest a street name when Building Control received the works application in April 2024, again in June 2024 and finally in November 2024. The Building Control department had not



received a suggestion to date, even after the developer acknowledged receiving the emails.

The development had continued to progress on site and most of the eight dwellings were nearing completion. Therefore, as per the Street Naming Policy, the Building Control department had since suggested a name to ensure that house purchases could be completed and to allow rates to be collected.

The Building Control department previously suggested the name Milford Mews due to the close proximity to an existing development known as Milford Manor. However, following a street naming report brought to the January 2025 Environment Committee, the Building Control department was requested to suggest another name.

The developer had suggested an alternative name of Loughry View for the development. The townland of Loughriscouse was in very close proximity to theirs and was the adjacent townland to Ballyalcock, where their development was located, which could not be used for a suitable street name. The name Loughry View reflected the development's location beside the Loughriscouse townland and its scenic view of the fields bordering Loughriscouse.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council adopt the street name of Loughry View for this development.

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

Councillor Boyle spoke of how naming of the development had taken some time with several deferrals and was pleased to see it had progressed.

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

#### **4. LICENSING FEES 2024/25**

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:** Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in line with the budget setting process, the fees for the various Licences issued by Licensing and Regulatory Services had been reviewed and compared with fees of other Councils. Some fees in Ards and North Down were lower than those of other Councils and did not adequately reflect the actual cost of administering the licence, and as such, it was proposed that fees were increased as follows:

##### **Pavement Café Licences**

The Council was permitted to charge a fee to administer the Pavement Café Licensing regime and Pavement Café Licences are granted for a period of three years on both application and on renewal. Within the 2025/26 year, there would be a change in Pavement Café guidance which will increase the amount of Officer time dedicated to each licence.

Although the licence fee was paid in full on application, the proposed fees equated to a £75 fee per annum with a £75 initial application fee.

<b>PAVEMENT CAFÉ (3 Year Licence)</b>		
	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Application	£240	£300
Renewal	£160	£225
Variation of Licence	£91	£100

### **Street Trading Licences**

There were a number of designated Street Trading pitches across the Borough which were occupied by Stationary Traders, while a Mobile Trader was typically one who moved from place to place selling their goods. Both licences were issued for a period of three years.

Although the licence fee was paid in full at the time of application or renewal, the proposed Stationary Licence fee equated to £125 per annum and the Mobile Licence fee to £100 per annum.

Temporary licences were issued to traders to allow them to trade at a specific event.

<b>Street Trading</b>		
	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Stationary Trader (3 Year Licence)	£286	£375 For those wishing to use multiple designated pitches, an additional £125 per pitch will apply
Mobile Trader (3 Year Licence)	£137	£300
Temporary Licence (fee per trader)	£10	£20
Variation of Licence	£39	£60

### **Road Closure Notices**

The Council must advertise Road Closure Notices in the local newspaper. The cost of an advert was dependent on its size, and the proposed increase in fees was to assist with covering the cost of this advert to the Council.

Adverts for filming events tended to incur a larger cost to the Council due to their nature, and two advertisement costs were incurred where events with a geographical location within an area covered by more than one local newspaper.

<b>Road Closure Notice</b>		
	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Special Event	£293	Filming on a public road £400 All other events £350 Where Licensing and Regulatory Services determine that an event must be advertised in more than one local paper due to the geographical location within the Borough, the cost of the additional advert will be also be recouped from the event organiser.
Small Special Event	£160	£170

Other fees, where not set out in legislation, would be amended in line with the Council's Income and Charging Policy.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council agrees the proposed fee increases for Pavement Café Licences, Street Trading Licences and Road Closure Notices.

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

Councillor Boyle explained that Members never liked having to discuss increasing charges but unfortunately, they were unavoidable, and he would always hope that the Borough could keep their costs lower than other Councils if possible.

Alderman Cummings agreed with his colleague and advised that consistency was important. Regarding the breakdown, he asked if outdoor seating capacity had an effect on pavement café licence fees. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that cost for a pavement café licence remained the same regardless of the number of outdoor tables/chairs.

Councillor Morgan thought it was not a good enough reason to increase fees to match other Council areas and asked how Officers had arrived at the decision. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that there were policies in place as well as licence processing procedures which took significant time for Officers to work through. The increase in fees would see figures at a more suitable level that

reflected the costs of work. A number of businesses covered by the licences such as mobile traders did not pay business rates in the same way as a business located in a permanent building, so payment of a licence for a service being provided by Council afforded a degree of fairness.

Councillor McKimm asked if consultation had occurred with those the rise would affect and how the cost had been calculated. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that fees had not increased for some time and Council policy advised of raising rates in line with inflation. These fees ranked seventh and as such were lower compared to other Council areas. No consultation had been carried out. Councillor McKimm queried why the Council had not consulted, how the price had risen from £160 to £225 and if the Council had matched costs without research. The Head of Regulatory Services advised that fee increases were part of a three year cycle and had sat out of line with inflation for a number of years. The guiding principle had been based on inflation as well as with reviewing costs of other Councils.

Councillor McKimm advised that he could not support the recommendation given the difficulties many traders already faced.

Councillor Wray understood the need to revise fees and that the increase was relatively modest given the number of years without revision. However, he could not support the increase given the adverse conditions many businesses were amidst and felt that that the Council had a duty to support local trade, citing discussions that had taken place over the past year. He did not believe this was the correct time for agreeing to a raise in fees.

As there had been some dissension in the room, a vote was called. On being put to the meeting with 10 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST and 0 ABSTENTIONS it was declared as CARRIED.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman Cummings, with 10 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST and 0 ABSTENTIONS, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **5. GRANT OF ENTERTAINMENTS LICENCE**

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

### **1. Donaghadee Parish Church Halls, Church Lane, Donaghadee, BT21 0AJ**

**Applicant:** David Sloan, 45 The Meadows, Donaghadee, BT21 0JG

**Days and Hours:**

Occasional Licence: 14 unspecified days within 12 months  
Monday – Sunday 9am – 11:30pm

**Type of entertainment:**

Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.  
A theatrical performance.

There had been no objections received from PSNI, NIFRS or Environmental Health.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants an Entertainments Licence to Donaghadee Parish Church Halls subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services.

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

## **6. ANDBC ESTIMATED 2025/26 PEPR PAYMENT – PROVISIONAL NOTICE OF ASSESSMENT**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment which in the first instance, provided background information relating to the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations, which were draft extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations, were laid in Parliament on 24 October 2024 and introduced the extended producer responsibility regime for packaging (packaging EPR) in the UK.

Significant changes had been made to the draft EPR Regulations 2024 following the government's July 2023 consultation. These included the definition of household packaging and of brand owner, for drinks containers reporting, a single date for introduction of recyclability labelling of 1 April 2027 and to disposal costs and fees. The UK government was committed to exploring ways to ensure greater producer and industry leadership, integration and engagement within packaging EPR.

### **Rationale for Introduction of packaging EPR regulations**

Packaging EPR was being introduced under powers in the Environment Act 2021, *to ensure producers pay the full net cost of managing their products at end of life to incentivise them to design their products with sustainability in mind.*

These regulations imposed obligations on producers for household packaging waste, to ensure that a proportion of the packaging they supplied by material type (card, glass, plastic, metal) was recycled and that they provided information on its disposal. Both civil sanctions and criminal prosecution were available for non-compliance. Most producers were expected to join a compliance scheme to meet their obligations.

### **Responsibility for the EPR scheme**

A producer responsible organisation (PRO) would run the packaging EPR scheme. The PRO would be made up of packaging producers who would manage the day-to-day running of the scheme. The PRO would say what materials were recyclable and how recyclable they were. It would work with the government and also see whether the collections that were being made at the household level by local authorities had been efficient and effective.

## Commencement of EPR regulations

Producers were required to register by 1 April 2025 and may have already been reporting data. The draft EPR Regulations 2024 would repeal and replace a set of interim packaging EPR data reporting regulations and would revoke and expand the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.

### **2.0 Ards and North Down Borough Council Provisional Notice of Assessment - Year 1 of the Scheme - Financial Year 2025 to 2026**

The Council had recently received a draft notice of assessment indicating the estimated total pEPR payment for Financial Year 2025 to 2026, amounting to **£2,788,000**. The notification stated that this value was an estimate only, it had been rounded to the nearest £1000 and is subject to change. A further notice of assessment would be provided once the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations were in force.

Our payment covers estimated net efficient costs associated with collection and disposal of household packaging waste from kerbside and communal collections, waste brought to Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and bring sites only.

In accordance with the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations waste management costs associated with the following were excluded from pEPR payments in year 1:

- A. Drinks containers made of any material other than glass (as per the draft regulations, waste management costs associated with the following were excluded from pEPR payments in year 1: drinks containers made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), steel, or aluminium between 150ml – 3l in size. This exclusion was until 2028. All drinks containers would be in scope from 2028 if a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) was not in place by that time.
- B. Binned waste and littered packaging waste
- C. Business waste
- D. Packaging collected within food and garden waste services

The payment would only cover the estimated cost of managing the in-scope (household) packaging element of the waste stream, subject to the above exceptions. Packaging was categorised depending on the material from which it was made into aluminium, fibre-based composite, glass, paper and card, plastic, steel, wood, and other materials.

In calculating the amount payable to the Council, a model (the Local Authority Packaging Cost and Performance model or LAPCAP) developed by Defra on behalf of the four nations had been used to determine the estimated net efficient costs incurred by every local authority (LA) in the UK for the management of household packaging waste. In line with the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations and where relevant to your authority, LAPCAP consider the following factors in determining your estimated net efficient costs:

1. The frequency, pattern and type of collections of household packaging waste undertaken within your LA.
2. The population density in your relevant area.
3. The type and accessibility of dwellings in your relevant area.
4. The levels of deprivation in your relevant area.
5. Government policies and the regulatory requirements affecting waste management to which your authority is subject.

### **3.0 Local Authority Performance Effectiveness Metrics and Evaluation Approach for pEPR**

The Extended Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations would require the Scheme Administrator to assess the effectiveness of local authority waste management services.

To support the transition to a circular economy pEPR seeks to increase the amount of packaging that was recycled, and the delivery of effective waste management services by local authorities was a key aspect of achieving this.

The Scheme Administrator was expected to assess effectiveness from the second year of the pEPR scheme, with performance metrics expected to be applied for the first time to local authority reported data covering April 2026 - March 2027.

It was expected that the Scheme Administrator would assess each local authority by its applicable metrics and that authorities would be grouped into one of ten groups to account for factors which were outside a local authority's control such as rurality, deprivation and inaccessibility so that a comparison of performance could be fairly undertaken by the Scheme Administrator. Following this analysis, the bottom 10% of each grouping would be identified and these authorities may qualify for inclusion within an Improvement Action Process (IAP).

The IAP was still under development and further engagement would be undertaken to inform the approach. The Improvement Action Process would feed into the improvement process in each UK nation, ensuring that it harmonises with any existing whole service improvement processes and therefore supported the delivery of the environmental outcomes of the policy.

### **4.0 Budgeting**

Members would have been aware that our estimated pEPR award for the forthcoming year had already been considered in the context of the estimates process for 2025-26, and agreement had been reached on how the monies would be treated and managed in that regard.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the contents of this report.

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

Councillor McKee was happy to see information coming from the scheme and explained that decades of costs from businesses where non-recyclable packaging

had been used, led to increased costs for the Council. With this change, he hoped that it may be possible for costs to reduce for businesses that made the efforts surrounding packaging/recycling. He asked for further information on the exemptions regarding bins and littered waste. The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services advised that bin waste referred to litter bins and DEFRA had developed a model, LAPCAP that currently could not account properly for street litter. However, there were plans to include litter bin waste in the future. The legislation related to household waste hence why business waste had been excluded. There were, at the time of writing no plans to bring business waste into the scheme.

Councillor Boyle was content with the forthcoming year having already been considered during the estimates process in 2025-26 and how monies would be used.

Councillor Morgan spoke of enthusiasm for the scheme. She was unsure as to how Council received money from producers. The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services explained that a scheme administrator was appointed and where 50 tonnes or more packaging material was produced, whether manufacturer or the end of supply would have to register and pay into the scheme. Businesses across the UK paid around £1.6B to the scheme. Northern Ireland’s allocation was £36m across all Councils. When asked if the same scheme had been carried out elsewhere, the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services said he understood variations of it had been introduced across the EU.

Councillor Cathcart asked if this had been a Westminster-orientated scheme for all of the UK and if it was ringfenced for Councils or if it could stay with Stormont where it may not reach Councils. The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services advised that it was indeed a UK wide scheme and money would be going straight to Councils. Some English authorities were two-tier, with District and County Councils, whilst other Councils were formed into waste partnerships for disposal. Therefore, a trade-off could occur in terms of how much was allocated to each.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council notes the contents of this report.**

**7. Q2 LICENSING ACTICVITY RPEORT (JULY TO SEPT 2024)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that information provided within covered, unless otherwise stated, the period from **1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024**. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Licensing Service.

**2.0 Applications Received**

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

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Same quarter last year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
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<b>Entertainments Licence</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Cinema Licence</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Amusement Permits</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pavement Café Licence</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Street Trading Licence</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Lottery Permits</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Most of the licences issued were renewals hence the workload was constant year on year. Renewing a licence still entailed considerable work when assessing the application and consulting with the other bodies.

### 3.0 Regulatory Approvals

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

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Same quarter last year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
<b>Entertainment Licence</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Cinema Licence</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Amusement Permits</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership Place Approval</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pavement Café Licence</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Street Trading Licence</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lottery Permits</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### 4.0 Inspections

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

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

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Same quarter last year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
<b>Initial/ renewal Entertainment Licence Inspections</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>During performance Inspections</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Initial Inspections of Street Cafes</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Initial Inspections of Places of Marriage and Civil part.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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

### 5.0 High Hedges

High Hedge legislation required complainants to attempt to resolve their complaint informally prior to lodging a formal complaint with the fee of £360. This generated a large volume of queries for officers in an advisory role, which were not reflected in these statistics.

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Same quarter last year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
<b>Formal Complaints</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

### 6.0 CCTV incidents

**Period: 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Action</b>
17/7/24	High Street, Bangor	Assault	CCTV requested and provided to PSNI
24/7/24	High Street, Newtownards	Traffic collision	CCTV requested and provided to PSNI
3/8/24	High Street, Bangor	Unnotified parade	CCTV requested and provided to PSNI

8/8/24	High Street, Bangor	3 males fighting	No request made
23/8/24	High Street, Bangor	2 females fighting	No request made
14/9/24	Regent Street, Newtownards	PSNI request to record specific persons in street	Requested by PSNI and actioned
18/9/24	High Street, Bangor	Assault	CCTV requested and provided to PSNI
29/9/24	High Street, Bangor	2 males Fighting	No request made

### 7.0 Off Street Car Parking

The Council currently operated 22 pay and display car parks in Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards.

**Table 1: Income from Ticket Sales**

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Previous year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
<b>Income from ticket sales</b>	161,874.20	194,166.61

**Table 2: PCN's Issued**

	<b>Period of Report 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024</b>	<b>Previous year 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023</b>
<b>Total</b>	921	971

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Cummings drew attention to page 4 where it stated that on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August, two incidents of fighting were reported. He suspected the PSNI may not have asked for CCTV but referred to the one-punch kills campaign and the unfortunate circumstances that could arise in such incidents. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that if the operator was manning the cameras at that time, they would report any issue but the provision of CCTV recordings were only provided if the PSNI requested it.

Councillor Wray recalled how he had learned that a protocol existed for a customer to call 101 which could take a long time. One solution PSNI were working on was for a direct line, but the system required an overhaul in general. In an example, he thought it was more luck than anything else for cameras to be useful such as the camera operator being on shift, then seeing the right screen without any obscuration.

Councillor Morgan was pleased to see in the budget reports that money had been set aside for a review. She asked if there was any update on when Comber may avail of CCTV. The Head of Regulatory Services explained a tender process was in place at the time of writing with an estimation of deliverables by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Edmund referenced the circa £30k increase in car parking income and asked if it was at a satisfactory rate to carry out repairs. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that the figure had actually reduced by £30k from last year. The Council continued to monitor income and the apparent deficit in income could be an accounting issue, with income delayed from one period to a next. He explained that carparks maintenance was prioritised to do work that was necessary to allow the Council to enforce rules, such as maintaining clearly defined bays etc.

Councillor Edmund asked if there was any solution to reused car-parking tickets that were often traded between users. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that online/telephone payments had been more successful in combatting ticket reuse. There were also plans to install alternative metres when those in situ at the time of writing reached end-of-life. The Director of Environment advised that when the car park strategy was being developed, Council considered potential future use of more modern ticket machines that required input of vehicle registrations - which would preclude sharing of tickets.

Councillor Boyle asked what the difference was between those wearing blue coats and those wearing red and who had authority over free parking areas. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that red coats were Dfl employed for on-street parking whilst blue coats were subcontracted by Council for off-street paid carparks.

Councillor Boyle recalled that Ards Blair Mayne and Londonderry Park had recently been overloaded due to the recent storm and Aurora's closure. Many people using those crowded car parks had received fines and he queried if any solution might exist. The Director of Environment advised that Council could discuss that with colleagues in Leisure. At the moment it was hard to say how long facilities at Aurora would be inaccessible, but that he would discuss extra demand at other facilities. With regard to the wider issue, when the Borough car park order was made last year, non-charged Council carparks had been included at the request of Councillors as they were being blatantly abused by some users on a regular basis. He had been contacted by Elected Members about recurring problems and perceived slowness of the Council's response. Some people may have claimed that they had received penalties for minor breaches of the carpark regulations but there were regular contraventions reported to staff and Councillors including use of disabled spaces without blue badges and those parking in EV charge spaces with non-EV vehicles or parking without using the chargers. Some blatantly used two spaces to avoid any possibility of someone tapping their door. There were a range of reasons for blue-coats to target certain Council non-paid carparks to deal with such issues. Complaints about tickets were usually well outnumbered by complaints about misuse of car parks that hindered legitimate users.

Councillor McKee explained that he had been contacted by a regular user of Ards Blair Mayne who was reliant on the EV chargers, but there had been multiple occasions where it was unavailable as a non-EV car had parked or was not being charged. Blue-coats had been ticketing which was welcome to tackle such issues.

Councillor Douglas asked how many bluecoats were within the Borough. The Head of Regulatory Services advised that he understood there were routinely two operating in the Borough with a rota that fit into an hourly cycle for checking tickets.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to Item 5, Page 3 about High Hedges legislation, suggesting the fee was off-putting to those on benefits or welfare and asked if Council could waive upfront payment of the fee. The Head of Regulatory Services advised that there were a lot of cases not recorded in the table, as there was a requirement for informal neighbour to neighbour negotiations which should take place before formal complaints were progressed. He confirmed that the requirement for a fee to progress a formal complaint by Council was a legal requirement. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter queried if a TPO (Tree Protection Order) was in place whether it was taken out of Council hands. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that TPOs would generally cover trees which would not fit the criteria for the high hedge legislation.

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

## 8. WINTER COAT PROJECT 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members may have recalled a report brought to the November 2024 meeting of the Environment Committee, relating to a joint initiative between the Council and two voluntary organisations, Orchardville and Redeeming our Communities (ROC), aimed at making warm winter coats available free of charge to those who needed them.

The Recycling Team liaised with the Community Centre and Halls Team and organised the following times and venues for donation drop offs (grouped by town but not in date order).

- Hamilton Road Hub 31 October 1000-1630 and 2000-2130
- Hamilton Road Hub 11 November 0930 – 1630 and 1830 – 2130
- Donaghadee Community Centre 29 October 1030-1600 and 1830-2030
- Donaghadee Community Centre 7 November 1000-1600 and 1900-2130
- Kircubbin Community Centre 30 October 1100-1200 and 1730-1830
- Kircubbin Community centre 8 November 0830-1330 and 1830-2100
- Portaferry Market house 30 October 1200-1600 and 1900-2100
- Portaferry market house 6 November 1900-2130
- Portavogie Community Centre 5 November 0900-1300 and 1700-2030
- Portavogie Community Centre 12 November 0900-1300 and 1900-2100
- Carrowdore Community Centre 23 October 0900-1630 and 1900-2100
- Carrowdore Community Centre 2 November 1400-1700 and 1900-2130
- Manor Court Community Centre, Newtownards 30 October 1000-1230 and 2000-2200
- Glen Community Centre, Newtownards 8 November 0900-1500 and 1830-2000
- Comber Adult Learning Centre 29 October 1400-1600 and 1730-2100
- Comber Adult Learning centre 12 November 1000-1600 and 1730-2100

The drop-off locations were widely promoted through Council social media channels, and through our Bin-ovation app news section. Further promotion was carried out via posters at our Community Centres.

The response to the request for donations was incredibly successful, with large collections accumulating at some of our community halls, necessitating multiple visits in order to collect the donations and deliver to our partners at Orchardville for sorting and cleaning (if required).

The clothing donated was of a very high standard and met our requirements for the next stage of the Winter Coat project.

The winter coat pop-up shops took place at two locations,

- Bangor Elim Church on 21 November 2024
- Kircubbin Community Centre on Tuesday 17 December

Both events were widely promoted via a range of channels, including:

- Council social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram
- Council intranet
- The Bin-ovation app

The Recycling Team supported both events by attending and providing an information stall to engage with the public in relation to the three R's (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) within the Borough.

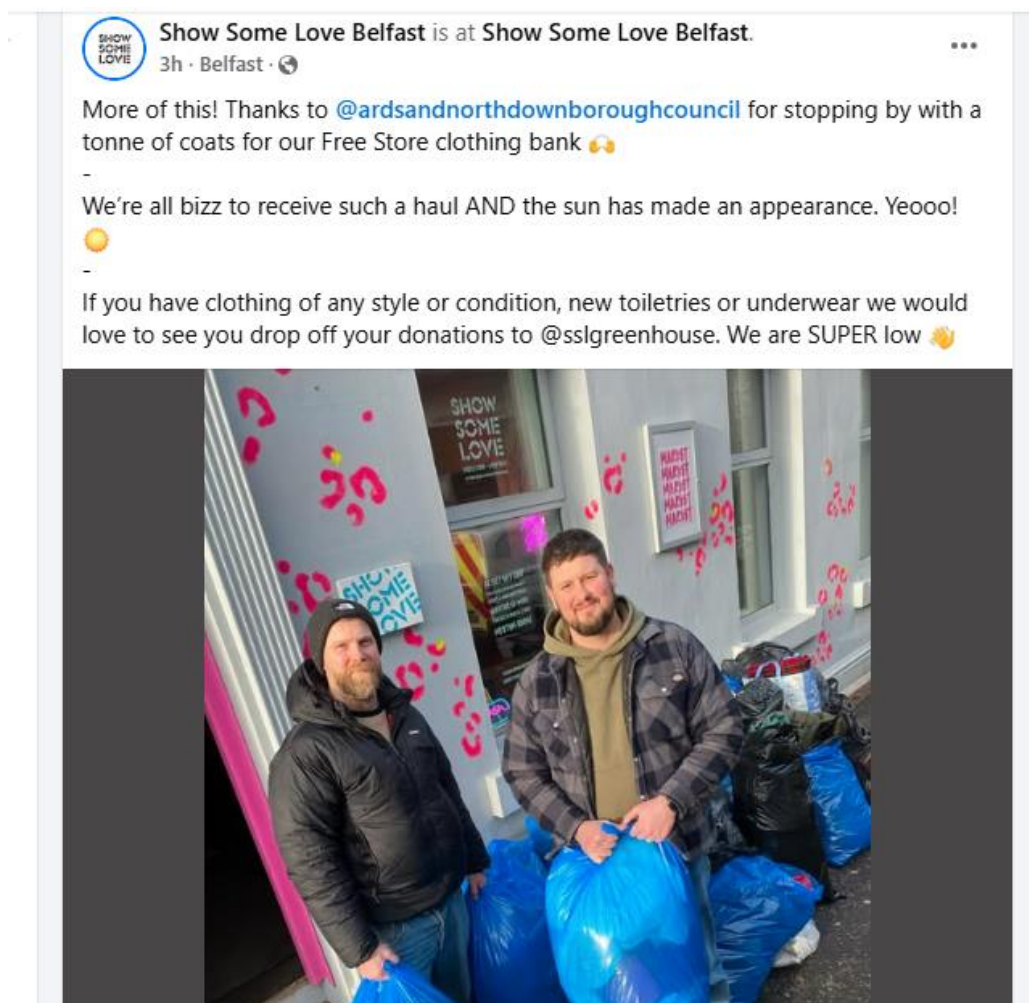
The Bangor Elim event was well attended, and members of the public were able to avail of tea, coffee, traybakes and hot soup, all of which were greatly appreciated on a very cold day.

The Kircubbin event was quieter (poor weather on the day undoubtedly contributed) but members of the public who attended obtained coats and other items and were engaged with by friendly members of the recycling team.

Feedback from attendees of both events was overwhelmingly positive.

As a result of the very successful appeal for donations, there were a considerable number of coats and other items of winter clothing left over after the two Winter Coat events.

The Recycling Team actively engaged with several local charities to find a home for these valuable donations. ROC NI, and the County Down Community Rural Network were both contacted, and our enquiries signposted us to 'Show Some Love', a charity that aids the homeless community and tackles fast fashion via several sustainable textile projects. This charity had been able to avail of the leftover clothing, ensuring that all the donations would go to a worthy cause.



This was a successful and very worthwhile initiative, and the recycling team made every effort to maximise the value of all the winter coats that were so thoughtfully and generously donated by citizens from across the Borough. The team would be looking at future opportunities to follow up on this or similar such projects in the future, as part of the aim to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor McLaren offered congratulations for the efforts of those involved.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the report with the project having been needed in her area. It had drawn more attention to facilities available for people to leave clothes at. She queried how the, 'Show Some Love,' charity had been identified who received the remnants of clothing that had not been used during the project. The Director of Environment was unaware of how the charity was selected but was able to advise that a number of good winter coats were left over with Officers carrying out work with the Down Rural Community Network who made every effort for the coats to be used by people who really needed them. He would try to



find out how the charity was identified and share the information but noted from the report that officers had been signposted to Show Some Love by the other groups involved. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reasoned that no one would argue the charity getting these items but wanted it noted that it would be nice to support local charities if possible.

Councillor McKimm noted the kindness in the Borough. He had spoken to some who participated in volunteering in the program, who asked if Council would be willing to repeat the project with perhaps more robust communication to signpost people to it. The Director of Environment advised that improvements could always be made, although he understood there had been a large communications effort regarding the project – including for example sending out information via the Bin-ovation app which he believed had over 35k household users. Any feedback was always helpful and would be taken on board for the future.

Councillor Irwin gave thanks to organisations who worked on the project and those who had donated so many coats. She did not know the Show Some Love business location, but recalled it was a charity of Belfast Lord Mayor this year. It was important to have good quality coats being re-used as opposed to being relegated to landfill.

Councillor Morgan agreed with Councillor Irwin's comments. If the project was carried out again, she thought having pop-up shops further throughout the peninsula would help if at all possible.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **9. DOG LICENCING AND XL BULLY EXCEPTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 legislation came into force in July 2024. From that date all XL Bully type dogs were required to be muzzled, on a lead when in public and the dogs must be kept in secure conditions that would stop them from escaping. It was also illegal to breed, sell, exchange, gift or abandon an XL Bully dog.

From 1 January 2025 it became illegal to own an XL Bully without an Exemption Certificate.

To manage the exemption process, the Neighbourhood Environment Team (NET) proactively sought and reached out to the known owners of XL Bully type dogs within the Borough.

The department conducted a number of house visits, mail drops, contacted owners by telephone and text to ensure all owners were aware of the new legislation, the owners' responsibilities under that legislation, and to guide them through the exemption application process.

NET had received, processed, and issued 70 Exemption Certificates. This accounted for all licensed XL Bully type dogs in the Borough.

This proactive approach had led to a reduction in the risk of such dogs being released or abandoned and mitigated danger to members of the public.

At a previous Environment Committee, Members asked for details on the total number of dogs licensed within the Borough.

Whilst this number varies from day to day due to licence renewals and variations in ownership levels, the number on our system as of 20 January 2025, was 20,360.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor McKee was happy to see that owners of XL Bullies had engaged with the scheme whilst Councillor Cathcart hoped it would reassure owners who were able to keep their dogs. He had been surprised at the significant total number of licenced dogs within the Borough and was curious as to what the real number of dogs might be when including all those that were unlicenced.

Councillor McLaren gave thanks to the team's work on the report and ensuring all known XL Bully dogs had received the exemption certificate. Staff did not always encounter friendly owners and were regularly working under tough conditions which she wanted to be acknowledged.

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

## **10. HARBOUR SAFETY UPDATE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment which explained how its content followed a standardised template which kept Members informed about ongoing safety measures and statistics at our Harbours. It also addressed some key elements of our Marine Safety Management System and specifically the need to keep the Environment Committee, as "Duty Holder" (under the Port Marine Safety Code), fully informed of relevant matters at our Harbours.

This report covered the period 1 July to 31 December 2024.

### **2.0 Harbour Key Performance Indicators**

See Appendix 1 attached.

### **3.0 Marine Safety Training Scheme (MSTS)**

The MSTS utilised the income from the slipway permit system to educate local users in a variety of marine based safety initiatives. In this reporting period it was planned

to have a second water safety day at Groomsport, but due to adverse weather conditions this had to be cancelled. Consequently, excess funding was released that would be used for MSTs training (First Aid, Powerboat Level 2 and Sea Survival). ANDBC Harbours would be able to part-fund courses for up to 36 candidates during February and March 2025.

#### **4.0 Items Reviewed Under the 5-year Safety Plan**

The 5-year safety plan (Appendix 2 attached) set out a schedule of reviews for an extensive safety plan covering all marine based activities. During this period the following reviews took place:

- Emergency Response Plan
- Oil Spill Response
- Port Waste Management Plan

There were no notable developments from any of the above reviews.

#### **5.0 Harbour Stakeholder Group Meeting**

The newly formed harbour stakeholder group was established, with invitations sent to berth holders, harbours fisherman, local water sport and safety groups and Chair of the Environment Committee.

The next meeting was due to take place in March.

#### **6.0 Appointment of New Designated Person**

In order to ensure consistency in approach across all harbours under Council ownership, a new Designated Person (DP) had been appointed over the five rural harbours plus Bangor Harbour and Marina.

The newly appointed designated person, Orcades Marine, would carry out their first audit during February and the outcome of this would be reported back to Council in due course.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the half yearly harbour safety update.

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

Both Councillors' Edmund and Boyle thanked staff and officers for their work on the report. Councillor Boyle recalled how there had been plenty of Health & Safety checks across harbours and how there had been bigger issues at the beginning such as issues with jet skis. He was curious if monies for the water safety education project were sourced straight from berthing and slipway costs. The Head of Assets and Property Services directed Members to No.3 in the report regarding the Marine Safety Scheme from which reinvestment was gained with the slipway permit system.

Councillor Morgan queried whether Newry, Mourne & Downe had a similar system in place and how the issue of jet skis had been handled. The Head of Assets and Property Services did not believe the Newry, Mourne & Downe Council had a similar scheme and advised that efforts to ensure the appropriate use of jet skis were ongoing. The situation had improved greatly with the slipway permit system. Users could buy daily or annual permits. Councillor Morgan asked about the Council's standpoint on the slipway at Whiterock, to which the Head of Assets and Property Services advised that the slipway was not under Council ownership.

Councillor Cathcart spoke of how little regulations there appeared to be in maritime safety suggesting it was a subject that should be raised more generally. There were still problems with abandoned boats such as that at Ballymacormick Point. The Head of Assets and Property Services advised that the Council had the details of the owner, who had been asked a number of times to remove the vessel from Council land.

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

## **11. NOTICES OF MOTION**

Councillor Kendall referred to her Notice of Motion, as detailed in the Committee agenda:

*That this Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression.*

*However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Article 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessary cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011.*

*Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the XL Bully legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.*

Councillor Kendall highlighted a small amendment to the Notice of Motion within the second line of the third paragraph, removing the wording 'XL Bully'. This was allowed by the Chair.

Councillor Kendall explained that she was committed to animal welfare and had raised many motions with Council before. She was also committed to community safety and recognised that there were occasions when measures had to be taken to

protect communities from dangers and understood most of those measures such as the registration, licensing and muzzling. She also understood that people did have reasons to be fearful of dog attacks which could be deadly, sometimes fatal and could cause lasting impacts.

Councillor Kendall wanted to address the killing of non-dangerous dogs and asked Members not to presume that certain dog breeds were dangerous by default. It was the view of the USPCA Battersea Dogs Trust and many other respected reward-based trainers and behaviorists that dog breeds were not synonymous with dog attacks whilst within the Battersea report, there was a section called, *"Dog Bites, What's breeds Got to Do With It?"*

There were two main findings. Legislation which aimed to protect the public, they stated, by banning certain breeds could not be justified. Most behaviourists felt that Breed was not important and even where they potentially felt that it might be slightly important, there was no agreement in that research on what breeds were prone to attack. Tighter regulation of the dog industry was key, with the Environment Committee having been part of a notice of motion asking for strengthening of breeders' regulations in the past. An overwhelming 98% of expert behaviourists believed that adding more breeds to the ban list would have no effect in preventing dog attacks, which just showed that the evidence was not there.

The motion concerned dogs who had no history of violence or aggression that were assumed to be aggressive, destined for destruction simply as a result of their breed or breed assumption. Max was one of those dogs who was destined to die simply as a result of what his breed was presumed to be. Found as a stray puppy at only five months old, Max was taken by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council from a rescue centre in early December. Within a few weeks, that council determined that Max was going to be put down as he was believed to be a banned breed. And after alarm was raised the Council sought their own assessor despite calls for campaigners in the USPCA to use an agreed independent assessor. Eventually, the Council agreed and the independent assessor had come back to say that Max was not a banned breed. Had it not been for the for the efforts of campaigners and those signing the petition, Max would now be dead. There were many other similar cases where the end result was that of destruction. When XL bully legislation was on the cusp of introduction, there had even been offers of payments in the form of compensation to those who would euthanise their dogs as was the case up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

In 1983 dog legislation as well as 1991, no person was permitted to sell or exchange such a dog as could be found on the banned list, or offer, advertise or expose such a dog for sale or exchange/gift. This meant that banned dogs with no apparent history or behaviours could not be rehomed even by animal rescue centres and shelters resulting in the destruction of healthy animals. Councillor Kendall reminded Members that the Notice of Motion to allow for a revision to the legislation so the banned dogs which were found, seized or surrendered would have the chance after being assessed by professionals via specific establishments such as animal charities with vets. With those dogs that were registered recently, they were permitted to exist with a license, with dog owners exercising control measures such as muzzling to protect the public which should surely extend as an option to those who may be presumed or identified as banned breeds in the future, where it was possible and safe to do so.

Animal shelters and charities assessed many dogs for rehoming on a daily basis including the assessment of behaviours, aggression, reactivity, and whether they were good with children and other animals. Those same groups also would not rehome a dog to people that were not deemed suitable. With those accolades, it seemed possible that those groups could act in re-homing breeds identified as dangerous. She asked Members to consider the saving of dogs like Max without risking public safety.

Alderman Cummings appreciated the reasoning behind the Notice of Motion. Owning large breeds required responsibility and was less about the breed and more about the owner. It was wrong to identify a large breed as the sole responsibility/target of legislation. There had to be a better structured piece of law that puts the animal's welfare into focus. He appreciated the risks of dogs that were badly behaved but also believed safety measures as Councillor Kendall had referred to in the Notice of Motion were extremely important. With approaches of other agencies that rehomed animals, it was critical that the right owner/ handler was identified for that breed of dog. The Council had a role to play having responsibility for training of dogs and owners of dogs regardless of breed. Alderman Cummings recognised budgets constraining Councils, but advised there were many good partners who could assist.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also supported the Notice of Motion. As a fellow dog owner, she was saddened to hear of actions that could affect innocent dogs. With children too, safety was paramount. She recalled a large dog brought into her place of work that could have been destroyed if its owner died despite its good nature. Safeguards meant people did come before animals, but animals needed compassion.

Councillor Morgan had sympathies with the sentiment behind the Notice of Motion but could not support it. She agreed with the issues being behind the owner as opposed to the dog. She believed the name alone of XL Bully defined the breeding of the dog to be aggressive. Councillor Morgan spoke of figures from April 23-March 24, citing that there were over 1500 dog attacks on people 48 of which were by the XL breed. In the last NET quarterly update for 2024, 23 dog attacks on a person in the Borough had been reported. The figures purported to show that there were dog attacks on people all the time. Councillor Morgan spoke of mauling, fatalities and a picture of a young child rolled by a dog with a disfigured face. In Assisi at the time of writing, 30 dogs required rehoming with some having been rehomed a second time. Some dogs were in sanctuaries for a long time. The legislation allowed responsible owners to keep dogs by registering them, which was a sympathetic approach.

Councillor McKimm thanked colleagues for the Notice of Motion, noting from an earlier report that over 20,000 dogs had been licensed in the Borough. The opinion and feeling through the Borough would show that there were many dog owners in the land, but he was not sure the information shared by Councillor Morgan was relevant to the subject of XL Bullies. Assisi Figures had no bearing. When Councillor McKimm took a puppy for training, he was told the dog was not to be trained, but him; a sentiment he believed reflected the onus of owners and advised that he would

be supporting the Notice of Motion and encouraged the Committee to represent a Borough of dog lovers to support the Notice of Motion.

Councillor Wray advised that he would have been against the Notice of Motion before hearing Councillor Kendall's argument. He took onboard all points and would support the Notice. Despite being bitten by a dog as a child, he would support the Notice because of the will of the majority over his own thoughts and experiences. He asked how qualified, trained and skilled those making assessments were such as staff and wardens. The Director of Environment understood that each Council was provided with a fully funded place for a competent officer, who travelled to England to be trained by the Met Police in identifying XL Bully dogs.

Councillor Boyle, having had dogs for over 30 years understood the spirit of the Notice of Motion and though great points had been made, he had some reservations. The current legislation would likely remain but talk of rehoming by shelters and other establishments raised questions of whether they wanted to be involved in taking in of or rehoming such dogs. The other issue was how one would determine that one of the dogs was given a suitable owner. Councillor Boyle had a Japanese Akita with great strength at 8 weeks old and though a friendly dog, others crossed the road out of fear. He would require more information before he could vote for or against and asked if officers had any viewpoint on the subject. The Director of Environment advised that the team of officers involved in this area would have reservations about the practicability of the proposal, despite concern for the welfare of dogs expressed by Members. The Legislation was likely to have gone through a rigorous process and was not introduced lightly. Owners had the ability to apply for exemption certificates to avoid their dogs not being compulsorily destroyed. Those who had not done so would have officers querying the history of said dog. Suitable rehoming with an appropriate owner would also be difficult, not knowing history and temperament. However, if Members elected to write to the DAERA Minister as outlined in the NOM, officers would of course do so.

Alderman McAlpine had a personal experience of the XL Bullies, explaining that she had been delivering items in a local village when a man had been dragged across the road by two XL Bullies. They had been let off the lead and attacked a Chihuahua which had to be rescued. The dog had been taken to a vet. If a dog was rehomed, that would be traumatising for the dog as it was for humans, and how one knows of a dog's history would always be difficult. Alderman McAlpine would not like to have responsibility to rehome a dog with trauma that humans could not understand.

Councillor Harbinson explained his viewpoint that the Council's number one priority was the safety of constituents, and as such could not support the Notice of Motion despite his affinity for dogs.

Councillor McLaren referred to the term in the NOM of, "unnecessary destruction of healthy animals", querying if selective breeding could mean XL bullies were a healthy animal. If dogs were predisposed to violence due to selective breeding, personality and behaviour could affect the statement of health. If there was a genetic imbalance, a dog could turn on its owner which puts huge onus on the Council and their statutory duty.

On being put to a vote with 8 voting FOR, 4 voting AGAINST and 2 ABSTENTIONS, the Notice of Motion was declared CARRIED.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee with 8 voting FOR, 4 voting AGAINST and 2 ABSTENTIONS, that this Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression.**

However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Article 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessary cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011.

Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.

## **12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

The were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

## **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

## **13. AWARDS OF TENDERS FOR THE RECYCLING OF VARIOUS HRC WASTE STREAMS**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON**

A report on the award of tenders for the recycling of various HRC waste streams, was considered.



It was agreed to recommend that the Council agrees to award contracts for the collection and recycling of the three lots listed in the report, namely cardboard, rigid plastics and rubble and hardcore, to R Heatrick Ltd.

#### **14. EXTENSION OF TENDERS RECEIVED FOR THE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF VARIOUS HRC WASTE STREAMS**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

#### **SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON**

A report on the extension of tenders for the collection and treatment of various HRC waste streams, was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that Council extends the existing contracts on the terms as listed in the report, with the following contractors:

- Timber – R Heatrick
- Paint and Associated Products – McQuillan Envirocare
- Scrap Metals – Makenzies
- Oily Rags, Filters and Containers – ENVA
- Plasterboard – R Heatrick
- Vehicle Batteries - Makenzies

#### **15. TENDER FOR THE SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINTS FOR NI ELECTRIC VEHICLE CONSORTIUM**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

#### **SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON**

A report on a tender for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of electric vehicle charge points for the NI Electric Vehicle Consortium, at various locations across the Borough.

It was agreed to recommend that Council agrees the award of the tender to Weev.

#### **RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

## **16. CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: DAERA Letter dated 10 January 2025 – Nappy Collection Scheme.

Councillor Cathcart reminded the Committee that this item had been a response to Notice of Motion and suggested it be the subject of a substantive report for consideration. The Council had written to the Minister as required by the NOM and this was the response, but he was happy to bring a report to the next Committee meeting in regard to the matter.

**NOTED.**

## **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 21:06.

**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 6 February 2025 at 7.00pm.

**PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Councillor Gilmour

**Aldermen:** Adair McDowell  
 Armstrong-Cotter

**Councillors:** Ashe McCracken  
 Blaney (Zoom 7.05pm) McKimm (Zoom)  
 Edmund McLaren (Zoom)  
 Hennessy Smart  
 Hollywood Thompson (Zoom)  
 McCollum

**In Attendance:** Interim Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Interim Head of Regeneration (A Cozzo) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

**Also in Attendance:** Alderman Smith and Councillor Morgan

**1. APOLOGIES**

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

Apologies for lateness had been received from Councillor Blaney.

**NOTED.**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman sought any Declarations of Interest and none was made.

**NOTED.**

**REPORTS FOR APPROVAL**

**3. ARDS PENINSULA BUSINESS AWARDS (FILE 160094)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that following a report to Council in September 2024 it was recommended that Council approved budgetary support for Ards Business Awards. In December 2024 officers

liaised with Ards Chamber on its business awards ceremony arrangements which had now been confirmed by Ards Chamber.

#### **Detail**

The Ards Peninsula Business Awards ceremony would take place on Friday 11 April 2025 at Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor. The Council would be sponsoring the "Business Growth Award" with two subcategories, Business Growth Awards under 10 employees and Business Growth Awards over 10 employees.

As part of the package, four complimentary tickets were being made available to Council. If additional tickets were required those could be purchased from Ards Chamber at a cost of £89 plus VAT per ticket.

A budget of £3,000 was available under the Economic Development revenue budget for this event.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council nominates four Members to attend the Ards Peninsula Business Awards on 11 April 2025.

The Chairman advised that there had been a typo in the report and the name of the awards should read Ards Business Awards.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted and the following members were nominated to attend the Ards Business Awards.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, the Mayor Councillor Cathcart (or his nominee) and Councillor Thompson.

Councillor Hollywood proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, Councillor Smart.

Councillor Ashe proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, Alderman McDowell.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that the Mayor, Councillor Cathcart (or his nominee), Councillor Thompson, Councillor Smart and Alderman McDowell be nominated to attend the Ards Business Awards.**

#### **4. LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN (FILE ED136) (Appendix I)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that following on from the report presented to Council in November 2024, this report was to provide an update on Invest NI's Sub Regional Economic Plan and the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) at a local level.

Members were advised that Minister Murphy communicated with local Councils at the end of last year in respect of the launch of the Department for the Economy (DfE)'s Sub-Regional Economic Plan. In his correspondence this set out the strands of delivery for his economic vision:

- a. Creation of new Local Economic Partnerships with dedicated funding.
- b. Enhancing the role of Invest NI at a regional level; and
- c. Realignment of Departmental policies and programmes to help drive local growth.

Subsequently, Invest NI and the Department for the Economy held a number of workshops with relevant stakeholders. During those sessions officials laid out the vision for sub-regional delivery in line with Minister Murphy's key objectives.

## 1. Local Economic Partnerships

One of the key proposals was the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships within each Council area.

Local Economic Partnerships were designed to:

- Bring together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.
- Identify actions and develop projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council Economic Development Strategies and Invest NI Business Strategy. Those would be developed with advice from DfE and Invest NI, and they should be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.
- Put in place effective monitoring and evaluation – this would be agreed dependent on the nature of the projects.

In order to support the delivery of the plans the Minister had proposed an annual NI budget of £15 million for the next three financial years (£45 million in total).

## 2. Guidance and Membership

DfE had now provided outline guidance on the make-up of the LEPs. At this point it was indicated that DfE would approve the final list of suggested partners. It was also suggested that no group/organisation should have a majority on the LEP, and Councils should consider equality of opportunity. The guidance issued by the Department (attached at appendix) outlined that membership should reflect local economic needs with no one sector dominating at the expense of others and with each organisation having an equal vote. The guidance also set out that the LEP must include representation from Further Education, Local Enterprise Agencies and local business representatives.

As specified in the DfE guidance the membership of the LEP was noted below:

- South Eastern Regional College
- Ards Business Hub
- North Down Development Organisation
- Local business representatives to be confirmed
- Queen's University Belfast
- Ulster University
- Invest NI
- DfE
- DfC
- ANDBC Officers – Administration and Support provision

Following the initial meeting (details to be agreed) of the LEP, additional members may be proposed who may contribute to achieving the LEP objectives and subsequent actions.

### **3. LEP Action Plan**

The LEP would be tasked with co-designing an action plan which would identify interventions and develop projects that aligned with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Invest NI Business Strategy and Council-specific Economic Development Strategies. Those would be developed with advice and guidance from DfE and Invest NI and would be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology, which was yet to be confirmed.

### **4. Status and next steps**

#### **Current status**

- The Council's Economic Development Service had communicated with DfE and obtained guidance on the set-up and membership of the LEP; however, it contained no specific details.
- DfE had appointed a Strategic Advisor to work alongside the relevant Council officers and Invest NI to support the development of the LEP. To date, some support had been provided and the officers had progressed and developed the proposals in this report.

#### **February to March 2025 and beyond**

- The Membership of the LEP needed to be confirmed and established to enable the action planning to commence through the Q1 2025-2026.

#### **Subsequently the LEP will:**

- Draft Terms of Reference for the ANDBC LEP working group to be agreed by Council and DfE/ INI based on chosen model. This would set out initial membership, initial decision-making process, and confirmation of DfE/INI role.
- Start the action planning development with associated budget.
- Agree core focus until programme end in 2027-28. This would be agreed with DfE/ Invest NI.

- Decision on procurement element and progression of actions – for example open call, private submissions, ranking, appraise options etc. – DfE and Invest NI would provide advice and assist the LEP working group to identify projects that meet the core focus.
- Assess the actions and projects based on LEP methodology agreed with DfE/INI.
- Start the project delivery phase once agreement with all parties had been reached.

#### **Proposed LEP model for consideration:**

It was proposed to adopt the following model for the ANDBC LEP (see structure diagram attached in appendix)

- Appoint a secretariat hosted by the Economic Development Service funded by DfE.
- The LEP Working Group would be formed as a working group, linked to, but separate, from the Labour Market Partnership, reporting to the Place and Prosperity Committee.
- Each member of the LEP Working Group had one vote per organisation as specified in the DfE guidance (see membership highlighted in this report).
- Strategic decisions such as the Action Plan and associated budget would be presented at Place and Prosperity Committee and agreed by Council.
- Operational decisions (implementation) would sit with the Working Group to progress actions agreed by Council.
- The Working Group would report to Council on a quarterly basis for information once the action plan had been agreed and seek approval for any emerging strategic issues.

There was no standard approach to the setup of the LEP among the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland. Some Councils were proposing that the Chair and Vice Chair of the reporting Committee represent the Council on the LEP.

## **5. Funding and Recruitment**

In the announcement on 1 October 2024, the Minister outlined a £15m fund spread across Northern Ireland for a period of three years totalling £45m. Each Council area in Northern Ireland would be granted an allocation to support their individual action plan.

Whilst the allocation for Ards and North Down had not been confirmed officially, DfE had indicated that the Council allocated funding would be in the region of £1.384m per year, meaning a total of £4.152m across three years. The final amount would depend on the formula agreed by the Minister and had not yet been confirmed.

The majority of the funding would be for operational expenditure on programmes and projects identified in the action plan; however, the Department had indicated that circa £135,000 per year should be allocated to the administration of the programme and this would include the recruitment of additional staff. It was

anticipated that all of the administration would be covered from this source and there was no anticipated additional cost to Council.

This report was seeking approval from members to proceed on this basis and prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP to avoid any delays.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:

- that officers proceed to make arrangements to the establish the LEP Working Group and with the subsequent development of an action plan, in accordance with the attached guidance and report, by engaging with the relevant partners at a local level;
- that the LEP Working Group reports directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee for decision-making purposes on strategic issues such as the action plan and budget allocation; and
- that officers proceed, on the basis of this report, to prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP Working Group following confirmation of budget by DfE.

Alderman McDowell proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor McCollum that Council approves:

- that officers and Councillors meet to agree arrangements to the establish the LEP Working Group and with the subsequent development of an action plan, in accordance with the attached guidance and report, by engaging with the relevant partners at a local level;
- that the LEP Working Group reports directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee for decision-making purposes on strategic issues such as the action plan and budget allocation; and
- that officers proceed, on the basis of this report, to prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP Working Group following confirmation of budget by DfE.

(Councillor Blaney joined the meeting at this stage via Zoom – 7.05pm)

The proposer, Alderman McDowell, warmly welcomed the report, particularly as the non-domestic rate base in the Borough was in decline. He believed that it was important to ensure that the right structures and practices were in place for the establishment of the Partnership. Referring to his amendment, Alderman McDowell stated that it was important in respect of voting arrangements that Councillors had a role in that and he also had queries around those that were not included on the list to ensure fairness for all. He believed there was a need for more strategic roles and a need to ensure the process was right from the outset.



Commenting as seconder, Councillor McCollum endorsed Alderman McDowell's comments, particularly given the significant amount of money which was being made available during the next three years. She agreed that it was important to ensure the Group was representative of all throughout the Borough and agreed Members were best placed to assist with that, being at the coal face of issues on a daily basis. Councillor McCollum stated that the monies per annum were a fantastic sum and she was content to second the proposal.

Alderman Adair rose in support of the proposal, adding that he commended the Council for taking the lead on this matter. He also acknowledged the work undertaken by Ards Business Centre, adding that the Borough's close proximity and links to Belfast were a valuable asset.

Also adding his support, Councillor Smart stated that this would provide an exciting opportunity for the Borough. He acknowledged that while there was already some fantastic work being undertaken, the Borough still had some of the highest attrition levels in Northern Ireland. He noted that poverty was also an ongoing issue of concern, something that could be helped by a strong economy. Councillor Smart agreed that the approach to be adopted was very appropriate and would ensure that elected members were involved in the process in order to strengthen it.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that Council approves:**

- **that officers and Councillors meet to agree arrangements to the establish the LEP Working Group and with the subsequent development of an action plan, in accordance with the attached guidance and report, by engaging with the relevant partners at a local level;**
- **that the LEP Working Group reports directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee for decision-making purposes on strategic issues such as the action plan and budget allocation; and**
- **that officers proceed, on the basis of this report, to prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP Working Group following confirmation of budget by DfE.**

(Councillor McCollum left the Chamber at this stage – 7.14pm)

## **REPORTS FOR NOTING**

### **5. AND EXPERIENCES AND WALKS AND TOURS PROGRAMME END OF SEASON REPORT 2024/25 (FILE TO/EV92) (Appendix II)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating throughout 2024/25, as part of the AND Experiences and Walks and Tours

Programme, the Tourism Service had delivered 15 Experiences and 22 Walks and Tours. Those mostly took place from April – September each year.

### **Experience AND Programme 24/25**

In collaboration with tourism-focussed, and other local, businesses (those who may be interested into diversifying into the visitor/tourism market) the Tourism team delivered a series of new or enhanced Experiences in 2024/25. This was via an Expression of Interest application-based developmental business process, meaning that those businesses which were successful could develop and operate a pilot at zero or limited financial risk to themselves. The total Council budget associated with the Experience Programme was £6,000.

Between May 2024 and January 2025 22 Experiences were programmed. However, due mostly to adverse weather conditions where re-scheduling was not an option, coupled with unforeseen personal circumstances and unfortunately some Experiences lacking sufficient sales to proceed, a total of 15 Experiences were delivered. Those ranged from ‘on the water’ activity, craft, food and drink ,and even an Experience featuring alpacas. Experiences took place at various locations throughout the Borough (see Appendix for full list).

A total of 239 tickets were available with 202 tickets sold, equating to 85% of tickets sold. Of those, 60% were ‘Out of Borough’ (OoB) with participants from, GB, ROI as well as rest of NI. Every Experience received positive feedback.

### **Industry Day**

The success of the 24/25 programme and its high level of ticket sales generated sufficient income to enable the Service to deliver a second annual Tourism Industry Day. Hosted at The Clandeboye Lodge Hotel on 22 October 2024, with 40 delegates in attendance, the day offered opportunities for businesses to be guided on Experience development. Five speakers presented on the topic of ‘Innovation’ and a collaborative ‘speed networking’ session was held to close the day. Feedback was extremely positive with the day producing several new collaborations for the 2025/26 programme and beyond.

### **AND Experience Programme 2025/2026**

At the end of 2024/25, the Experience Development Programme was reviewed to ensure it was continuing to deliver against its objectives and alignment with new the Corporate Plan Priorities. One of the recommendations was to ensure Experiences could also align with the Tourism NI Embrace a Giant Spirit (EAGS) brand, meaning they could progress to become EAGS TNI brand-aligned, ensuring national promotion. It was anticipated that this would produce a reduction in the overall number of Experiences.

An Expression of Interest was launched after the Industry Day, which was promoted through various Council ezines, contact lists and social media, resulting in 16 applications by the closing date.

The Assessment Panel assessed that 12 experiences met the criteria and were duly accepted onto the programme for 2025/26. Experiences were currently under development, but it was anticipated Experiences would run throughout the Borough

and include creative, heritage, 'on the water' and food and drink themes (see Appendix for full draft list).

### **AND Walks and Tours Programme 2024/25**

Beginning in May, 22 Walks and Tours took place across the Borough, finishing with two 2025 New Year's Day walks.

A total of 518 tickets were available with 470 sold, equating to 91% of tickets sold. Of these 27% were OoB with visitors from USA, GB, ROI and rest of N.I.

The programme included a diverse range of themes and interests including, horticultural, historical, Christian heritage, dog friendly and themed boat trips across the Borough. Once again, the programme included activity aligned to the two main food and drink festivals in summer and autumn.

### **AND Walks and Tours Programme 2025/26**

Like last year, the 2025/26 Walks and Tours programme would begin in May and finish on New Year's Day 2026. The programme would seek to complement monthly food activities and events happening within the Borough (see Appendix for full list).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and appendices.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Adair, commended the report and acknowledged the many fantastic walks there were within the Borough to attract visitors. He took the opportunity to refer to a recent visit to an Alpaca Farm on the outskirts of Carrowdore, stating that was something he would highly recommend to anyone visiting the Borough. Continuing, he commented that he believed there was something in the Programme for all.

Concurring with Alderman Adair, the seconder, Councillor Ashe, agreed that there was indeed a fantastic range of events in the Programme. One issue had been raised with her by Comber Regeneration Community Partnership which was that they had organised a walk to take place as part of the Comber Earlies Festival which was at the same time as a Council organised walk. She asked if officers could look into that.

(Councillor McCollum re-entered the Chamber at this stage – 7.17pm)

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the Programme which she noted had been successful in securing many out of Borough visitors. She noted that Newtownards only had one scheduled walk at this stage, suggesting that the town had so much more to offer given its rich history, particularly in and around the Priory and asked that consideration was given to introducing a second walk to encompass that.

At this stage the Head of Tourism informed Members that there were two walking tours in Newtownards included in the Programme - one scheduled to take place on

New Year's Day and the other was a general historical tour. She indicated that she would take on board the Member's comments around linking in with the Priory.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed the officer's comments, adding that she believed the Priory had a magical quality about it and had proved to be very popular when it had opened to the public the previous year as part of European Heritage Open Day. She encouraged all Members to be proud of their towns and get passionate about them. While Paddington had undoubtedly been great for Newtownards, there were other aspects of the town which were also worth encouraging tourists into the Borough to visit.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted.**

**6. MARKETING – DESTINATION CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW  
REPORT 2024, SPRING AND AUTUMN (FILE TO/MAR4)  
(Appendix III)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that Council agreed to the delivery of a Borough Marketing and Communications Strategy (BMCS) with the aim to create greater awareness of Ards and North Down as a visitor destination. The objective being to convey a clear proposition presenting Ards and North Down as an appealing visitor destination, targeting potential visitors, increasing revenue and supporting jobs.

The roll out of biannual destination campaigns in spring and autumn was a key deliverable of the BMCS. In 2024, those campaigns were delivered in March and Oct/ November (the quieter shoulder seasons before and after peak summer months) and guided by Tourism Northern Ireland's consumer sentiment to target 'most likely to travel' segments in NI domestic, Republic of Ireland and GB markets.

Both multi-channel digital-led marketing campaigns were designed to raise awareness of Ards and North Down as an appealing destination that was easily accessible, offering value-for-money short breaks.

**Campaign Aims**

1. Promote AND tourism industry offered aligned to discoverni (Tourism NI) and visitardsandnorthdown (VisitAND) websites.
2. Increase awareness of AND as an appealing place to book short breaks.  
Driving traffic and engagement to VisitAND website and social channels.

Messaging delivered clear and compelling reasons to visit, with a call-to-action to book offers and enter the campaign competition for a chance to win £300 off a stay in the Borough. A total marketing investment of £58,750 covered creative concepts, asset creation, video and photography as well as all campaign advertising placement.

**Overview**

The two campaigns were designed to support the industry by directing audiences to book offers and inspire potential visitors about what to see and do on a short break in Ards and North Down. Simultaneously, the campaigns generated strong growth of Visit AND’s online following. A total of 45 local tourism provider offers were promoted.

The campaigns generated strong reach including 59.2k campaign webpage views, an increase of 6% in VisitAND social media followers, and strong engagement including 1,398 competition entries (up 66% on prior year). The positive impact was also extended with 937 new people subscribed to receive ongoing destination promotional email communications from Council. Overall, the two campaigns generated a total of 6.3million impressions/ opportunities-to-see.

**1. Spring 2024 – ‘Make it Ards and North Down’ Campaign**

This campaign targeted NI domestic market Natural Quality Seekers, and ROI market Indulgent Relaxers and Open-Minded Explorers, as well as the GB market (short breaks) holiday makers. The multi-channel campaign ran across traditional channels including out-of-home and radio as well as digital channels such as Google Search, Google Display, YouTube, Spotify, META (Facebook, Instagram) advertising, organic social, web, email, and Google Search and Display advertising. Reach was further extended via Council’s promotional partners including whatsonni and Visit Belfast with presence in high footfall areas of Belfast, including the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre – a key gateway for visitors to the City.

Objective	Result
At least 2% growth in social media audience	3%
At least 10k web pages views	32.2k
Digital impressions (opportunities-to-see) target 500k	3.1 million

**3. Autumn 2024 – ‘Aaaaand Relax’ Campaign**

This campaign targeted NI domestic market (Natural Quality Seekers) and ROI market (Open-Minded Explorers). The fully integrated campaign ran across traditional channels including radio, print advertising, and out-of-home (including Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, Grand Central Station, Connelly Street Station Dublin, and other high footfall sites in NI and ROI). Digital channels included Google Search, Google Display, META Facebook and Instagram advertising, organic social, video, web, email, and via Belfast Live, Dublin Live, Irish Times, editorial in the Belfast Telegraph Online and whatsonni. Reach was further extended via the Visit Belfast Regional Partnership with presence in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre – a key gateway for visitors to the city.

Objective	Result
At least 2% growth in social media audience	3%
At least 10k web pages views	27k
Digital impressions (opportunities-to-see) target 500k	3.2 million

### **Digital Benchmarking- Above Industry Average**

Digital Marketing allowed for accurate measurement of visibility and engagement. Statistics for both campaigns showed engagement levels across a range of digital channels which were well above industry benchmark levels.

The spring campaign generated click through rates\* (CTR) well above benchmark levels. Google Search CTR was 6.61% vs. benchmark 4.68%, META (Facebook/Instagram) advertising CTR was 1.57% vs. benchmark of 0.52% and Google Display Advertising in ROI was 0.59% CTR vs. benchmark of 0.4%. The autumn campaign's META advertising achieved an average CTR of 2.41%, far outperforming the industry average ad CTR of 0.9%. Digital content on Belfast Live and Dublin Live generated 348 clicks which was 83% higher than industry average, and Irish Times digital content achieved a CTR of 7.6% compared to an industry average of 2.1%.

[NB\* percentage of people seeing the advert and clicked to find out more by visiting the campaign web pages]

Those results demonstrated that both campaigns resonated with the target audience and that the content was compelling and well-targeted, encouraging a significant portion of users to act by clicking through for more information.

Together, those two campaigns effectively promoted a total of 45 offers for tourism providers based in the Borough and generated 6.3 million digital / impressions / opportunities-to-see. As a direct result of the campaign an additional 59.2k visitors were driven to the [visitardsandnorthdown.com](http://visitardsandnorthdown.com) website, 1.3k new people signed up to receive ongoing marketing communications from Council, and the audience following on VisitAND social media channels increased by 6%.

The tourism 'offers' providers gave feedback about the positive impact of this campaign work:

*'The destination management campaigns are a great way to give the audience an overview of the destination and for us to piggyback on. Campaigns are great overall and give a fantastic look and feel of Ards and North Down.'*

*'Helps target key demographics and audiences with additional funding on our behalf.'*

*'The campaigns showcase a wide variation of activities and destinations within the borough and the multiplatform approach is consistent and well considered.'*

### **Summary**

The main objective – building awareness through creating a strong profile of the Borough as an appealing visitor destination to potential visitors – was achieved with strong reach across NI, ROI and GB audiences. The fully integrated digital-led approach effectively reached the target audiences. It was anticipated that the output of that greater awareness will be a positive impact on visitor interest and bookings.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and attachment.

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

The proposer, Councillor McCollum, commended this, adding that it was a fantastic resource and one which she often referred to whenever she had visitors of her own to the Borough. She particularly applauded the two and three day programmes noting that feedback on a number of those had been fantastic.

At this stage the Chair agreed that it was very encouraging to see this and recalled an occasion recently while visiting Donaghadee when she had been approached by a number of American tourists looking for Hope Street. She added that the television series had undoubtedly given the town a boost.

Concurring with his colleague, Councillor McCracken welcomed the report and the work which had been done around the branding of the Borough. Continuing he asked if there were any plans for a Christmas campaign for the Borough.

In response the Head of Tourism advised that there was an overall Borough Christmas campaign but it did not sit within the Tourism remit. Instead it sat within the Council's Corporate Communications and they had a package aligned to that.

Councillor McCracken highlighted the concerns of many local businesses in the current environment who were keen for more help in respect of marketing. As such, going forward he asked if further thought could be given to funnelling people towards Bangor and Newtownards to purchase their Christmas gifts adding that would be helpful for business rate payers to help to alleviate some of the current economic pressures they were facing.

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

## **7. BANGOR VISITOR INFORMATION OUTREACH PILOT - 2025 (FILE TO/TIC4)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that in October 2020, Council approved a series of Transformation projects, one of those being to review Visitor Information Provision. The Tourism Service had been progressing a series of workstreams in line with relevant and parallel Council projects.

- Move of Newtownards Visitor Information Centre (VIC) permanent services from 31 Regent Street to a more central location – inclusion in the Newtownards Citizen Hub project.
- Move of Bangor Visitor Information services to a higher footfall location – inclusion in the Bangor Waterfront or Civic and Office Accommodation project.
- Portaferry seasonal visitor information provision at Exploris via a Service Level Agreement with all year availability - complete.

- Review of visitor servicing offered at Cockle Row Cottages on a seasonal basis. Two Expressions of Interest to offer the building to private or community use failed in the market. The Tourism team had and continued to develop relationships with a local community group who offered walking tours and partner with the VIC for local heritage activities. This group delivered excellent services but appeared at this juncture not likely to have the capacity to deliver a heritage/visitor service under a formal agreement with Council, however this would be kept under review.
- Move to digital visitor servicing. The new Visit AND website was introduced in 2020 utilising the Tourism NI platform to extend reach and visibility in the market. It had 729k VAND website users in the last 12 months, up by 50% on the previous year. The VAND social channels were developed and introduced in 2020 and continue to grow annually: Facebook at 10k followers and VAND Instagram at 3.6k followers (January 2025).
- Develop and maximise visitor servicing outreach opportunities. This was maximised via outreach activity at visitor attractions and event days (17 opportunities servicing an additional 1800 enquiries year to date at various sites). A further opportunity to pilot test additional outreach was set out below.

**Status of Visitor Servicing in Bangor**

The Tourism Service operated a visitor information centre at Tower House, Quay Street, Bangor six days per week. The building had been utilised for this purpose, along with accommodating most of the tourism office-based team for circa 30 years. It was open Monday – Friday 9.15am – 5.00pm and Saturday 10am – 4pm (Jun- Aug 5.00pm) and staffed by two Visitor Information Advisors daily. Since the pandemic, both VICs had experienced a reduction in footfall and enquiries. It was acknowledged that customers sought visitor information in numerous ways with digital being a high preference pre- travel. Tourism NI (TNI) in line with the new draft Tourism Strategy indicated that every touchpoint, whilst in destination for the visitor, should be imbued with a ‘human touch’ (TNI, VIC research, November 2023). The footfall year to date in Bangor VIC had been changeable with the early and later months slightly up on footfall and enquiries, but the peak season having a decline in figures. This may be somewhat attributable to the inclement weather in 2024.

**Customer enquiries**

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	April – end Dec 2024
April – end March	*5,844	8,257	7,267	6,412
May - September	*3,207	4,487	4,188	3,998

Figures included visitors to the centre along with phone and email enquiries.  
 \*NB Bangor VIC reopened after the Covid Pandemic in June 2021 under restricted entry

**Outreach Pilot to maximise customer engagement**

It was acknowledged by TNI that to maximise positive customer engagements and increase visitor dwell time, face to face visitor servicing should be available at locations where visitors would be present. The Tourism service believed this opportunity could be explored further in Bangor by relocating its Visitor Information



Advisors (VIAs) from Tower House to other City locations during the peak summer months. An options exercise had been completed with the following three sites determined as feasible for testing during 2025

1. The Market House, Main Street, Bangor – in partnership with ‘Gifted Trust’ ‘Front of house’ reception/desk and information provision space alongside an exhibition space. May – August with existing Bangor VIC opening schedule.
2. Pickie Fun Park, Bangor – in partnership with Pickie Fun Park. Space for ‘pop-up’ information stand and ‘roving’ advisor.
3. The Walled Garden – in partnership with Parks Service. Space for ‘pop-up’ information stand and ‘roving’ advisor.

(Sites 2 and 3 weather dependent during May – September)

In all cases, the above would be staffed with the existing Bangor VIAs with staff rotated as appropriate. Site one would be the ‘base or hub’ with sites two and three staffed as appropriate to optimum visitor engagement. The Tower House office would be utilised on key City event days and as required, but would not operate as a VIC.

### **Budget**

The annual overheads budget for the VIC related to the entire building of Tower House (also housing most the Tourism Events and Tourism Development team), so would remain static. Income and expenditure relating to stock purchase would not likely be achievable due to the new outreach venue – with site one only allowing a smaller selection possible. This would be managed to remain cost neutral. An element of the budget would pay for the rental at £500 per month for the Market House and a limited budget would be diverted to support additional stock range at Newtownards VIC.

### **Monitoring and review**

The three new outreach sites would be monitored to record footfall, enquiry type and visitor origin. The three sites would be compared from a busy period and frequency of use perspective and would give insight into accessing visitors at different sites. Surveys would be undertaken with visitors to understand the engagement experience. Should there be any need to change or revert to the normal operating model at Tower House this would be implemented with immediate effect to ensure no loss of service. An appropriate communication plan to include signage and social posts as relevant would be agreed. A review report would be completed at the end of the season with recommendations for longer term planning.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the Bangor Visitor Information Outreach Pilot for the period May – end September 2025.

Councillor Ashe proposed, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder, Councillor McCracken, stated that while he was a little circumspect about the Tourist Information Service that Council provided, he welcomed the report and the thought which had gone into this to see how the service could be improved.

He suggested that perhaps resources could be better spent on extending the digital output and asked if at the end of this Pilot that a report was brought back on this for further consideration. Continuing, he indicated that he had a question to ask around customer enquiries either by phone, email or a visit to a VIC and asked if the officer had any figures around actual footfall to the VIC.

The Head of Tourism advised that she did not have those specific figures to hand but estimated that most of the enquiries were carried out face to face through a visit to the VIC. At this stage, she also took the opportunity to inform Members that a very significant proportion of the budget aligned to the Visitor Information services was actually absorbed by staffing costs. 90% of the budget related to staffing costs in comparison to very low running costs associated with the VIC service aspect, and as such there would not be a significant input to the digital side.

Councillor McCracken indicated that he was happy to note the report and would look forward to a report coming back assessing the success or otherwise of the Pilot.

Referring to Page 3 of the report Councillor McKimm noted the three possible sites which had been determined and asked for clarity around how those sites had been chosen and who had been involved with that process. He asked if the Council had engaged with the local traders as he was aware they were keen for that information service to be sited at Bangor Railway Station.

In response, the Head of Tourism advised that as this was being considered as a Pilot, a series of options were reviewed by officers, the Tourism Manager and the Tourism Development Officer with regard to visitor servicing. Various sites were scoped out at the time following which a decision was made on trialling the ones that were considered as a best fit and which did not require further investment as there were structures already in place. She confirmed that engagement had taken place in respect of the three sites listed in the report and in respect of comments around the Train Station she recalled that information had previously been available there. The officer indicated that she would converse with officers to ensure that everything was in place.

Thanking the officer for her comments, Councillor McKimm suggested that given the level of footfall in the Train Station that would be the best fit for this service. Again, he asked when going forwards that officers would engage with local traders on such matters and consider the availability of space. In summing up, he asked if visitors to the town could be encouraged to turn right at the Train Station and visit the many businesses in Abbey Street which were often forgotten about.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## 8. PROSPERITY BUDGETARY REPORT – DECEMBER 2024 (FILE FIN45)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that the Prosperity Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 9-month period 1 April to 31 December 2024. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £111k (4.5%) – box A on page 3.

### Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's budgetary performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£53k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£125k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£183k favourable	3

### Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table: -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(53)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Development – (£65k) vacant posts filled in Sept/Oct</li> <li>Tourism – £15k. mainly due to extra staff costs for Tourism Events.</li> </ul>
Goods & Services		
Economic Development	152	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go Succeed Programme grants - £218k. Offset by additional grant income.</li> <li>Development Projects (£66k) – (50k) re Seal Sanctuary Q2 claim which offsets the adverse income variance below.</li> </ul>
Tourism	(28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various expenses across Tourism running costs</li> </ul>
Income		
Economic Development	(218)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional grant income for the Go Succeed Programme.</li> </ul>

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Development Projects	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploris – Q2 grant not yet received but has been processed by DAERA</li> </ul>
Tourism	(16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism Experiences – (£6k).</li> <li>Tourism Events – (£10k).</li> </ul>

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT						
Period 9 - December 2024						
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance	
	£	£	£	£	%	
<b>Prosperity</b>						
700 Prosperity HQ	112,801	115,600	(2,799)	153,500	(2.4)	
720 Economic Development	895,497	975,500	(80,003)	1,396,000	(8.2)	
740 Tourism	1,314,977	1,342,900	(27,923)	1,868,200	(2.1)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,323,275</b>	<b>2,434,000</b>	<b>A (110,725)</b>	<b>3,417,700</b>	<b>(4.5)</b>	
<b>REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT</b>						
	£	£	£	£	%	
<b>Prosperity - Payroll</b>						
700 Prosperity HQ	104,860	107,600	(2,740)	143,300	(2.5)	
720 Economic Development	612,155	677,600	(65,445)	912,800	(9.7)	
740 Tourism	764,873	749,400	15,473	987,600	2.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,481,889</b>	<b>1,534,600</b>	<b>B (52,711)</b>	<b>2,043,700</b>	<b>(3.4)</b>	
<b>REPORT 3 GOODS &amp; SERVICES REPORT</b>						
	£	£	£	£	%	
<b>Prosperity - Goods &amp; Services</b>						
700 Prosperity HQ	7,941	8,000	(59)	10,200	(0.7)	
720 Economic Development	865,174	712,200	152,974	974,200	21.5	
740 Tourism	597,018	624,800	(27,782)	916,100	(4.4)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,470,133</b>	<b>1,345,000</b>	<b>C 125,133</b>	<b>1,900,500</b>	<b>9.3</b>	
<b>REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT</b>						
	£	£	£	£	%	
<b>Prosperity - Income</b>						
700 Prosperity HQ	-	-	-	-		
720 Economic Development	(581,832)	(414,300)	(167,532)	(491,000)	(40.4)	
740 Tourism	(46,914)	(31,300)	(15,614)	(35,500)	(49.9)	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(628,746)</b>	<b>(445,600)</b>	<b>D (183,146)</b>	<b>(526,500)</b>	<b>(41.1)</b>	

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

## 9. PLACE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – DECEMBER 2024 (FILE FIN45/RDP152)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place advising that the Place Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 9-month period 1 April to 31 December 2024. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £123k (11%) – box A on page 3.

### Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate's budget performance was further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£158k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£14k favourable	3
Report 4	Income	£49k adverse	3

### Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £20k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(158)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainly vacant posts within Regeneration</li> </ul>
Goods & Services		
Regeneration	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paddington, Conway Square £15k</li> </ul>
Strategic Development	(38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underspend in revenue costs for Capital Projects mainly due to timing.</li> </ul>
Income		
Strategic Capital Development	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levelling up Grant is expected to be less than budget - £62.3k</li> <li>Shop Local Campaign Grant (£11k)</li> </ul>

<b>REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT</b>					
<b>Period 9 - December 2024</b>					
	<b>Year to Date Actual</b>	<b>Year to Date Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Place</b>					
800 Place HQ	209,471	217,400	(7,929)	266,900	(3.6)
810 Regeneration	535,219	630,000	(94,781)	1,128,800	(15.0)
820 Strategic Capital Development	251,676	272,400	(20,724)	453,600	(7.6)
<b>Total</b>	<b>996,366</b>	<b>1,119,800</b>	<b>A (123,434)</b>	<b>1,849,300</b>	<b>(11.0)</b>
<b>REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Place - Payroll</b>					
800 Place HQ	121,474	129,900	(8,426)	173,100	(6.5)
810 Regeneration	389,432	495,200	(105,768)	657,000	(21.4)
820 Strategic Capital Development	235,038	279,200	(44,162)	371,900	(15.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>745,944</b>	<b>904,300</b>	<b>(158,356)</b>	<b>1,202,000</b>	<b>(17.5)</b>
<b>REPORT 3 GOODS &amp; SERVICES REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Place - Goods &amp; Services</b>					
800 Place HQ	87,997	87,500	497	93,800	0.6
810 Regeneration	159,112	134,800	24,312	471,800	18.0
820 Strategic Capital Development	16,638	55,500	(38,862)	206,200	(70.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>263,747</b>	<b>277,800</b>	<b>(14,053)</b>	<b>771,800</b>	<b>(5.1)</b>
<b>REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Place - Income</b>					
800 Place HQ	-	-	-	-	-
810 Regeneration	(13,324)	-	(13,324)	-	-
820 Strategic Capital Development	-	(62,300)	62,300	(124,500)	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(13,324)</b>	<b>(62,300)</b>	<b>48,976</b>	<b>(124,500)</b>	

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

## **10. UPDATE ON THE RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME 2024-25 (FILE RDP19)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place stating that as members would be aware the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25 in October 2024. This was welcome news and a timely development coming after a lengthy gap since the previous scheme in 2022/23.

### **Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25**

The purpose of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme was to support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses (less than 10 full-time equivalent employees) through the provision of a small capital grant of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a maximum amount of £4,999.

DAERA anticipated that the Northern Ireland total capital funding allocated to the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/2025 would be £1.5million. The funding allocation per Council would be, as in previous scheme years, a straight percentage share based on the number of micro businesses in the Council area as a percentage of the overall number of micro businesses in Northern Ireland. Each Council would also have an administration budget of 10% of the Letter of Offer award.

The scheme opened 16 October 2024 and closed on 8 November 2024. Mandatory pre-application workshops were facilitated by officers and took place on the 23, 28, 31 October and 5 November 2024. This process proved beneficial for officers and applicants, which was evidenced by the high number of approved applications.

A total of 36 applications were received, three were deemed ineligible, and one applicant withdrew for personal reasons.

An assessment panel convened on 18 December 2025 to assess the 32 applications. Thirty-one applications achieved the minimum threshold score of 65 and were approved. One application was unsuccessful in meeting the minimum threshold and was therefore unfortunately deemed not eligible for approval.

The total grant amount awarded for the 31 successful applications totals £101,736. This amount was above the indicative budget for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, however, DAERA confirmed on 10 January 2025 that it would provide the additional budget required to award grant funding to all businesses who achieved the minimum threshold score of 65.

Letters of Offer were issued to successful applicants on 10 January 2025 with projects having to be completed no later than 31 March 2025.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council notes this report.

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

The proposer Alderman Adair commended the Council team for their assistance with this, particularly given the short time frames involved. The funding was vital for many rural businesses, and he took the opportunity to express his thanks to DAERA for increasing the budget. Alderman Adair added that many rural businesses in his constituency would benefit from this funding and was hopeful DAREA would increase the budget in subsequent years. Continuing, he took the opportunity to commend officers on the Shop Frontage Scheme undertaken in Portaferry, noting that it had been warmly received.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Edmund commented that initially he did have some concerns around the tight timescales but was delighted with the helpful approach of staff in respect of this funding which was very much welcome and needed.

Councillor McCollum expressed her thanks to Alderman Adair for being a great advocate on this matter, adding that DAERA was also to be commended with 31 businesses securing funding on this occasion. She also took the opportunity to express her thanks to Minister Andrew Muir MLA.

The Chairman added that initially while there had been some concern around the timescales, she was delighted to be able to congratulate those businesses which had been successful in securing funding. She also acknowledged the flexibility which had been demonstrated by DAERA to make that possible.

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

## **11. UPDATE ON NOTICE OF MOTION 568 ON VACANCY AND DERELICTION STUDY (FILE RDP246/RDP14)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place stating that members may recall the following Notice of Motion (568) agreed and ratified at the 5 July 2024 Council meeting:

*‘Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change. As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC 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.’*

An update report in response to this Notice of Motion was agreed at the Place and Prosperity Committee meeting on 13 June 2024.

### **Update**

Three considerations were detailed in the previous report as being fundamental to empowering the Council to effectively respond to this Notice of Motion and the detrimental vacancy and dereliction issue impacting the Borough:

1. Staffing – a restructure within the Regeneration Service had recently been completed resulting in the implementation of newly formed small team of officers, specifically tasked with undertaking strategic regeneration projects focused on growing the non-domestic rate base and therefore positively



contributing towards the Economic priority detailed in the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028. Work had begun on various projects deemed to be of strategic regeneration value.

2. Corporate Governance – from experience in developing and delivering various grant schemes, officers were mindful that any grant scheme should not be overly arduous to applicants, however, it must be aligned to the Grants Policy Version 2.0 implemented in October 2024. Officers had engaged with other Council districts regarding their grant schemes used for vacancy and dereliction focused projects to establish any key successes and lessons learnt.
3. Pilot and Budget – Officers were in the process of developing a pilot grant scheme aimed at tackling vacancy and dereliction within urban areas of the Borough to increase the value of the non-domestic rate base to the Council.

The 'Empty to Energised' (working title) grant scheme would provide potential financial assistance to property owners who participated in the scheme to renovate vacant properties and reintroduce commercial use to the premises under stipulated terms and conditions. A secondary benefit of the pilot scheme may be an opportunity to increase living accommodation on the high street, aligned to the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Living High Streets Framework.

To ensure an evidence-based approach to the pilot schemes officers deemed it necessary to obtain the most recent vacancy and dereliction figures in urban areas of the Borough. The latest DfC vacancy survey (31 October 2024) showed that:

- Bangor City Centre had a total number of non-domestic premises of 666 of which 140 (21.0%) were vacant
- Newtownards had 536 premises with 113 (21.1%) vacant. This was the highest number since April 2016
- Comber had 129 premises with 20 (12.6%) vacant
- Donaghadee had 121 premises with 21 (17.4%) vacant
- Holywood had 305 with 28 (9.2%) vacant

Based on those percentages and other considered factors, an appointed consultant was undertaking a Vacancy and Dereliction Study in Bangor and Newtownards. Each study had the following objectives:

1. Identification and mapping of derelict and vacant commercial properties
2. Analysis of patterns of vacancy using historic data
3. Exploration into cases of decline and recommendations of strategies for redevelopment (short, medium, and long-term)
4. Interventions to tackle vacancy and dereliction and ways to increase property values and attract new businesses
5. Each study would be supported with an Action Plan that detailed how the implementation of the various interventions could be managed, potential paths for funding, and a clear identification of responsibility suggested.

The anticipated completion date for each study was 31 March 2025, the data would then be interpreted and would assist with the development of the grant scheme. The required budget for the grant scheme had been approval as part of the 2025/2026 rate setting process.

The conclusions of the studies and the workings of the proposed grant scheme for Bangor and Newtownards would be detailed in a future report to the Committee for approval.

Upon implementation and assessment of the effectiveness of the grant scheme, consideration would be given to broadening its implementation across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Smart, thanked officers for the report, acknowledging that it was not an easy area of focus. Continuing, he commented that this matter had arisen following his Notice of Motion given the number of properties in his DEA which had been derelict for many decades. He stated that this was a frustrating situation, particularly as there many people in the area who were keen to start and grow their businesses but were not getting the opportunity to do so. As such, he felt this was a very positive step forward which would provide real learning in terms of what the issues were that would be encountered. Councillor Smart added that from a Council perspective there was further lobbying to be undertaken to secure those powers to make this change happen because the status quo was simply not acceptable and would not ensure the growth that was needed across the Borough. He thanked officers for the progress which had been made to date.

(Councillor Thompson left the meeting at this stage – 7.41pm)

Commenting as seconder, Councillor McCollum endorsed Councillor Smart's comments, adding that she had spoken with the Chief Executive on the matter to establish what the Council's powers were around dereliction. Referring to the Vacant to Vibrant scheme offered by Belfast City Council, she reported that she had a friend who had recently availed of this and enjoyed much success. They had been delighted with the quality of the anchor tenant that they secured and that they and the tenants, and properties around, were delighted with the footfall that had been brought to the area. At this stage she asked a number of questions:

- Were officers able to say at this stage anything more about the projects that have been identified?
- Governance issues - were those to do with the application process itself and how those could align with the objectives?
- Financial assistance – was there any indication at this stage?
- In relation to the figures published, particular reference was made to the fact that Newtownards had the highest number or percentage of vacancy since 2016. Were other areas increasing, decreasing or staying static?

- When would the Consultant's report be brought back to Members for their consideration?

In response, the Interim Head of Regeneration advised that officers had engaged with colleagues in Belfast City Council and taken away learnings from that. He added that they seemed to be facing the same challenges and opportunities as well. Continuing, he confirmed that it was intended to start with ground floor projects before potentially looking at Living Above The Shop (LOTS). Members were advised that officers were very mindful of the governance issues around this and, as such appropriate time would be taken, as well as engagement. He added that from lessons learned, there appeared to be good value in tying in with a retail agent. In respect of governance, the officer advised that the team had lots of experience delivering grant schemes, and with £200,000 in the first year of this project, they were mindful of trying to get good value for money from that fund as well. Continuing, he advised that in respect of financial assistance that was very much a collaboration through engagement with other Councils, adding that it was the intention to work with the retail agent to get a good understanding of it, as well as any potential property owner. Members were further advised that in terms of the Consultant's report, it was the intention to interpret that and bring back a full report to Committee in September 2025. Finally, in terms of vacancy figures members were advised that officers were keen to ascertain their own figures and while he did not have those to hand, he would report back to the member in due course.

At this stage Councillor Edmund expressed the view that derelict buildings often fell into disrepair or got broken into and that often led to problems for the Council. As such, he could not understand why a landlord would want to leave a building vacant as there was no value in that, when instead they could be utilised for the betterment of the town and tourism.

Welcoming the report and the initiative, Councillor McCracken thanked Councillor Smart for bringing forward his Notice of Motion. He, too, also provided examples of how successful Belfast City Council's Vacant to Vibrant scheme had been, adding that he was aware of several businesses within the Borough which would be interested in this type of scheme. However, he referred to one issue which had been identified with the scheme, in terms of the level of bureaucracy which many had found to be quite challenging. Councillor McCracken also advised of several businesses which were keen to expand and refurbish their premises and asked if something of that nature would be considered under this scheme.

In response, the Interim Head of Regeneration advised that officers were keen to increase the non-domestic rate base by primarily attracting new businesses and as the scheme progressed, consideration would also be given to those wishing to expand or refurbish their properties.

At this stage Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commented that she was aware that some of the derelict properties in Newtownards had Preservation Orders on them, for example along the Bawn Wall in South Street. Developers were keen to progress there but were unable to do so as a result of those Orders, and therefore she suggested that officers made contact with the relevant Departments to establish a way forward with those properties as part of the scheme.

The Interim Head of Regeneration commented that it was intended to widen the net as much as possible with this project as there was a Council budget to do so which would enable them to think outside the box. He added that he would take the members comments on board.

At this stage the Interim Director of Place thanked members for their comments and advised that the team was trying its best to get through this as best it could as well as understand the corporate governance requirements. He commented that some members would recall the former THI in Donaghadee, adding that the team would proceed along the understanding of how that scheme had operated. Continuing, he reiterated that now, Council money was being used and, as such, corporate governance needed to be in place while officers could set the terms and conditions and those would be brought to the Committee in due course. It was noted that DfC was now aware of such schemes and as such it was anticipated that it may introduce one province-wide; however, he indicated that the Council would continue with the implementation of its scheme as best it could.

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

## **12. NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL 29 JANUARY 2025**

### **12.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Ashe and Councillor McCollum**

Councillor Ashe proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that this Council notes the transformative benefits that street art, such as painted utility boxes, can have on communities including the potential to become tourist attractions or foster a sense of civic pride and notes the recent success of the painted utility boxes in Ward Park.

That this Council also acknowledges the frustration and concern that graffiti, such as tagging, can cause and the subsequent costs of removal. Council notes it is important to facilitate the creation of local art in a safe, legal, and positive way enabling artistic creation and local regeneration while also reducing the proliferation of antisocial graffiti.

That this Council returns a report which: Identifies suitable utility boxes which could be prospective 'canvas sites' for local art: Identifies prospective local artists who could participate in the project, with the input of the Council Arts Officer ; and Identifies any external sources of funding, such as from the Department for Communities or the Arts Council of NI.

The proposer Councillor Ashe wished to express her thanks to the officer for the work which had been undertaken to date and for the replies to the numerous emails from herself. She also took the opportunity to thank colleagues in the Council's Community & Wellbeing Directorate for their assistance with a similar project.

Councillor Ashe indicated that she had circulated an image of what she was referring to her in her Motion (of a duck painted on side of a utility box in Ward Park), noting that local artist Sharon Regan had already been involved with the painting of several utility boxes. Councillor Ashe stated that she was keen to bring the scheme into other areas of the Borough and support up-and-coming local artists. She anticipated that the report would show a range of options which may be available, including collaboration amongst DfC, local artists and the local community. It was noted that a similar scheme in Belfast had proved very popular with links to a number of social media sites. By way of summing up, she believed that it was a nice idea that would brighten up certain areas and promote buy-in from the local community.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor McCollum expressed her thanks to officers for the work which had been undertaken to date. Referring to several utility boxes in Donaghadee which had already been painted by Sharon Regan, she stated that they were a joy and very uplifting for passersby. As such, she believed that it was a fantastic project which provided a great opportunity to collaborate with the local community. She added that there could also be opportunities for business collaboration and, as such, she encouraged members to support the Motion.

At this stage Councillor Edmund indicated that he was happy to support the Motion but he did have some concerns. He referred to some pieces of artwork recently installed in Meetinghouse Lane, Newtownards, which had subsequently been vandalised with graffiti. He believed consideration needed to be given to how to prevent against such vandalism, adding that he would look forward to the report coming back in due course.

Rising to also support the Motion, Councillor Smart noted how lucky the Borough was to have so many talented artists and referred to the success of the Creative Peninsula Festival and the thriving Boom Studios. He agreed that projects such as that being proposed in the Motion could do so much in terms of lifting people's spirits and highlighting the area, either in terms of a piece of historical interest or tourism benefit. Continuing, Councillor Smart noted Councillor Edmund's concerns commenting that perhaps areas such as utility boxes may be a little easier to maintain. Continuing, he asked if Planning Permission would be required for what was being proposed.

In response the Interim Director of Prosperity advised that if it was painted directly onto a utility box and did not include advertising, then no Planning Permission was required; however, normally if a proposal involved affixing something onto the likes of a building, Planning Permission would need to be sought.

Also rising in support of the Motion, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commented on the image which had been circulated by Councillor Ashe stating that it was indeed beautiful and visited regularly by her family. She sought reassurance that if vandalism occurred, there would be a contract in place with whomever owned the utility box to ensure that it was cared for in a timely manner. She referred to difficulties which had occurred at Londonderry Park, Newtownards, where there had been acts of vandalism and the Council was able to remedy the matter in a timely manner with its own team. Overall, she agreed that what was being proposed was a lovely idea and one which could really brighten up a walk.

At this stage Councillor McLaren also expressed her support for the Motion, adding that the city of Bangor was becoming well known for housing local artists such as Terry Bradley and JossiePops. She believed that many young people were inspired by those artists and, as such, she believed it was advantageous to bring young people on board and engage with the youth in the community who might have an interest in art. She reiterated her support for the Motion and thanked the members for bringing it forward.

Concurring with those comments, Councillor McKimm stated that the concept of what was being proposed was marvellous. Noting the reference made to JossiePops, he indicated that he wished to put on record that Councillor Blaney had been a huge driving force behind this concept, stating that if it had not been for him the pop-up shop would not have happened. As such, there was a great level of appreciation of this in Bangor, not just to the artists but also to Councillor Blaney and he expressed his thanks to him.

Councillor Blaney thanked Councillor McKimm for his comments.

At this stage, the Chair commented on the many great artists within the Borough as well as studios such as the Boom Studio. She suggested that engagement took place with those artists in respect of the hoardings at Queens Parade, Bangor. Continuing, she welcomed the report to come back which would include issues such as the cleaning and maintenance of the utility boxes and their liability. Councillor Gilmour also sought clarity around whether or not it was the Council's Assets and Property Services who would carry out any repairs as the result of vandalism.

By way of summing up, Councillor Ashe indicated that she shared all members' concerns around the potential for vandalism, but was hopeful through buy-in with the local community that would generate a sense of pride. She added that given their smaller size she would hope that the utility boxes would not be so much of a target, and that perhaps officers from the Council's Community & Wellbeing Directorate could provide some guidance around maintenance. Continuing, she noted Councillor Edmund's concerns and reassured him that the proposals were for DfC utility boxes at this stage which should make things a little easier. Councillor Ashe thanked members for their support.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that this Council notes the transformative benefits that street art, such as painted utility boxes, can have on communities including the potential to become tourist attractions or foster a sense of civic pride and notes the recent success of the painted utility boxes in Ward Park.**

**That this Council also acknowledges the frustration and concern that graffiti, such as tagging, can cause and the subsequent costs of removal. Council notes it is important to facilitate the creation of local art in a safe, legal, and positive way enabling artistic creation and local regeneration while also reducing the proliferation of antisocial graffiti.**

**That this Council returns a report which: Identifies suitable utility boxes which could be prospective 'canvas sites' for local art: Identifies prospective local artists who could participate in the project, with the input of the Council Arts Officer ; and Identifies any external sources of funding, such as from the Department for Communities or the Arts Council of NI.**

**12.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Chambers and Councillor Hollywood**

The Chairman informed members that the Notice of Motion had been withdrawn and referred to the March 2025 meeting of the Committee.

**NOTED.**

**12.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Morgan, Alderman Cummings, Councillor Douglas, Alderman Smith and Councillor Ashe**

(previously agreed at Place and Prosperity 9.1.25 – minute extract enclosed - referred back to Committee by Council 29 1.25 Appendix IV)

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Alderman Smith, that 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.

The proposer Councillor Morgan stated that she was not going to repeat all that had been said at the last meeting, as that was included in the minutes. However, what she would say was that following Storm Eowyn the hoarding was now in a worse state. She emphasised that this was a really difficult problem to resolve and was aware of how hard officers had worked to try to reach a resolution. She reported that it was not only an issue for Comber, but also for the nearby village of Ballygowan and was taking away from the good work being carried out as part of the Village Plan. Therefore, she believed that it was imperative to find solutions to these ongoing problems.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Smith acknowledged that members may be unhappy to see this matter on the Agenda for a second time, acknowledging that officers were doing their best around this with funding trying to be secured from DfC. He advised he was also aware that a local community group had tried to get funding and failed. The initial request last month was for a report to come back which was fine, however, in the interim, Storm Eowyn had passed through and left the hoarding in an even worse state - so much so he would fear that if there were to be further storms someone could end up being hit by the hoarding or even passing vehicles could be damaged. Continuing, he acknowledged that the big issue was liability and the fact that the landowner of the property where the hoarding was currently in place

was not willing to take on any liability. He was also aware that the local community group had visited the landowner's agent in Newtownards and had permission to replace the hoarding and take on that liability under their own public liability insurance. However, having spoken to the Director it appeared that it was not just that simple.

Continuing, Alderman Smith noted that the local community group had obtained quotes for replacing the hoarding and putting a covering on it perhaps with some photographs of old Comber town. He acknowledged that some members would have concerns around unbudgeted expenditure and a precedent being set, however he reminded members of previous occasions when unbudgeted funds had been found for a variety of projects raised by members. In this respect he believed that this was a small amount of expenditure and in summing up he believed there was an opportunity here with people who were willing to help. Comber Rotary had indicated its willingness to go in and tidy up the area behind the hoarding and a donation of £500 had been made from a local businessman to fund that. All that was needed was for something from the Council to ensure that this could be delivered and resolved as soon as possible.

At this stage Alderman Adair expressed disappointment that the matter had been referred back to the Committee having received unanimous support at last month's meeting. He was not sure why it was back on the Agenda for this meeting and suggested that it may be the case that Alderman Smith just wished to exercise his speaking rights on the matter. As far as he was aware nothing had changed since last month and to bring it back again for further discussion had effectively delayed any progress being made. Alderman Adair reminded members that Council officers had previously secured funding of £10,000 to carry out the required works but the owner had prevented any works being undertaken. He noted that a funding stream was now required, and procurement would need to be undertaken and that would all be included in the report which had been asked for.

Councillor Ashe thanked officers for all work undertaken to date in respect of this matter. She also noted the work which had been undertaken by Comber Regeneration Community Partnership and agreed with Alderman Adair that hopefully this could be passed for a second time with a report to come back in due course.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter considered that it did matter if a precedent was set, adding that while Alderman Smith was a stalwart when it came to rate setting, he would be only too aware that if unbudgeted funds were removed from reserves that could set precedent. She added that members could all put forward cases for their own DEAs seeking funds for unbudgeted matters and as such she urged caution.

Rising to support the Motion, Councillor Smart said he would be keen to see what next steps would be. He agreed that no one wished to set precedents and expressed disappointed at some of Alderman Adair's comments as the matter had been before the Full Council meeting and therefore all 40 members had the opportunity to speak on it then. Instead, he recalled that perhaps it had been one of Alderman Adair's colleagues who had asked for the matter to be referred back to the Committee. Councillor Smart stated that it probably would be useful for members to understand



why the original proposal, rather than the amendment, was being discussed, adding that he would look forward to the report coming back in due course.

The Chair advised that no valid amendment had been submitted in respect of this matter. Alderman Smith had submitted an amendment but, in line with Standing Orders and having consulted with the Chief Executive, it was agreed that the required five clear calendar days' notice had not been given, and the amendment would have needed to be received by last Friday.

At this stage a discussion ensued between the Chair and Councillor Smart around the submission of Amendments and the requirements of members as detailed in Standing Order 17.

In support of Alderman Smith, Councillor Blaney noted some of the comments which had been made around the matter coming back to the Committee. He expressed the view that his colleague Alderman Smith had the highest integrity and as such if he asked for something to be brought forward it was because he truly believed in it. He added that there was no bigger advocate for Comber than Alderman Smith and, as such, he had his full support for whatever matter he brought forward for consideration. Councillor Blaney added that for anyone to suggest otherwise was something he would disagree with.

The Interim Director of Place acknowledged Alderman Smith's comments around the hoarding which had deteriorated following the recent storm. He indicated that he would be happy to ask the team to contact the agent now to see if they would maybe change their mind given its deterioration. He added that if they were prepared to progress with the original proposal, DfC would potentially fund it, and he indicated that he would report back with an update at the next meeting.

By way of summing up, Councillor Morgan stated that there was no need for unpleasanties about the matter coming back to the Committee for further consideration. She said that the people of Comber were only interested in getting this hoarding sorted. She stated while attending the recent Comber Farmers' Market someone had suggested that if the issue had been in Bangor, it would have been resolved a long time ago. While she acknowledged the concerns around seeking unbudgeted funding, the sums involved in respect of this were small with further funds secured by members of the local community for this purpose. She also welcomed the Director's comments and thanked members for their support.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman Smith, that 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.**

### **13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

The Chairman advised there were no Items of Any Other Notified Business.

**NOTED.**

### **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

### **REPORTS FOR NOTING**

#### **14. KINNEGAR LOGISTICS BASE (FILE RDP 37) (Appendix V)**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

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

#### **SUMMARY**

This report outlines the chronology of events between Council agreeing to participate in the D1 process and the decision by the MoD to suspend the process when it was announced that the PSNI was the preferred partner.

#### **15. LMP QUARTERLY UPDATE (FILE RDP47)**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

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

#### **SUMMARY**

This report details the of the LMP including specific budgetary spend.

**RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

**TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 8.48pm.

Unclassified

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**ITEM 7.3.1.****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	13 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Matter arising from Item
Attachments	

At the February Place and Prosperity Committee Members approved the following, subject to Council ratification, in relation to the setup of the Local Economic Partnership:

- **that officers and Councillors meet to agree arrangements to the establish the LEP Working Group and with the subsequent development of an action plan, in accordance with the attached guidance and report, by engaging with the relevant partners at a local level;**
- **that the LEP Working Group reports directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee for decision-making purposes on strategic issues such as the action plan and budget allocation; and**
- **that officers proceed, on the basis of this report, to prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP Working Group following confirmation of budget by DfE.**

Not Applicable

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### **Background**

£45m of funding has been allocated to Northern Ireland's councils by the previous economy minister to help fund production of Local Economic Development Plans through the setup of Local Economic Partnerships. It is part of a broader Stormont strategy aimed at improving regional economic balance across Northern Ireland.

### **Detail**

Following further discussion on this matter, and in order to be able to expediate the set-up of the group, it is recommended that Council nominates four Elected Members to the Working Group. This will enable an initial meeting with officers to be arranged as soon as possible.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Further to ratification by Council of the above Place and Prosperity Committee recommendations, it is recommended that Council nominates four members to the Local Economic Working Group.

## **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 7.00 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Councillor Irwin

**Alderman:** Graham McAlpine (Zoom, 7.02pm)  
Mcllveen Smith (Zoom)  
McRandal  
Mcllveen

**Councillors:** Chambers Irvine, W  
Cochrane McCracken  
Gilmour Moore (7.15pm)  
Irvine, S (Zoom, 7.04pm) Thompson

**Officers in Attendance:** Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of Transformation and Performance (S Denny), Head of Strategic Capital Development (A Dadley), Community Planning Manager (P Mackey) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kennedy and apologies for lateness were received from Alderman McAlpine, Councillor S Irvine and Councillor Moore.

**NOTED.**

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTED.**

(Alderman McAlpine, attending remotely, joined the meeting - 7.02pm)

### **3. DEPUTATION – NI WATER - PLANS FOR 2025**

(Appendix I)

Representing Northern Ireland Water, Dr Stephen Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, and Mr Mark Consiglia, Wastewater Assets Area Manager, were in attendance via Zoom to deliver their presentation to the Committee.

Dr Blockwell referred to the attached presentation and his address to the Committee was detailed as follows:

NI Water was a regulated utility responsible for water and sewage services across the whole of the country.

It was funded in six-year price control periods where its business plans were rigorously reviewed by the utility regulator, EA, DWI, Consumer Council NI, and Department for Infrastructure.

He referred to the attached slides to demonstrate the undertaking that NI Water managed as a company and operated on a daily basis. It had thousands of assets and the statistics associated with the water side of its business.

It provided 605 million litres of clean, safe drinking water every day to 920,000 customers and treated 360 million litres of wastewater at over 1,000 wastewater treatment works.

Its combined water mains and sewers were over 43,000 kilometres in length, and that was one and a half times the entire Northern Ireland road network.

Every part of Northern Ireland's infrastructure network, whether it was a treatment works, a pump or a pipe, had a finite capacity and most of those assets were legacy from decades ago. So much of the capacity that could be handled today was based on those legacy assets.

Its infrastructure was a key enabler for many of the outcomes of a modern society, whether it was public health, economic growth or nature and biodiversity.

The Northern Ireland Programme for Government released a consultation last year, and it was evident that there were deficiencies in Northern Ireland's wastewater infrastructure and that had an impact on nature and the economy.

(Councillor S Irvine, attending remotely, joined the meeting – 7.04pm)

He referred to the 360 million metres of wastewater that the company treated every day and a part of the wastewater network called storm overflows and how they worked and operated to prevent out of sewer flooding of homes and businesses.

It was well documented that in Northern Ireland the wastewater network and treatment infrastructure had been subject to underinvestment for decades.

It was therefore simply under the size needed to meet the demand required which meant there were higher levels of spills to the environment.

The environmental impact from those under-invested assets was understood back in 2007 when the company was formed.

At the time, a regulatory dispensation was put into place so that higher environmental standards could be levied once the assets had been invested in.

That dispensation should have been short term, a short-term mitigation, and it was there to provide breathing space for the wastewater investment programme. Unfortunately, an investment programme was not included in successive business plans until PC21.

Northern Ireland needed to protect its watercourses to reduce the level of nutrients as those could cause green and blue-green algal blooms, as had been seen in recent summers.

NI Water had to tackle that problem and the way to do that was to make sure it did not overload the wastewater infrastructure and that meant limiting or stopping connections to an undersized network.

It was that necessary action that was impacting on Northern Ireland's ability to build new homes and to connect new businesses.

A further slide showed the shape of the capital programme for the current six-year price control period called PC21.

This was the plan for the whole of Northern Ireland that was agreed with the utility regulator and it was a plan to begin to address the problems in Northern Ireland's infrastructure, particularly wastewater. It was in excess of £2 billion of investment over six years.

Dr Blockwell referred to a quote from Northern Ireland's environmental regulator, which spelt out the issues with the wastewater assets across Northern Ireland. NIW had stipulated that it was a public health and environmental issue that needed to be resolved and that the continual deterioration of water quality in Northern Ireland was inevitable unless something was done.



In PC21 years four, five and six, there was intense capital spend and investment, particularly in wastewater. That was to alleviate some of the stresses and strains on the wastewater network and the impact that those had on consumers.

Unfortunately, due to difficulties across Northern Ireland government for PC21 year 4, NI Water had been allocated £321million against the £590million that Northern Ireland's infrastructure needed. So that shortfall of 45%, approximately £270million against what the independent utility regulator determined was required to invest in Northern Ireland's vital wastewater and water infrastructure.

Small increases through monitoring rounds, though they were very welcome, were not going to address the issues.

He presented a further slide which showed the impacts of this constrained funding on the PC21 capital investment programme towards the end of the price control period.

That affected enhancements or upgrades of Northern Ireland's ageing and undersized wastewater infrastructure. NI Water had to prioritise the funds that it had on maintaining existing assets through planned maintenance and reactive maintenance. He also referred to the management of the general programme, which kept its IT systems, fleet of vans and its buildings running.

It also ensured the provision of safe, clean drinking water to consumers across the province at all times and what remained was a very small amount to address wastewater treatment and wastewater network enhancement.

As a failure to invest in new assets continued, its base maintenance costs would also increase significantly.

It was an extremely challenging situation and NI Water was looking at ways to minimize an impact of losing nearly a billion pounds from the wastewater recovery programme.

Referring to Ards and North Down's ambitions, Dr Blockwell explained that his team had liaised with ANDBC's Planning Service since 2015 and it was up to the draft plan strategy development stage. He described the plans as ambitious with targets there for delivery of over 8,000 new homes and 7,500 new jobs across the Borough by 2030.

A further slide covered some of the key capital investments that were going on this financial year along with the significant investment challenges that had impacted NI Water's investment that it had planned this year and during the remainder of PC21 across the Borough.

He highlighted Whitespots Greyabbey Trunk main which represented a £5 million total investment to provide infrastructure which ensured the resilience of the Greyabbey Water Distribution Network. £120,000 had been invested this financial

year and the project was now completed. That was a 15.8 kilometre trunk main that had become operational in this financial year.

The Drum Road Strangford WIIM Regen2 Work package was a water mains rehabilitation project and NI Water had been accelerating its delivery in the Strangford and Portavogie area. That package contained around 40 schemes and involved the rehabilitation of about 25 kilometres of mains, an overall investment of around £3million with £900K being invested this financial year.

Unfortunately, with £0.8billion coming out of NI Water's PC21 programme, impacts had been felt across all Council areas, including this one, regarding wastewater investment.

In 2024-25, NI Water would continue to invest, but there would be a focus on maintaining its wastewater assets.

For example, the Living With Water programme had been wound up and the investment that it was going to conduct in Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works was now base maintenance and it was going to invest around £3.8 million there this year.

There was also some early contractor involvement in the Kinnegar sewer network that was being carried out.

At Killinchy Wastewater Treatment Works there was some early contractor involvement there. There was £470,000 in network investigations.

Bangor DAP Work Package 1: Carnalea Stream UIDs and Bangor DAP Work Package 2: Rathmore Stream UIDs represented significant investment and were being planned, subject to planning approval.

Moving on, he pointed to the inability to connect new customers being a visible symptom of capacity issues being experienced across the whole of Northern Ireland, and not just in Ards and North Down.

Specific areas within this Council area would be impacted within the 19,000 units province-wide and they were outside what were called developer-led solutions and funded solutions.

Some areas in Comber, Donaghadee, Killinchy, Millisle, Newtownards and Portaferry were affected by network constraints. Treatment works at Cloughey and Killinchy were at their capacity.

The importance of front loading the planning application process was recognised several years ago and NI Water implemented a three-stage pre-development process that the developers needed to follow. This was set out in a diagram.

Further challenges had occurred for NI Water and developers in relation to areas where it was no longer possible to find any new storm offset opportunities to allow connection.

NI Water had to adjust its pre-development process for new wastewater impact assessments and had informed the applicants in terms of that being part of the initial first stage of the pre-development inquiry.

There were currently 23 towns in Northern Ireland with high pollutant storm overflows in their wastewater networks that were not suitable for developer-led solutions. The only solution being a major capital works project to upgrade Northern Ireland's undersized wastewater infrastructure network.

Dr Blockwell referred to the outworkings of the impact assessments conducted. There had been 130 wastewater impact assessment inquiries this year or conducted to date. The key message was that 92 impact assessment reports or letters had been issued to developers which had provided solutions. Ten were currently open and ongoing. There had only been four occasions where no developer-led solutions had been identified.

One impact assessment was received when it was not required. A further 14 had been determined as like-for-like developments and could go ahead and there were nine instances where wastewater treatment works had been identified, although it did not recommend those as solutions.

Dr Blockwell provided an overview of the planning applications from the last calendar year, explaining that out of 218 applications processed, 98 had been approved as standard conditions. A further 68 had been approved with specific conditions with 166 approvals in total. That equated to 76% of all applications.

There were 49 from developers which had not followed the PDE or pre-development inquiry process and they had been asked to come and talk to NI Water officers.

There had been three refusals and those had been in closed catchment areas. So the outright refusal equated to less than 0.01% of all applications received.

(Councillor Moore entered the meeting – 7.15pm)

Dr Blockwell added that historical underinvestment had put Northern Ireland perilously close to wastewater being a permanent issue. It affected the building of new homes, the economy and environmental improvements.

Those problems had the potential to remain in Northern Ireland for a long time and would directly impact on priorities set out in the programme for government. Short-term injections of surplus money were unsuitable for funding what was critical Northern Ireland infrastructure.

In March last year, a Northern Ireland Audit Office report called for a comprehensive review of alternative funding and governance arrangements for NI Water to be led by suitable qualified experts. Existing independent economic regulatory processes clearly set out the funding required yet the certainty of investment was not in place.

Without change to the wastewater system, Northern Ireland faced a permanent future of higher levels of pollution, severe constraints on its ability to build new homes, putting off new investors and slowing development of existing businesses.

In closing, he explained that he did not want to give an overall picture of doom and gloom and explained that NI Water had developed clear plans to put in place the improvements to its infrastructure and deliver for the environment, for economic growth and Local Development Plans. Those plans were now being undermined due to the necessary infrastructure investment plan being paused.

Long-term infrastructure intensive businesses needed a stable and sustained investment profile. Short term cash injections, while welcome, were not the most effective or efficient vehicle for delivery.

The Chair explained that she had allowed the presentation to run over the allotted time due to the significance and urgency of the issues that had been raised. She invited questions from Members.

Concerned at the increasing dangers of toxicity in Belfast Lough, Alderman McRandal asked if NI Water could offer reassurances that the maintenance work it had planned would see a reversal or decrease in the toxicity levels there.

Dr Blockwell explained that the base maintenance was only optimising rather than enhancing existing wastewater treatment works.

He referred to potential changes from DAERA in terms of nutrient levels within the Lough which would be a step change in the standards that NI Water had to comply with. It was also unable to accommodate for new growth. If further step changes in standards were introduced then that approach would not be able to leap up to those new bars.

Given that response, Alderman McRandal asked how NI Water expected to meet its environmental aims and Dr Blockwell referred to the Living with Water Programme that had now been paused by the Department for Infrastructure and that was part of the £0.8billion now coming out of the six-year programme. NI Water was now having to cut its cloth to suit.

Mr Consiglia added that base maintenance meant fixing existing assets and the problem NI Water faced was that the standards for discharge to the Lough were getting tighter and tighter and that would require it to completely change its process and add to its existing works which it simply could not do at the moment.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, referred to NI Water's decision to mothball, in its own words, upgrades to treatment works across the Greater Belfast

area which discharged into Belfast Lough meaning that some of those would become non-compliant within the next couple of years.

The Deputy Mayor queried the consequences for Northern Ireland Water if that was to happen and Dr Blockwell explained that it needed to provide effectual drainage and treatment in compliance with the NI Water Act and without the upgrades required it would not be complying with that which would be an issue for DAERA and NIEA. He referred to potential impacts on shellfish as a further impact and those issues would become apparent in its regular sampling of the Lough. There would be further impacts on those works along with the drainage networks as well.

Mr Consiglia added that it was at the forefront of his mind and explained the majority of the population was in that Greater Belfast area and referred to Whitehouse serving 120,000 PE, Belfast serving 600,000 PE and Kinnegar 120,000 PE. He explained the challenges of those existing plants meeting increasingly tighter standards.

Alderman McAlpine wondered how the developer led process had been accepted and if it was operating elsewhere in the UK and Mr Blockwell explained the process of working with developers provided small tactical solutions in terms of squeezing out small areas of capacity within its networks in terms of removing storm water but there was a limit. Those were only short-term measures however to aid developers who would need to be able to build the work into their own business models. It was good practice to take storm waters out of sewer networks particularly in terms of climate change and many other factors.

In a further query, Alderman McAlpine asked for NI Water's thoughts on the safety in terms of water quality, for the growing number of sea swimmers and Dr Blockwell referred to ongoing projects and investments of which some had already been put in place. He recognised it was an issue and it was monitored but the public had to be mindful of what the results were at their swimming locations. NI Water had hoped to upgrade 231 storm overflows over the six-year period. There were 944 unsatisfactory overflows in Northern Ireland and NI Water was only able to deliver 30 to 40 with the reduced funding. He explained the importance of storm water separation and minimising the number of spills. Spills were unavoidable however, particularly around Belfast due to its large population centre. It was important to be cautious of heavy rainfall.

Mr Consiglia explained that where there was substantial rain a CSO was there to stop flooding to properties but it was about striking a balance and being more environmentally conscious. Particularly in the Bangor area a lot of CSOs were located around housing areas and it was not possible to install tanks due to a lack of space. He explained in order to fix two or three small areas a huge catchment activity was required. He felt it was important to note good work that had been done in the Bangor area pointing to various locations including Bangor Marina, Clandeboye Stream, Stickland's Glen and Brompton.

Alderman Graham asked if wastewater treatment was a bigger challenge than providing clean water to drink and what solution it would offer to the crisis in terms of funding the infrastructure upgrades.

Mr Blockwell explained that the treatment works were multi barrier systems and robust. The plants were set up to remove algae and other harmful particles. The other challenge was the blue green algal in Lough Neagh however the treatment there had resulted in some taste issues to drinking water but tests had shown it was always safe to drink. For the crisis, there was a plan in place, but it needed investment.

He added that it was always recognised that clean water provision took priority over wastewater, so there had been less investment in wastewater over the years but that was changing due to the environmental issues. Firefighting to keep things ticking over was not ideal.

Alderman Smith noted the lack of investment and impact on development, particularly in the Ards area. He noted that the data showed the number of refusals being very small so he wondered if that was due to an increase in developer led solutions. He asked if NI Water anticipated an increase in refusals due to the lack of investment and Mr Blockwell agreed that refusals were relatively small and that the alternative approaches had been successful. He added that without the investment then it would be inevitable that there would be more refusals.

The Chair thanked the officers from NI Water for attending, recognising the importance of the issue for the Committee Members.

(Dr Blockwell and Mr Consiglia left the meeting – 7.38pm)

#### **4. ANDBC DATA STRATEGY**

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that as part of our Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme (STEP), the Council committed to developing a Digital Strategy (a plan that outlined how it would invest in digital technology to make a wide range of Council services work better for staff, residents and partners).

The Strategy was approved by Council in April 2024. One of the five principles of the Strategy was 'Better Connected', which required us to 'explore and exploit opportunities for collaboration, ensuring we make best use of technology to enhance innovation and the overall effectiveness of Council'.

One of the highest priority projects associated with this principle was the establishment a comprehensive council-wide data strategy aimed at guiding staff on data sharing, storage, collaboration, and more.

Effective and efficient data management was essential for service delivery in all public authorities. The information and data Council created, managed, and used should provide a resilient, reliable foundation to improve Council services, reduce costs and improve compliance to its regulatory and legislative requirements. Data and information were the lifeblood of any organisation.

The purpose of this strategy was to clearly communicate the importance and responsibilities for excellent information and data management. It set out a clear framework, direction, and plan to improve data quality and accessibility.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the attached Data Strategy.

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

The proposer referred to a section relating to email storage on page 10 of the attached document and the difficulties associated with emails that contained both business and personal information. He queried how it would be determined how those emails would be stored as business documents and if it was down to staff to make a decision on how they were processed.

The Head of Transformation and Performance explained that there would be a significant cleansing exercise that would require staff to remove personal emails from the system. This document was a precursor to a bigger exercise which would be built on SharePoint and that software would be used for business storage while One Drive would be used for the storage of personal emails. She specified that it would be for personal emails that were business related. The officer confirmed that every email would be going through this cleansing exercise.

Councillor W Irvine queried how this strategy compared with best practice elsewhere and the officer confirmed that due diligence had been undertaken and the individual who had produced the strategy was the author of the PRONI approved document in relation to data classification. This was an industry expert who had already produced Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's data strategy.

Alderman McIlveen asked if any Council email account was accessible and under the corporate ownership of the Council. He asked if an email account would need to be accessed and the circumstances in which that could happen.

The Director confirmed that all Council emails were owned by the Council but it was not actively accessing email accounts. He explained that it could be done during an investigation or other issues that would warrant such action in line with Council's Data Management Plan.

Alderman McAlpine asked where Councillors and Democratic Services sat within the strategy. She could not recall any reference to Councillors but the Director clarified that there was no differentiation between staff and Elected Members within the strategy. However as elements of it evolved it would be appropriate to include more specific information.

Alderman McAlpine felt it would be helpful to have that clarity included that it could be all-encompassing.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## 5. **MID-WAY REVIEW OF THE BIG PLAN (COMMUNITY PLAN) FOR ARDS AND NORTH DOWN (2017-2032)**

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailed as follows:

### **Background**

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017-2032) was published in April 2017. It was reviewed in 2020/21 and an addendum, Our Big Priorities, was published in April 2022. The five outcomes set out in the 2017 Big Plan were unchanged but were supported by 10 priorities and 15 workstreams. This first review took place during Covid and changed how the partnership workstreams operate.

Three Statements of Progress had been published in November 2019, November 2021 and November 2023.

The Big Plan ran for another eight years. It was likely that work on the Borough's second community plan will start in 2030. Before then a review of the current plan (The Big Plan) and the addendum (Our Big Priorities) was undertaken to ensure they still represent the direction Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership wish to follow for the next eight years.

### **Mid-way review of the Big Plan (2017-2032)**

In reviewing the current documents, consideration was given to statistical evidence, existing workstreams, partnership engagement, feedback from the Third Sector HUB partners and the resources available within Council's Community Planning Service.

### **Outcomes**

A recommendation was made to amend the wording of all five outcomes. The rationale for this was to better reflect what the partnership is trying to achieve. The suggested changes better aligned the outcomes with the workstreams.

The opening words of all outcomes now included the words 'benefit from'. *All people in Ards and North Down benefit from ...*

The table below outlines the rest of the proposed changes

<b>Original wording</b>	<b>Amended wording</b>	<b>Rational of change</b>
Fulfil their lifelong potential	Opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential	Our workstreams focus on empowering people to look after themselves. We can provide the opportunities, but we need people to take them.
Enjoy good health and wellbeing	Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing	Like above. We can provide to tools people need to manage their own wellbeing, or to help them



		live as well as possible with ill health.
Live in communities where they are respects, are safe and feel secure	Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure	People should feel safe and secure everywhere in the Borough, whether they live in a community or are visiting it.
Benefit from a prosperous economy	A prosperous and inclusive economy	The word inclusive has been added as the workstreams that fall under this outcome are about providing support to people furthest from the labour market and to address financial disadvantage.
Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment	An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible	The original wording was too narrow for the workstreams that have developed.

The agreed changes were subtle but made it easier to provide a narrative communicating, to all stakeholders, the priorities and the workstreams.

**Priorities**

In 2022, The Big Plan Part II | Our Big Priorities had 10 priorities. Many of the workstreams fell across multiple priorities. In our efforts to reduce silos the updated **Big Plan | Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams** had reduced the priorities from 10 to six.

The table below sets out the rational for the amendments.

Original priorities	Amended priority	Rational
Participation	Participation	No change
Infrastructure	Infrastructure	No change
Emotional Wellbeing Health Equity	Determinants of Health	A person’s health is influenced by many factors. The CP Partnership, and the wide remit of its members, can help people to stay healthy. This priority focuses on prevention and empowerment.
Welcoming to Everyone Vulnerable people	Welcoming Spaces	Welcoming spaces incorporates all people and vulnerabilities.
Better jobs and skills Inequalities (Economic)	Employment, Employability and Economic Inequalities	We need to understand why economic inequalities exist and the barriers to economic activity to

		improve employment opportunities. Community development support and economic development support need to work together.
Sustainability	Environmentally Sustainable Communities	A well-functioning environment is essential to support people and their needs – food, water, shelter, clean air etc... It also improves mental and physical well-being. Climate change will interfere with existing environmental systems, and we need to make communities resilient and sustainable.
Valuing our Environment		

**Workstreams**

Within the updated Big Plan, workstreams had remained largely unchanged. The exception to this was three workstreams that we had struggled to get traction with.

A new Health and Wellbeing Workstream had been established under outcome 2 priority 3. This incorporated two previous workstreams that focused on emotional wellbeing and social isolation & loneliness. It was proposed to establish a Climate Resilient Communities Workstream, incorporating our Sustainable Food Workstream, under outcome 5 priority 6. The remit and operation of this new workstream was still in the planning stage.

**Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams**

There was always scope for the partnership to establish additional workstreams, but consideration should be given to alignment with agrees priorities, outcomes and available resources across the Community Planning Partnership.

The table below showed the link between outcomes, priorities and workstreams.

<b>Outcome 1 Outcome, Priorities and Workstreams</b>		
	<i>1. Participation</i>	<i>2. Infrastructure</i>
<b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Resuscitation Group</li> <li>Citizen Engagement* (includes Over 50s Council, Youth Voice, Community Support Steering Group, Third Sector HUB)</li> <li>Borough Reading Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Estate and Lands Group</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2 Outcome, Priority and Workstreams</b>		
	<i>3. Determinants of Health</i>	

<p><b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Wellbeing Group (<i>incorporates emotional wellbeing, social isolation and loneliness</i>)</li> <li>• Whole Systems Approach to Healthier Weight</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 3 Outcome, Priority and Workstreams</b></p>	
<p><b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure</b></p>	<p>4. <i>Welcoming Spaces</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age Friendly</li> <li>• Dementia Friendly</li> <li>• Multi-agency Support Hub</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 4 Outcome, Priority and Workstreams</b></p>	
<p><b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous and inclusive economy</b></p>	<p>5. <i>Employment, Employability and Economic Inequality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Market Partnership</li> <li>• Anti-poverty (via social supermarket, AND Poverty Forum and strategic subgroup of SCPP)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 5 Outcome, Priority and Workstreams</b></p>	
<p><b>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible</b></p>	<p>6. <i>Environmentally Sustainable Communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Tourism</li> <li>• Climate Resilient Communities (inc. Sustainable Food)</li> </ul>

\*Citizen Engagement was not a specific workstream but a combination of initiatives that help increase the public’s influence on issues to be addressed and how public services were delivered.

A more streamlined Big Plan would help better communicate the focus and activities of the Community Planning Partnership and how this resulted in better outcomes for people living in, working in and visiting Ards and North Down.

On 11 November 2024, Ards and North Down’s Strategic Community Planning Partnership agreed the following:

1. To adopt the revised wording of the five Big Plan outcomes
2. To adopt the amended list of priorities
3. To adopt the content of the document as an updated Community Plan for Ards and North Down (2017-2032) to be known as The Big Plan | Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams.

**Promotion and Communication about the updated Big Plan**

The original Big Plan (2017-2032) and its addendum Our Big Priorities would be archived and replaced with an updated **The Big Plan | Outcomes, Priorities and Workstreams**. The new version would be officially published in April/May 2025 and would be communicated to stakeholders. A summary version would also be produced.

To coincide with the publication and promotion of the new version of the Big Plan, a morning event was being planned for 7 May 2025. **The Big Community Planning 10-year summit** would reflect on 10 years of community planning in Northern Ireland.

The purpose of this event was to communicate about initiatives that had taken place to help deliver the Big Plan outcomes. It would also look forward and start a conversation with stakeholders about the next 10 years.

Six new community planning animations have been commissioned. These would highlight some of the initiatives that had been undertaken under the umbrella of community planning. Alongside the new Big Plan publication, the animations would be used throughout 2025 to help communicate the positive impact community planning was having on communities (people, businesses, visitors, partnerships etc.) across Ards and North Down.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor W Irvine queried the successes and challenges of the plan to date. He noted that the Labour Market Partnership had been successful and asked the Community Planning Manager for her thoughts.

In terms of successes, the officer referred to the outworkings of the Rapid Covid Response work which had resulted in strong partnerships. There had been success around the health and wellbeing initiatives and the officer pointed to the Here to Help app which had worked well.

The officer explained the process of the Big Conversation initiative which had enabled Community Planning to gather evidence from residents and help improve some of the mental health service provision in Ards and North Down. It had been an opportunity to gain an understanding of the data in relation to people who lived and worked in Ards and North Down and delve much deeper into the findings rather than accept headline figures. That approach had provided insight into poverty and hardship within the Borough for example, which was not often reported.

In terms of the challenges, the officer felt that much more could be done to improve the coordination of public sector organisations and she advised that some of the established working relationships ended when an individual from another organisation moved on, so that could cause a setback.

Alderman McRandal referred to a climate resilient communities workstream covered on page 4 of the report. He asked who would be involved and how community groups would feed into that workstream.

The officer explained that the approach towards climate change had evolved since the Big Plan was first completed in 2017 so officers had reviewed that particular workstream and the initiative looked at how communities could prepare for the effects of climate change such as adverse weather conditions. The thinking was that if you could make a community resilient against climate change you were also making it resilient against many other factors too. Community Planning would seek to work alongside the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Manager and

Emergency Planning and engage with members of the community's third sector hub to develop this. She expected it to come forward within the next couple of months once the resources were confirmed to progress it.

Alderman McAlpine referred to the level of economic inactivity which she noted was on the high side in Northern Ireland. She raised concern around the barriers faced by people who did not have a Level 2 qualification in English and Maths which prevented them undertaking a Level 4 course. She wondered if there could be a more targeted approach in terms of who Council tried to help in getting basic qualifications in order to increase the level of employability and prosperity for those families concerned.

The officer felt that the LMP was a good example of a targeted approach to get people furthest away from the labour market in to training. She felt that there was no quick and easy solution and she recalled a recent meeting of the Strategic Partnership to look at education, skills and employability in terms of identifying gaps and barriers. She felt that it was possibly a case of pushing higher up due to the limitations of the Strategic Partnership in that area, particularly around policies. Colleagues from SERC had felt it important to ensure that people were encouraged to undertake qualifications that were needed for employment and that people were not just recycled around lower-level qualifications. This was being looked at by the Strategic Partnership and it was aware of different programmes such as Raise and Multiply.

Alderman McAlpine asked about start-ups and support that could be offered for those but the officer did not have that information to hand and would ask her colleague in Economic Development to provide that information. She agreed that it was important to increase the number of start-ups in this Borough for many reasons.

Alderman McAlpine felt that support for start-ups would be a good way to bring prosperity to families and the Borough.

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

## **6. BUDGET REPORTS:**

### **A) STRATEGIC BUDGET REPORT Q3**

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- The Strategic Budget Report Quarter 3

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

### **B) PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS & TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2024/25 Q3 (FILE FIN165)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that in February 2024, Council approved its annual Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the setting of Prudential Indicators (PIs) for the current financial year ending 31 March 2025. These are statutory requirements in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the PIs and treasury management activity as required by the CIPFA Codes, at the end of December 2024.

### 1.1 Capital - Expenditure & Financing

The PIs for capital expenditure and financing should ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council were affordable, prudent and sustainable. Updates to these PIs were set out below.

	Original Forecast	Revised Forecast
Table 1.11	£M	£M
Capital Expenditure 2024/25 (Current Year)	19.41	10.41

The original estimate of £19.41M had been revised to £10.41M, reflecting the capital expenditure that was now expected to be incurred by 31 March 2025. This was consistent with the deliverability risks outlined in the 2024/25 budget strategy, where it was reported that capital ambition was not being matched by delivery due to reasons including Officer resource, business readiness and planning and funding delays. The main schemes impacted by such risks for this reporting period were Bangor Waterfront, Greenways, Ward Park Redevelopment, 3G Pitches and the Digital Innovation Hub.

The revised capital expenditure forecasts for the three-year plan, together with the capital financing implications and previous year activity are summarised below.

	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Table 1.12	£M	£M	£M	£M
Capital Expenditure	6.51	10.41	26.26	36.27
<b>Financed by:</b>				
Loans	4.20	3.99	14.91	21.16
Grants	1.36	5.33	8.75	14.55
Capital Receipts	0.62	1.07	1.95	0.46
Revenue/Reserves	0.33	0.02	0.65	0.10

### 1.2 Capital – Capital Financing Requirement and External Borrowings

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance was measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increased with new debt-financed capital

expenditure and reduces with MRP (minimum revenue provision). See section 1.4 for further information on MRP.

Statutory guidance was that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Council had complied and expected to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as shown below.

	Actual	Revised Forecast		
	31/03/24	31/03/25	31/03/26	31/03/27
Table 1.2	£M	£M	£M	£M
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	75.07	76.78	83.90	96.96
External Gross Borrowing	(59.65)	(56.88)	(60.92)	(75.43)
External Gross Debt (Leases)	-	(4.14)	(3.79)	(3.46)
<b>Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement</b>	<b>15.42</b>	<b>15.76</b>	<b>19.19</b>	<b>18.07</b>
Gross Borrowing within CFR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£15.76M 31/03/25 forecast) and indicated that historic capital expenditure has been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. This had been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in the current and previous years. The position has been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018.

### 1.3 Capital - Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit each year, known as the 'Authorised Limit'. In line with statutory guidance, a lower 'operational boundary' was also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

The revised forecast for external gross borrowing (including leases) at 31 March 2025 was £61M (table 1.2). The Council is therefore forecast to remain well within both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary set for the year as follows:

Table 1.3	2024/25
Authorised limit – borrowing	£ 88.93M
Operational boundary – borrowing	£ 83.93M

### 1.4 Capital - Revenue Budget Implications

Capital expenditure was not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead, interest payable on borrowings and MRP (minimum revenue provision), together known as capital financing costs, were charged to revenue. These financing costs were compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from District Rates and general government grants, to show the proportion of the net revenue stream which was made up of capital financing costs.

Table 1.4	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast
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Financing costs (£m)	£7.9M	£9.06M	£10.11M	£11.08M
Proportion of net revenue stream (%)	12.7%	13.7%	14.7%	15.4%

The forecast financing costs for 2024/25 was in line with the budget set for the year. The increase in the proportion of financing costs to the net revenue stream was due to the inclusion of 'right of use' assets in the financing costs from 1 April 2024 following a change in accounting rules. These costs were previously treated as operating leases and accounted for as revenue rental charges.

## 2.1 Treasury Management – Debt Activity

The following table summarises the position on long-term borrowings as of 31 December 2024.

Table 2.1				
Lender	Balance 01/04/24	New Loans	Repayments	Balance 31/12/24
Dept of Finance	£ 53.38M	£ -	(£ 1.42M)	£51.96M
Banks (LOBOs)	£ 6.27M	£ -	£ -	£ 6.27M
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£ 59.65M</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>(£ 1.42M)</b>	<b>£ 58.23M</b>

The Council did not currently hold any short-term borrowings.

The revised capital financing requirement (table 1.2) showed that the Council could increase its level of external borrowings to £76.78M by 31 March 2025. However, an assessment of the Council's cashflow position forecasts that there would be adequate cash reserves to temporarily finance capital expenditure for the remainder of the current year and therefore no further borrowing was anticipated before 31 March 2025.

After repayments on existing long-term loans were made during the remainder of 2024/25, the level of external borrowings on 31 March 2025 is forecast to be £56.9M. The average interest rate for the Council's total debt portfolio was 3.87%.

## 2.2 Treasury Management - Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

The tables below showed the position of all debt related treasury activity limits.

Table 2.21		
Interest rate exposures	Limit 2024/25	Actual at 31/12/24
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	2%
Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	98%

Table 2.22



Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit 2024/25	Upper Limit 2024/25	Forecast 2024/25
Under 12 months	0%	15%	4.7%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	6.0%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	13.8%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	27.2%
10 years and above	30%	90%	48.3%

### 2.3 Treasury Management - Investment Activity

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy were safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its investments on time, with the investment return being a secondary objective. The current investment climate continued to be one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. In line with advice provided by treasury management consultants, officers continue to implement an operational investment strategy of placing short-term investments with approved high-quality counterparties.

For the period from 1 April to 30 September 2024, Council had earned interest of £321K on investment deals with approved financial institutions as summarised below:

Table 2.31	Average Deposit Size	Average Term	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£3.02m	Call A/c	5.04%	£114,802
Invesco Investment Mgt Ltd	£2.97m	Call A/c	5.04%	£113,007
State Street Global Advisors	£3.02m	Call A/c	5.02%	£114,471
Barclays Bank	£1.66m	Call A/c	4.82%	£57,888
Bank of Scotland	£2.31m	Call A/c	4.94%	£78,756
Santander	£1.10m	Call A/c	3.13%	£4,862
<b>Totals</b>				<b>£483,786</b>

That compared favourably to the budget set for the same period of £397K, resulting in a favourable variance of £87K.

The total balance of funds held in investment accounts at 31 December 2024 was £11.5M.

The table below showed the risk and return metrics on the Council's investments held at 31 December 2024 against other NI Councils.

Table 2.32	Counterparties	Investments	
	Credit Rating	Liquidity: (< 7 days)	Rate of Return (%)

ANDBC	A+	100%	4.71%
NI Council Average	A+	49%	4.66%

Source: Arlingclose Ltd Local Authority Quarterly Investment Benchmarking report Dec-24

The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days was £500k. The Council had not entered into any such investments.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

## 7. RESPONSES TO NOTICES OF MOTIONS

### A) NOTICE OF MOTION 643 – RISE IN NATIONAL INSURANCE PAYMENTS (FILE NOM 643)

(Appendix V – VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that a Notice of Motion was discussed and agreed by Council at their meeting on 18 December 2024.

“That Council notes the recent changes to National Insurance made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves that increased employer's 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 implication for this Council is an unbudgeted £1.2 million increase in our cost base which works out at a potential 2% increase for ratepayers.”

A letter was sent from the Chief Executive to the Department of Finance on 2 January 2025. A reply was received on 23 January 2025 and a copy was attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the response.

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

Alderman McIlveen commented that this was not good news for the Council and this was still a period of uncertainty. It was now important to keep the pressure on through the Northern Ireland Assembly.

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

### B) NOTICE OF MOTION 642 - PROPOSED CLOSURES OF NEWTOWNARDS AND BANGOR POST OFFICES

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council at its meeting in November 2024:

“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.”

On 27 January 2025 the Chief Executive met with Mr Gibson, External Affairs Manager of the Post Office.

Currently across the UK the Post Office owned and directly ran 108 Post Offices with a further 11,400 privately franchised, owned and operated by Post Masters. Bangor and Newtownards Post Offices were within the 108 owned and operated by the Post Office, two of only a small number in Northern Ireland. The buildings from which Bangor and Newtownards Post Offices operate were leased by the Post Office from Royal Mail. (Full list of Post Offices in the Borough as provided by Mr Gibson is included in Appendix 1.)

Bangor Post Office had seven staff and operated a 46-hour week. There were two other franchised Post Offices within a 1-mile radius. Usage of the Bangor Post Office had experienced a 40% decline in recent years. Newtownards Post Office had seven staff and operated a 46-hour week, with four other franchised Post Offices within a 1-mile radius. It reported 44% decline in usage.

The Post Office was undertaking a company review on the provision of its Post Office services. Their key objective was for Post Masters to have a bigger say in day-to-day operations and a future £120m remuneration to be found, raising to £250m by 2050, to further support Post Masters. The Post Office hoped to make an announcement on this review mid-March, which would include any decisions on the future of Newtownards and Bangor Post Offices.

The Chief Executive outlined the importance of the Post Offices in Bangor and Newtownards, both in terms of the provision of the services they provided to local residents and businesses, as well as the role they played in driving footfall and the regeneration of our town and city.

Depending on the decision made by the Post Office, there may have been an opportunity for Council to meet with both the Post Office and Royal Mail (owner of the building) to understand what the potential solutions may be to encourage investment / additional uses for the buildings, which could potentially include a franchised post office service, and the Chief Executive intends to reach out to both organisations in this regard. Mr Gibson had also offered to attend a future Council meeting to give an explanation to any future decisions. A further report would be brought to Council following the Post Office review decision.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the engagement from the Post Office and noted it planned to make a decision around mid-March though he was not hopeful of it changing its position. He welcomed that there had been a meeting with the Chief Executive and hoped that it would also meet with the Council in the future. He felt it was important that Post Offices were strategically placed within Bangor and Newtownards city/town centres and added that their future was crucial.

The seconder, Councillor S Irvine was not surprised at the report but wanted to see Mr Gibson attend a future meeting to explain any future decisions and to keep everything transparent going forward.

Alderman McIlveen agreed that it would be useful for Mr Gibson to attend a meeting, recalling that he had met him previously with Jim Shannon MP. There were possible conversations that could be had with the Unions in terms of securing the two important sites. He had found the appendix to be useful showing where all services were across the Borough but it was important to preserve them within our town centres. The banks had withdrawn from town centres and the Post Office had stepped in to offer counter services so losing those would be a big blow. Ultimately the Council needed to know what the Post Office's proposals were going to be and it was important to ensure that Council contributed to that discussion.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

**NOTED.**

### **Circulated for information**

(a) UK National Risk Register

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the item be noted.**

### **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

**9. RENEWAL OF LICENCE TO ULSTER BANK AT THE PARADE, DONAGHADEE**

(Appendix VIII – IX)

**\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\***

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

Council was asked to consider renewing the licence to the Ulster Bank for the Mobile Banking Unit at the Parade, Donaghadee. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

**10. REQUEST FROM QMAC CONSTRUCTION LIMITED TO USE PART OF HIBERNIA STREET SOUTH CARPARK- EXTENSION OF LICENCE**

(Appendix X – XI)

**\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\***

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

Council was asked to consider extending the licence in relation to land at Hibernia Street carpark. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was agreed.

**11. RENEWAL OF LEASE - MILLISLE LAGOON AND BEACH PARK- MAP REVISION**

(Appendix XII – XV)

**\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\***

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

Council was asked to consider a revision to the mapping as part of renewal of the Lease from The Crown Estate of Millisle Lagoon and Beach Park. It was recommended that the Council approved the revised map.

The recommendation was agreed.

## **12. CIVIC OFFICE SITE SELECTION PROCESS (FILE PCU08)**

**\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\***

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

The Council was asked to consider various potential commercial models, and were further asked to consider the immediate procurement of an Integrated Consultancy Team to carry out site specific feasibility studies.

The recommendation was agreed.

## **13. SALE OF LAND HAMILTON ROAD, BANGOR**

(Appendix XVI)

**\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\***

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

Council was provided with an update with regards to the sale of the Hamilton Road site. Officers will bring a report back to Council to recommend the next steps.

The recommendation was agreed.

## **RE-ADMITANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

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

## **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 9.18pm.

## **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 12 February 2025 at 7.00 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Alderman Brooks

**Aldermen:** Adair  
Cummings  
McRandal

<b>Councillors:</b>	Ashe (Zoom 7.05 pm)	S Irvine
	Boyle	W Irvine
	Chambers	McBurney
	Douglas	McClellan
	Hollywood	Moore

**Officers in Attendance:** Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Cochrane and apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Ashe.

**NOTED.**

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hollywood declared an interest in: Item 4 – Integrated Advice Partnership Fund and Item 9 - Multiply Advance Payment.

Councillor Moore declared an interest in: Item 4 – Integrated Advice Partnership Fund and Item 9 - Multiply Advance Payment.

**NOTED.**

(Councillor Ashe entered the meeting at 7.05pm)

### **3. DFI ACTIVE TRAVEL CONSULTATION**

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:** Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 the Minister for Infrastructure launched a consultation on an Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland, at Craigavon

Civic Centre. The launch event was attended by Alderman Adair, Councillor Moore, the Director of Community and Wellbeing, the Head of Strategic Capital Development and the Senior Planning Officer from the Local Development Plan Team.

After the event, the consultation document was circulated for comment and input from those appointed to attend the launch on behalf of the Council, and the Council's Heads of Service team, so that a corporate approach to the consultation could be drafted for the Council to consider as its response to the consultation.

Input had been provided to the attached proposed response from a range of services within the Council including Tourism, Planning, Assets and Property, Environmental Health and Outdoor Recreation. Furthermore, a meeting was held with the Active Travel Unit of DFI on 28<sup>th</sup> February to allow for further discussion on the proposals.

As a result, the attached was recommended as the Council's views to be provided as the response to the consultation.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council approves the response in appendix 2, to the Active Travel Plan consultation.

Alderman Adair asked to make an alternative proposal which was seconded by Alderman Cummings:

That the Council agrees to the recommendation but include that consideration be given to the inclusion of public unadopted roads in Departments Rural Active Travel networks to promote active travel benefits and links to services and transport network in rural communities.

Alderman Adair explained that he had attended the Active Travel consultation launch in Craigavon recently which had been very positive and, although there appeared to be funding coming forward, public unadopted roads were not being given consideration. He stressed that he was not speaking about private roads but rather public access roads which had not been adopted by either the Council or the Department for Infrastructure. He was aware that Mid Ulster District Council had availed of funding to promote Active Travel on unadopted roads and believed that would be worthwhile to pursue. He reported that he was aware of three of these roads in his own area and that this should be included in the Council's consultation response.

Seconding that Alderman Cummings echoed support for the comments made by his colleague and highlighted Laurel Bank in Comber which was a public road but was not adopted.

Councillor W Irvine was also happy to support the alternative proposal. He added that he believed that the Council may have missed an opportunity in relation to Bangor and not prioritising links to the train station and bus station. Car parking was



also difficult around the area close to the station and at Queen's Parade and he asked for the officers to comment on that.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that the lack of attention to the Bangor Waterfront connections had been discussed at a recent meeting with DFI and that this was highlighted in the proposed response.

Councillor Boyle thanked Alderman Adair and Alderman Cummings for bringing the amendment and referred to unadopted roads in a very poor condition and if they were allowed to deteriorate further the Council itself would have difficulty accessing properties for bin collection. He agreed that the matter needed to be explored.

Councillor Chambers echoed those sentiments and recalled bringing a Notice of Motion to an Environment Committee meeting asking for the Council to collaborate with the Department over unadopted roads, and in particular, The Point, Groomsport, and that Motion had been roundly rejected by all the other parties. He welcomed the change of heart by Members and was pleased to see that they were now on board in asking for the Borough's unadopted roads to be addressed.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted and that consideration be given to the inclusion of public unadopted roads in Departments Rural Active Travel networks to promote active travel benefits and links to services and transport network in rural communities**

(Having declared an interest in Item 4 Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore left the meeting at 7.12 pm)

#### **4. INTEGRATED ADVICE PARTNERSHIP FUND**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Department for Communities had a statutory requirement to provide debt advice to individuals and households in need. The debt advice levy enabled the Department to secure funding to deliver free debt advice in Northern Ireland.

The levy was applied to the financial services industry by the Financial Conduct Authority. The monies collected through the levy were allocated based on the proportion of adults in each of the nations of the UK who were indebted. The amount of funding available varied from year to year based on the 'Need for Debt Advice' survey.

Additional, one-off funding had become available, which would not continue beyond 2025/26.

That had provided the Department with an opportunity to explore and implement additional options that aimed to increase debt advice reach through early intervention ensuring that more people facing financial difficulties had access to comprehensive support and guidance tailored to their specific circumstances.

An Integrated Advice Partnership fund had been approved to test proposals which focused on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. The approach was grounded in collaborative advice partnerships; connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach.

The Council had received a Memorandum of Understanding from the Department for Communities in relation to the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund for £68,121,68 to deliver one off debt advice in 2024/2025, with an accounts directive to enable the fund to be carried over to 2025/26.

The Integrated Advice Partnership Fund would focus on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. That approach would be grounded in collaborative advice partnerships, connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach, through a range of diverse methods that complemented the existing NI Debt Advice services administered by Advice NI.

The important considerations of the fund included:

1. A holistic approach.
2. Collaborative partnership with two or more organisations one of which could supply the free, independent, FCA regulated debt advice - the FCA regulated organisation must be the lead partner.
3. Money awarded for 2024/25 equated to £68,121.68, with a finance directive allowing that money to be carried over to the financial year 2025/26.
4. The funding amount for 2025/26 had not been confirmed but it would be included in the Community Development CSP letter of Offer.
5. The funding would not extend beyond **March 2026**.
6. The funding was for the whole Borough and could not be split into different grant pots.

Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND) was already contracted by the Council to deliver advice services for the Borough and were FCA regulated. The procurement team had confirmed that this element could be added to the existing contract via a variation to contract. CAAND would deliver a partnership model to target areas that required debt advice, but were not currently seeking it, in partnership with GP surgeries.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves a variation of contract to CAAND of £68,121.68 to deliver the Integrated Advice Partnership fund in the Borough in 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.

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

Councillor Boyle welcomed the report and believed that the funding would prove to be very useful and if it was not spent it could be carried over to the next financial year.

Councillor W Irvine was in agreement and recognised the value for Citizens Advice going forward. It was explained that this was one off funding from the United Kingdom government but that if it was successful a case could be put to the Department for similar funding next year.

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

(Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore were re-admitted to the meeting at 7.14 pm)

## **5. COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUNDING**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that at a meeting of the Community Development Elected Members Grants Working Group held on 16th May 2024, Members requested that a sample of local community representatives be consulted with to consider applications forms, guidance etc to make them more user friendly for applicants and to streamline the process.

Following approval of the new Grants Policy in September 2024 elected members on the working group each nominated representatives they wished to see invited to participate in the process.

A meeting of the Grants Working Group was held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to discuss the grants paperwork for the Events and Festival fund. The Events and Festivals Fund was launched in 2022 as a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund. The Council tested the amalgamation of the Tourism Events Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund, but it had been determined that to ensure proportionate and relevant information was requested from applicants, the Fund would now return to being administered as two separate grant schemes.

The community part of the fund would return to its original title of Community Festival Fund.

Following the meeting in November 2024, officers amended the paperwork taking advice from the Working Group and making changes where possible whilst also meeting Department for Communities requirements as set out in the Letter of Offer. The finalised paperwork was sent to everyone involved in the initial meeting for comment and two responses with minor amendments were received. The team would like to thank all those who attended the meeting and who gave up their time to participate in this process to date.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Community Festival Fund scheme.

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

Councillor Douglas was happy to see the funding come forward and explained her participation and that a variety of groups had been represented in the working group from across the Borough. There had been good discussion and suggestions and the feedback she had received from Ballygowan had been positive.

Seconding that Councillor Boyle spoke of the importance of the Festival Fund to the Borough and the many organisations that could avail of it. He welcomed the local community involvement and was glad there had been a reversal of some of the previous thinking. He gave his thanks to officers and the members of the working group.

Alderman McRandal reiterated the very positive community engagement and the Holywood group and was grateful for that. He asked that when changes were made to documents if tracked changes could be shown in future and that need was acknowledged.

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

## **6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that The Community Development (CD) Fund was jointly funded by the Community Support Programme from the Department for Communities and the Council. The annual Grant scheme was open to constituted Community and Voluntary groups in the Borough who met the eligibility criteria.

The Fund was available for running costs of up to £2,500. Attached was the 2025-2026 application form and guidance criteria. No changes had been made since the last financial year. Under the new Grants Policy the scheme required approval from the Council prior to launching.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Community Development Running Costs grant scheme.

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

Councillor W Irvine queried the use of community houses and the costs to run those. The Head of Community and Culture replied that the detail of that had been still under discussion and further information in relation would be brought back to the Committee in a report.

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

## **7. VE DAY GRANT SCHEME 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the 8th May 2025 would mark 80 years since VE Day – the official end of the Second World War in Europe. The Council had approved a budget of £60,000 for the provision of a VE grant scheme and agreed that a further report be brought to the Community and Wellbeing Committee outlining how the grants would be administered, as detailed in this report and its appendix.

The Council approved that grants would be made available to Community groups and organisations up to a maximum of £1,000 with a total budget of £60,000, (subject to the Rates process).

Applications would be welcomed from constituted community organisations to hold events between 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

Timetable for applications –

- Scheme would launch on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (or sooner, dependent upon call in after February Council meeting)
- Scheme would close for applications on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025
- Scoring panels - 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March
- Letters of Offer issued 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Under the current grants policy successful applicants would be able to seek an advance of 50% of the total awarded amount, with the outstanding balance paid on submission of receipts and claim form.

It was recommended that awards of up to £1,000 were paid in full, in circumstances where need was shown to be required, with relevant receipts and claim forms to follow after the event had concluded.

The Grants Policy would be reviewed and amended accordingly for use with future grant schemes, as outlined above.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the proposed grant scheme for VE Day commemorations to allow the award of grants to successful applicants of up to £1,000.

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

Alderman Cummings was very pleased to see the report coming back following his colleague, Councillor Gilmour's Notice of Motion. He reminded the Committee that on 8 May 1945, people had taken to the streets to celebrate the momentous occasion of Victory in Europe and to remember the fallen.

This year would mark VE Day 80 and he trusted that this programme presented an opportunity for communities to mark this historic milestone and remember their ancestors' sacrifices on the path to victory during World War II. When he asked if the initiative offered advanced payments to groups to allow them to prepare for the celebration it was confirmed that funding could be provided in advance in accordance with the Councils grants policy.

Seconding, Councillor Boyle welcomed that groups would get funding upfront and sought clarity that all the funds would be distributed. The Head of Community and Culture explained that if the funding pot was not allocated the application process would reopen.

Councillor Hollywood also rose to welcome the report stressing that it was important not to air brush history but instead remember the sacrifice given to win the freedom and democracy that everyone in the country could take for granted. He hoped the celebration would be a resounding success.

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

## **8. SOCIAL SUPERMARKET ADVANCE PAYMENT**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council previously agreed to fund Bangor Food Bank for the provision of a Social Supermarket in Ards, Comber and the Peninsula.

Following receipt of the Letter of Offer the Manager of the social supermarket contacted officers requesting an advance payment of £10,000 to allow the supermarket to begin provision in Portaferry. In accordance with the Council's grant policy, an advance payment of £10,000 had been processed, subject to required financial returns being provided.

RECOMMENDED that the Council retrospectively approves advance payment of £10,000 to the Bangor Foodbank for the provision of the previously agreed social supermarket for Ards, Comber and the Peninsula area.

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

Alderman Adair praised the work being carried out and thought that it was reaching those who needed help and was well spread across the Borough. Councillor W Irvine echoed that and wished the initiative every success going forward.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

(Having declared an interest in Item 9 Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore left the meeting at 7.27 pm)

## **9. MULTIPLY ADVANCE PAYMENT**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council approved the award of Multiply Funding in January 2025 to the Bangor Social Supermarket (£31,500) to deliver Numeracy Boot Camp – Maths for everyday life and to CAAND (£79,800), to deliver Numeracy Boot Camp – Maths for everyday life.

The new agreed Grants Policy advance payment thresholds were:

Up to £500 – £1000 could be requested in advance

From £501 to £1000 – 80% could be requested in advance

From £1001 to £3000 – 30% could be requested in advance

Bangor Social Supermarket requested an advance payment of 50% of the total grant awarded whilst CAAND requested an advance payment to allow delivery to begin.

As the full amount of funding had been received by the Council, advance payments, were processed as follows:

CAAND - £15,000

Bangor SSM - £15,750

Further funding would be made available once the necessary financial returns had been completed.

RECOMMENDED that the Council gives retrospective approval for payments to CAAND and Bangor SSM as outlined above.

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

Councillor W Irvine thought this was a very worthwhile project and hoped that a report would be brought back to the Committee on how the work was progressing. The Head of Community and Culture confirmed that would be the case in the normal way when grant funding was being provided.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

(Councillor Hollywood and Councillor Moore were readmitted to the meeting at 7.28 pm)

## 10. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS GRANT SCHEME

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing 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 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.

The Council in partnership with The Executive Office (TEO) was delivering a localised Change Fund scheme open to CVS organisations and grassroots groups in the area.

The Council had been awarded £60,000 of Momentum funding to raise awareness of the Change fund locally. Momentum funding must be utilised by the Council before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 whilst change funding of £120,000 would be distributed via a competitive grants process administered via by the PCSP during 2025 – 2026. Momentum funding would be used as followed:

- Events to raise awareness of the Executive Office Change fund 2025-2026

DATE/TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (1)	Orange Tree House
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 8am – 10am	Business Breakfast	Clandeboyne Lodge
Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (2)	Culloden hotel
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 10am – 2pm	International Women's Day Panel Discussion	Clandeboyne Lodge
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (3)	Strangford Arms
Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 7pm – 8pm	Workshop (4)	Online via Teams

- 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.
- Training for Council staff on EVAWG.



A letter of offer had been received for £180,000 (including £60,000 momentum) to deliver grants in line with the EVAWG guidance.

A draft Change Fund application pack was attached for approval. The scheme would be launched following the closure of the call in period in February to enable Letters of Offer to be issued for projects to begin from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Change Fund grant scheme.

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

Councillor Douglas rose to support the recommendation and the organisations working to challenge behaviour and culture and the need to promote healthy, respectful relationships ensuring women and girls remained safe in all settings. Alderman Adair concurred with those comments.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **11. ARTS PROJECT GRANTS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing the first round of the Arts Project Grants for 2025-2026 opened for application in November 24 with a deadline of Tuesday 21 January 2025. The grants were advertised in the local press, social media and on the Council's website.

An assessment panel met on Thursday 23 January to assess 10 applications received by the closing date. The panel comprised the following Officers:

- Linda McAllister, CD Officer
- Julia Harkness, CD Officer
- Amy McKelvey, Arts Officer

A maximum of £1,000 was available per application.

The total available budget - £11,000.

Total amount requested - £9,810.

Pass mark was agreed at 60%.

Table 1 below provided a summary of the applications, the scores received and comments.

	<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount awarded</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	AMH New Horizons	£1000	Pottery Workshop Programme	£1000	94	High quality, good value, person centred project
2	Bangor Speech Festival	£1000	Festival activities	£1000	92	Excellent application, good value for money
3	Kilcooley Women's Centre	£1000	Harp playing workshops	£800	80	Valuable community engagement learning new skill, no match funding so requested amount reduced in line (20%)
4	Kilmood Art Club	£820	Art Masterclasses	0	48	Unclear details about the project and didn't represent good value for money or community engagement
5	Northern Attitudes Dance Company	£1000	Dance workshops	0	Did not meet essential criteria	Majority of project not based in the Borough
6	Peninsula Healthy Living	£1000	Older Peoples Theatre and Storytelling Programme	£1000	90	Interesting and unique idea and great application
7	Portaferry Community Services	£1000	Music and Drama Workshops	£1000	90	Excellent application and project for older people in Portaferry

8	Portico	£1000	Choral workshops and performance	£1000	85	Strong application representing good value for money
9	Remakery Studio	£1000	Upcycling Workshops	0	Did not meet essential criteria	Didn't provide a constitution
10	Valhalla	£990	Workshops and development of Historical walking tour of Comber	£990	81	Good project engaging with the community in Comber
	Total	£9,810		£6,790		

The budget was £11,000 and applications totalled £9,810. The pass mark was 60%.

Kilmood Art Club's application did not score above the pass mark as the application did not represent good value for money and did not give enough detail about the project or community engagement and need.

The Remakery Studio and Northern Attitudes Dance Company were not scored as they did not meet the essential criteria. Seven organisations scored above the pass mark of 60.

As the scheme was launched under the previous Council grants policy, approval to award Letters of Offer was requested to award the grants as outlined above. An updated scheme would be tabled to the Committee for approval, prior to the next round of funding.

A second round of funding would be released in April 2025 for the remaining budget of £4,210.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the 7 successful applications and awards detailed in Table 1, totalling £6,790.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **12. UPDATE OF MUSEUM POLICIES**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme required all accredited museums to hold a variety of policies in order to care for and provide access to their collections to industry standards. North Down Museum last went through the Accreditation process in June 2023. As part of that process the Museum must update the following policies:

- Documentation Policy Statement 2025-2030
- Conservation and Collections Care Policy Statement 2025-2030
- Access Policy Statement 2025-2030

Under the Council's scheme of delegation, minor changes to already approved policies were delegated to a Director to sign off. However, The Museum Council Accreditation Scheme required evidence that those policies and any changes had been signed off by the Council. All three policies were previously approved by Council in February 2021.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the updated Museum policies as appended to this report.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.**

### **13. CLANMIL HOUSING ASSOCIATION – SHARED HOUSING SCHEME SAVOY, BANGOR**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Clanmil Social Housing Association provided affordable homes for more than 11,500 people across Northern Ireland including families, older people, those with support needs, and shared communities.

The shared schemes were supported by the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Executive's "Housing for All" Shared Housing Programme. The programme had its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy which reflected the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society where people could choose to live, learn, work and socialise alongside neighbours from many different backgrounds and traditions, free from prejudice.

Clanmil was currently developing a 26 two-bedroom apartment scheme, targeted at the over 55 age category, at The Savoy, Donaghadee Road, Bangor with completion to be in early Spring 2025.

To apply for social housing in Northern Ireland, including a home with Clanmil, applicants needed to submit an application form to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). All applications for social housing, including homes with Clanmil, were assessed by the NIHE using the Housing Selection Scheme. The Housing Executive had agreed the inclusion of the Savoy scheme on the Social Housing Development Programme and invited the scheme onto the Shared Housing Programme.

#### **Good Relations**

Each shared scheme was supported through the development and delivery of a five-year Good Relations Plan. The Good Relations Plan was managed by the Housing Association developing the shared scheme and it included 'bonding' programmes

which are delivered to the new shared neighbourhood residents, and 'bridging' programmes which were delivered between the new shared residents and residents from surrounding communities (within a five-mile radius of the new shared scheme).

The Good Relations Plan identified and details the following requisite actions to encourage inclusion and integration within the local community:

**Action 1 – Promotion**

**Action 2 – Engagement**

**Action 3 – Bonding**

**Action 4 – Bridging**

**Action 5 – Sustainability**

**Action 6 - Learning**

Funding for this Good Relations revenue programme would be c.£400,000 over a 5-year period and could be used for both the residents and projects within a 5 mile radius of the new scheme.

The programme should increase the confidence and capacity of both residents in the Savoy and residents in neighbouring communities.

### **Advisory Groups**

A key support mechanism to the delivery of the Good Relations Plan was the establishment of an Advisory Group. The Advisory Group would draw membership from the Housing Executive, local Council Good Relations Officers, Community and Voluntary organisations and other statutory bodies.

Clanmil had met with the Mayor and Council officers to request nominations to the Advisory Group for the Savoy scheme.

RECOMMENDED that the Council nominates Bangor Central DEA Councillors, together with the Good Relations Officer to the Savoy Advisory Group which will be managed and supported by staff from Clanmil Housing Association.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McRandal.

Proposing Councillor W Irvine welcomed this and considered it to be a very good initiative in many ways. The development of the building had been held back for some time but he looked forward to progress being made now and welcomed the integration of the tenants who would be allocated these homes.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **14. CORRESPONDENCE. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023 from Newry Mourne and Down

District Council requesting support for notice of motion in relation to Gender Based Violence had been received and was attached for Members information.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to support the request in the attached correspondence.

Councillor Moore proposed an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor Boyle.

That the recommendation be adopted and that as the legislation referred to in the original letter from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is owned by the Department of Finance, and not Justice, that the wording in any letter from Ards and North Down Borough Council be amended to reflect that.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted and that as the legislation referred to in the original letter from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is owned by the Department of Finance, and not Justice, that the wording in any letter from Ards and North Down Borough Council be amended to reflect that.**

## **15. PIGEON CONTROL IN CONWAY SQUARE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would recall that a decision was made in November 2023, that measures be taken by the Council to reduce the pigeon population in Conway Square, Newtownards. Complaints were occasionally received by the Environmental Health Protection and Development Service from residents, and several business owners had also asked Members to try and find a solution to the ongoing issues caused by feral pigeons. Interventions had been made in the past which successfully reduced bird numbers; however, the pigeon population had inevitably risen again.

Tackling the challenging current issue of pigeon numbers had required the input of several Council departments, with work ongoing by the Head of Regulatory Services to introduce a byelaw to address bird feeding in Conway Square. The Environmental Health Protection and Development Service had made recommendations for bird proofing improvements at Newtownards Arts Centre and was carrying out surveillance of bird movements to identify roost sites and put control measures in place. That approach alone had not been successful in reducing the number of birds and in fact an increase in the bird population had been observed over recent months.

The Environmental Health Protection and Development Service had therefore sought further specialist advice. Several strategies were suggested, including a combination of the trapping and destruction of birds along with the use of falcons to deter pigeon activity in the square.

A request for funding had been made to the Council's Budgetary Panel to invest £25k in pigeon reduction measures in Conway Square. That was subsequently

approved by the Council at the 29th January 2025 meeting. Due to the sensitive nature of pigeon control, the Environmental Health Protection and Development Service was seeking approval from the Council to commence a procurement process to appoint a private pest contractor to carry out pigeon control during 2025/26 using the methods outlined above, rather than continue to try to tackle the issue in house.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves that a procurement process is designed and implemented for pigeon control activities in Conway Square to include trapping and destruction of birds and the use of birds of prey as a deterrent.

There was no proposer and seconder for the recommendation nor any alternative.

**NOTED.**

## **16. PHA CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Public Health Agency (PHA) was consulting on its draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030, the closing was 4pm on, Friday 28 February 2025.

Under the Vision of “A Healthier Northern Ireland”, the organisation stated its purpose: Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.

It proposed four main themes:

- Protecting Health
- Starting Well
- Living Well
- Ageing Well

There were key priorities and measurement indicators identified alongside each of the themes.

The attached response to PHA was produced after consultation with officers from all Councils through the Environmental Health and Wellbeing subgroup of Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI). Emphasis had been placed on the main work areas with which partnership work with PHA was already in place to achieve results including infectious disease control, tobacco control, home accident prevention, Mind Body Business and Age/Dementia Friendly. Ards and North Down officers contributed to that process and fully endorsed the attached as the Council's response.

The Public Consultation Response was due to be submitted by Friday 28th February 2025. That would be done with the caveat that it was subject to ratification by Council and call-in period.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to the submission of the proposed response to the PHA Corporate Plan 2025 – 30.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **17. FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY CONSULTATION JANUARY 2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Department for Communities (DfC) had released a consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy that set out a pathway to a Northern Ireland where everyone lived in a warm, healthy home. Responses were due no later than Thursday 6th March 2025.

Officers had consulted with colleagues in other Councils to provide the attached proposed response. The response broadly agreed with the series of actions, guided by clear and fair principles, to help achieve three key goals:

- to make homes more energy efficient,
- to collaborate and build capacity, and
- to protect consumers.

The consultation narrative explained that at present, too many people lived in houses that they struggled to heat, and most recent modelling by DfC suggested that in 2022 more than a quarter of households in Northern Ireland were living in fuel poverty. Living in cold and damp homes impacted health and well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable in society. The continued high prices of fossil fuels, low standards of energy efficiency in homes and the ongoing cost of living all contributed to unacceptably high levels of fuel poverty.

The 2024 announcement to restrict the winter fuel payment created an additional financial burden for less well-off older people and this Fuel Poverty Strategy aimed to better understand the longer-term impact of the removal of the payment on pensioners who were above the threshold for winter fuel payments and provide support, if necessary, to help those who had moved into fuel poverty.

Drawing on experience from the Affordable Warmth Scheme, officers were keen to emphasise that schemes to improve insulation should aim for a whole house approach to maximise benefits but at the same time remained mindful of the need to consider exceptions. There was also a consensus that the qualifying criteria for such schemes needed to be more flexible during the life of the scheme to consider fluctuations of fuel prices and rises in cost of living, which could have a significant impact and increase the numbers living in fuel poverty.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agreed to submit the proposed response to the DfC consultation on draft Fuel Poverty Strategy.

Councillor McBurney asked to make an alternative proposal which was seconded by Alderman McRandal.



That the Council agrees to submit the response but with the following amendments:

**In questions 21 and 22** add people with lived experience to the list of stakeholders that the Department should engage with.

**Question 24** add community and voluntary organisations to the list

**Question 30** add families with children eligible for free school meals to the list for exploring additional support

**Question 41** to include a recommendation that in developing the Fuel Poverty Strategy the Department ensures that the strategy links to the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Councillor McBurney began by thanking all officers who had been involved in completing the Consultation response. In her opinion there was much to welcome in it from an acknowledgment of the need to move away from blaming residents for condensation and mould to a more flexible approach to income thresholds and eligibility criteria. She thought that would be welcomed by constituents as a way forward in an approach to tackle fuel poverty and make homes more energy efficient.

She felt that some amendments could be made to make the response even stronger and more reflective of the needs across communities.

To ensure policy met the needs of the people it was written for those people must be central to the development work. With that in mind she proposed that for questions 21 and 22 the Council include people with lived experience to the list of stakeholders that the Department should engage with. That was best practise and would help to ensure the strategy was more effective and served the needs of those most impacted by fuel poverty.

In respect of question 24 when the list the organisations that government could engage with around the provision of emergency support a critical group was missing and should be included. She suggested the community and voluntary sector were a critical cog in the wheel of emergency support and could provide vital insight into the support required and long-term solutions. Their vital contribution to developing solutions that worked best for people on the ground, especially those who found themselves in need of emergency support could not be overlooked.

She welcomed the focus of vulnerable groups throughout the consultation response. She suggested question 30 set out an intention to explore expanding support for particularly vulnerable population groups. She stated that she had long been an advocate for children living in poverty and therefore could not let an opportunity pass to raise the need for better support for some of the most vulnerable in society. It was well understood that growing up in poverty had long-lasting consequences for children and their futures. She therefore proposed that in addition to the groups already listed in the response that families with children entitled to free school meals as potentially requiring additional and targeted support where energy efficiency measures may not be the right solution.

She stated that she had one final amendment. Everyone would be familiar with the need for an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland and the work that was ongoing within the Department for Communities to deliver on that. When she read the Fuel Poverty Strategy and the Council's response the biggest gap for her related to the lack of joined up thinking around poverty in Northern Ireland. Therefore, her final amendment was that question 41 be amended to include a recommendation that in developing the Fuel Poverty Strategy the Department ensured that the strategy linked to the Anti-Poverty Strategy. At the end of the day poverty was poverty whether it related to fuel, food or any other label we choose to add. Everything we did to tackle poverty must be informed by the Executive's anti-poverty strategy therefore to not link the two would be a missed opportunity and counterproductive.

Councillor Hollywood supported those comments and through his own work in the community had been shocked at the amount of people facing fuel poverty, particularly pensioners, and hoped that this would be expedited as quickly as possible.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McBurney, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted and the following responses be submitted:**

**In questions 21 and 22 add people with lived experience to the list of stakeholders that the Department should engage with.**

**Question 24 add community and voluntary organisations to the list**

**Question 30 add families with children eligible for free school meals to the list for exploring additional support**

**Question 41 to include a recommendation that in developing the Fuel Poverty Strategy the Department ensures that the strategy links to the Anti-Poverty Strategy.**

## **18. FUNDING TO MARY PETER'S TRUST**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailed that Members may be aware that the Council had previously, on an annual basis, helped to support the Mary Peters Trust in the form of a grant. The Mary Peters Trust did excellent work in supporting upcoming local athletes from a wide range of sports through the distribution of financial support that allowed the athletes to train and compete at the highest levels.

Since its inception more than 50 years ago, the Trust had made a difference to the lives of thousands of young athletes from across Northern Ireland, selecting the best athletes, supporting them financially and providing access to a team of experts, who helped support their pathway to success and aid them in achieving their sporting dreams and ambitions.

As noted in an appendix, throughout 2024 the Mary Peters Trust had provided financial support to 20 local athletes from 12 different sports across the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, totalling £14,500 of investment.

Without that support many of the athletes would struggle to do the training required or be able to afford to travel to events to compete and represent everything that was good about this Borough.

It was proposed to continue to support the work of the Trust through the award of the grant. £5,000 had been budgeted for.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council approves the award of £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust.

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

Councillor Boyle welcomed the report and the support being showing to all the Borough's sporting athletes. He thought that this was an outstanding Trust and that Mary Peters herself was a great ambassador to promote local sporting excellence. He thought that the Trust had been proven to provide a good return on investment.

Councillor S Irvine echoed those comments and thought the fund was exceptional, indeed he knew of one recipient locally who had been helped and without the support given would have struggled to compete at a high level.

Alderman Adair agreed and remarked that he had had the privilege of meeting Mary Peters when he had been Mayor. He thought she was a great lady and a wonderful ambassador for Northern Ireland and praised the encouragement she had provided to future generations of athletes.

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

## **19. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON OLDER CHILDREN PLAY PROVISION IN HOLYWOOD**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ards and North Down Play Strategy 2021-2032, made recommendations for play provision for each settlement in the Borough. Holywood was identified as having the highest proportion of teenagers in the Borough and therefore in need of an outdoor play facility for older children. At present it did not have any specific play equipped provision for older children. The Play Strategy proposed that consultations took place to determine the way forward from the preferred options for young people in Holywood.

A preliminary consultation was carried out in early 2022 with the Holywood Children and Young People's Network via a Teams meeting online. They then spoke to their members and submitted a response to the Outdoor Recreation Officer in the Councils Parks and Cemeteries Team.

The suggestions included:

- Adding Ballymenoch Park to the site options (in addition to Seapark and Praegar's Field)
- Add a rain shelter/youth shelter
- Provide lighting at the facility
- Make sure it was in an open location
- Not locked

The Holywood Family Trust through its youth club, then conducted a poll of their members in June 2022. A total of **76 responses** were received from the young people attending the Youth Club and the majority wanted to see a **Multi-Use Games Area** delivered at **Seapark**.

A full public consultation was carried out in September 2023. The online survey commenced on Monday 11th September 2023, and this was advertised on the Council's social media channels. Posters were also placed at each of the four play parks (Seapark, Johnny the Jig, Ballymenoch and Redburn). A public drop-in session was held on Monday 11th September 2023 in Redburn Community Centre, hard copies of the survey were available as well as maps of the locations and images of the facility types. Details of the survey were issued via email to the Redburn and Loughview Community Forum, the Holywood Children and Young People's Network, the Holywood Family Trust, the Holywood Steet Pastors and Ards and North Down Street Pastors via the Council's Community Development Team. Details of the survey were also issued to all Elected Members. The survey closed on 1st October 2023 and the results were as follows:

**Total responses received: 57**

- **Preferred location: Seapark 43.86%**
- **Preferred facility type: Multi Use Games Area 36.84%**

The results of the consultation were presented to the Council in October 2023. Elected Members tasked officers to investigate the possibility of other potential locations beyond those considered and to consult with the post primary schools in Holywood (Sullivan Upper, Priory College, Rudolf Steiner and Rockport).

### **Alternative Locations**

Officers researched other potential locations using GIS maps and site visits, land currently owned by the Council and other public bodies was considered (Education Authority, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Health Trust etc), as well as researching current land for sale on the property market. NI Housing Executive and Health Trust land within the Holywood area was not considered large enough or in the right location for a play provision for older children as, for example, it was too close to residential properties. **Conclusion-no suitable sites.**

- **Current sites for sale within the Holywood Area and costings:**

Below showed potentially suitable land currently for sale in Holywood. The costs were significant, and it was not considered that those were suitable locations for the

older children facility due to the proximity of residential properties. **Conclusion-no suitable sites.**




Asking Price  
**£650,000**

Exceptional Seafront Building Site, 117a Station Road, Craigavad, Holywood, BT18

Site

**simonbrien** Residential  
Marketed by Simon Brien Residential (North Down)



Offers Over  
**£125,000**

Site @, 42 Park Avenue, Holywood, BT18 9LS

Site

Marketed by Templeton Robinson (North Down)

TEMPLETON ROBINSON

- **Other Public Land.** Land behind SERC Holywood, land beside Sullivan Upper school Limited, land in Glenlyon Park

**Land behind SERC Holywood**



Source: GIS Maps

This land was owned by the Education Authority and following discussions it had advised that the land was earmarked for the development of a new school. **Conclusion-not available.**

### Land beside Sullivan Upper School



Source: GIS Maps

This land was owned by Lesley Holywood Properties Limited and following a site visit the land was currently being developed for a new housing development.  
**Conclusion-no longer available.**

### Land in Glenlyon Park



Source: GIS Maps

This land was owned by Ards and North Down Borough Council and after visiting the site it was not considered that this would be suitable for an older children facility as it was quite enclosed with lots of trees, which could potentially increase the chance of anti-social behaviour. **Conclusion-not a suitable site.**

After research the conclusion was the following sites were the only options in Holywood to provide a play provision for older children:

- Ballymenoch Park
- Seapark
- Praegar's Field

### **Consultation with Schools**

The Councils Development Officer (Play and Recreation) contacted the local post primary schools to arrange for young people to complete an online survey about viable options. Each school was sent emails and contacted by telephone three times, to ask for support in completing the survey between August 2024 and January 2025. A visit was made to Sullivan Upper to deliver posters with a QR code link that the teachers could present to their classes.

The collective results from all school results are below:

- Responses received: **272**
- Preferred facility type: **Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) (44%)**
- Preferred location: **Seapark (55%)**

It would now need to be established if planning permission was required to deliver the facility. If it was deemed necessary, then a planning application could be submitted, and the facility would be delivered on completion of that process. If a planning application was not deemed necessary, the facility could be delivered during 2025/2026.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council proceed with the next steps to deliver a Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) at Seapark in Holywood.

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

Alderman McRandal thanked the officers for the report and appreciated the effort to obtain the level of responses gathered which provided a better steer on young people's preferences. He thought that ideally the provision should be located close to the town centre but accepted that the Seapark option was the best location at this time. He was happy to propose the recommendation and asked when it was envisaged that construction would take place and if a rain shelter for the young people could be provided. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries hoped that the park could be in place for April 2026 and that there were no plans for rain shelters at the moment but could be considered in the future if funding was available.

Seconding, Councillor Hollywood also welcomed this initiative and had always believed that a lot more could be delivered at Seapark when he compared it to

Loughshore on the northern side of the Lough. The area was an incredible asset to the Borough and he believed it should be maximised but this was a very good start.

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

## **20. CYCLE FRIENDLY BOROUGH UPDATE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by the Council in February 2023: "This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards and 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."

In June 2023 a report was brought to the Council outlining the elements that were in place or were currently in development, planned or being progressed that would contribute towards ensuring that a 'Cycling Friendly Borough' status could be declared and sustained. Business cases were submitted as part of the budget setting process in Autumn/Winter 2023 for the 2024/2025 Financial Year to support the delivery of the One Path Initiative and a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough. The One Path Initiative business case budget was held until the 2025/2026 Financial Year and the Cycling Masterplan budget had now also been approved for the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

The elements that would be developed that would contribute towards a Cycling Friendly Borough were as follows:

- a) The role of, and working with the Department of Infrastructure
- b) The proposed Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan
- c) Working with Sustrans, on its National Cycling Network and One Path Initiative
- d) The Councils Greenway network programme
- e) Cycle to Work Scheme
- f) Cycle Friendly Workplace Scheme

### **a) Department for Infrastructure (DFI)**

Dfi was statutorily responsible for promoting and improving road safety via education, licensing, and regulation of transportation. The Safe and Sustainable Travel Division aimed to promote improved road safety and deliver better regulation of the transport sector. The Division was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy. In addition, the Division had a role in promoting the use of alternative and sustainable modes of transport such as: walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.

DFI had developed a draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 which advocated partnership working to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries



on the roads network and to develop a safe and sustainable transport network that met the needs of all road users.

An annual programme of research and statistical investigations into road safety problems in Northern Ireland continued to be developed and implemented in partnership with road safety partner organisations. DfI had over the years delivered several 'Road Safety' Campaigns such as:

- Being a safe pedestrian
- Cycling
- Protective clothing
- Road safety for children under seven
- Road safety for 7 to 11 year olds
- Teenage Road Safety
- Share the Road to Zero

They also produced a plethora of other safety awareness information, and in relation to cycling the information available was as follows:

- Cycle Journeys
- Cycle Parking and Security
- Cycle Safety for Children
- Cycling Safety
- Cycling – getting started
- Electric bikes (electrically-assisted pedal cycles)
- The Benefits of Cycling
- Using cycle lanes and other cycling facilities safely

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme had been funded by DfI for over 50 years teaching children how to cycle safely as well as proposed Road Safety Campaigns. The impacts of the scheme were reviewed in a report in December 2024.

Council Officers met representatives from The Safe and Sustainable Travel Division regularly to ensure connectivity with proposed DfI cycle lanes, public transport links, etc and the Council's proposed Greenway Network. Council Officers had also been liaising with representatives from DfI and Atkins in relation to the development of their Active Travel Plan and Council would be submitting a response to the consultation that was currently running on that, as outlined in Item 3.

#### **b) Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan**

Council Officers were keen to pursue a 10-year cycling masterplan for the Borough and a business case to secure the budget for its development was submitted as part 2025/6 Estimates Process and had been successful. The Masterplan would be developed over this Financial Year and would provide the basis for a strategic approach to developing a network of key active travel routes.

Development of the plan would be done in the following stages:

**Stage 1:** Review of strategic policy documents and a review Audit of Active Travel initiatives, in the following way.

- **A review of Physical Measures:** Desk-based audit of initiatives at national, regional and local level. Map and evaluate routes to make recommendations on which active travel initiatives should be considered for delivery in the Borough, identifying delivery partners, target audiences and potential funding sources.
- **A review of Soft Measures:** Evaluation of the impact of the delivery of behavioural change and engagement projects.

**Stage 2:** Engagement with key council staff (E.g., Planning, Regeneration, Leisure, Parks, Community Development and Environmental Health) and DfI.

- Further activity that would contribute to the development of a cycling friendly Borough would include engagement with cycling groups and clubs, community interest groups and the general public as part of the development of the strategy.

**Stage 3: Drafting of the Cycling Masterplan**

Using the information gathered, the Masterplan could propose the following:

- A cycle and walking path typography of three categories of cycle and walking routes that linked to, expand and improve the existing NCN (National Cycle Network) and network of greenways across the borough: Segregated cycle routes (A routes), Quiet ways (B Routes), Off-Road Greenways (C Routes).
- A suite of other measures that would lead to transformative change across the Borough. Those would include junction improvements; pedestrianised areas and Bus and Cycle only streets; low traffic neighbourhoods; school streets; speed reduction measures; pedestrian priority measures; outline cycle parking and storage strategy; outline parking removal strategy; measures to activate public space, however it must be noted that some of that would be the remit of DfI to deliver.
- The masterplan would map infrastructure proposals at three levels of detail: 1 - ANDBC wide, 2 - Urban areas: Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and 3 - an overview of Smaller Settlements.

**Stage 4: Development of an Implementation Plan**

Production of an implementation and delivery plan for the Masterplan would identify for delivery;

- Priority routes considering cost, technical deliverability, such as landownership, political deliverability, connection to existing and proposed active travel initiatives, and anticipated benefit to the community.

- Indicative costings for projects, grouping those into short term 'quick wins', medium term projects, and longer term, more ambitious projects.

The rationale for developing a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough was clear and many current government strategies including transport, health and urban regeneration identified that cycling as a form of active travel could bring significant outcomes to people. Locally within the Borough active travel had a significant role to play in contributing to the outcomes identified in 'The Big Plan' and the Corporate Plan 'Towards a Sustainable Borough'.

### **c) Working with Sustrans**

#### **National Cycle Network**

Council regularly liaised with Sustrans, which was a charity that promoted walking and cycling. Sustrans consisted of engineers, educators and industry experts. It created the National Cycle Network, and as custodians, it is their role to care for it, improve it and champion a long-term vision for its future. The NCN had provided for nearly 30 million trips per year in Northern Ireland; two-thirds of which were cyclists. According to pre-pandemic data, across the UK, leisure and tourist cyclists and walkers on the National Cycle Network spent an estimated £2.5 billion annually in local businesses.

Following a UK-wide assessment of the quality of the Network in 2018, they produced a report entitled 'Paths for Everyone' with a vision for traffic-free, accessible routes by 2040. It aligned with the Department for Infrastructure's own 'Strategic Plan for Greenways' which earmarked £150M to create new traffic free routes connecting communities across Northern Ireland. To meet the new vision, 80% of the NCN in Northern Ireland was reclassified and a further 6% removed in July 2020. In summary:

Where a route was removed from the Network but was of importance to local tourism and of a significant distance and scale, it would be reclassified as a named strategic route e.g., Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

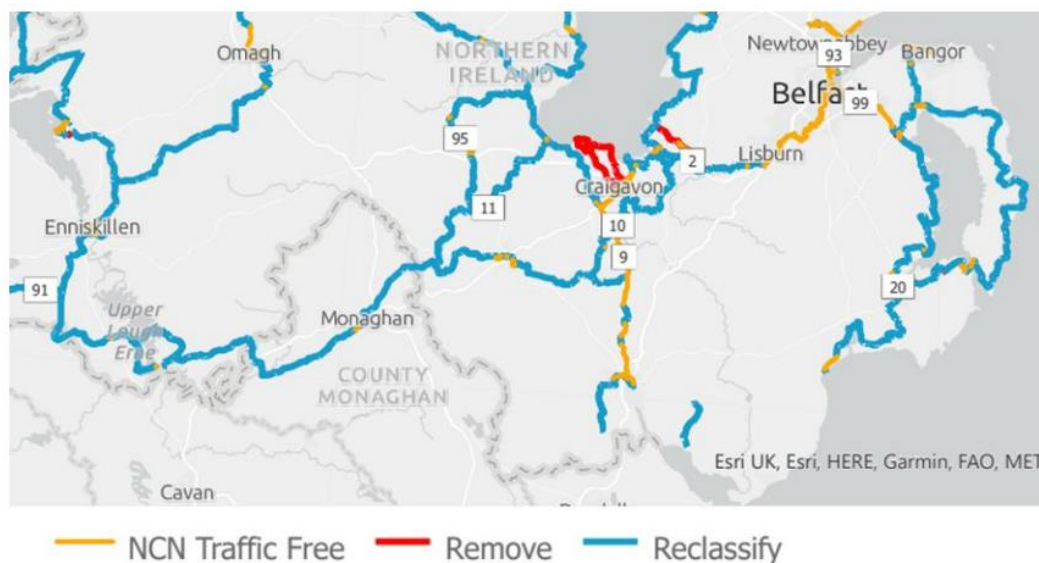
In the long-term, Sustrans' aim was to re-route on-road parts of the NCN to new traffic free sections or create new protected infrastructure.

In Ards and North Down Borough Council no routes were removed, but three NCN/RCN (Regional Cycle Network) routes were affected by the changes as followed:

- RCN Route 20, from Whiterock to Comber along Strangford Lough, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.
- NCN Route 93, from Newtownards to Bangor (which included the North Down Coastal Path, this section, as an off-road trail, would remain part of Route 93) the remaining sections would now be known as: North Down, Bangor to Newtownards.
- NCN Route 99, from Portaferry to Comber via Newtownards, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

As they were all largely on-road, those had all been reclassified and geared towards and adult audience and would be referred to as their local, familiar name.

It was the aim of Sustrans, following the Review, to re-invigorate the network in Northern Ireland and work with Councils and other partners to invest in a network that brought business to rural areas as well as giving people an opportunity to travel actively. Also, it would create a safer, more consistent user experience, manage user expectations and allow people to make an informed choice when using different routes on and off the Network.



### One Path Initiative

As the amount of people walking and cycling in public spaces and on multi use paths had increased over the years, so too had the interactions between those users and in some cases those were negative. Sustrans had in recent years received a significant increase in contact from local Councils, members of the public and community groups about concerns relating to the behaviour of some path users and requesting support and guidance about how to manage the issue. Most of the conflicts being reported were occurring between different types of users for example, dog walkers complaining about cyclists or cyclists complaining about joggers and so on.

As managers of many public spaces and multi-use paths, it was incumbent on the Council to try to respond to those complaints. The danger was however that a response such as imposing speed limits, segregation of paths or adding signage outlining a list of rules impeded one group of users and left them feeling targeted causing further tensions between user groups.

The approach of 'The One Path Initiative' was to discuss and understand the issues people faced when using shared paths and to collaboratively develop ways which helped people to better share the space. By participating in that process, people would feel more invested in their local space, understand other users' experiences,

feel more connected to their community, and it would create a positive atmosphere. The ethos behind the One Path Initiative was 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

That would be a two-year initiative, helping users of shared spaces understand and respect how other users enjoyed the space as follows:

**Stage 1:** An audit and analysis of issues

**Stage 2:** Development of a creative engagement programme

**Stage 3:** Embedding the One Path ethos, 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

In the first year the project provided for engagement with a variety of user groups through a series of focus group sessions e.g. with running groups, walking groups, cycling clubs, dog walker groups, local community groups, statutory bodies and so on. That was followed in the second year by on path animation events to engage users in conversations about messaging and how they and others could safely use the path together without the need for restrictive codes of conduct and lists of dos and don'ts – the initiative helped path users understand each other's' perspectives and that the simple message of 'Share, Respect, Enjoy' was applicable to all.

At the end of the two-year programme a One Path festival would be held along a shared space giving the various user group representatives opportunity to highlight their own work by running engagement events then and thereafter.

Given the progression of the Comber-Newtownards-Green Road Greenway project, it would be timely to deliver the One Path Initiative in 2025 and the budget for that had been confirmed.

### **Greenways**

In January 2023, the Council scaled back its greenway plans for the Borough, but was still progressing with the following:

#### **a) Comber to Floodgates Park, Newtownards**

Planning Ref LA06/2019/0308/F – Permission Granted 10/01/2025. The A21 section was omitted and a sperate planning application would be submitted to cover that section in consultation with Dfl. Discharge of planning conditions would be progressed and the progression of land acquisitions etc.

#### **b) Floodgates Park to Londonderry Park, Newtownards**

Planning Ref LA06/2019/0544/F - Permission Granted 02/09/2021. Construction work was underway on this section of the greenway.

#### **c) Belvedere Road, Newtownards to Somme Heritage Centre**

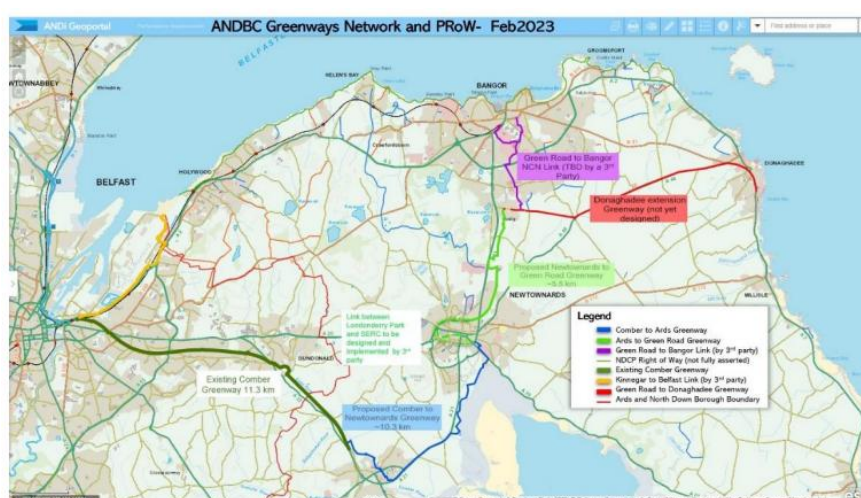
Planning Ref LA06/2020/0940/F - Permission Granted 01/09/2022, construction work was underway on that section of the greenway.

#### d) Somme Heritage Centre to Green Road, Bangor

Planning ref LA06/2021/0885/F – Permission Granted 09/10/2024, construction work was underway on that section of the greenway.

In relation to the Council's alternative decision concerning the abandoned Kinnegar to Donaghadee route, a Working Group had now been established to address connectivity, accessibility and maintenance issues along the North Down Coastal Path and that work was ongoing.

The Borough already had a greenway route; the Comber Greenway, connecting Comber to the centre of Belfast, that was Northern Ireland's first greenway, created in 2008. A map of the greenway routes was shown below



All external and internal funding had been secured for those schemes, with the Council responsible for approximately 15% of the overall capital costs.

#### Cycle to Work Scheme

Cycling was a “Be Active” step in the “Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing” health message supported by the Council through the Employee Health and Wellbeing Group and various Community Planning projects. Employees were therefore encouraged to cycle and had been supported through the Council's Cycle to Work Scheme – one of our advertised employee benefits packages designed to attract and retain staff. That scheme allowed employees and Members to purchase a bike through a salary sacrifice scheme and as the costs were deducted before tax and National Insurance contribution, it represented a 12.5% saving on each purchase value for the Council and 32% - 42% saving for the purchaser depending on tax bracket. The scheme was temporarily closed over Covid but had now been reintroduced.

Through the Cycle to Work scheme, staff and Members could in purchasing a bike have the opportunity to become fitter, healthier, more energetic and focused at work and would also save money in using a bicycle rather than a car for journeys related to work and outside of work, and reduce carbon emissions.

### **Cycle Friendly Workplace Scheme**

As part of the Council's commitment to becoming a Cycle Friendly Borough, Officers were exploring opportunities for the Council to become a Cycle Friendly Employer. Preliminary discussions had taken place with the accreditation body, Cycling UK.

The Health and Wellbeing Team was working closely with other Council departments to progress the first stage of that process which included undertaking a survey to provide better information regarding the extent of measures needed and may identify quick wins to support the existing Employees Cycle Schemes such as the Cycle to Work Scheme. A small budget had been approved in the 2025/26 estimates to progress the accreditation and improve facilities.

Once the outlined recommendations had been progressed a further report would be brought back to advise on when the status of a cycling friendly Borough could be declared.

RECOMMENDED that the Council:

1. Notes the above areas of activity and how they will contribute to the delivery and sustaining of a Cycling Friendly Borough.
2. Seeks to advocate the Assembly's adoption of the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 and ensure there is sufficient budget is made available to continue to deliver the Cycling Proficiency Tests and the wider Safety Campaigns within the Northern Ireland Government.
3. Officers continue with the delivery of a 'Cycling Masterplan for the Borough' and the 'One Path Initiative'.
4. Officers continue to meet and engage with Sustrans, the Safe and Sustainable Transport Division of DFI to further promote safe cycling and active travel.
5. Officers continue with the delivery of the greenways and the proposed improvements to the North Down Coastal Path
6. Continues to recognise the value of continuing with its Cycle to Work scheme.
7. Officers continue to work towards a Cycle Friendly Workplace Accreditation.

McRandal asked to make an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor Moore:

That the recommendation be adopted but with point 4 changed to read:

Officers continue to meet and engage with the Department for Infrastructure's Safe and Sustainable Transport Division and its new Active Travel Team, local stakeholders (particularly cycling campaign groups and clubs), and Sustrans to further promote safe cycling and active travel.

Alderman McRandal was pleased to see the report coming forward informing the Committee that it stemmed from a Motion brought by his colleagues and acknowledged that there was still a long way to go before the Borough was truly cycle friendly. He was pleased that the Masterplan budget had been increased and

it was important that the Council engaged effectively with local stakeholders. He hoped that the Committee would give it support.

Councillor Moore supported the broad consultation and accepted that it was important to engage with stakeholders to support and increase cycling within the Borough. She was aware that the Ards Chamber of Commerce had noted with a certain amount of jealousy the benefits the Greenway had brought to Comber and they hoped to see it extended to Newtownards.

Councillor W Irvine was also happy to give it his support and referred to the cycle paths in place already which had a lot of parked cars on them. He hoped that there could be legislation put in place to enforce no parking on those places.

Councillor McClean agreed and praised the excellent Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign Group and was happy to support the recommendation and amendment.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted but with point 4 amended to read: Officers continue to meet and engage with the Department for Infrastructure's Safe and Sustainable Transport Division and its new Active Travel Team, local stakeholders (particularly cycling campaign groups and clubs), and Sustrans to further promote safe cycling and active travel.**

## **21. COMMUNITY RESUSCITATION GROUP**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Community Resuscitation Group workstream arose from the priority in The Big Plan (the community plan) "to create a community of lifesavers across Ards and North Down". Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) was the Lead Partner with other partners including ANDBC (secretariat and Chair), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), Chambers of Commerce, Ards Peninsula First Responders Scheme, Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI), Sport NI and representatives from the community and voluntary sector.

The Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland was launched in July 2014 with a vision to increase the survival rate for those who suffered an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, to the highest level that could be achieved across Northern Ireland. The workstream had progressed well and started to implement an agreed Action Plan, but work was paused because of Covid and resource pressures within NIAS. The workstream resumed in 2023.

### **Workstream Update**

The workstream met in January and September 2023, and modest progress was made in reinvigorating the group post Covid. In 2024 a new NIAS Community Resuscitation (CR) Lead was appointed alongside a designated support team to cover all Northern Ireland. A CRG meeting was held in May and October, and commitment given to update the Terms of Reference and review and update the Action Plan, which covered the following areas:



- Education (mainly schools)
- Community
- Community First Responder Schemes
- Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)
- Business
- Communication

It was agreed in 2024 that this workstream group would prioritise:

- Re-establishing the networks of community lifesavers to strengthen the chain of survival.
- Developing Ards and North Down protocol for the location and maintenance of AEDs (defibrillators).
- Providing CPR training to local organisations.
- Promoting Restart a Heart Campaign in October through sharing social media posts.

In 2024 the following were actioned:

- The NIAS CR Lead and ANDBC Health and Wellbeing (H&W) leads worked over the summer months to review the existing actions, agree future plans and update timelines. The **new Action Plan** was presented for sign off by the CR Group October 2024. Priorities in the new Action Plan included:
  - Re-engagement with schools to continue the **“train the trainer”** programme for teachers to cascade CPR training to classes
  - Consideration of similar “train the trainer” schemes in the community
  - **Support for the First Responder Schemes** including a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary recognition event in 2025 which, with their agreement was planned for March 2025. It should be noted that Ards First Responders (AFRs) were highly qualified volunteers who agreed to attend first aid emergencies and deliver first aid, including CPR, whilst waiting for ambulances to arrive. The work had saved many lives, particularly on the Peninsula where it could take longer for an ambulance to reach the patient, and every minute of delay for treatment in a cardiac arrest was a 10% reduction in the chances of survival. AFRs had attended over 700 incidents in the last 3 years
  - The development of an **AED protocol** to assist with identifying and siting suitable locations
  - Re-engagement with the **Business Community** through the Chambers of Commerce/Trade associations, etc
- Work was also undertaken to update the terms of reference for the group and to reach out to other potential members.
- A draft AED protocol was prepared with the expectation of being agreed by the group in January 2025, as one of the priorities in the Action Plan. That considered the siting, provision and maintenance of Council AEDs alongside guidance for community groups and other interested parties who may wish to provide AEDs on Council property or public spaces. Once finalised and

agreed by the CRG, the document would be brought to the Council for noting.

- As part of their routine work visiting premises to monitor the smoke free and tobacco/vaping control work, Council Tobacco Control Officers were checking if premises had an AED and if so, queried if they were registered on the circuit. They provided an information leaflet to premises that were not registered. In the last 12 months 70 premises had AEDs and 62 (89%) were registered on the circuit. The remaining 8 premises were encouraged to register.
- A campaign to encourage householders and business premises to display their street number to make it easier for emergency services - Every Second Counts: Display Numbers on Your Doors. In the summer of 2024 press releases and social media posts were launched with this message to ensure houses and premises were numbered and clearly visible from the road, to make it easier for emergency services to identify their location, otherwise responders to 999 calls could lose valuable time, leading to potential life-threatening delays.

There was good coverage of the campaign in local newspapers and on social media. The Council website also hosted the news and photos, and press releases were provided to the emergency services partners so that they could also share the campaign message. It was intended to re-visit that message on a regular basis.

Such was the success of the campaign that it was agreed to consider ways to keep this important message in the public eye, with ideas such as each partner taking it in turns to lead on the message every few months, and providing leaflets/posters to local businesses that sold house signs.

- Work was also underway to develop a communication plan amongst all the partners to ensure that key messages were regularly placed in the public domain. Of particular importance was the Chain of Survival (below) so that the focus was recognising a cardiac arrest, calling 999 and starting CPR. AEDs were an important step but were not the first priority which was why it was so important that the right messages were communicated.



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and supports the work of the Community Resuscitation Group, and in particular the work of the Ards Peninsula First Responders group as they celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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

It gave Alderman Adair great pleasure to support the recommendation and he referred to the life-saving volunteering of the group and how they went out of their way to assist people facing serious health risks. He explained that this was a group of volunteers who did not receive funding. The reality was that for many residents living on the Peninsula they faced a 45 minutes wait for an ambulance and for conditions like heart attack or stroke time with critical. The group had saved many lives on the Peninsula and he did not believe that the community could thrive without their vital work. The Council had lobbied for an ambulance station on the Peninsula without success and this group was filling that void.

Councillor Boyle was in agreement and thanked Alderman Adair for his comments and remembered championing the cause. He informed the Committee that the reality was of long waiting times for ambulances and in fact Portaferry had the longest wait time for an ambulance in Northern Ireland. A group like the First Responders was vital and the group did tremendous work. It was critically important that the Council support them and recognise what they did for the area. He wished them all the very best for the coming ten years.

The Chair (Alderman Brooks) was in agreement and stated that the First Responders were one of his nominated charities when he was Mayor and he praised them for the life-saving work they provided on the Peninsula.

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

## **22. TRANSFER OF LANDLORD REGISTRATION SCHEME TO LOCAL COUNCILS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in 2023, SOLACE considered a report from the Department for Communities outlining the benefits of transferring the functions of Landlord Registration Scheme to local Councils. In March 2023, it was agreed that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) would act as the lead Council in the preparation for and transfer of the functions under the Landlord Registration Scheme within Northern Ireland. LCCC would administer the scheme.

Landlord Registration was introduced through '*The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014*' to create a single database of landlords who rented within the Private Rented Sector.

The Scheme was currently managed by a Landlord Registrar and small team that sat within the Department for Communities.

Local councils had enforcement powers to act against non-compliant landlords.

In September 2023, a Programme Board was established to oversee the delivery of the project with representatives from DfC, LCCC and an independent SOLACE representative to oversee the transfer of those functions from DfC to local councils by March 2025.

Engagement had been ongoing with Councils and other stakeholders throughout the lifetime of this project including various all councils' groups such as Environmental Health NI (EHNI), IT officers', Head of Communications and Information Governance groups. Other stakeholders had included landlords, agents, tenants, DfC, PropertyPal and those who had contracts with the current scheme.

The scheme operated on a cost neutral basis with all services offered by this scheme being funded from the landlord registration fee only.

The purpose of the report was to provide a final update as the project neared completion.

### **New Website and Registration Portal**

Following an open procurement exercise conducted by LCCC in March 2024, an IT software company was awarded the contract for the build and management of a new dedicated website and registration portal. Currently, the system was going through the User Acceptance Testing stage which once finalised in early February would allow the data stored on the current system to be migrated over.

The transfer of the landlord registration functions to local councils would occur on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025 with a 'go live' date for the new system on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025. That would see the completion of Phase 1. Phase 2 would commence shortly after that date with all additional functionality completed by June 2025.

Full training, including user guides for future employees who would access the database, would be provided to all councils and other users to maximise the benefits of the new system.

### **Appointment of New Landlord Registration Team**

A recruitment exercise for a new landlord registration team was completed in 2024 and a team of three positions had now been filled, including the appointment of a new Landlord Registrar.

The team was funded wholly from the income received from the landlord fee with no cost to any Council.

### **Communications Plan**

The Department for Communities had developed an advertising campaign as part of a wider communications plan associated with the transfer of functions. That included radio and social media advertisements that would go live from February 2025. Those advertisements would focus on the need of any landlords within the private rented sector to register with the scheme with updates being provided by email or letter to those already registered about the changes. Post-transfer any campaigns would be led by the Landlord Registrar and shared with all other Councils for their social media channels.

### **Governance Structures Post Transfer**

The Programme Board would formally be asked to consider a MOU, a new operations model and a timeline for regulation change. Those documents were being proposed by the Department for Communities at its meeting in January 2025. Those documents provided clarity to the Council on the governance structures for the scheme post transfer and proposed how the Landlord Registration Scheme could become more meaningful to councils and landlords in the long term.

### **Finance and Resource Implications**

There was no financial implication to any Council. All funding for the project to date had been funded by the Department for Communities. Post transfer of functions, all staffing costs, contracts and future initiatives would be funded through the registration fee. There would be no cost to any Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor W Irvine happy to read this report noticing that often when functions were transferred to the Council from central government the funds did not always come along too. He recognised that the process would be more efficient and less bureaucratic. In response to a query, the Head of Environmental Health Protection and Development confirmed that there would be no operational impact on the officers based at Ards and North Down.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **23. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that on the 26<sup>th</sup> of 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. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2024/2025 revenue budget for that 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 surplus being sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

During December 2024, the Forum received a total of 6 applications: 1 Goldcard and 5 Individual Travel Accommodation Grants. A summary of the 4 successful applications was detailed in the attached Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation Appendix.

<b>2024/25 Budget £45,000</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Proposed Funding Awarded December 2024</b>	<b>Remaining Budget</b>
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	<b>-£1,999.90</b>
Coach Education	£3,000	£0	<b>£1,195.00</b>
Equipment	£14,000	£0	<b>*-£5,012.41</b>
Events	£6,000	£0	<b>£869.46</b>
Seeding	£500	£0	<b>£500</b>
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£420	<b>*-£5,735.07</b>
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	<b>£1,000</b>
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	<b>£4,570</b>
<b>0 Goldcards Awarded in December (46 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)</b>			

\*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£5,012.41** was based on withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£277**.

\*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£5,735.07** was based on a proposed award this month of **£420** and withdrawn costs of **£150**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 was **-£4,612.92** (110% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDED that the Council note this report. The report outlined December grants that had been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum. That was in line with the Council's Grant Policy effective from 5 December 2024.

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

Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the excellent work carried out within the Council. There were clearly more applications than funding available and he hoped that that could be increased going forward. He was pleased to see the surplus sourced from the Ards Blair Mayne leisure centre and thought the position was one of win win.

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

## **24. FUTURE CEMETERIES PROVISION UPDATE**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing the purpose of the report was to update Elected Members on the Future Cemeteries Provision project and development of additional facilities to provide ongoing cemetery provision for the Borough for the next 30 to 40 years.

There were currently twelve active cemeteries within the Borough. Movilla and Redburn had a capacity of approximately two years, with a further three cemeteries (Greyabbey, Clandeboye and Ballyvester) expected to be at capacity in less than ten years. The Council had a statutory duty to provide public burial grounds sufficient to the present and future needs of the Borough.

To preserve supply of burial space and ensure immediate demand could be met, only five of the twelve cemeteries currently had new graves available to pre-purchase, with the remaining seven cemeteries only having capacity for burials to take place in existing graves, or in graves only available to purchase at the time of interment.

An initial phase one sift of 21 potential sites was undertaken by AECOM in 2019. That resulted in a recommendation on a strategic direction which was to develop two green field out of settlement sites rather than extend existing cemetery sites. However, the strategy was not approved by the Council.

Additional feasibility study was carried out by Cavenagh Kelly in 2021 identifying further options. Those included: extending Movilla and Clandeboye, developing a new facility in the Holywood Hills; developing existing ground at Ballyvester and Greyabbey and investigate land at Kinnegar. Of the above, investigation work at Clandeboye, Kinnegar, and the Holywood Hills and, by giving due consideration to relevant planning policy, indicated that the sites were not viable. In addition, development works at both Greyabbey and Ballyvester were facilitated by the in-house Cemeteries team and had been successfully concluded.

Following that review and a further Council decision in December 2022 it was agreed to appoint a specialist to update the Outline Business Cases for Extending Movilla Cemetery, and, identify one of the following locations for a combined site to service the Holywood, Bangor, Ards and Comber areas. Those were; Conlig, Six Road Ends, and extending Loughview Cemetery in Comber. A draft OBC was produced by December 2023.

### **1. Extending Movilla Cemetery using Council owned land.**

In February and March 2024, the Council owned land adjacent to Movilla Cemetery was cleared of scrub to facilitate test digs and surveys for a proposed planning application. The test digs were positive and confirmed that the location was suitable for burial space. As the land was currently zoned for housing, planning was required for a change of use. To progress a change of use, the Council had sought AECOM's assistance to complete drawings and maps including proposed levels and locations for new grave sections. Over the Summer and Autumn period several surveys had been carried out to inform the proposed planning application. Completed surveys had been submitted by AECOM and reviewed by the Council's Planning Consultant in November 2024. The Consultant had advised that further monitoring for a minimum of six-months was required at the site to monitor the natural ground water table. An application to planning for change of use was being proposed for March 2025. The Council's consultants were finalising the Outline Business Case for the proposal, which would be brought to the Council in the near future.

## **2. New Cemetery Site**

(Conlig; Six Road Ends; or extending Loughview Cemetery in Comber)

The Council's appointed consultants were finalising the Outline Business Case for the proposal. To help inform that, test digs were currently being planned at four sites within some of the above locations. It was hoped to conclude those tests by Spring 2025. In addition, an advertisement in local newspapers had been published and local landowners and estate agents had been contacted, seeking expressions of interest from landowners who individually or jointly were in a position to offer circa. 14 hectares of land for consideration as a suitable site for a new Cemetery site or sites which it required to enable it to accommodate the need for burial spaces within the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the above and progress made to date.

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

Alderman McRandal welcomed the report but always read it with a sense of dread that cemetery provision at Redburn had only two years remaining and he asked if any more space could be sourced at that site and what the provision would be for Holywood residents in the future. He also asked when a new cemetery was likely to be established. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that there were only two years left at Redburn for new graves and after that new grave burials could only take place in other Council cemeteries where there remained ample space. Existing graves at Redburn could continue to be used until they were full. He said it was unlikely that a new cemetery would be created before that time because sourcing suitable land had been a difficult process. Holywood residents would need to consider alternative cemeteries within the Borough.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **25. TREE ASSET VALUATION**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report and attachment outlined the findings of the Council's first Tree Asset Valuation, an analysis commissioned by Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2024 to assess the value, composition, and benefits of the Borough's tree population. The findings of this report would directly benefit the delivery of the Council Tree and Woodland Strategy. It served as a crucial tool for understanding the ecological, financial, and community benefits provided by the Council's managed trees. It set a baseline for enhancing urban canopy cover and aligned with the Council's Roadmap to Sustainability, Climate Adaptation Plan and Tree and Woodland Strategy.

The report examined over 10,700 trees across the parks and open spaces (approximately 70% of Council owned trees), analysing their contribution to



ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, pollution removal, and water runoff reduction. It also evaluated the monetary value of those trees, providing essential insights to inform future policies, planting strategies, and community engagement efforts. Additionally, this document identified opportunities for increasing urban tree canopy coverage by highlighting areas where additional trees could be planted to maximize benefits for residents and the environment.

### 1. Overview of the Tree Asset Valuation Report

The attached Tree Asset Valuation Report provided an in-depth analysis of the tree population managed by Ards and North Down Borough Council. The report was commissioned to evaluate the composition, distribution, and ecosystem benefits of the Council's trees, as well as their structural and amenity value. The assessment formed part of the Council's 'Tree and Woodland Strategy,' supporting sustainability goals and informing long-term tree management strategies.

The report recorded over 10,700 trees across public parks and open spaces within the Borough, representing 151 species. Key metrics such as carbon storage, pollution removal, avoided water runoff, and replacement costs were analysed. The data underpinned the strategic value of trees in mitigating climate change, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing public well-being.

### 2. Key Findings

#### Tree Population and Diversity

- **Population:** 10,700 trees over 7cm DBH were recorded, encompassing 151 species.
- **Diversity:** The most common species were Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), and Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), collectively accounting for 31.3% of the population. The population's diversity indicated resilience to pests, diseases, and climate change.
- **Distribution:** 60.7% of the trees were in the Bangor area, with significant populations also in Holywood and Newtownards.

#### Ecosystem Services

- **Carbon Storage:** The trees reviewed stored 7,690 tonnes of carbon, valued at £7.6 million, with an annual sequestration (process of storing carbon) of 143 tonnes, £141,000.
- **Air Pollution Removal:** 1,620 kg of pollutants (NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, PM2.5) were removed annually, worth £47,200.
- **Avoided Surface Runoff:** Trees intercepted 1,200 m<sup>3</sup> of water annually, saving £2,700 in drainage costs.
- **Leaf Area:** The total canopy leaf area spanned 424 hectares, underscoring trees' significant role in providing ecosystem services.

#### Asset Value

- **Replacement Cost:** The estimated cost to replace the tree population was £25 million.
- **Amenity Value:** The trees' amenity value, was £277 million. Castle Park Bangor's trees alone had an amenity value of £97.9 million.

### 3. Recommendations for Enhancing Urban Tree Canopy

#### Strategic Expansion Areas

The report identified urban parks and spaces with low canopy coverage as priority areas for planting new trees. For example, Newtownards, with only 694 trees across its parks, offered significant potential for increasing tree density. Similarly, smaller parks such as Pickie Park and Bloomfield Playing Fields, with less than 1% of the total population, could benefit from targeted tree planting programmes. By addressing those gaps, the Council could work towards a more equitable distribution of tree benefits across the Borough.

#### Increasing Urban Tree Canopy Benefits

Urban tree canopy directly improved environmental, social, and economic conditions. Trees provided shade, reducing urban heat islands and plus canopy cover enhanced air quality by filtering pollutants, reduced noise pollution, and mitigated stormwater runoff. Socially, a robust urban canopy improved mental well-being, promoted outdoor activity, and increased property values in greener neighbourhoods. Enhanced canopy cover also supported biodiversity by providing habitats for wildlife. Strategically planted trees in urban centres could create green corridors, connecting fragmented habitats and supporting migratory species.

Identifying and planting in areas with insufficient canopy cover was essential for those ecological benefits.

#### Species Selection and Diversity

The Council was encouraged to prioritise diverse and climate-resilient species in new planting initiatives. By selecting species that were tolerant of urban stressors, such as poor soil quality and limited water availability, the urban tree canopy could become more resilient to climate change and pests. Increasing genetic diversity would also reduce reliance on a few dominant species and mitigate risks associated with monocultures.

#### Community Involvement

Engaging residents in tree planting and maintenance could foster a sense of ownership and ensure the long-term success of new plantings. Public awareness campaigns highlighted the benefits of urban trees and could inspire community participation and support for Council initiatives.

#### Alignment with the Sustainability Roadmap

The Tree Asset Valuation Report served as a foundational document supporting the Council's Sustainability Roadmap. By providing baseline data on tree population, diversity, and ecosystem services, the report allowed the Council to measure progress in enhancing urban canopy cover and achieving climate resilience.

Key contributions included:

- **Baseline Metrics:** The report established quantifiable benchmarks for carbon sequestration, pollution removal, and water runoff management. Those

figures could guide future initiatives aimed at increasing tree canopy coverage.

- **Strategic Planning:** Insights from the report informed long-term planting schemes and species selection, ensuring alignment with sustainability goals and climate adaptation strategies.
- **Urban Heat Island Mitigation:** Increasing tree canopy in identified urban heat zones could significantly reduce temperatures and improve living conditions for residents.
- **Public Engagement:** The findings provided a platform for engaging communities on the importance of urban forestry.

The findings highlighted the immense value of Ards and North Down's tree population in terms of ecological benefits, monetary valuation, and community well-being. The data-driven insights provided in the report could guide Council policies and strategies to maintain and enhance the urban forest, ensuring it continued to deliver vital ecosystem services for future generations. Additionally, the report provided the Council with essential baseline metrics to monitor and improve canopy cover, directly contributing to the broader Roadmap to Sustainability and Climate Adaptation Plan.

By identifying areas with low canopy coverage and providing actionable recommendations, the report empowered the Council to strategically increase urban tree density. That effort not only addresses environmental challenges but also enhanced the quality of life for the Borough's residents, creating greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

Members were asked to note the Tree Asset Valuation Report was compiled before the Storm Eowyn, which brought down and damaged a significant number of trees across the Borough. Although sadly many mature trees had fallen, it has not had a significant impact on overall tree canopy within the Borough and the principles and recommended way forward as outlined in the report remain.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Moore welcomed the report which contained some interesting information, particularly quantifying the value of trees to the Borough which was hugely important. She thought that that would be valuable information to communicate to residents and asked about the methodology used and was it consistent across the country. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that at the back of the document it was noted that CAVAT (Capital Asset Value of Amenity Trees) had been developed by the London Tree Officers Association and was regarded as the principal method of tree evaluation in the United Kingdom. It was about seeing trees as public assets and was measured consistently by Councils across the country.

Councillor McClean seconded the recommendation and noted that the Woodland Trust had been delighted and he was pleased to see that this had been carried out as a stock take of the Borough's trees.

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the report coming forward and noted the substantial damage to trees in the recent storm. He asked for an update on the position at Whitespots and Cairn Wood. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries remarked there had been substantial damage in these woods but the tree canopy had not been significantly impacted. Members were advised that some trees at Castle Park were deteriorating and that provided an opportunity to plant new trees.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **26. COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL DECEMBER 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Community & Wellbeing Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covered the 9-month period 1 April to 31 December 2024. The net cost of the Directorate was showing an underspend of £1,451k (15.7%) – box A on page 3.

### **Explanation of Variance**

Community & Wellbeing's budget performance was further analysed on page 4 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£611k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£122k favourable	3
Report 4	Income	£718k favourable	3

### **Explanation of Variance**

The Community and Wellbeing Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £15k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(611)	Payroll underspends throughout the Directorate mainly due to vacant posts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Health (£186k).</li> <li>• Community &amp; Culture (£136k).</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Cemeteries (£98k).</li> <li>• Leisure (£191k).</li> </ul>

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
<b>Goods &amp; Services</b>		
Environmental Health	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal case which involved a judicial review.</li> </ul>
Leisure	(106)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributions for Football Development (£14k), Leisure Insourcing (£26k), Aurora LOI (£13k) plus range of small underspends within Leisure</li> </ul>
Community & Culture	(54)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small underspends within: -</li> <li>Community Development (£19k)</li> <li>Arts and Museums (£34k)</li> </ul>
<b>Income</b>		
Parks & Cemeteries	(112)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cemeteries income (£82k)</li> <li>Franchise income (£17k)</li> <li>Memorial Benches (£17k)</li> </ul>
Community & Culture	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Externally Funded Programs (£35k) and Arts &amp; Museums (£13k) – offset by underspends in payroll and goods &amp; services.</li> </ul>
Environmental Health	(16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noise, PPC and H&amp;S income</li> </ul>
Leisure	(637)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure Centres &amp; Londonderry Park – (£299k)</li> <li>NCLT Contract – (£255k) – not budgeted</li> <li>Community Centres – (£44k).</li> </ul>

<b>REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT</b>					
<b>Period 9 - December 2024</b>					
	<b>Year to Date Actual</b>	<b>Year to Date Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing</b>					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	172,312	165,300	7,012	221,000	4.2
110 Environmental Health	1,661,776	1,831,800	(170,024)	2,333,500	(9.3)
120 Community and Culture	1,787,583	1,930,600	(143,017)	2,529,800	(7.4)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	3,442,347	3,652,400	(210,053)	5,246,800	(5.8)
150 Leisure Services	705,816	1,640,600	(934,784)	2,567,300	(57.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,769,834</b>	<b>9,220,700</b>	<b>A (1,450,866)</b>	<b>12,898,400</b>	<b>(15.7)</b>
<b>REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing - Payroll</b>					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	130,895	130,800	95	174,300	0.1
110 Environmental Health	1,838,750	2,025,100	(186,350)	2,692,500	(9.2)
120 Community and Culture	1,313,742	1,449,800	(136,058)	1,946,800	(9.4)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	3,003,935	3,101,800	(97,865)	4,142,900	(3.2)
150 Leisure	3,659,410	3,850,300	(190,890)	5,225,900	(5.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,946,732</b>	<b>10,557,800</b>	<b>(611,068)</b>	<b>14,182,400</b>	<b>(5.8)</b>
<b>REPORT 3 GOODS &amp; SERVICES REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing - Goods &amp; Services</b>					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	43,055	36,200	6,855	48,400	18.9
110 Environmental Health	202,498	170,600	31,898	290,700	18.7
120 Community and Culture	922,686	976,500	(53,814)	1,859,400	(5.5)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	975,983	976,400	(417)	1,632,600	(0.0)
150 Leisure	406,329	512,800	(106,471)	1,008,100	(20.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,550,550</b>	<b>2,672,500</b>	<b>(121,950)</b>	<b>4,839,200</b>	<b>(4.6)</b>
<b>REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT</b>					
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing - Income</b>					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	(1,638)	(1,700)	62	(1,700)	3.7
110 Environmental Health	(379,472)	(363,900)	(15,572)	(649,700)	(4.3)
120 Community and Culture	(448,845)	(495,700)	46,855	(1,276,400)	9.5
140 Parks & Cemeteries	(537,570)	(425,800)	(111,770)	(528,700)	(26.2)
150 Leisure	(3,359,923)	(2,722,500)	(637,423)	(3,666,700)	(23.4)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(4,727,448)</b>	<b>(4,009,600)</b>	<b>(717,848)</b>	<b>(6,123,200)</b>	<b>(17.9)</b>

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Alderman McRandal referred to variances within the budget and there was significantly more income than what had been budgeted for and he asked how that had come about. The Head of Leisure Services said that he could not comment on the NCLT side but the Council had reported significant success in attracting customers in to leisure sites. There had been significant staff transformation and growth in swimming lessons being provided and increased use of the fitness suite.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **27. HARDSHIP FUNDING 2024-2025**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that at the Council meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024 it was agreed that the Council writes to the Department for Communities to highlight disappointment at its failure to provide Hardship Funding this financial year.

Furthermore, that Council asks the Department for Communities to commit to use funding in future monitoring rounds to provide hardship funding in 2024-2025. A letter was sent to that effect on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

A response dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024 was received from Colum Boyle, Permanent Secretary of Department for Communities, stating that due to the financial constraints on the Department's budget the Department was currently unable to provide any hardship funding for 2024-2025, and due to the continuing uncertainty in funding, it would not be possible to consider a recurrent funding model at this time.

At the October Council meeting, the Council agreed to write again to the Department in response, expressing disappointment to that response making it clear that the ask was for DFC to commit to seeking funding in future monitoring rounds should funding become available during 2024-25, to provide hardship funding. A response to that letter was received in December and was attached for Member's information.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Adair stated that while this was not a positive response it was one of the pressing issues and the withdrawal of the Winter fuel payment had plunged many people into poverty. He commended the Minister of Communities for making available £100 to help those in Northern Ireland and while that was welcome it was unfortunate that the full amount could not be given.

Seconding, Councillor W Irvine believed that the hardship funding had been very well received by the groups and he hoped the full amount would be provided in the coming financial year.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **28. NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **28.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Mcllveen 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.

Proposed by Alderman Mcllveen, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Mcllveen began by circulating photographs of the children's play park at Bowtown which showed the topography of the site, the play surfaces, the condition, age and types of play equipment there. The surface was sloped in places and there were grass surfaces which were soggy in wet weather, an old style roundabout, a basketball ring in the centre of the grass, toddler swings and only one piece of accessible equipment which was an old metal framed swing. The area was not accessible for wheelchairs or for buggies or for others with additional needs. The paths to the equipment were also not clearly laid out.

His Motion was as simple as stated. It was clear to him that the park was old and neglected. However, it essentially served the east site of Newtownards. It was located close to Castle Gardens Primary School where he noted a quarter of the children who attended had special educational needs in September 2024. He had invited Council officers out for a multi-agency walkabout and had been struck that the playpark had not been touched when other playparks had been repeatedly upgraded. He was particularly concerned at the lack of accessibility funding.

The park in his view was clearly substandard and that had never been addressed. He thought it incredible that the shortfalls within the park had not been noted on the annual playpark inspection and it did not meet the needs of the local population even though it had a catchment area of half the population of Newtownards.

Alderman Adair commended his colleague for bringing the playpark to the attention of the Council and did not expect that any Member would disagree with the points that he had made. Alderman Mcllveen was a great advocate for the Bowtown community. He asked Members to support the Motion and see what could be done for the children of Newtownards.

Councillor Boyle asked the Council, if, considering the number of children living in this area, was this the best that it could offer. He thought that the basketball net and stand looked dangerous and the rest of the equipment was not fit for purpose. He asked where it sat on the Council's list of priorities and when was refurbishment last carried out.



In response the Director explained that the annual inspection report was due next month and would be back to the Committee with the prioritisation of actions required across all playparks. Councillor Boyle thought that it was important that the Council give the playpark serious consideration. The site looked depressing and hopefully the Council could do better.

Councillor S Irvine thanked Alderman McIlveen for bringing his Motion and gave it his support hoping that it would be the first step in providing a safer and richer play environment for the Bowtown community. In turn he hoped it would encourage healthy play and community cohesion that would reap benefits in the years to come.

Councillor Moore thanked Alderman McIlveen and echoed what had been said, agreeing with Councillor Boyle that the park was not meeting current standards. Play was an investment in children, it was a joyous thing but that could not be said looking at the provision currently offered in the playpark. She said she would be keen to see a report being brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

Alderman McIlveen thanked Members for their indications of support in relation to his Motion and completely agreed that this was an embarrassment for the Council and he hoped it would be addressed quickly. He added that the people of Bowtown had perhaps been too quiet and accepting of the lack of investment in their community while other playparks across the Borough were being upgraded time and again while this one had not been touched in a long time. It was a stark example of poor playpark provision in this area of Newtownards.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.**

## **28.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Irwin and seconded by Councillor McCracken**

That this Council expresses its disappointment at the Education Minister's decision to refuse the development proposals from Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College and Rathmore Primary School to transform to Integrated schools, notes the overwhelming parental support for transformation, further notes the duties on the Integrated Education Act to aim to meet demand for Integrated Education, considers that the Minister has failed to act on this duty, and in doing so has failed to listen to parents from these schools, and resolves to write to the Minister and request he reconsider his decision as a matter of urgency.

Proposed by Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor McCracken that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Irwin explained that it was with regret that she was bringing her Notice of Motion but that it followed an outrageous decision in her opinion by the Minister for Education who was blocking two local schools from being granted Integrated status. She explained that she had been in frequent contact with the schools and that they were very disappointed by the decision. At Bangor Academy, 79% of parents had shown support to move toward integration and the figure was 82% for Rathmore

Primary School. The Minister's officials had recommended that he support the proposal to move to Integrated status but that had not happened and she believed that the rationale for that had not been concrete. She stated that the Department of Education had an obligation to consider applications and she put on record that Ards and North Down had an unmet demand for Integrated education and that the Minister was ignoring his statutory obligations. The Alliance Party had been contacted by hundreds of parents who had been left devastated. She asked did the Minister not wish to see the community being educated together and how could parental preference be ignored. In her opinion the decision did not make sense and she called on Members to support the call for Integration and ask for a reversal of the Minister's decision.

Seconding the Motion Councillor McCracken said that he had studied history at Queen's University, Belfast, and, as part of his studies had looked at the correspondence of Lord Londonderry who in 1923 brought in the Education Act to try to overcome the religious divisions of the past. He believed that Northern Ireland society would be in a better place today if integration had taken place then.

Within the Good Friday Agreement the desire was expressed for a coming together and reconciliation of the country's historic differences to build a shared society. He added that in his view civic Unionism should also be supporting that. The schools in question were both excellent with talented children and active parents who had chosen to express a desire to move toward Integration status for their children's schools. He invited Members to support the Motion if they believed in parental choice to have schools open to all and if they favoured good governance he invited them to support.

Councillor McClean stood to indicate that there were sixteen elected representatives on the Community and Wellbeing Committee and he suspected that each one of them wanted to see all children learn together and as parents in the Borough most people were in agreement that they did not want to live in a divided society and hoped to build bridges wherever possible. He said that to make an argument the Committee would need to examine the Minister's specific reasoning against the move toward Integration for those schools. The legislation required that any school would be granted approval where there were equal numbers of the two main religious community within any school. He informed them that that requirement had come about through clumsily assembled legislation brought forward by Alliance Minister Kelly Armstrong MLA. It was clear that with a Roman Catholic representation of only 3% at Rathmore Primary School that did not fulfil the requirement that that Minister had set and there seemed little chance of the figure growing significantly in the near future. As a result of that the Integrated requirement set by Miss Armstrong herself was impossible for the school to meet. A school could not be deemed to be Integrated when it had such a small proportion of its community from one of the main traditions and he considered the Bill to be very poorly drafted. Councillor McClean explained that he had gone to an 'integrated' school, Bangor Grammar School, which welcomed children of all faiths and none without asking any questions about community or socio-economic background.

Councillor McBurney placed on record her disappointment as she had been an advocate of Integrated Education for many years. The Education Minister's own

department advocated for parental choice with the transfer test and in this situation parents had raised their voices in good faith and she believed that the children in both of these schools would benefit. She thought the strong demand justified that change and the stakeholders should be listened to.

Councillor Chambers acknowledged the parents who had taken the time to respond to the consultations that had been carried out and he had respect for the outcome and was disappointed for the parents. However, his disappointment was not directed at the Minister for Education but rather it sat with the Alliance Party which had crafted the legislation and refused to accept friendly amendments that would have worked in the schools' favour. It was the legislation that had let down those parents and he believed that the process had been a subtle attempt to drag the schools in question in to the political arena. People were aware that this cry was a thin veneer and that the Minister did not have the ability to change the legislation that had been put in place.

Alderman Adair, spoke in opposition of the Motion repeating that Miss Armstrong's Bill had been rushed by its own admission without consultation. What was being displayed in the Chamber was the outworkings of that Bill and the Alliance Party were clearly playing politics. They knew that the Minister's hands were tied and that the DUP was the voice for fairness for the whole system which included Controlled Schools, Catholic Maintained and Integrated and while he was voting against the Motion he was not voting against a shared society. He explained that Northern Ireland had excellent schools, and he longed for the day when they were treated equally, and financial resources were also shared fairly. He stated strongly that he would be taking no lectures from the Alliance Party, he stood for parental choice and was committed to fairness for all. He said both schools in question were open to all children and just because the word Integrated was not in their name did not mean that there were not. He confronted those who claimed to want to bring society together but were instead causing division.

#### **RECESS 8.56 pm**

#### **RECOMMENCED 9.09 pm**

Councillor Hollywood supported the ethos of integration but he could not support the Alliance Party's rushed legislation and believed that it had been unfair on the respective schools who had participated in the process with the right intentions. He supported a single education system where children were taught together.

Councillor Moore expressed her disappointment and believed that suggesting this was the fault of the legislation was disingenuous. She stated that the Minister could have supported the change to Integrated and he did have the option to. She found the argument against the change to be incredible.

In summing up Councillor Irwin agreed that the arguments against were disingenuous and she urged Alderman Adair to check up on the history of the Act. Good governance had been followed but ultimately she thought that the other political parties could talk a could talk but not commit to integration. The legislation could be blamed but she thought that the ultimate decision was down to the Minister himself. The Members had also failed to take on board the desires of the parents

and the schools were not being given an opportunity to grow the numbers of Roman Catholic children in the schools. She asked for Members to support her Motion.

At this stage Alderman McRandal requested a recorded vote.

On the Motion being put to the meeting with 4 voting For, 7 voting Against and 3 Abstained and 2 Absent the Motion FELL.

<b>FOR (4)</b>	<b>AGAINST (7)</b>	<b>ABSTAINING (3)</b>	<b>ABSENT (2)</b>
<b>Alderman</b>	<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Alderman</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
McRandal	Adair	Brooks	Cochrane
<b>Councillors</b>	Cummings	<b>Councillors</b>	Kendall
Ashe	<b>Councillors</b>	Boyle	
McBurney	Chambers	W Irvine	
Moore	Douglas		
	Hollywood		
	S Irvine		
	McClellan		

## **29. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

The Chair spoke of the Standing Orders which governed Any Other Notified Business and reminded members that they were to be used only for urgent matters at the Chair's discretion. He had permitted the following being brought forward by exception.

### **Update on Clandeboye Football Pitch**

Councillor McClellan had asked for a quick update on the Clandeboye Football Pitch which was very much on the minds of the community and wished to know if that was being progressed in the right direction.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that the matter had been brought to the Council meeting in January and the Call-In period had just expired the previous week. He was working with colleagues in compliance to go over the detail and had also met with the relevant parks manager to outline the actions that needed to take place and a proposed maintenance plan. It was hoped to purchase goal posts and a more detailed update would be brought within the coming few months.

**NOTED.**

## **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 9.21 pm.

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	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	10 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Deputation Request - North Down & Ards Women's Aid
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request has been received from Miss Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive Officer, North Down & Ards Women's Aid see appendix attached.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council considers this request.



## Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: [member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk), providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

### Applicant Details

We apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

<b>Name of person(s) making the deputation request:</b>	Emalyn Turkington
<b>Date of request:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024
<b>If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:</b>	North Down & Ards Women's Aid
<b>Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:</b>	Full Council

**Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.**

North Down & Ards Women's Aid (NDAWA) works with women, children and young people who are affected by domestic and sexual abuse in the Ards & North Down Council area. Women's Aid is the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland working with women, children and young people affected by domestic and sexual abuse. I wish to raise the role of NDAWA before Council to increase Council members' awareness of NDAWA and the services we provide in the area.

NDAWA provides crisis temporary accommodation to women, children and young people fleeing domestic abuse throughout Northern Ireland. For women who do not need to go into our refuge accommodation, we provide a safe and confidential support service to women in their own home or community. Support can include, safety planning, housing advice, money management advice, information on a woman's rights, accompaniment to solicitors and court or sign posting to other support agencies.

Domestic abuse is a societal problem that requires a collective response from various stakeholders. NDAWA work with many different agencies in partnership, which allows us all to share responsibility and resources to tackle the issue of domestic abuse more effectively. We work with statutory agencies such as local Health Trusts, local Councils, PSNI, NIHE, other community and voluntary organisations. We provide information and feedback in safeguarding meetings, consultations to calls for views in helping to change and implement policies and legislation. By sharing information and coordinating efforts in partnership working, we all help identify risks earlier, provide more targeted support, and increase the chances of long-term safety and recovery for the women, children and young people we work with.

NDAWA exists to challenge attitudes, structures and systems which perpetuate domestic abuse. Through our work we aim to enable women, children and young people to live free from violence and abuse.

Since 2020, 24 women have died violently in Northern Ireland. In at least 20 of the 24 deaths, the killers, or the suspect of the killings were well-known to the women. Those accused or convicted of the killings include husbands, partners, ex-partners, brothers, sons, a friend and a grandson. As it may be known, one of these sad deaths was in Bangor in June 2024.

Again, as mentioned, it would be good for NDAWA to raise awareness to local Councillors about NDAWA services, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

## **Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024**

### **12. Deputations**

(1) Deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received seven working days' notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Council.

(2) In the case of an emergency, deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received one working days' notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Mayor.

(3) The deputation shall be confined to the presentation of a statement, or copy of resolutions, and shall not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address shall not exceed 10 minutes followed by a maximum 15 minutes question and answer session.

(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn. Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.



## Privacy notice – how we will use information about you

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a Data Processor under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers when receiving and administering deputation requests.

You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing it falls within the following three categories:

- a) **Consent** - you consent to the information being processed for the specific purpose of the Council considering your deputation request;
- b) **Public task** - the processing is necessary in order for the Council to consider your request in line with its Standing Orders which were established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and
- c) **Legitimate interests** - the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests (or the legitimate interests of a third party) in order that Council may consider your deputation request.

The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

Your personal data will not be shared or disclosed to any other organisation without your consent, unless the law permits or places an obligation on the Council to do so.

Personal data is held and stored by the Council in a safe and secure manner and in compliance with Data Protection legislation and in line with the Council's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

If you have any queries regarding the processing of your personal data, please contact:

Data Protection Officer  
Ards and North Down Borough Council  
Town Hall, The Castle  
Bangor  
BT20 4BT  
Email: [dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

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**ITEM 8.2.****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	04 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Deputation Request - Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, North Down and Ards Area Council
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request has been received from Mr Sean Johnston, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, North Down and Ards Area Council (request attached).

Council is asked to note that Mr Johnston has requested to deliver this presentation to Community and Wellbeing Committee in relation to the recent allocation of Winter Hardship Funding.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council considers this request.



### Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: [member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk), providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

#### Applicant Details

I/we apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

<b>Name of person(s) making the deputation request:</b>	Sean Johnston
<b>Date of request:</b>	24 January 2025
<b>If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:</b>	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, North Down and Ards Area Council
<b>Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:</b>	Community & Wellbeing Committee

Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) provides financial help and support to families and individuals on low incomes throughout the whole Ards and North Down Borough Council area. It provides help with food, gas, electricity, clothing, essential white goods and furniture. The Society works collaboratively with Storehouse North Down and the House Church Newtownards Foodbank as well as Kiltonga Christian Centre to augment the support it provides to people in need. The Society has been providing help to people in need in the Ards and North Down area since 1893.

In 2023 the Society spend just over £304,000 on basic essential items for the people of Ards and North Down area – the spend for 2024 is currently being finalised. Considerable fundraising effort is required to provide this level of ongoing support each year.

The six SVP groups across the Council area receive referrals from the various statutory and voluntary agencies that encounter people in need, including Community Advice, social workers, the Health and Social Care Trusts, N Ireland Housing Executive, Women's Aid, Simon Community and the Link Centre, as well as local politicians.

Since the need extends across all parts of the Council area, allocating support funding, such as the recent Winter Hardship Fund, to only one SVP Group is a very unsatisfactory approach. The outcome of the current allocation which resulted in only one SVP Group – Portaferry – receiving funding left the other SVP groups (which serve a completely different population) without any Council support. The main purpose of the delegation is to ensure that in the future the Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee allocates such funding in a way that better recognises that there are areas of deprivation across the whole Council area. The current funding criteria has enabled this unsatisfactory situation to arise. In our view, the criteria needs to be reviewed urgently to recognise that social disadvantage occurs in all parts of the Council area. This problem was highlighted to Council officials prior to their recommendations to the Committee. SVP suggests that the Committee commissions a thorough review of the funding criteria, taking account of the level and scope of the practical support already being provided by the organisations bidding for such funding. The Society is willing to contribute to such a review.

## **Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024**

### **12. Deputations**

(1) Deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received seven working days notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Council.

(2) In the case of an emergency, deputations, from any source, shall only be admitted to address the Council provided the Chief Executive has received one working day's notice of the intended deputation and a statement of its objective, and subject to the agreement of the Mayor.

(3) The deputation shall be confined to the presentation of a statement, or copy of resolutions, and shall not make more than two short addresses by any two members of the deputation. The totality of the address shall not exceed 10 minutes followed by a maximum 15 minutes question and answer session.

(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn. Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

## Privacy notice – how we will use information about you

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a Data Processor under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers when receiving and administering deputation requests.

You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing it falls within the following three categories:

- a) **Consent** - you consent to the information being processed for the specific purpose of the Council considering your deputation request;
- b) **Public task** - the processing is necessary in order for the Council to consider your request in line with its Standing Orders which were established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and
- c) **Legitimate interests** - the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests (or the legitimate interests of a third party) in order that Council may consider your deputation request.

The personal data you provide when making a deputation request may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in decision making and administration in respect of Council and Committee meetings. This includes both the data contained within this form and any other data, such as an email address or other contact details, we may gather when you send the form to us.

The information you provide on this form only will be provided as a report to Council and potentially thereafter as a report to a Committee (depending on whether Council accedes to your request). Any such report will not usually be heard 'in confidence' and therefore the report will also be published on the Council website prior to the meeting. Members of the press and public may attend the Council (and Committee) meeting at which the report is discussed. An audio recording and written minute will be made of the meeting and both will be published on the website.

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Ards and North Down Borough Council  
Town Hall, The Castle  
Bangor  
BT20 4BT  
Email: [dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

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**ITEM 8.3.****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	04 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Deputation Request - Community Advice Ards and North Down
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request has been received from Mr Derek McGregor, Community Advice Ards and North Down, see appendix attached.

Council is asked to note that Mr McGregor would like to deliver this presentation to Full Council April 2025 or appropriate Committee meeting in April 2025.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council considers this request.

## Deputation Request Form

A 'deputation request' refers to a person or group of persons asking to appear in person before the Council or a Council Committee in order to address the Council or Committee (as the case may be) on a particular matter.

The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

If you wish to make a deputation request, please complete this form and return it to Ards and North Down Borough Council via the following email address: [member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:member.services@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk), providing us with a contact email or postal address and contact telephone number when doing so (please do not include your personal contact details on this form – see privacy notice below).

Please note that it will be for the Council to decide whether to accede to your request and, if it does, to determine when and where the deputation will be heard. The Council will draw upon the information you provide in this form in order to reach its decision, therefore you are encouraged to clearly outline the topic of your request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.

### Applicant Details

We apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

<b>Name of person(s) making the deputation request:</b>	Derek McGregor
<b>Date of request:</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
<b>If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:</b>	Community Advice Ards and North Down
<b>Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:</b>	Full Council



**Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.**

**Community Advice Ards and North Down (formerly known as Citizen's Advice) is celebrating 50 years providing advice within The Ards and North Down Council Area.**

**Currently, there are many issues that are impacting on our community. We are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis. Costs are rising for food, electricity, gas and heating oil. There is a shortage of available housing, debt cases are increasing as is domestic violence cases.**

**We would like to present to Council, an update on these and many other issues that are prevalent within our community at this time and how we are trying to cope with the ever-increasing demand on our service. We will provide a full briefing of the service that we provide, detailing the many and wide-ranging issues we provide help, support and advice on.**

**The proposed presentation will also include details of the impact of our work within the community, the partnerships that we have with other organisations providing a full holistic service and the challenges we face in providing this service.**

**We feel it is important that our locally elected representatives are made aware of the many issues that are impacting the people of Ards and North Down and how CAAND is striving to ensure that we can meet this demand.**



## **Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024**

### **12. Deputations**

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(4) Deputations should not be repetitive and, where possible, issues of a similar or linked nature should be contained in one deputation. Where a deputation has made a presentation to the Council, the Council will decline to accept another deputation on the same issue from the same individual or group for a period of six months.

(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn. Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.

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Tel: 0300 013 3333

Unclassified

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**ITEM 8.4.****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	18 February 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Deputation Request - Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

A deputation request has been received from Monika Ciok-Giertuga, of Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK, see appendix attached.

Council is asked to note that Ms Ciok-Giertuga has requested to deliver this presentation to Community and Wellbeing Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council considers this request.



## Deputation Request Form

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The procedure governing deputations is contained within section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders, a copy of which is set out below.

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### Applicant Details

I/we apply to Ards and North Down Borough Council to make a deputation and should this application be successful, I/we agree to comply with section 12 of the Council's Standing Orders.

<b>Name of person(s) making the deputation request:</b>	Monika Ciok-Giertuga Helen Sloan <a href="#">Maggie Filipova-Rivers</a>
<b>Date of request:</b>	30/01/2025
<b>If making the deputation on behalf of an organisation or a group of individuals, name of the organisation / individuals:</b>	Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK
<b>Name of Committee (if known) to which you wish to make your deputation:</b>	

**Please summarise below (continuing onto an additional page if required) the subject matter of your deputation request and the reason why you wish to raise the matter before the Council or a Committee.**

In November 2024 the Ards and North Down Borough Council application to become the Borough of Sanctuary was assessed by the Sanctuary UK and a panel of specialists. Following this, the Sanctuary status had been granted to Ards and North Down.

Although many of the Ards and North Down councillors had been supportive of the the idea of the Borough becoming the Borough of Sanctuary, during the voting in December, the motion was rejected.

Our understanding is that some councillors have very little knowledge of the Sanctuary UK, its aims and objectives. Some concerns based on misconceptions were raised, particularly by the members of one political party. On the other hand, other councillors who abstained from the vote, were keen to find out more about the Sanctuary UK in order to be able to make an informed decision.

I was wondering if it would be possible for the members of the Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group and the Sanctuary UK to present to the North Down Borough Council Community and Well-being Committee at the next meeting, in order to alleviate the concerns of some councillors?

## **Extract from Ards and North Down Borough Council's Standing Orders, Version 11, April 2024**

### **12. Deputations**

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(5) No further discussion or proposals beyond questions shall take place at a Council or Committee meeting until after the deputation has withdrawn. Any subsequent proposal made should be limited to a request for officers to bring back a report on the matters raised by the deputation.



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Email: [dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0300 013 3333

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	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning
Date of Report	13 February 2025
File Reference	N/A
Legislation	The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and The Planning (Trees) Regulations (NI) 2015
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Public Consultation - Private Member's Bill on improving tree protections in Northern Ireland
Attachments	Draft Response to Consultation

**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update Members in relation to a Public Consultation for a Private Member's Bill on improving tree protections in Northern Ireland.

**Detail**

Peter McReynolds MLA has written to the Council as a key stakeholder of his consultation on a proposed Private Member's Bill which seeks to strengthen the legal protection of individual and groups of trees, as well as ancient and long-established woodland in Northern Ireland. It is intended that a proposed Bill would cover three key areas:

- 1) Strengthen existing legal protections for trees, by enhancing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in legislation.

Not Applicable

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- 2) Protect and support Northern Ireland's oldest and most significant trees by creating a new 'Heritage Tree' designation.
- 3) Safeguard ancient/long-established woodland and legally protected trees from building developments and/or new infrastructure.

The consultation can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CLQNK6>

A draft response is attached at Appendix 1. The deadline for the consultation is 6 March 2024.

### **Further Background**

Members will be aware of a recent report published by The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman entitled 'Strengthening Our Roots – Tree Protection in the Planning System' (November 2023 Council – Item 7.1). This report, published November 2023, was an 'Own Initiative Overview Report' by the Ombudsman, and was published following investigation into concerns raised with her office indicating potential systematic maladministration in how public bodies fulfil their duties to protect trees within the planning system.

The current consultation does not seem to have cognisance of that report, or of the current powers available to councils in respect of planning legislation relating to trees.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council approves the attached draft response to the consultation.

## Item 6a

### RESPONSE FROM ARDS & NORTH DOWN BOROUGH

#### Section 1: Strengthening Existing Legal Protections for Trees

Currently, a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) can protect a single tree, or a group of trees, if they are deemed worthy of protection by virtue of their visual amenity.

When a tree, or group of trees, is protected by a TPO it means permission must be sought for any proposed works to the protected trees.

Peter McReynolds MLA is proposing to strengthen TPOs by:

- Introducing 'ecosystem services' as an additional attribute for making a TPO. This would consider the benefits trees play in all our lives, such as improving air quality and reducing the risk of flooding, rather than just amenity.
- Updating the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to make it an offence to 'cause or permit' the breach of a TPO. This would make it easier to enforce and prosecute in cases where a TPO has been breached.
- Include a requirement for those in breach of a TPO to plant a suitable tree in its place and be responsible for its establishment in its formative years.

These measures will strengthen the effectiveness of TPOs by increasing the likelihood enforcement action is taken when breaches of TPOs are identified and reducing the loopholes which enable landowners to evade prosecution.

#### 1. Did you know about TPOs as a mechanism for protecting trees?

- Yes – the Council's Planning Service is responsible for exercising of the powers conferred on the Council by sections 122(4), 128 and 247(1) and (6) of The Planning Act (NI) 2011 and the related Tree Regulations.

#### 4. How effective do you think TPOs are for protecting trees and groups of trees?

- The Council considers that the current legislation provides appropriate powers for protection of trees whether individual or as a group.

#### Do you have any further thoughts about the current system for protecting trees and groups of trees?

Whilst Tree Preservation Orders are effective, use of planning conditions to protect trees (which may not otherwise merit protection by a TPO) are not as effective, as a developer can remove affected trees but state that he is not implementing his planning permission.

The Council has previously provided information on the tree protection system to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman which contributed to the findings in her Own Initiative Overview Report entitled – Strengthening Our Roots – Tree Protection in the Planning System.

**5. Do you support adding 'ecosystem services' as an additional attribute for making a TPO to protect trees or groups of trees?**

- The additional criteria for 'ecosystems services' is vague and there would be difficulty in interpreting such a broad definition. The guidance for TPOs is tried and tested and being replicated by councils across Northern Ireland

**Do you have any further thoughts on which benefits trees provide (ecosystem services) should be considered when making a TPO?**

- TPOs are served 'where it appears to a council that it is expedient in the interests of amenity to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in its district, it may for that purpose make an order.'. When assessing if a site is worthy of a TPO this Council does consider biodiversity and also historical value and rarity.

**6. Do you support updating the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to make it an offence to cause or permit the breach of a TPO?**

- This already exists in the current planning legislation.
- Section 126 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 states the following: 126 — (1) If any person, in contravention of a tree preservation order, cuts down, uproots or wilfully destroys a tree, or wilfully damages, tops or lops a tree in such a manner as to be likely to destroy it, that person shall be guilty of an offence and liable.
- The legislation is considered adequate and clearly sets out what is considered an offence in terms of cutting down, uprooting or wilfully destroying a tree etc.

**Do you have any further thoughts on making it an offence to cause or permit the breach of a TPO?**

- No, other than it is considered difficult to bring about prosecutions in this regard as the burden of proof is extremely high.

**7. Do you support the requirement to plant and maintain a tree if a TPO has been breached?**

- Section 125 of the Act already refers to replanting: Replacement of trees. 125 (1) If any tree in respect of which a tree preservation order is for the time being in force; (a) is removed, uprooted or destroyed in contravention of the order; or (b) except in the case of a tree to which the order applies as part of a

woodland, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies at a time when its cutting down or uprooting is authorised only by virtue of section 122 on the grounds that it is dying or dead or has become dangerous, it shall be the duty of the owner of the land to plant another tree of an appropriate size and species at the same place as soon as the owner reasonably can.

### **Do you have any further thoughts on the requirement to plant and maintain a tree if a TPO has been breached?**

- The word 'maintain' is considered vague. If a tree is planted as a result of a requirement in legislation, then it continues to be covered by the TPO regardless of whether it is 'maintained'.

### **Section 2: Heritage Trees**

Unlike our oldest and most significant buildings, most of our oldest and most significant trees are not legally protected. In Northern Ireland, there are over 2,000 recorded ancient and veteran trees. A major concern is stopping the loss of these trees due to development and neglect because, once they are lost, they cannot be replaced.

A Tree Protection Bill would propose Northern Ireland's oldest and most significant trees could be designated as 'Heritage Trees'. These would be identified and listed because of their age, ecological value, historical, or cultural significance. Once designated as Heritage Trees, they would receive similar protections to trees under a TPO. Local councils would be responsible for issuing Heritage Tree Protection Orders, ensuring there are strict measures to prevent any unauthorised removal or damage.

### **8. Do you agree with the creation of a new heritage tree designation to protect our oldest and most significant trees?**

- Heritage Trees - The designation of 'heritage trees' should be done centrally (and not left to local government); there would be cost implications with regards to identification of 'heritage trees' and concerns about who would provide the fiscal incentives to landowners; additionally the existing legislation would require amending to include these.

### **Do you have any further thoughts on the creation of a new heritage tree designation to protect our oldest and most significant trees?**

- Although this doesn't form part of 'formal' criteria, this is something that the Council does touch upon when assessing if trees are worthy of protection via a TPO. It is considered that DFI centrally should be responsible for updating and providing coherent guidance on the rationale and identification for protection.

**9. Please rank the criteria you think should be used to determine whether a heritage tree qualifies as a heritage tree, from 1 being the most important to 4 being the least important.**

- 1 – Age
- 2 – Historical Significance
- 3 – Cultural significance
- 4 - Ecological Value

*Heritage Tree status would introduce 'Heritage Tree Partnership Agreements' which would encourage co-operation between tree owners and responsible organisations to ensure the best care and maintenance of important trees. These agreements could include small grants or advice to help protect them for future generations.*

**10. Do you agree with the proposal to support landowners who have heritage trees on their property?**

- As above the current legislation would require to be amended and the Council does not consider that this should be the responsibility of local government. It is unclear as to who would provide such financial support and allocate it accordingly.

**Do you have any further thoughts on the proposal to support landowners who have heritage trees on their property?**

- No

**11. What kind of support do you think should be provided to landowners who have heritage trees on their property?**

- The current Tree Regulations deal with matters of compensation in relation to TPOs – and it is considered the same provisions could be adapted accordingly.
- The Council foresees difficulty in people claiming a tree in their ownership is 'heritage' worthy, and as such clear criteria would be required in order to deal with any such claims.

### **Section 3: Safeguarding Ancient and Long Established Woodland**

Ancient woodland, which has been around since the 1600s, and long-established woodland, which dates back to at least 1830, have developed unique and complex ecosystems over time. These woodlands are shaped by factors like the type of soil, the local climate, and how people have interacted with them. Ancient woodland makes up just 0.04% of Northern Ireland's landscape, and once its gone, it cannot be replaced.

Permitted developments allow specific works by statutory undertakers like utilities or telecoms without formal planning permission. A Tree Protection Bill would propose adding ancient and long-established woodland, legally protected trees (those with a

TPO) and heritage trees, to the list of criteria in which development is not automatically permitted. This measure would provide these irreplaceable assets with the same protection as Areas of Special Scientific Interest or sites of archaeological interest to ensure they will not be lost to development without the necessary authorisation.

12. Do you support the proposal to restrict permitted developments from sites with ancient and long-established woodland, legally protected trees and heritage trees?

Such measures could be introduced under an Article 4 Direction within The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015 (the "GPDO"); and Article 3 therein also refers to the GDPO being subject to the provisions of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (NI) 1995.

Should permitted development rights be removed for statutory undertakers in respect of protected trees, this will inevitably create additional work for local planning authority Tree Officers, who will have to assess consent for works applications (which are currently non-fee attracting) and potentially arbitrate whether preservation of trees outweighs particular infrastructure works. There would require to be detailed guidance around how to manage such conflicts in terms of timeframes and outcomes and potential compensation.

Do you have any further comments on protecting ancient and long-established woodland, legally protected trees and heritage trees from permitted development?

- N/A

**13. Do you support the proposals to require developers to prove that there are no other viable options for development in cases where development would result in the removal or alteration of ancient and long-established woodlands, and heritage trees?**

- There is already consideration during the processing of planning applications in terms of whether or not the removal of any protected tree is appropriate and whether supplementary planting can be achieved to off-set the loss accordingly.
- There would need to be detailed guidance in how to arbitrate on such cases, as it is not considered to be a planning function to assess viability in this context.
- Such a proposal would likely have significant implications for Local Development Plan preparation and implementation/application, particularly in respect of achieving councils' growth strategies, and the practicalities of administering such an approach.

**Do you have any further comments on the proposed requirements for developers?**

- No



**14. When balanced against the benefits of this legislation, do you think that any cost of implementing and enforcing the proposed bill is acceptable?**

- Unclear at this stage due to the lack of detail but envisaged to likely be long and protracted in terms of drafting/introducing the relevant legislative changes and need for central government guidance on administering in order to ensure a consistent approach across NI, alongside appropriate arbitration on expected disputes.
- Many of the suggestions posed would inevitably place more administrative and professional burden on councils' planning services, in respect of tree functions, which are not currently fee-attracting/subsidised.

**Other (please specify)**

15. Please tick any of the following options that you believe these proposals will positively benefit:

- All the below
  - *The Environment*
  - *The Climate*
  - *Biodiversity*
  - *Public Health*

16. Do you have any additional comments on the proposed legislative changes to enhance the legal protection of trees and ancient/long-established woodland in Northern Ireland?

- This consultation seems to not be cognisant of the aforementioned NIPSO Report, and the detail of current planning legislation.

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	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	18 February 2025
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	Nomination to Outside Bodies
Attachments	

Places on working groups are filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and are thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position becomes vacant, it reverts back to Council to nominate a Member(s) to fill the place rather than Party Nominating Officers.

Notification from Councillor Ray McKimm of his wish to resign from the following groups was received by the Chief Executive on 18 February 2025. Therefore, a place has become available on each of the following groups:

- East Border Region Members Forum
- Community Resuscitation Group
- Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership
- Diversity Champion
- Mental Health Champion

Not Applicable

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The below tables reflect the current membership of the above working groups:

**Community Resuscitation Group – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)**

	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
1	Councillor Creighton	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

**East Border Region Members Forum – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)**

	<b>2019/23</b>	<b>2023/27</b>
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Keery	Alderman McDowell
3	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Rossiter
4	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Blaney
5	Alderman Carson	Councillor Boyle
6	Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKimm

**Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)**

	<b>2019/23</b>	<b>2023/27</b>
1	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Wilson	Councillor McCracken
3	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm
4	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

**Diversity Champions – 3 Places (1 Year Appointment)**

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

Not Applicable

**Mental Health Champions – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)**

*At the Annual Meeting in 2023, four members had been appointed for two places. As such, it was agreed that the four members be put forward by two taking the role on Years 1 and 2 and the remaining two taking the role in Years 3 and 4. This has meant only one member each year has taken the position of Mental Health Champion.*

*Council are now asked to consider, in addition to nominating to replace the appointment in year 3, 2025/26, also nominating a second Member to take up the role for the remainder of the term.*

	2022/23	Year 1 2023/24	Year 2 2024/25	Year 3 2025/26	Year 4 2026/27
1	Councillor Thompson	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McKimm	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor Smart				

Nominations are sought from Council to fill each of the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council nominate a Member(s) to the following groups:

- East Border Region Members Forum
- Community Resuscitation Group
- Ards and North Down’s Strategic Community Planning Partnership
- Diversity Champion
- Mental Health Champion (two nominations are sought for this body)

Unclassified

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**ITEM 13****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	18 February 2025
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. Meeting to be arranged for end of February 2025	Graeme Bannister (Director of Community & Wellbeing)	
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 (Head of Assets & Property Services)	
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 to create a modern system to assist the Council in meeting the outcomes identified within the Community Plan	Council - September 2019 Referred to Environment Committee - October 2019 Environment Committee 02.09.20 Item 12	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 (Interim Head of Regulatory Services)	
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 (Head of Leisure)	
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; meeting with councillors in January 2025, further engagement has been requested and clarity is being sought on the details of that request.	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 has been sought and a report will be brought back to Community & Wellbeing Committee on receipt of this advice.	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

<p>529</p>	<p>Environment</p>	<p>22.08.22</p>	<p>Councillor Dunlop &amp; Councillor Douglas</p>	<p>That this Council agrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Street furniture should be clean, have a purpose and be consistent; and</li> <li>• Street clutter should be removed.</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, Council tasks officers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out an audit of street infrastructure including street signage, project information; posts, etc;</li> <li>• Remove historic street clutter which has no current purpose or future benefit;</li> <li>• Ensure relevant signage is cleaned and fit for purpose;</li> <li>• Ensure signs have the appropriately-named Council on it, where this applies;</li> <li>• Identify a nominated officer within the Council to lead on the audit to ensure items are listed and removed; and</li> <li>• Write to the Department for Infrastructure to request they complete a similar de-clutter across the Borough.</li> </ul>	<p>Council September 2022 Environment Committee October 2022</p>	<p>Letter sent to Dfl (Mark McPeak) 11/01/23 Response received from Dfl 12/01/23 advising the improbability of any Dfl Roads owned street furniture being superfluous. Furthermore, diverting limited resources to undertake a separate and distinct audit was not a priority for Dfl at this time. However, the maintenance team during cyclic road inspections would consider our request (that being; 'no longer relevant/out-of-date/unnecessary street signage, posts, project information etc' ) who will bring to the attention of the local engineer to consider.</p>	<p>Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets &amp; Property Services)</p>	
<p>545</p>	<p>Community &amp; Wellbeing</p>	<p>16.11.22</p>	<p>Alderman McIlveen &amp; Councillor Cummings</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Council November 2022 Community &amp; Wellbeing December 2022 and March 2023 and June 2023</p>	<p>Officers have asked HED to confirm return arrangements and will report to future C&amp;WC when final arrangements for return of the stones is confirmed</p>	<p>Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)</p>	



549	Community & Wellbeing	09.12.22	Councillor Douglas & Councillor Walker	<p>That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to 'Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls', 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.</p>	<p>Council December 2022 Corporate Services Committee January 2023 Community &amp; Wellbeing Committee January 2024</p>	<p>Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&amp;W Committee. Womens Night Charter reported to January C&amp;W Committee ratified at Council. Report going to March Community and Wellbeing Committee. N Dorrian met with White Ribbon in January 2025.</p>	<p>Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)</p>	
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 Environment Committee January 2023 May 2024</p>	<p>12.12.23 Letter sent to DAERA by CEX 08.11.23 Response received from DFI 13.10.23 - Acknowledgement received from PSNI 12.10.23 - letters sent to DFI &amp; PSNI by CEX</p>	<p>Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing Services)</p>	

555	Community & Wellbeing	08.12.22	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas	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	Council January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee February 2023 and June 2023	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. Report going to February Community & Wellbeing Committee.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
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...' several chasers have been sent.	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	
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 (Head of Administration)	

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>P&amp;P 13 June 2024 (Item 15)</p> <p>P&amp;P 15 June 2023 (Item 28.1)</p> <p>Council 29 March 2023 (Item 22.1)</p>	<p>Report to be presented to 06.02.25 P&amp;P Cttee</p> <p>Further report to be brought back to Committee</p>	<p>Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead</p>	
585	Community & Wellbeing	16.10.23	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</p> <p>Environment Committee November 2023</p> <p>Community &amp; Wellbeing Committee January 2024</p>	<p>Report to C&amp;W Committee in January 2025.</p> <p>Further report requested to future C&amp;W Committee to include site visits to Causeway Coast &amp; Glens and Newry Mourne and Down Distrcit Council as per amended recommendation at January C&amp;W Committee.</p>	<p>Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)</p>	

<p>588</p>	<p>Environment</p>	<p>17.10.23</p>	<p>Councillor Wray &amp; Alderman Smith</p>	<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</p>	<p>Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023 April 2024 Council August 2024 Item 20</p>	<p>Officers to liaise with Greyabbey Community Association.</p> <p>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.</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 Greyabbey.</p>	<p>Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets &amp; Property Services)</p>	
<p>586</p>	<p>Corporate Services</p>	<p>16.10.23</p>	<p>Councillor Cathcart &amp; Councillor Martin</p>	<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 &amp; discussions with vendor.</p> <p>July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor.</p> <p>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>	Council 29.11.2023	<p>Initial report to December 2024 C&amp;W Committee. Second report to March 2025 C&amp;W Committee</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
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 &amp; 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&amp;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 March 2025 Committee.</p>	Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	

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. Agreed that Council proceeds as proposed in section 4 of the report, with the outcome of engagement outlined being reported back to Environment Committee in 2025. April 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.</p>	<p>Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets &amp; Property Services)</p>	
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.</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>Prosperity Ctte - 5 September 2024 (Item 14.1)  Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.2) referred to P&amp;P</p>	<p>Donaghadee Signage Working Group established. Audit completed of existing signage to provide rationale for additional signage. Update report to future P&amp;P Committee Agreed at 5 Sept P&amp;P and ratified by 25 Sept Council</p>	<p>Brian Dorrian - (Interim Director of Place) to lead</p>	

629	Community & Wellbeing	19.08.24	Councillors Gilmour, Hollywood, McClean and McKee	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.”	Council 28 August 2024 (Item 25.3)  September C&W Committee	Report to January 2025 C&W Committee. Funding approved for 25/26 to progress first stage.	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)	
631	Corporate Services	7.8.24	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)	Meeting with Rhys McClenaghan scheduled for January 2025. Further report to follow.	Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)	
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 (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	

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</p>	Council October 2024 - Item 23.2 Environment Committee November 2024	<p>Letters sent to DAERA and other NI Councils 11.12.24 Response received from DAERA 10.01.25 advising that there were no current plans to introduce a specific nappy recycling scheme here, but officials would be keen to explore opportunities and requirements further with local Councils via the existing Government Waste Working Group (GWVG) on this matter. To date no responses have been received from any Council. DAERA response to be Circulated for Information at February 2025 Environment Committee</p>	Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing)	
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 (Head of Leisure)	



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 (Interim Head of Community and Culture)	
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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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	Place & Prosperity Committee November 2024 (Item 14.2)  Council October 2024 (Item 23.5)	Agreed at 7 Nov P&P and ratified by 27 Nov Council - initial report to be brought back to future P&P Committee	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	
639	Place & Prosperity	30.10.2024	Cllr Patricia Morgan and Alderman Trevor Cummings, Cllr Libby Douglas, Alderman Philip Smith, Cllr Rachel Ashe	<p>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.</p> <p>There is, however, a long-standing dilapidated hoarding in Castle Street which badly detracts from this important area of Town.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Considering this, Officers should do a report exploring all further options available to resolve this issue with some urgency.</p>	P&P 09.01.25 (Item 9.1)  Council meeting 27.11.24 (Item 16.1) Referred to December 2024 P&P Committee, referred back to P&P by Council 29.1.25; reconsidered at P&P 6.2.25	Agreed at Cttee 09.01.25 - report to be presented  Reconsidered at P&P 6.2.25 - Agreed report to be prepared	Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead	

640		05.11.2024	Councillor Cochrane and Alderman Adair	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Heard and agreed.	Letter sent to Minister on 9 December and response received 13 January. Report to go to January Council.		
642	Corporate Services	15.11.24	Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine	<p>That this Council expresses its concern at the decision of the post office to propose to close it's 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.</p>	Council meeting 27.11.2024 - Item 16.4 - referred to CS Committee December 2024. Item 7b response to NOM to Corporate Services Committee 11 February 2025.	Letter sent to Chief Executive of Post Office on 06.01.25 and response received 13.01.25. Meeting between Council and Post Office arranged for 27.01.25. Response to NOM to Corporate Committee 11 February 2025.	CEX Office	

643	Corporate Services	10.12.24	Alderman Smith and Councillor Blaney	<p>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 £1.2 million increase in our cost base which works out at a potential 2% increase for ratepayers.</p> <p>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.</p>	Council 18.12.24. Heard at Council and Agreed. Response to NOM to Corporate Services Committee February 2025.	Letter sent to Finance Minister on 02.01.25 from CEX office. Response rec'd to CEX Office 23.1.25. Response to NOM to Corporate Services February 2025.	
644	Community & Wellbeing	10.12.24	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	<p>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.</p>	Council 18.12.24 and Community and Wellbeing Committee 15.01.2025	Deferred to the February 2025 meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee	Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries)

645	Planning	10.12.24	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.	PC 04.02.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.3)	Withdrawn - not heard at PC 04.02.25 To be heard at Planning Committee 04.02.25	Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity)	Withdrawn
646	Planning	10.12.24	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.	PC 04.02.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.4)	To be heard at Planning Committee 04.02.25		
647	Community & Wellbeing	10.12.24	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. Alongside this officers shall engage meaningfully with all Sports Clubs in Donaghadee around facilities to ensure the development and investment to improve sports provision and facilities. Further to this Council officers will bring a report back exploring external funding opportunities, or in the absence of external funding, options of direct funding for upgrades to Donaghadee Sports facilities.	Council 18.12.24 & Community and Wellbeing Committee 15.01.2025	Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Community and Wellbeing Committee 15.01.2025. Report to March C&WC.	Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)	

648	Place & Prosperity	10.12.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall	Alongside this officers shall engage meaningfully with all Sports Clubs in Donaghadee around facilities to ensure the development and investment to improve sports provision and facilities.	P&P 09.01.25 - Item 9.2 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.6)	P&P Committee 09.01.25 - NOM Withdrawn	
649	Place & Prosperity	5.12.24	Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken	Further to this Council Officers will bring a report back exploring external funding opportunities, or in the absence of external funding, options for direct funding for upgrades to Donaghadee Sports facilities.	P&P 09.01.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.7)	Debated and agreed at P&P 09.01.25 that report be presented to include number of Members to participate in Working Group	Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity) to lead

650		16.12.24	Councillor Ashe and Councillor McCollum	<p>That this Council notes the transformative benefits that street art, such as painted utility boxes, can have on communities including the potential to become tourist attractions or foster a sense of civic pride and notes the recent success of the painted utility boxes in Ward Park. That this Council also acknowledges the frustration and concern that graffiti, such as tagging, can cause and the subsequent costs of removal. Council notes it is important to facilitate the creation of local art in a safe, legal, and positive way enabling artistic creation and local regeneration while also reducing the proliferation of antisocial graffiti. That this Council returns a report which: Identifies suitable utility boxes which could be prospective 'canvas sites' for local art; Identifies prospective local artists who could participate in the project, with the input of the Council Arts Officer; and Identifies any external sources of funding, such as from the Department for Communities or the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.</p>	Council January 2025 Place and Prosperity February 2025	Agreed at P&P 6.2.25 - report to be prepared	Director of Prosperity/Head of Tourism
651		10.01.25	Councillor Irwin and Councillor McCracken	<p>That this Council expresses its disappointment at the Education Minister's decision to refuse the development proposals from Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College and Rathmore Primary School to transform to integrated schools, notes the overwhelming parental support for transformation, further notes the duties in the Integrated Education Act to aim to meet demand from Integrated Education, considers that the Minister has failed to act on this duty, and in doing so has failed to listen to parents from these schools, and resolves to write to the Minister and request he reconsider his decision as a matter of urgency.</p>	Council January 2025, Community and Wellbeing February 2025		

652	Environment	16.01.25	Councillor Chambers and Councillor Hollywood	<p>That this Council brings back a report detailing the associated costs, viability and public desirability to install a low level position lighting scheme along the promenade at Groomsport beach.</p>	Council January 2025, Place and Prosperity February 2025	<p>Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 05.02.2025. Report to future EC.</p>	Richard McCracken
653		21.01.25	Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee	<p>This Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression. However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Articles 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessarily cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011. Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA Minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the legislation as currently set out, and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering.</p>	Council January 2025 , Environment Committee February 2025		

Corporate Services  
Community & Wellbeing  
Environment  
Place & Prosperity



**ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

St Anne's House, 15 Church Street, BELFAST BT1 1ER



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To (by email): All Members of Parliament (Northern Ireland)  
Members of the Legislative Assembly (Northern Ireland)  
All Local Government District Councillors

31 January 2025

**ELECTORAL OFFICE – (NEW ELECTORAL OFFICE WEBSITE & ELECTORAL IDENTITY CARD APPLICATIONS ONLINE)**

I am writing to inform you of two upcoming reforms of Electoral Office digital services.

**On Monday 3 February 2025 the Electoral Office will upgrade our website [www.eoni.org.uk](http://www.eoni.org.uk).** The new website will retain functionality but provides a more user-friendly design and allows scope for further online functions in the future. Electors will continue to be able to register to vote online and get their Digital Registration Number online via [www.eoni.org.uk](http://www.eoni.org.uk). In addition, on Monday 3 February 2025 there will be a new service to provide a more comprehensive “Contact us” process at [www.eoni.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.eoni.org.uk/contact-us).

**Then on Monday 3 March 2025 a new online service [www.eoni.org.uk/ID-card](http://www.eoni.org.uk/ID-card) will start – this will allow electors to apply for an Electoral Identity Card online.** Applicants will be able to fill out their personal details, upload their photograph and choose to have their photograph/application verified by their local elected representative. If you are chosen as the elected representative to verify the photograph of the applicant, then you will receive an email from the Electoral Office ([NoReply@eoni.org.uk](mailto:NoReply@eoni.org.uk)) to your official email address (Parliament/Assembly/Council email) with a link to follow to verify the photograph. **A training video will be sent to you in the next few weeks showing you the process to follow.**

As part of this change the paper Electoral Identity card application form is also being updated – a sample copy of the new form is attached.

The online process will enhance access, speed up the process and increase security. As part of this reform, the Electoral Office will no longer accept walk-in applications for an Electoral Identity Card.

If you have queries, contact us at [info@eoni.org.uk](mailto:info@eoni.org.uk).

**Dr David Marshall**  
**Chief Electoral Officer Northern Ireland**

Register to vote online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

**Susie McCullough**

**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Dear Susie,

**Justice Bill**

The Justice Bill was introduced into the Assembly on 17 September 2024 and was referred to the Committee for Justice after completing its Second Stage on 1 October 2024.

The Committee for Justice would welcome your views/comments on the content of the Bill which includes:

- Provisions to amend retention periods for DNA and biometric material.
- Provisions to make changes to bail and custody arrangements for children and young people.
- Provisions relating to the use of live links in police custody.
- Provisions covering a range of areas relating to the administration of justice.

Following the Bill's introduction, the Department of Justice informed the Committee that it had been identified that amendments would be required to the biometrics provisions in the Bill; however, the policy intent of the provisions remained the same.

The Department also advised the Committee a number planned amendments to the Bill that the Minister intends to introduce at a later stage in the Bill's passage through the Assembly. The proposed amendments cover the following:

- The transfer of the legislative powers to add, remove or inspect schemes from a register of organisations formally accredited to delivery restorative justice services from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the Department of Justice; and a number of changes related to restorative justice accreditation processes.
- Definition of serious organised crime and the creation of new offences for participating in and for directing an organised crime group.
- Streamlining the list of serious and violent offences that cannot be filtered from AccessNI Standard and Enhanced disclosures.
- Reform of rehabilitation periods.
- Repeal of vagrancy legislation.
- Live links for courts and tribunals.

The Department of Justice has provided the proposed text of the amendments along with background information. The Committee would also welcome your views on those amendments.

Information on the Bill and the proposed amendments, along with other relevant papers, is available on the [Committee's webpage](#).

Written evidence should be submitted via Citizen Space at the link below:

<https://consult.nia-yourassembly.org.uk/justice/justice-bill/>

The closing date for written submissions is **21 March 2025**.

If you have any queries or require any further information please email [committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk) or call 028 9052 1033.

Unclassified

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**Cfl c)****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	26 February 2025
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	20 February 2025
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	Ards FC Stakeholder Consultation - Letter of Support from The Mayor
Attachments	

**Background**

Members will be aware that Ards FC are applying to the Department for Communities for funding to build a new IFA premiership standard Community Stadium on the Portaferry Road in Newtownards.

They have secured a long-term lease from the Council for this site and the opportunity to bring this disused piece of land back into Community use.

They have engaged a Consultancy firm, S3 Solutions, to develop an Outline Business Case for the project to support their application. They have been in touch to ask if the Mayor would write a letter of support to the Club to append to their business case.

Securing this funding would see the club's long journey home successfully culminate in a home ground for the Club and much needed facility for the wider community.

Not Applicable

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**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council agrees that the Mayor write a letter of support to Ards FC to support their Business Case.