

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

19 March 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 March 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
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of March 2025 (Copy attached)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 26 February 2025 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 7.1 Planning Committee dated 4 March 2025
 - 7.2 Environment Committee dated 5 March 2025
 - 7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee 6 March dated 2025
 - 7.4. Corporate Services Committee 11 March dated 2025
 - 7.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 12 March 2025
8. Consultations
 - 8.1 Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating (Report attached)
9. Conferences and Invitations

- 9.1. National Association of Councillors Conference (Local Government Finance), Scarborough, 11 – 13 April 2025 (Report attached)
10. National Association of Councillors (NAC) Enterprise Champions, Request for Nominations (Report attached)
11. Update to Redundancy Policy (Report attached)
12. Sealing Documents
13. Transfer of Rights of Burial
14. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
15. Notices of Motion
- 15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McClean and Councillor Cathcart

That Council notes the tired and inconsistent presentation of Christmas lights and illuminations in Bangor City Centre, particularly during the Christmas period, and considers potential festive lighting improvements for Christmas 2025. Further, that Council tasks officers to bring back a report presenting options that draw on successful practice and displays elsewhere, including the use of festoon lighting over Main Street. The report should look at the feasibility of the future expansion of these concepts to the remainder of the Borough, if proven successful in Bangor.

- 15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and Alderman Graham

That this council recognises the challenges faced by those who are blind and partially sighted and commits to working to make Ards and North Down a Visually aware Borough. This council recognises the expertise of the RNIB, their vision for a world where blind and partially sighted people participate equally, and their goal of breaking down the barriers for blind and partially sighted people in everyday life. Tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining what processes we already have in place and identifying what measures the council can take to ensure we are a welcoming, Visually aware Borough.

- 15.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options to enhance and improve pedestrian and vehicle access to Kirkistown Cemetery making use of the adjacent derelict Council owned former caretaker's site to improve access and road safety at the cemetery.

Circulated for Information

- a) NI Housing Council Minutes dated 12 December 2024 (Copy attached)
- b) NI Housing Council Minutes dated 09 January 2025 (Copy attached)

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

16. Request from Market Place Europe Limited to hold an International Market at Conway Square May 2025 (Report attached)

17. Queen's Parade Update (Report attached)
18. Purchase of land at Comber Road, Newtownards (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 |

Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of March 2025

Tuesday 4th March 2025

10:00 Ending Violence Against Women & Girls Launch, Clandeboye Lodge

18:30 St Patrick's Day Reception, Merchant Hotel

Wednesday 5th March 2025

10:30 International Choral Festival Launch, Bangor Castle

17:00 Young Volunteer Program, Ards Community Allotments with MenShed

19:30 Local Food to Go Awards, Bangor Castle

Thursday 6th March 2025

09:45 Visit to Abbey Primary School, Abbey Primary School

11:00 NIFRS Tree Planting, Castle Park (Meeting point near the Gate House on Abbey Street)

12:00 Job Fair Photo Op, Ards Blair Mayne

18:00 Bangor Chamber of Commerce - Business Futures, The Old Market House, Bangor

Friday 7th March 2025

10:30 Celebration of World Day of Prayer, Salvation Army Citadel, Crosby Street, Bangor

Saturday 8th March 2025

11:15 Big Spring Clean, Meeting at the Boat House, Groomsport

Tuesday 11th March 2025

10:30 Rathgill Community Association Art Reveal, Rathgill Park, Bangor

Wednesday 12th March 2025

09:00 Walled Garden Nursery Visit, Walled Garden, Castle Park

Thursday 13th March 2025

10:00 Sight Loss Awareness Walk, Starting at Bangor Bus Station initially

14:00 ANDB Cycle Campaign Group Meeting, Mayors Parlour, Bangor Castle

15:30 Bangor By the Sea Meeting, Mayors Parlour, Bangor Castle

Friday 14th March 2025

11:00 St Patricks Day Celebrations via Kilcooley Womens Centre, Old Market House, Bangor

19:00 Little Stars - Night of Music and Memories, Bangor Elim

Monday 17th March 2025

10:30 UDR Saint Patricks Day celebration, Royal British Legion, Hamilton Road, Bangor

Wednesday 19th March 2025

10:30 Launch of our Rewilding sites, Whitespots Country Park

12:00 Reception for international exchange students at SERC, Bangor Castle

19:00 Reception for Ballykeel Conservative Flute Band 125th anniversary year, Bangor Castle

Thursday 20th March 2025

10:00 Tree Planting - Bangor Rotary Club, Castle Park, Bangor

10:45 Job Fair, Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre

19:00 Love Ballyholme visit, Bangor Castle

Friday 21st March 2025

18:30 Ards and North Down Sports Awards, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel

Saturday 22nd March 2025

15:00 North Down Chiro and Physio Opening, North Down Chiro and Physio; Unit 1, 16 Balloo Avenue; Bangor

Sunday 23rd March 2025

15:00 Game of Three Halves, Spa Field Playing Fields, Holywood

Tuesday 25th March 2025

18:00 Ards First Responders 10th Anniversary, Bangor Castle

Wednesday 26th March 2025

12:00 Disability Sport NI Meeting, Mayor's Parlour, Bangor Castle

10:00 Tree & Community Orchard Planting Event, Londonderry Park, Newtownards

Thursday 27th March 2025

18:30 NILGA Awards, Ballievey Road, Banbridge

19:30 North Down Street Pastors 10th Anniversary, Queens Hall, Newtownards

Friday 28th March 2025

10:00 DfC Celebration of Sport Event, Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre

Saturday 29th March 2025

17:30 Mayor's Boxing Event in aid of Mayor's Charities, Legion, Hamilton Road, Bangor

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 26 February 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| In the Chair: | The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart) | |
| Aldermen: | Adair | McAlpine (zoom) |
| | Armstrong-Cotter (zoom) | McRandal |
| | Cummings (7.03pm) | McDowell |
| | Graham | McIlveen |
| | | Smith |
| Councillors: | Ashe (Zoom 7.06pm) | Irwin (zoom) |
| | Blaney | Kendall |
| | Boyle | Kerr |
| | Chambers | McBurney |
| | Cochrane | McClellan |
| | Douglas | McCollum |
| | Edmund (zoom) | McCracken |
| | Gilmour | McKee (zoom) |
| | Harbinson | Moore |
| | Hennessy | Morgan |
| | Hollywood | Thompson |
| | S Irvine | Smart |
| | W Irvine | Wray |

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

1. PRAYER

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

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Alderman Brooks and Councillor McKimm.

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor McLaren.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and the following declarations were made.

Councillor Chambers – Item 17 Storm Damage at Aurora

Councillor Hollywood – Item 8.3. Community Advice Ards and North Down

NOTED.

(Alderman Cummings entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 7.03pm)

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Kerr on his recent engagement and wished him well for the future.

Continuing the Mayor remarked that the previous week, he had been delighted to welcome the Minister for Infrastructure, Ms Kimmins to the Borough to launch the Comber to Bangor Greenways.

Later that day, he also had the pleasure of welcoming the new High Sheriff, Mr Peter Leckey, to the Castle to chat about his new role and responsibilities and the upcoming year.

Finally, he indicated that he would like to extend his congratulations to the Ards and North Down Borough Council staff who had been shortlisted in the 2025 Local Government Awards in two categories:

- Employee of the Year Award – Steven Andrews, Groundsperson; and
- Service Innovation and Improvement Award for the Household Waste Recycling Centre Access Management System.

The ceremony would take place on 27 March 2025, and he knew his colleagues would join him in wishing the very best of luck to the nominees.

RESOLVED, that the Mayor's business be noted.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2025

(Appendix I)

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

The Mayor referred to a number of Arts events which he had attended at the start of the month commenting that it was encouraging to see so many of those throughout the City of Bangor.

Further highlights during the month had included:

- Business Breakfast at the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel
- Live Here Love Here Community Awards at Belfast Castle
- Community Development Play Club at Skipperstone Community Centre
- Tea Dance at Queen's Hall, Newtownards
- Abbey Villa Football Club Reception, Bangor Castle
- Public Conveniences Staff Recognition event, Bangor Castle

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

(Councillor Ashe joined the meeting via Zoom at this stage – 7.06pm)

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 29 JANUARY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

6.1. MATTER ARISING - ITEM 7.4 SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR GREEN GROWTH WORKING GROUP

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that 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 Notice of Motion, in order to further expedite the establishment of this working group, it was considered appropriate to seek nominations from the Council as soon as possible, to meet with relevant officers to explore those matters accordingly.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council nominates nine members to the Green Economy Working Group.

At this stage Alderman McDowell commented that this was a very important opportunity for the Council to take part in the Green Economy which could result in significant savings. Those savings could be achieved through for example the use of Council car parks and at its Leisure Centres to obtain electricity from, to supply and then sell the surplus through the installation of solar panels all of which could help to cover running costs. He referred members to a NAC Brochure on the matter which included a number of QR Codes from which further information could be obtained on some of the projects mentioned.

The Mayor sought nominations to the Green Economy Working Group at this stage and the following nominations were made:

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Councillor Kendall be nominated.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that Councillors Smart and Blaney be nominated.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken be nominated.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Alderman Smith, that Councillor Boyle be nominated.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Alderman Graham and Councillor Kerr be nominated.

RESOLVED, that the following members be nominated to the Green Economy Working Group:

**Councillor Kendall
Councillor Smart
Councillor Blaney
Alderman McDowell
Councillor McCracken
Councillor Boyle
Alderman Graham
Councillor Kerr**

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1 Planning Committee dated 4 February 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 7 – Kinnegar WWTW – Upgrade Deferral

Alderman Smith indicated that he wished to propose an amendment that this Council replies to the letter from Northern Ireland Water dated 15th 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 (NIW) 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 odour

Furthermore, that Council seeks a meeting with the new Minister for Infrastructure to highlight the ongoing issues in the Borough relating to water infrastructure, roads funding and greenways. That a delegation be appointed to attend the meeting to include the Mayor, Group Leaders from DUP, Alliance, UUP or their nominee and a representative from the smaller parties and independents plus appropriate officers.

Councillor Wray indicated that he was happy to second the proposal.

Following the appointment of the new Minister, Alderman Smith believed that it was important to meet with them and establish new relationships. He was aware that she had a background in Local Government and would therefore have an understanding of the Council’s perspective on such matters. Continuing he referred to a recent Deputation made by representatives of NIW where the lack of investment was raised and the impact this had had throughout the Borough, including the facility at Kinnegar. Alderman Smith felt the meeting would also provide an opportunity to discuss other matters of concern including road budgets and he hoped members would be supportive of his proposal.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Wray stated that there could be no doubt that the Council had been getting a bad deal when it came to these matters. There were real, genuine concerns throughout the Borough and such a meeting would enable those issues to be highlighted with the Minister. He added that he welcomed the cross party approach which had been suggested.

Councillor McCollum indicated that she was happy to support the amendment particularly as a representative of the Holywood DEA and indeed a resident of that locality. She noted that DAERA had acknowledged the concerns around the state of Belfast Lough. The lack of infrastructure investment meant that homes were unable to be built in the Borough and the economy was also being stifled. Continuing Councillor McCollum reported that the Alliance Party had been leading the charge on this matter with its recent publication 'In Deep Water' with Minister Muir also fully on board. She reiterated that she was happy to support the amendment.

Also supporting the amendment Councillor Morgan agreed that such a meeting would be very welcome. She outlined some of the ongoing matters with Belfast Lough and referring to Strangford Lough, a Marine Conservation Area, noted that its water quality was currently unknown. As such, she believed it was the job of the Minister to come up with solutions to such problems.

Councillor Kendall also expressed her support for the amendment commenting that it was a very frustrating situation for all. She added that the lack of infrastructure and investment had been an epic failure by NIW.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen indicated that he was happy to support the amendment, adding that the Council had engaged a lot with the previous Minister around roads matters and as such it was known there were issues at Divisional Level around the allocation of funds. NIW capacity issues and its impact on Planning Applications had also been discussed at the recent Corporate Services Committee when NIW had made its Deputation. Continuing Alderman McIlveen advised that Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA had, at the end of last year, published the Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039, and it was hoped that could help progress matters. Referring to the Alliance Party's publication referenced earlier, he commented on the impact for many farmers and that was something which he believed also needed to be taken into account.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Wray, that this Council replies to the letter from Northern Ireland Water dated 15th 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 odour

Furthermore, that Council seeks a meeting with the new Minister for Infrastructure to highlight the ongoing issues in the Borough relating to water infrastructure, roads funding and greenways. That a delegation be appointed to attend the meeting to include the Mayor, Group Leaders from DUP, Alliance, UUP or their nominee and a representative from the smaller parties and independents plus appropriate officers.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes, as amended, be approved and adopted.

7.2 Environment Committee dated 5 February 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 6 February 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

7.3.1. Matter arising – Item 4 Local Employment Partnerships

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that 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.

Background

£45m of funding had 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 was 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 was recommended that Council nominated four Elected Members to the Working Group. This would enable an initial meeting with officers to be arranged as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDED that 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.

The Mayor sought nominations to the Local Economic Working Group and the following nominations were made.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair that Councillors Thompson and McClean be nominated.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that Councillor Boyle be nominated.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that Alderman McDowell be nominated.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor Blaney be nominated.

RESOLVED, that the following members be appointed to the Local Economic Working Group:

Councillor Thompson
Councillor McClean
Councillor Boyle
Alderman McDowell
Councillor Blaney

7.4. Corporate Committee dated 11 February 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes of the Corporate Services Committee be approved and adopted.

7.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 12 February 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

Item 15 – Pigeon Control in Conway Square

Alderman McIlveen noted that no decision had been taken by the Committee in respect of this matter which he believed had then subsequently been misrepresented in the local media by suggesting that was the end of the matter. This was not the case and he was aware that other solutions were being considered including the introduction of Bye Laws and educational programmes. He acknowledged that the problem would remain while the pigeons were still being fed and as such there was further work to be undertaken. Alderman McIlveen added that he was aware some people chose to avoid walking through Conway Square because of the pigeons there.

Councillor Boyle sought further clarity around what work would be undertaken.

In response the Director of Community & Wellbeing advised that a number of actions were being considered including Bye Laws and education programmes. He added that culling had previously taken place under arrangements introduced by the legacy Ards Borough Council.

Rising in support of the comments made by the previous speakers, Councillor Smart reported that the issue had also been discussed by the Town Steering Group. Issues around land ownership had been raised as that could ultimately affect any Bye Laws to be introduced.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, be approved and adopted.

8. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATIONS

8.1 North Down and Ards Women's Aid

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that a deputation request had been received from Miss Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive Officer, North Down & Ards Women's Aid see appendix attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

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

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that a deputation request had been received from Mr Sean Johnston, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, North Down and Ards Area Council (request attached).

Council was asked to note that Mr Johnston had requested to deliver this presentation to Community and Wellbeing Committee in relation to the recent allocation of Winter Hardship Funding.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

8.3. Community Advice Ards and North Down

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive that a deputation request had been received from Mr Derek McGregor, Community Advice Ards and North Down, see appendix attached.

Council was asked to note that Mr McGregor would like to deliver this presentation to Full Council April 2025 or appropriate Committee meeting in April 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

8.4. Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that a deputation request had been received from Monika Ciok-Giertuga, of Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK, see appendix attached.

Council was asked to note that Ms Ciok-Giertuga had requested to deliver this presentation to Community and Wellbeing Committee.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that all four of the Deputation requests be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

At this stage Councillor McKee stated that both requests from North Down & Ards Women's Aid and Community Advice Ards and North Down had asked to be heard by the Full Council rather than at a Committee meeting.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the request from North Down & Ards Women's Aid and the request from Community Advice Ards and North Down be referred to the Full Council meeting.

Councillor McKee advised that he was aware that it was the preference of both organisations to have their Deputation heard at the Full Council meeting.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Moore concurred with those comments adding that she too was aware that was their preference.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen questioned why both members had not declared an interest in these two matters.

The Mayor reminded Alderman McIlveen that it was entirely up to members to make a judgement on when they needed to declare any interests they may have.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Item 8.2. Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, North Down and Ards Area Council and Item 8.4. Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group Sanctuary UK be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Moore, that Item 8.1. North Down & Ards Women's Aid and Item 8.3. Community Advice Ards and North Down be referred to the Full Council meeting.

(Alderman Armstrong-Cotter left the meeting at this stage – 7.41pm)

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that the purpose of this report was 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 had written to the Council as a key stakeholder of his consultation on a proposed Private Member's Bill which sought to strengthen the legal protection of individual and groups of trees, as well as ancient and long-established woodland in Northern Ireland. It was 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.
- 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 could be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CLQNK6>

A draft response was attached at the Appendix. The deadline for the consultation was 6 March 2024.

Further Background

Members would 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 fulfilled their duties to protect trees within the planning system.

The current consultation did not seem to have cognisance of that report, or of the current powers available to Councils in respect of planning legislation relating to trees.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached draft response to the consultation.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman McIlveen thanked officers for the report which he believed set out the situation in great detail.

Alderman Graham concurred with those comments wholeheartedly as seconder.

At this stage Alderman McRandal stated that he had been taken aback to read the comment in the officer's report that the consultation did not seem to have cognisance of the NIPSO report or the current powers available to Councils. He reported that he had spoken with Peter McReynolds MLA who confirmed to him that he was aware of both.

Regarding Question 5 about using the term ecosystem services for administering a TPO, the legislation sought to rectify a lack of consistency across Councils. Not all Councils approached it in the same way, and as such the aim was to introduce a standard around this to ensure that tree protection was consistent across all Council areas. He added that the NIPSO report alluded to that.

Continuing Alderman McRandal referred to Question 6, stating that the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 did not explicitly mention liability for those who caused or permitted a breach of a TPO. The focus was primarily on the individual who directly undertook the unauthorised work. The primary legislation governing TPOs in England was the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under this Act, it explicitly addressed not only those who directly carried out unauthorised works on protected trees but also individuals who caused or permitted such actions. This meant that landowners, contractors, or any parties who authorised or allowed the breach could

be held liable. This, he stated, was what Mr McReynolds proposals sought to bring to Northern Ireland, bringing it in line with England.

Referencing the statement about appearing not to be cognisant of the NIPSO report, Alderman McRandal stated that the proposals were not designed to address the issues highlighted by the NIPSO report. However some proposals such as ‘cause or permit’ were intended to assist in pursuing those who stood to gain from the breach of a TPO. This he suggested may help improve upon the headline statistic in the NISPO report that of “Out of 369 tree protection breaches reported to Councils over a three-year period, only one resulted in formal enforcement action being taken. No cases were brought to court”.

In respect of the final statement, in answer to question 16 on page 6, Alderman McRandal expressed the view that it was inappropriate and misplaced and as such he would support Council sending the drafted response only if that final statement was removed.

Councillor Boyle indicated that he had wished to rise in support of the report but on having heard Alderman McRandal’s comments he was unsure how the Council should now proceed.

The Mayor indicated that the proposal would be put to a vote by way of a show of hands.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, with 21 voting For, 12 voting Against and 2 Abstaining, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

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

The below tables reflected the current membership of the above working groups:
Community Resuscitation Group – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

| | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Councillor Creighton | Councillor Creighton |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2 | Councillor McKimm | Councillor McKimm |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|

East Border Region Members Forum – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)

| | 2019/23 | 2023/27 |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Councillor Thompson | Alderman Adair (Replaced Councillor Cathcart September 2023) |
| 2 | Alderman Keery | Alderman McDowell |
| 3 | Alderman McDowell | Councillor Morgan (Replaced Councillor Rossiter October 2024) |
| 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)

| | 2019/23 | 2023/27 |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| 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)

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

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 had meant only one member each year had taken the position of Mental Health Champion.

Council were 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 McBurney (Replaced Councillor Creighton) |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 2 | Councillor Smart | | | | |
|---|------------------|--|--|--|--|

Nominations were sought from Council to fill each of the above places for the remainder of the term as necessary.

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)

The Mayor sought nominations at this stage for each of the groups as detailed below:

- East Border Region Members Forum

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor Wray be nominated to the East Border Region Members Forum.

- Community Resuscitation Group

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Thompson be nominated to the Community Resuscitation Group.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Councillor McKee be nominated to the Community Resuscitation Group.

- Ards and North Down’s Strategic Community Planning Partnership

No nominations were made.

- Diversity Champion

No nominations were made.

- Mental Health Champion (two nominations are sought for this body)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Thompson be nominated as Mental Health Champion.

ALSO PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Addendum report from the Chief Executive stating that Council previously agreed that the membership of East Boarder Region (EBR) Board would be Councillor Cathcart, Alderman McDowell and Councillor Blaney. The three members on the EBR Board were also represented on the EBR Forum, along with a further three members on the Forum.

Following Councillor Cathcart's resignation from both the EBR Board and Forum, Council agreed in September 2023, to nominate Alderman Adair onto the EBR Forum. The Council minute only detailed that Alderman Adair replaced Councillor Cathcart on the EBR Forum and not the EBR Board, which should have also been agreed at the time. The Council were now asked to put on record that Alderman Adair replace Councillor Cathcart on the EBR Board.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree that Alderman Adair replaces Councillor Cathcart on the EBR Board.

RESOLVED, that the following nominations were made:

- **East Border Region Members Forum – Councillor Wray**
- **Community Resuscitation Group – Councillor Thompson & Councillor McKee**
- **Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership – No nominations**
- **Diversity Champion – No nominations**
- **Mental Health Champion – Councillor Thompson**

FURTHER RESOLVED on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that Alderman Adair replaces Councillor Cathcart on the EBR Board.

11. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grants of Rights of Burials: D40773-D40814
- (b) Tender award to the Integrated Consultancy Team for the Queens Hall, Newtownards Redevelopment.
- (c) Operation Agreement between Ards and North Down Borough Council -and- Crumlin Road Gaol Ltd to operate Pickie Family Funpark, Bangor

12. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfers were received:

Transfer – Comber Cemetery section 25 grave 23
Karen Niblock – Gary Brown

Transfer - Clandeboye Cemetery section AN grave 4429
George Templeton – Robert Coulter

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the transfers be noted.

13. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix VII)

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

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 Brough 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place & Prosperity Committee.

14.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Cummings and 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.

14.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor 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.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

14.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and 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.

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

Circulated for Information

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:-

- a) Electoral Office for Northern Ireland - New Electoral Office Website & Electoral Identity Card Applications Online (Correspondence attached)
- b) Committee for Justice – Justice Bill: Call for Evidence (Correspondence attached)

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Alderman Smith, that Items a) and b) be noted.

- c) Ards FC Stakeholder Consultation - Letter of Support from The Mayor

Report from the Chief Executive stating that as members would be aware, Ards FC were applying to the Department for Communities for funding to build a new IFA premiership standard Community Stadium on the Portaferry Road in Newtownards.

They had 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 had engaged a Consultancy firm, S3 Solutions, to develop an Outline Business Case for the project to support their application. They had 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.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees that the Mayor write a letter of support to Ards FC to support their Business Case.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation at Item c) be adopted.

Referring to Item c) Alderman McIlveen while supportive of it, queried why it had been included on the Agenda as an item Circulated for Information. He added that it was important for the Council to be seen to be putting its colours to the mast in respect of this matter and to offer the Club its full support.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor S Irvine welcomed the report adding that it was the right thing to do not only for the Club but also for the town of Newtownards and the entire Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman Smith, that Items a) and b) be noted.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation at Item c) be adopted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

15. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF CLEANING SERVICES AT 2NO COUNCIL BUILDINGS

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

3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Council was asked to approve the contract award for the provision of cleaning services at two locations: Ards Visitor Information Centre/ West Street Offices, Newtownards and North Road Depot, Newtownards.

It was agreed that the recommendation contained within the report be approved.

16. SINGLE TENDER ACTION - SUPPLY BMI EJECTOR TRAILERS (FILE 77076)

*****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)

A report in relation to the supply of waste transfer ejector trailers was considered.

It was agreed to approve the purchase of 3no. trailers from BMI Trailers (Dungannon) as a Single Tender Action.

(Having declared an interest in the next item Councillor Chambers left the Council Chamber at this stage – 8.09pm)

17. STORM DAMAGE AT AURORA

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE

A report in relation to recent storm damage and associated repairs at Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex, was considered.

It was agreed that the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

(Councillor Chambers re-entered the Chamber at this stage – 8.42pm)

18. QUEENS PARADE (FILE RDP 63)

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

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)

The report gave an update on the current position with the Quality Specification, Crown Estate, Deed of Variation and Bangor Marine in respect of the Queen's Parade development.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.55pm.

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 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell
Smith

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Councillors: | Harbinson | McClellan (7.01 pm) |
| | Kendall (7.15 pm) | McKee (zoom) |
| | Kerr | Morgan |
| | Hennessy | Smart |
| | McBurney (zoom) | Wray |
| | McCollum | |

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

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from the Mayor (Councillor Cathcart).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McCollum declared an interest in Item 4.1 - LA06/2022/0827/F - Lands approximately 250m SW of 240 Scrabo Road, Newtownards.

Councillor Morgan declared an interest in Item 4.2 - LA06/2024/0438/O - 100m south of 35 Ballymaleddy Road, Comber.

Councillor Harbinson declared an interest in Item 4.3 - LA06/2024/0726/F - 15A Morningside, Ballyholme, Bangor.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 04 FEBRUARY 2025

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2022/0827/F - Lands approximately 250m SW of 240 Scrabo Road, Newtownards - Stable building and associated hayshed/tack room and equipment store (Appendices I- III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report, addendum report and note of site meeting.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: A local development application "called-in" to the Planning Committee by a member of that committee (Councillor Cathcart)

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

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

Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

Having declared an interest in the item, Councillor McCollum withdrew from the meeting.

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application.

Councillor Hennessy brought to the attention of the Committee that the Members present on Zoom could not hear the meeting. A short break was taken to allow the matter to be rectified.

The Head of Planning recalled to Members that the application was previously presented to the Planning Committee on 3 December 2024 where the proposal was deferred for a site meeting in line with paragraph 67 of the Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee. The reasoning for the site visit was that the proposed development was difficult to visualise from the case officer's report, photographs and drawings.

As the application was presented in detail at the December meeting, the Head of Planning did not present the application afresh or reiterate details already discussed.

Referring to pictures of the site, the Head of Planning stated that a site visit was convened by herself and took at the site on Monday 20 January 2025 at 9.30am. The meeting point was the car park at Killynether Country Park from where members walked to the site assessing various viewpoints along the way. Those in attendance were Alderman Graham, Councillors Morgan, Wray, and Smart, Head of Planning (G Kerr) and Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd). The site location plan and associated photographs of the application site from main viewpoints had been circulated for members' convenience which provided a context for the viewpoints to be assessed. All vantage points were viewed by walking to different points to view the site. The group walked to the entrance of the car park to the Scrabo Road to assess the wider landscape in order to gain an appreciation of where the proposed development would be located. It was explained that the site

was located in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) characterised by open farmland with wide ranging views. Any development in the area was characterised by small clusters of buildings set with well-established mature landscaping. The group walked west along the Scrabo Road to view the site from a further distance – the site was visible by the presence of a tractor on the site with an extension. The group then walked back along the Scrabo Road towards the site turning into the access lane. The area was marked by high hedges with parts of the site not being visible from the road at this point. The access to the road was along the access lane at which point the group accessed the site. The site of where the proposed two structures were to be located was roughly marked out. While all were present on the site – it was explained that the site had characteristics of hedgerows and undulating landscape with views of Scrabo Tower to the north and views of Strangford Lough as the group traversed east across the site. There were some matters of clarification from members regarding potential views from the dual carriageway – it was explained that any views would be that long ranging they would be fleeting. There would also be views of the site at parts along the Moat Road which ran from the Scrabo Road to the Comber – Newtownards dual carriageway. Those in attendance made their way back to the car park and the site visit ended at 10.30am.

Given that the site visit had now taken place, the Head of Planning stated that the recommendation remained to refuse planning permission for the proposal for the reasons listed in the case officer's report. There had been considerable debate over the application and a decision needed to be made by the Committee in the interests of all parties.

As there were no questions for the Head of Planning, the Chair invited Mr David Donaldson (Agent) and Mr Gareth Metcalfe (Applicant) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Donaldson stated that the application related to a four horse stable and small barn for an established breeder of thoroughbred racehorses. The application was now two and a half years old. It had already been thoroughly debated at Committee, and Members had been to visit the site. Mr Donaldson reinforced some key points:-

- The report stated that 'need' was not a material consideration because the policy did not require 'need' to be demonstrated. That interpretation was wrong in law. DMPN 16 advised that material considerations in land use planning included 'the development plan; policy; planning history; need; existing site uses and features' etc. The Committee was of course entitled to weigh the Applicant's need to provide facilities for his horses in the overall planning balance. Indeed, information on his business was requested by Officers in September 2024 on the basis that 'this information would be helpful to the Committee to consider on balance with the concern regarding visual impact.'
- Regardless of need, the policy allowed for the development of stables in the countryside. Over 40 stable applications had been approved in this Borough since 2015 including several within AONBs and at least one other within this LLPA.

- Neither AONB nor LLPA designations prohibited development. Stables, barns and farmyards were already a characteristic of this area. There were at least 140 buildings within the Scrabo LLPA – those were not a ‘precedent’ to allow further development – their presence simply demonstrated that this was a living and working countryside.
- Members who had been to the site would have seen that it was located several hundred metres from Scrabo Road, it was set at least 10m below the high point of the applicant’s land and was well integrated by hedges and by the rolling landscape. The proposal did not rely on additional landscaping for integration. Members would have noted how inconsequential this proposal was within this extensive landscape. Mr Donaldson questioned how something could be considered prominent or lacking in integration when it was not adjacent to the road and the views, particularly from the dual carriageway, were even described in the site meeting note as long ranging and fleeting.

Mr Donaldson stated that the application remained a modest proposal for an established equestrian business. Similar equestrian facilities were common throughout the rural area and indeed within this LLPA. Permission should be granted unless there was clear evidence of harm. Mr Donaldson questioned if this modest proposal would give rise to such demonstrable harm that the Applicant’s ability to maintain his established horse breeding business and ensure the welfare of his animals was not met.

The Chair invited questions from Members for Mr Donaldson and Mr Metcalfe.

Alderman Graham asked for an explanation as to why the site was chosen for the facility bearing in mind it was within an AONB. Mr Donaldson explained that Mr Metcalfe had 12 acres on which he breeds his horses. That 12 acre holding had no building or facilities for the horses and in the winter months the horses were being stabled in Ballymena. Mr Metcalfe needed the facility on his land to look after the horses for veterinary, breeding and welfare. Mr Donaldson highlighted that the site that had been selected was at the very lowest point on the applicant’s holding.

(Councillor Kendall entered the meeting – 7.15 pm)

The buildings would be in the lowest corner of the land, bounded to the south by an existing hedge and to the west by the existing hedge and laneway. Therefore, Mr Donaldson stated that it was the best location within the holding for the proposed buildings.

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

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted, that planning permission be refused. The proposal did not receive a seconder.

Alderman Smith wished to ask a question of the Head of Planning. In the applicant’s address the matter of the requirement for need was emphasised. The

report stated that need was not a requirement whilst Mr Donaldson argued that it categorically was, and he sought clarity in that regard.

The Head of Planning stated that what was quoted by Mr Donaldson was guidance not policy. She clarified that the application was not being refused on the basis of need. Refusal was being recommended on the basis of the visual aspects and its integration into the landscape, the application had been assessed in that regard.

Alderman Graham noted that Mr Donaldson had referred to examples of such proposals in the Borough and he asked if it would be acceptable anywhere to build stable blocks for anyone who owned horses in the countryside providing it was not within an AONB. The Head of Planning acknowledged that the Borough was an equestrian area with examples of many stables. However, as Members were aware, each application was assessed on its own merits and a blanket response could not be provided. The particular area was a sensitive landscape, characterised by big open views, any buildings were existing clusters with mature vegetation surrounding to integrate. The proposal was for two buildings within a totally green site. It was the view, in terms of visual and integration, that refusal was recommended.

Councillor Wray raised a question regarding the potential implications for future development in the area if the application was approved.

The Head of Planning was cautious in her response as the Planning Committee had to consider the application and the information what was before them. To provide guidance, she stated that for any future applications that may be submitted, the policy required the grouping with buildings (plural).

As there were no further questions, the Chair invited Members to make a proposal.

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

Councillor Morgan thanked the Planning Officers for organising the site visit which she felt had been useful. The proposal for the buildings would adversely affect the environment and the landscape was open particularly from Scrabo. Councillor Morgan accepted that the applicant had placed the proposal in the best location however it remained that would have a significant adverse impact on that environment.

Councillor Harbinson stated that he was on the fence regarding the application however on balance he was content with the recommendation of refusal.

Councillor Smart thanked the Planning Officers for organising the site meeting. He felt it was unusual not to have the opportunity to discuss the application with the applicant on site however viewed the site visit as having been useful. The focus of the matter was integration, and the policy was relatively clear in that regard. Though he felt it was disappointing that the same weight was not given in terms of need and animal welfare.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 8 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 6 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED. The vote resulted as follows:

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| FOR (8) | AGAINST (0) | ABSTAINED (6) | ABSENT (2) |
| Alderman | | Aldermen | |
| McIlveen | | Graham | |
| Smith | | McDowell | |
| Councillors | | Councillors | Councillors |
| Harbinson | | Kerr | Cathcart |
| Hennessy | | McClellan | McCollum |
| Kendall | | Smart | |
| McBurney | | Wray | |
| McKee | | | |
| Morgan | | | |

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

(Councillor McCollum re-entered the meeting)

4.2 LA06/2024/0438/O - 100m south of 35 Ballymaleddy Road, Comber - Erection of shed for the storage and maintenance of agricultural machinery, yard and re-location of access
(Appendix IV, V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report and addendum

DEA: Comber

Committee Interest: A local development application “called-in” to the Planning Committee by a member of that committee (Alderman McIlveen).
Proposal: Erection of shed for the storage and maintenance of agricultural machinery, yard and re-location of access
Site Location: 100m south of 35 Ballymaleddy Road, Comber
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission

Having previously declared an interest in the item, Councillor Morgan withdrew from the meeting.

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application. She reminded Members that as it was an outline planning application, detailed drawings were not required to be submitted. There had been three letters of objections from one address and there had been a late submission received earlier that day in support of the application from a relation of the applicant.

There was material planning history associated with the application site under planning ref: X/2011/0165/F. That was for a single storey farm dwelling within the same field as the proposed shed but not in the same part of the field. The site location, site layout and proposed elevations for a dwelling which was refused were displayed to the Committee.

One of the refusal reasons was: That the proposal was contrary to Policies CTY1 and CTY10 of the Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside and does not merit being considered as an exceptional case in that it had not been demonstrated that the proposed new building is visually linked (or sited to cluster) with an established group of buildings on the farm. The refusal was appealed and the case also dismissed by the Planning Appeals Commission – appeal ref 2011/A0265.

Members could see that the Ballymaleddy Road was in the countryside with agricultural fields and farm buildings in the local vicinity. The site was located in a triangular shaped field bounded by Ballyalloly Road on the east and Gransha Close to the south and south west boundary and a lane to the north. The plans submitted indicated a small portion of hedge to be removed to provide site access and the planting of new hedgerows. The sloping topography of the surrounding land meant the site was very visible, particularly when travelling south to north along the Ballyalloly Road. Critical viewpoints were also from Ballymaleddy Road to the north and Gransha Close.

In relation to the policy - CTY12 stated that planning permission would be granted for development on an active and established agricultural holding where it was demonstrated that it met several criteria. In determining what was an active and established business, paragraph 5.56 of PPS21 referred to criteria set out in CTY 10, that was, the farm business was currently active and had been established for at least six years. The Head of Planning stated that it was accepted that the applicant did have an active and established agricultural holding therefore it followed that there was a criterion to be met in the assessment of this proposal, namely that the development was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or forestry enterprise.

In relation to the information submitted to show the proposal was essential for the efficient functioning of the business to fulfil the exceptional test in CTY12 – it was cited that the shed was necessary which was mainly for the storage and protection of machinery and a list of machinery currently stored outside was provided. The applicant had stated that the storage of machinery at 35 Ballymaleddy Road was no longer an option as there was a section 54 application submitted to remove the agricultural occupancy condition for letting purposes. The applicant's address was 37 Ballymaleddy Road where he resides with his parents. The applicant had also stated that from 2014-2021 the holding was 30 acres and 10 acres were lost following the death of his grandmother and also the use of her drive and garage.

In supporting information provided, the applicant stated that he owned several pieces of land:-

- one field in Comber (the application site)
- remaining fields in Comber are rented in conacre
- the size of the holding was 20 Acres - 13 Acres owned - 7 Rented
- the only other owned land was within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Area and the Applicant had no desire to build at this land.

For these reasons the applicant was of the opinion there are no other alternative sites within the Comber area where the applicant owns the land. The applicant had given no reason why the shed must be located within the Comber area rather than within Newry, Mourne and Down other than proximity to his home address. Recent information submitted by the applicant regarding possible siting in Newry, Mourne and Down assumed that elected members would not want a shed in an AONB and he would not want to locate there.

The applicant's address was however listed as 37 Ballymaleddy Road on the submitted P1 form and the applicant had confirmed on the P1C form that the active farm business was 'completely owned by applicant'. Number 37 was listed as the applicant's home address at which the applicant also appeared to reside. There was also a separate business number under the parents' names connected to number 37.

At the time of a site inspection the case officer noted a number of pieces of machinery stored in a field adjacent to number 37 (applicant's address/parent's dwelling) in fields which were not included within the business's farm maps. As this machinery was located on land outside of the applicant's farm business, it was concluded that they must be associated with another business. No other farm equipment was evident within the applicant's holding at the time of inspection.

Although a shed may provide storage and a safe work area for the established farm business, the submitted information was not considered to sway the opinion to being necessary in this particular location. The policy then goes on to state that in cases where a new building is proposed, applicants would also need to provide sufficient information to confirm all of the following:

- there are no suitable existing buildings on the holding or enterprise that can be used;
- the design and materials to be used are sympathetic to the locality and adjacent buildings; and
- the proposal is sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings.

From review of the evidence submitted that there are no suitable buildings on the farm holding (i.e. the application site), this would be the first farm building. The applicant's address on the application form is No 37, he lives with his parents, but he does not own No 37. This was an outline planning application and materials and final design of the building would be considered in depth at reserved matters stage.

Crucially, as was shown in the orthophotography, the proposal was not sited beside existing farm buildings (there were no other farm buildings on the farm).

The policy stated that, exceptionally, consideration may be given to an alternative site away from existing farm or forestry buildings, provided there were no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding, and where it was essential for the efficient functioning of the business; or there were demonstrable health and safety reasons.

- The applicant had not confirmed in the submission where the machinery was currently stored (only that it is outside),
- No evidence had been submitted why he could not rent accommodation nearby.
- The applicant had advised that while the farm business address is registered as No. 37 and he lives at this address, he does not own the property as it is his parents' house, therefore it did not constitute an existing building on the holding.
- The applicant had also advised that there was no possibility of erecting a shed within the curtilage of No 37. In an email received 10/10/24 the applicant included photos of his parents' house which he felt demonstrated how his mother had invested in the garden and stated, 'It seems unreasonable that I could be criticised for not bulldozing part of this.'

On consideration of this information, the Head of Planning stated that the financial investment in landscaping a garden area could not be considered as a material planning consideration and not a sufficient reason for the proposal to be on an alternative site away from the farm buildings.

The reasoning provided to justify this application site was that it was the only one in ownership of the applicant within this Borough and that the PAC had considered the previous application of a dwelling on this site would have no impact on character or integration.

The Head of Planning did not consider that the reasons above demonstrated that development in this location was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding. The total evidence presented did not persuade Planning Service that the proposed building was essential for the efficient functioning of the business and the exceptionality test in CTY 12 was not met. By permitting this proposal it would have the potential in setting a precedent in allowing development where insufficient information had been submitted to demonstrate policy compliance.

Members were reminded that previous applications for farm sheds had appeared before Committee and refused planning permission for cases considered more pressing, such as housing of livestock.

This was a small holding and the requirement for a shed as this location was considered to be excessive for the requirements of the applicant – for example, a pit underneath where repairs were to be carried out seemed more akin to a machinery business rather than simply for storage of machinery.

Given the relatively small-scale operation of the farm business it would surely be more efficient for the applicant to once or twice yearly hire a contractor to cut hay or silage rather than the expense of constructing a shed for storage.

The previous refusal for a farm dwelling was a material consideration for this proposal – the applicant had raised the issue that the proposal was not found to be prominent on the site - that was irrelevant, the proposal was for a different part of the site and was found to be unacceptable in principle.

Members were reminded that for agricultural purposes, it was the first shed only that requires planning permission with additional agricultural buildings being considered to be permitted development -with the precedent being set.

In addition, the recommendation for refusal of planning permission which may be endorsed by members of the Planning Committee is not the end of the road as it were for the applicant but the right of appeal still remained a viable option.

As there were no questions for the Planning Officer at this stage, the Chair invited Ms Kerri Hampton to be admitted to the meeting who was present via Zoom to speak in opposition to the application.

Ms Hampton outlined that she objected to this application for the following reasons:

Prominence and the failure to integrate the proposed building. This proposal was clearly contrary to criteria a, b, c, d and f of Policy CTY 13 of PPS 21 as the shed would be most prominent in this rural setting and lacked long-established natural boundaries. The existing natural boundaries were unable to provide suitable enclosure to integrate the building into the landscape and it seemed that the proposal was far too dependent on new landscaping for integration. The proposed building would appear to jar with its context, in that it fails to blend with the surrounding landscape & features.

Damage to the rural context – contrary to Policy CTY 14 of PPS 21. Such facilities, and related ancillary works, tend to blight rural settings with discarded machinery, equipment etc. left to rust, rot and deteriorate in adjacent yards and hardstanding areas, or even in the nearby field.

Detrimental to the overall context – while the case officer had stated the following: 'With regards to the shape of the red line and the shape of the remainder of said field this is not considered to be of planning concern and the applicant is entitled to submit whatever red line they consider to be appropriate', she wished to highlight that the main characteristic of the Irish countryside was the irregular grid pattern of the fields - mostly square or rectangular fields creating a diverse richness of trees, hedgerows and fields, united as a cohesive and structured whole. Ms Hampton pointed out that this proposal severely jarred with the ordered rural grid pattern of the broader setting and countryside context, with a good field being essentially 'butchered' and drastically contorted, unnaturally, into two most irregular parts.

The proposal was unnecessary, and risk to road safety – contrary to Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21. With the case officer's report confirming that the proposal basically appeared unnecessary '*for the efficient use of the agriculture holding*' she highlighted the obvious risk of unnecessary additional farm traffic / machinery moving in and out of the application site on narrow country roads.

Other sites appear to be available - contrary to Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21. The farm maps submitted for the application indicated other lands available to the applicant. It also seemed that there was already a suitable shed at the applicant's own residence. This existing shed could be extended if required. Alternatively by siting the proposed shed on other lands, it would be much less prominent by being further away from

neighbouring roads. Also, if the shed were located on other lands there would be no need for a new access to be created – this would significantly reduce risk from traffic movement as the existing lane and access could be used.

The proposed shed is not sited beside existing farm buildings - contrary to Policy CTY 12 of PPS 21. This policy states: *'where a new building is proposed applicants will also need to provide sufficient information to confirm the proposal is sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings.'* However she noted, there was an 'exception' clause to this policy whereby a building could be permitted if there were no other sites available, it was essential for the functioning of the business and there were demonstrable health and safety reasons.

There were no questions for Ms Hampton and she was returned to the virtual public gallery.

The Chair then invited Mr Gary Thompson (Agent) and Mr Ryan Doherty (Applicant) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Doherty commenced by referring to extracts of PAC decisions and outlined that he could not build on his parents' holding and had produced evidence in that regard. Mr Doherty emphasised that the shed was essential for the efficient functioning of his holding and should be considered. As the business maintained and repaired its own machinery, a dedicated work area was essential for the efficient functioning of the business both financially and operationally. Mr Doherty used an example to highlight the need for improved facilities. He was of the view that the Planning report oversimplified the matter by stating that machinery should be taken to someone else for fixing or to simply sell all the machinery. Doing the repairs himself reduced his business overheads and he had submitted a health and safety report. The works undertaken were not minor servicing works and the planning report falsely stated that. With regards to site availability, Mr Doherty stated that the garden presented legal and ownership impediments, as he did not own that site and the joint owners (his mother and father) refused to permit such a development. He had sent an email at the end of last year and he believed that had not been considered which presented the amenity value of his mother's garden which he highlighted she took great pride in.

Mr Thompson referred to the four refusal reasons. Mr Doherty had stated how the business was essential and a requirement for the ongoing sustainability of the farm. With regards to integration, Mr Thompson felt that was not issue as the PAC decision stated that there was no problem with integration or road access. Taken all the factors into consideration, with the topography of the ground there was no prominence and was well integrated.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman Graham referred to the suggestion that Mr Doherty could get contractors to undertake the work, and he asked if Mr Doherty could explain to the Committee why that was not always a straightforward option. Mr Doherty stated that was a possibility, that he could sell his machinery and outsource the work and even further let the land. However, it was a small business that benefited him by providing him

with an occupation. He commenced the business in 2014, whilst it was not particularly profitable, by being able to do the work to the machinery himself made it viable. He wished to make it clear that he never stated that he was storing machinery at No 35. The machines needed to be stored, and he did not feel that what he required to be excessive.

At this stage there was no detailed plan of what was proposed however Alderman Graham asked Mr Doherty to provide an indication of the size and scale and if the machinery would be kept indoors. Mr Doherty advised that although the application was outline, he had included elevations and a plan. He recognised that the proposal would need designed by a professional; however, what was proposed was a 7.2m (W) x 17.5 m (L). That would contain his machinery and a mezzanine.

Councillor McCollum asked the nature of the business and raised questions in respect his machinery. Mr Doherty advised that it was a farm business, and he would consider himself as an agricultural labourer. He produced haylage and fodder for livestock consumption. The tipping trailer would not be put in the shed, it would be located possibly to the north of the building to be hidden. The other machinery would be included.

There were no further questions for Mr Doherty and Mr Thompson, and they returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Kendall asked for more information in respect of the essential test. The Head of Planning stated that it was dependent on each case. It was a high bar to be met, and a proliferation of sheds did not want to be seen in the countryside with a need for those to be clustered with existing buildings. The proposal was not deemed to be essential with too many disparities.

Alderman Smith felt the key focus was prominence and the lack of integration and asked if the applicant could do anything in that regard to enhance the case. The Head of Planning wished to clarify that the previous refusal was in the same field but at a different part. There was nothing which could be done in terms of integration and the proposal failed the first test of being essential. If it had been deemed essential, she believed integration would have been an issue with the site being very visible. Additional planting should be not relied upon to make a proposal integrate.

Alderman Graham asked where the ideal location would be. The Head of Planning explained that under policy buildings were to be linked.

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

Councillor Wray sympathised with the applicant and hoped that the decision was not the end of the road. He did not feel the suggestion of hiring contractors to undertake the work was one for Planning to recommend. However, the proposal was not compliant with policy CTY1, 12, 13 and 14 and therefore he accepted the Officer's recommendation.

Councillor Harbinson was not convinced that the high bar had been passed in this case.

Alderman Graham did not feel Members had a full understanding of the situation. It was a small enterprise with Mr Doherty referring to himself as farm labourer rather than a farmer. He felt it would be impossible to operate a small business and purchase expensive equipment that did not require maintenance. It was all part of the small-scale agricultural function. To maintain equipment, shelter from the elements was needed. Alderman Graham felt Mr Doherty had made a good case and the Committee should try and facilitate Mr Doherty rather than put obstacles in the way.

Councillor McCollum was satisfied that the applicant had laid out an adequate case for the building being essential to the business. She recognised the issue of integration and felt it was regrettable. She hoped there was scope for Mr Doherty to engage with the Planning Department on an alternative site and wished Mr Doherty well.

Councillor Kendall was not convinced and felt the decision was difficult. She hoped the matter could be worked upon further.

Alderman Smith accepted that there was a business, and Mr Doherty was trying to develop that. The challenge was around its location, prominence and integration into the wider area.

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

FOR (10)
Alderman
McDowell
Smith

AGAINST (2)
Alderman
Graham

ABSTAINED (2)
Alderman
McIlveen

ABSENT (2)

Councillors
Harbinson
Hennessy
McBurney
McCollum
McKee
McClellan
Smart
Wray

Councillors
Kerr

Councillor
Kendall

Councillors
Cathcart
Morgan

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

4.3 LA06/2024/0726/F - 15A Morningside, Ballyholme, Bangor - Replacement 2 storey dwelling (Change of house type from approved ref. LA06/2021/0433/F)
(Appendix VI)

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: Replacement 2 storey dwelling (Change of house type from approved ref. LA06/2021/0433/F)

Site Location: 15A Morningside, Ballyholme, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located adjacent to the coast with vehicular access from Morningside. The area was characterised predominantly by larger detached and semi-detached properties in generous plots with the application site occupying one of the larger plots in the area.

Members were asked to recall that Planning Committee voted to approve a replacement dwelling on this site at its meeting in June 2023. The current application sought amendments to the previously approved design. This planning permission remained extant and represented an important material consideration that should be afforded considerable weight in the determination of the current application.

Objections had been received from nine separate addresses. The main matters raised related to the potential impact of the proposed design changes on the residential amenity of No.17 Morningside located to the east of the site (particularly in terms of overlooking, loss of light and dominance) as well as the potential impact on the character of the area.

The Case Officer's Report provided a full description and detailed assessment of the proposed design amendments. Overall, the Officer stated that it was considered that the changes were fairly minor in the context of the extant permission and approval was therefore recommended.

The Officer showed Members a series of slides with recent photographs of the site demonstrating that construction was ongoing. Members were also shown a comparison of the previously approved and proposed elevations.

The Officer highlighted that the main change to the design was the omission of the lower ground floor. This would help reduce the perceived scale and massing of the front coastal facing elevation. The omission of the curved glass around the raised patio area would further simplify the design. The previously approved first floor cladding was to be replaced by a render finish which was characteristic of the wider area.

To compensate for the loss of the lower ground floor, the first-floor level was to be increased to the rear of the dwelling to accommodate a fourth bedroom. This was

considered to be a minor increase in the overall scale of the dwelling and considered to not cause any unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area.

The previously approved carport would now be an enclosed garage – but with no change to the footprint or height previously approved.

The approved design included an external chimney breast opposite the side porch of the objector's property. The omission of this feature on the amended design would help reduce the perceived scale of this portion of the building from the neighbouring property.

The occupant of No.17 Morningside had expressed concern that the increased width of the proposed corner stairwell window may result in an unacceptable level of overlooking towards their property. The width of the glazing on each elevation would increase by only 10cm. This was a minor increase to a window which would not serve a main room. The Case Officer Report for the original approval clarified that the *stairwell window is located in approximately the same location as an existing bedroom window and due to the existing boundary treatment, it was considered that there will be no additional adverse overlooking to the rear or side of No,17*. This factor remained material to the assessment.

When comparing the site plans the Officer highlighted that it was evident that the footprint remained consistent with the previous approval. The neighbour had expressed concern that the dwelling would be positioned further forward on the site. As stated in the Case Officer's Report – that was only by 10cm, and it was considered that this would not result in any material impacts in relation to the character of the area or residential amenity.

A further slide showed that only minor changes to the landscaping plan were proposed and the sloping terraced garden area would remain a feature of the development.

The officer showed that there would only be a small increase in the scale of the first floor (projecting a further 2.3m) – the extent was as indicated in red. The neighbour had expressed concern in relation to loss of light – particularly in terms of their rear patio area. The officer referred to guidance which stated that overshadowing to a garden area will rarely constitute grounds to justify a refusal of planning permission. The extended first floor comfortably met the light test when measured from the patio doors on the neighbouring property. It was set well back from the party boundary (by approximately 8m) and was not considered to result in any unacceptable harm in terms of loss of light, overshadowing or dominance. In addition, the hipped roof design would help reduce the overall massing of the building.

The officer summarised that Planning Committee had recently approved a similar replacement dwelling on this site. It was considered that the proposed design changes were relatively minor and would cause no harm to existing residential amenity or the character of the area. Having taken into account all material planning considerations, it was recommended that planning permission should be granted.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Morgan referred to visuals and the red line. The Planning Officer explained that that represented the light test which was well within the 45 degree angle.

Councillor McClean noted that he was not on the Committee when the previous application was considered. He referred to the ground plans and felt it was hard to get a like for like. The Officer referred to the site plans, an enforcement case had been opened, and an enforcement officer had visited the site to check the measurements. Planning Service was satisfied that what was being constructed was in accordance with the plans. The footprint was consistent with the previous approval except for the 10cm forward from the approved building line.

Councillor McClean noted the chimney was being removed, there were chimneys elsewhere in the area, he felt that would affect the visual amenity and it would be better to have the chimney.

The Officer stated that there were a wide variety of house types in the area. She did not believe a refusal could be sustained on a loss of a chimney on design grounds. The overall form and massing were very similar to what had already been approved. The biggest changes were the removal of the basement area and the addition of the glazing balcony area.

Councillor McClean felt it was a mistake to remove the chimney. He referred to the definition of dominance outlined in page 12 of the Case Officer's Report and questioned how dominance was considered.

The Officer explained that the particular part of the first-floor window was 8m back from the boundary to the neighbour's property. The outlook had an open aspect and in the context of the overall scale, and in her professional opinion, she did not consider an overbearing or dominant affect to the neighbouring property from the rear.

In response to a further question from Councillor McClean, the Officer stated that there was guidance that stated when there was no unacceptable loss of light it was unlikely that dominance would occur. There should be sufficient distance to prevent any dominant affect.

(Councillor Harbinson realised that he had a conflict of interest and withdrew from the meeting at this stage).

The Chair invited Ms Muriel Ryan (Neighbour) and Ms Emma Sutherland (Ms Ryan's daughter) to come forward who were speaking in opposition to the application.

Ms Ryan stated that as the first-floor extension was almost built, it was clear to her the effect it would have on her home, in particular, her rear patio and garden. She was aware of the separation distance but the existence of a building in this space instead of open sky was of course going to adversely impact her amenity and add to the overall loss of light, overshadowing and dominance already caused. Ms Ryan felt it would be helpful for the Committee to visit the site to see the scale and mass of the proposed development adjacent to her home. The additional first floor

accommodation was unacceptable to Ms Ryan, and she considered that unfair. The approved scheme sited the two-storey building 7.6m forward of the original No 15a thereby impacting adversely on the front, sea facing amenity of her home (comprising a sitting out area and sun porch) in terms of loss of light, overshadowing and dominance. The one small comfort, if it could be called that, was the reduction in the two-storey element adjacent to the private amenity space to the rear of her home. Now, however, even that was to be taken away. The proposed (almost built) additional extension of the first floor element would result in the loss of that reduction. If it were to be approved, it would result in further impact on her residential amenity. The addition of the first floor extension meant that the whole west facing side of her home, including front and back amenities, was blocked from the sun because of the position of No 15a. It was as if the original house had not been demolished but had 7.6, now 7.7m, extended to the front. The mass and scale were now evident and the impact on her amenity was unacceptable highlighting that No 15a had such a dominant effect on her property.

The removal of the open aspect to the west had detrimentally impacted the living conditions she had enjoyed for 47 years. As building work progressed each day, she described that she felt more 'closed in' from the west, with loss of light, overshadowing and dominance now evident. From her west facing windows – living room, landing and sun porch (all of which the 25 degree light test found to be breached), she was now looking into a brick wall, but the Planning officers had previously decided that that was 'not unacceptable'. She added that she was now trying to prevent her rear patio and garden from being adversely impacted in any way. She wanted to hold on to as much of the remaining amount of light that surrounded her home as she could. A refusal to permit No 15a to extend to the rear would help to achieve this and that was her request to the Committee – to require amended plans with the first floor extension removed. Now that she could see the gap for the stairwell corner window and considering the increase in its width, she asked that some obscuring be reconsidered in regards to overlooking.

Ms Ryan highlighted that she also had concerns about proposed condition number 3 regarding the height of planting to screen the boundary. For one small section – the front of her sun porch to the top of the steps, and she viewed 1.8m was too high as it would cause further light loss and overshadowing to her front sitting out area, sun porch and her north facing kitchen window (which the 45 degree light test found to be breached). Shrubs in this position previously were approximately 1.4m which created a balance between privacy and light. A reduction in height would further conserve the amount. Ms Ryan expected the house and gardens at No 15a would be beautiful when completed but unfortunately, it had resulted in significant harm to her living conditions. She stated that the whole process and outcome so far had caused her much stress and upset.

There were no questions for Ms Ryan or Ms Sutherland and they returned to the public gallery.

The Chair invited Mr Andy Stephens (Matrix Planning), David Wilson (Project Architect) and Emma Rayner (Landscape Architect) to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Stephens commenced by thanked the Planning Officers for their comprehensive report and subsequent addendum. A significant amount of time and resources had been spent on the change of house type application and the previous application. The report before the Committee confirmed that the proposal met the relevant required planning policies and that all material considerations including third party objections had been considered. Some Members would recall the previous application which came before Committee in June 2023 when the recommendation to grant planning permission was unanimously endorsed. The application had been submitted as, post-demolition further analysis was undertaken in respect of the existing ground conditions to accommodate the lower basement element, which was arguably the most controversial element of the previous permission. Several other changes had been made to the design which, in his opinion, had reduced the development from that previously permitted. There were no changes to the overall site layout, footprint or position with the changes being outlined in paragraph 5 of the Case Officer's report. The planning history of the site was a significant material consideration in the determination of this change of house type application. The previous consent provided a benchmark of acceptability in respect of the principle of demolition, redevelopment, scale, massing and the relationship with the existing built environment. The consideration in this case only extended to the net differences between the extant permission and the proposal. The extant permission was until 20 June 2028 and therefore there was a fall-back position. Therefore, the applicant could build out the earlier permission until it expired, and that must be weighed in the balance in the determination. The fallback concept was fact specific and the judgment in *Gambone v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* (2014) EWHC 952 (Admin), was the most recent authority on the doctrine of fallback. The correct approach was to initially consider if there was a greater than theoretical possibility that the previous permission could take place prior to expiry. Factors to be weighed in the balancing exercise were the materiality of the differences and the scale of the harm, which could arise. Other factors such as the legal principle of legitimate expectation would be engaged given the legislative requirement for the orderly and consistent development of land and buildings, as per Paragraph 1, Section 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. It was also a general principle of administrative law, well established in the planning context, that decision-makers must act consistently unless there was good reason not to do so. In this fact-specific situation there was an extant permission which formed a genuine fallback for the applicant. It must be given significant and determining weight, as it would be both perverse and irrational to reach any other conclusion, when considering the chronology and circumstances, weighed against the presumption to grant permission. The consideration in this case only extended to the net differences between the extant permission and the current proposal and if they were material. The basis of forming a judgement on materiality was always the original planning permission and the development as a whole. As detailed, the changes were minor, both individually and cumulatively, and therefore were not of significance, of substance and of consequence when considering the fallback position open to the applicant under the previous permission. There were no objections from any of the statutory consultees to the proposal on traffic/parking, environmental impact, flooding, built heritage or residential amenity grounds. There had been no evidence presented to the contrary of those opinions. Mr Stephens appreciated that such changes were not always well received, however believed the objector had been afforded significant opportunity to express their concerns through the planning

process and engagement with the building contractors and project team. The concerns had been thoroughly examined in the Case Officer's Report and addendum and were considered at length through the previous application. In respect of the concerns, Mr Stephens wished to reiterate that the day light tests were not applied to non-habitable rooms or rooms less 13sqm as per the BRE guidelines 2011. Likewise, the 45 degree light test was respected in relation to the new 2.3m first floor extension.

The planning system did not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another. The legislation required that planning decisions were taken consistently; likewise, case law required that decision-makers must act consistently, unless there was good reason not to do so.

In this case the applicant had a legal fallback position established under the earlier permission and the change of house type results in lesser form of development overall than that already permitted. Mr Stephens fully supported the recommendation, and he asked that the Committee endorsed the grant of planning permission for the high-quality residential development.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Morgan questioned if the application had already been built making it retrospective. Mr Stephens stated that the applicant had built out the permission but in addition had removed the lower basement element and increased the first floor extension of 2.3m. As detailed, the variety of changes were stated in the Case Officer's report, some of those were omissions; for example, the chimney had been removed and glazing along with some enhancements. In his professional opinion, the fallback position granted more development for what now was being built with the most significant change being the 2.3m extension towards Morningside.

Councillor McCollum referred to the various changes reducing the scale of the development and questioned what was meant by scale. Mr Stephens stated that the consideration was the materiality of those changes for the whole development. Some elements had been removed with the only addition being the 2.3m first floor extension above the garage in place of the accommodation that was going to be put in the ground. The ground conditions and viability meant the lower basement element had been removed.

Councillor McCollum clarified that Mr Stephens was saying there was net reduction in the overall scale of the development. Mr Stephens confirmed in his opinion that was correct.

Councillor McCollum noted that was a subjective opinion. In relation to the basement and the controversial nature of that she clarified if the issues in that regard were with the Planning Department or residents, noting that she was not a member of the Committee when the application was first considered. Mr Stephens explained that the basement element had been deemed to be controversial from both the Planning Department and residents. Planning had considered there would be impacts on what was considered a draft ATC and concerns existed in respect of the character on what was visually prominent along Ballyholme esplanade. From the neighbour's

perspective, there had been concerns in relation to the prospect of piling. Mr Stephens therefore considered this application to be a significant improvement in both aspects.

Councillor McCollum raised a question if the basement protected the amenity of the neighbouring property whereas Members had heard the first-floor extension would not. Mr Stephens did not believe there to be an impact nor did the Planning Officers as it respected the 45-degree light test.

There were no further questions, and the representatives returned to the public gallery.

The Chair then invited questions from Members for the Planning Officer.

Councillor Morgan asked the Planning Officer to confirm if the stairwell had been changed. The Planning Officer stated there had been a very minor change with the glazing appearing to be 10cm wider.

Alderman Smith appreciated that a development next to someone’s house was potentially an ordeal. However, the key issue was the extant permission that already existed, the case officer considered that the change of house type would not result in any issues in relation to loss of light, overshadowing or dominance. Alderman Smith believed that there was limited impact from the changes and, on that basis, he was content to accept the recommendation.

Councillor Morgan stated that such decisions were difficult however she believed the changes were minor.

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

Councillor McClean took the point in relation to the extant permission; however, having seen the original approval he would have struggled to approve that. He highlighted the issues in respect of amenity, dominance and the impact on the residential amenity in the area. Councillor McClean did not believe the proposal to be acceptable and he could not support it.

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

FOR (10)
Aldermen
Graham
Smith
McDowell
Councillors
Kerr
Hennessy
McBurney
McKee

AGAINST (3)
Alderman

Councillors
Kendall
McCollum
McClean

ABSTAINED (1)
Alderman
McIlveen

ABSENT (2)

Councillors
Cathcart
Harbinson

Morgan
Smart
Wray

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

(Councillor Morgan withdrew from the meeting – 8.52 pm)

(Councillor Harbinson re-entered the meeting – 8.52 pm)

4.4 LA06/2023/2073/F - 32-36 Prospect Road, Bangor - Demolition of existing dwellings and erection of 9 apartments with associated car parking
(Appendix VII)

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 dwellings and erection of 9 apartments with associated car parking

Site Location: 32-36 Prospect Road, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located on the eastern side of Prospect Road within a primarily residential area of central Bangor consisting mainly of two and two and a half storey terraces. The site was located within the proposed Bangor Central ATC and just outside of the town centre as set out in Draft BMAP. The Officer displayed some views of the site from Prospect Road. The four existing terraced dwellings which occupied the site and were proposed for demolition were two storey in height. Due to extensive fire damage, the central unit at No. 34 had partially collapsed with the roof had been completely destroyed. The buildings were not considered to make any material contribution to the overall appearance of the proposed ATC and therefore the principle of demolition was acceptable in this instance. The entrance to the rear of the site was via an existing private right of way situated between Nos. 36 and 38c.

(Councillor Morgan re-entered the meeting – 8.54 pm)

To the rear of the existing dwellings the remainder of the site comprised the overgrown linear garden plots associated with each dwelling. The Officer displayed photographs to show the views of the site from the car park of Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church halls which were located to the immediate rear of the site.

Displaying the proposed site layout for the development, the Officer explained that the apartment building would be positioned at the front of the site on the footprint of the existing buildings. 14 in-curtilage parking spaces were proposed to the rear in

line with the recommended parking standards set out in the Creating Places Guidelines. A 240sqm area of communal amenity space would also be provided to the rear in line with the standards set out in Creating Places. Within this area bin and cycle storage would also be provided. Access would be from Prospect Road via the existing right of way which would be widened and would also incorporate a footpath.

The Officer showed the proposed existing and proposed Prospect Road contextual elevations. As could be seen the overall height and massing of the proposal was very similar to the original buildings on the site and the placement of fenestration on the front façade very much reflects the pattern and rhythm of the existing terrace.

The Officer further displayed visuals of the gable and rear elevations and the floor plans of the apartments which comprised two 2 bed apartments and one 1 bed apartment on each floor with a central entrance and stairwell located to the rear. While the density of the development would be higher than that originally on the site, it would not be higher than that found within the wider context. There were numerous examples of other apartment developments within close proximity to the site including those at the junction of Donaghadee Road and Hamilton Road, Holborn Avenue and new development at Broadway. Given the edge of centre location, the site was considered to be ideally suited to higher density apartment development with the SPPS advising that higher density housing developments should be promoted in town and city centres and in other locations that benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities.

A total of 10 objections from seven separate addresses had been received throughout the processing of the application. The main concerns raised included:

- The safety of the access and potential obstructed visibility onto Prospect Road.
- Loss of hedges and vegetation
- Bin storage provision
- Lack of parking

All of those issues had been considered in detail in the planning report. DfI Roads had been consulted and no concerns had been raised with regard to road safety. The improvements proposed to the existing access would enhance visibility for all users through the provision of 2m x 43m visibility splays on the LHS emerging. While particular concerns had been raised by Robinson Goldsmiths with regard to parked vehicles obstructing visibility on the right had side emerging from the access, DfI Roads had confirmed that this would not be a road safety concern due to the one way flow of traffic along Prospect Road. The access lane itself would also be widened from 3.2m to 5m for the first 10m and the safety of pedestrians would be improved through the widening of the existing footpath to 2m across the frontage of the site.

While an element of site clearance would be involved to make way for the new development, the site was largely derelict and had become significantly overgrown and unkempt. The site contained no significant trees which make any contribution to the character of the area or that would be worthy of protection. The new development would also incorporate a grassed amenity area with tree and shrub planting to replace the existing vegetation. As also shown on submitted plans, a sizeable, covered bin store was to be constructed within the boundary of the site.

While bin collection would result in additional bins appearing kerbside, as was typical in most residential areas, that was generally of a temporary and short term nature.

In summary, the Officer stated that the proposal for 9no. apartments at this edge of centre location was considered to be acceptable in the context of both the Development Plan and the relevant policies contained within PPS7. The development would see the removal of the existing derelict buildings and would greatly enhance this part of the Prospect Road with a sympathetically designed scheme. All of the statutory consultees were content with the proposal and all representations had been carefully considered. On this basis it was recommended that full planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions set out in the case officer's report.

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

Alderman Smith noted the improvements that the proposal would bring to the site which was currently in a poor state. Issues had been raised in respect of parking and access, and he was satisfied that those had been clarified.

Councillor Harbinson was pleased with the design which he felt was sympathetic to the area and would like to see more of such. He noted the concerns and felt that those had been addressed.

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

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9 pm and resumed at 9.15 pm

- 4.5 LA06/2021/1476/F - Lands to the NW of Kiltonga Industrial Estate, SW of Belfast Road and South of Milecross Road, Newtownards - Residential development comprising 29 No. dwellings (comprising 25no. detached and 4no. semi-detached dwellings), including garages, open space, and landscaping, access, internal road network and all other associate site and access works**
(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report and addendum.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: An application falling within the major category of development.

Proposal: Residential development comprising 29 No. dwellings (comprising 25no. detached and 4no. semi-detached dwellings), including garages, open space, and landscaping, access, internal road network and all other associate site and access works

Site Location: Lands to the NW of Kiltonga Industrial Estate, SW of Belfast Road and South of Milecross Road, Newtownards
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Planning and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located within the western periphery of Newtownards and was zoned for industry in the Ards and Down Area Plan under Zoning NS32.

The Officer showed a number of slides to the Members, showing images of the site, view of the site from the Belfast Road Junction with Kiltonga Industrial Estate, and view across the site from the Belfast Road and Milecross Road Junction.

In turning to the planning history of the site, the Officer highlighted that the principle of non-industrial development had already been established on this zoning through its planning history.

A nursing home was approved on the north-western portion of the site in 2012 with access from the Kiltonga Industrial Estate. It had been established through a Certificate of Lawfulness that the nursing home approval remained extant and could be built out at any time.

On the remaining southeastern portion of the site, planning permission was granted for 20 retirement dwellings by Planning Committee at its meeting in September 2019. The extant nursing home approval was a key factor in the Council's decision.

The Officer showed Members an extract from the Planning Use Classes Order – explaining that the Council had determined that the dwellings fell under Use Class C3 'Residential Institutions' – in that they offered care for people in need of care which could be supported by the adjacent nursing home facility. As such, approval was subject to a condition to restrict occupation until the nursing home was constructed and operational.

However, this condition was successfully appealed to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) with the condition being removed.

In its decision, the PAC was very clear that the approved accommodation did not fall under Use Class C3, rather the dwellings were Use Class C1 – being free-standing dwelling houses. Case law had established that decisions by the PAC must either be accepted and respected or challenged through the courts. This decision was not challenged by the Council. The site was subsequently sold to the current applicant with extant planning permission for C1 dwelling houses.

The principle for non-industrial development had now been established across the entire NS32 zoning and the PAC determined that occupation of the free-standing dwelling houses should not be dependent on the construction and operation of the nursing home. Having regard to the planning history of the site, it was considered that the proposed departure from the development plan was acceptable.

In addition, the Applicant had submitted a 'Demand Viability Report', prepared by O'Kane Commercial Property Consultants which specialised in the care home sector.

The report concluded that it was highly unlikely that the site would be developed as a care home - pointing to available capacity in Newtownards, both within existing facilities and in the recently constructed care home at Castlebawn. The report also referred to unsuccessful marketing of the site with extant permission for a nursing home.

Moving to the proposed site layout plan, the Officer advised that the proposal was for a relatively low-density development with significant open space provided in excess of policy requirements.

Existing landscape features would be protected and incorporated into the overall layout. A large pond would form a central landscaped feature. A further large area of open space was proposed to the west of the site. Existing mature vegetation would be retained and augmented providing a landscaped buffer adjacent to the Belfast Road. In addition, substantial new planting throughout the site would soften the built form and contribute towards an attractive residential environment.

Ample private amenity space was to be provided for each dwelling in accordance with recommended standards. The site would be separated from the closest existing dwelling by Milecross Road and an area of open space which would prevent any harm to existing residential amenity.

In terms of adjacent land uses, the development would be separated from the industrial estate by the existing access road and a landscape buffer to the south-east of the site.

Further slides showed a selection of the house types proposed – finishes included red brick with stone detailing and dark grey slate tile.

The Shared Environmental Service had provided no objection in terms of impact on designated sites subject to conditions to secure implementation of a final Construction Environmental Management Plan and to ensure that any land contamination was remediated. Natural Environment Division had provided no objection subject to conditions to prevent harm to protected species.

All proposed development would be located beyond the 1 in 100-year floodplain, and DfI Rivers had provided no objection in terms of flood risk or drainage subject to the approval and implementation of a Final Drainage Assessment. A condition was recommended to ensure that the method of sewerage disposal was agreed with the appropriate authority prior to the commencement of development.

The Council's Environmental Health Department provided no objection to the application subject to planning conditions to secure appropriate noise mitigation and remediation of any contamination within the site.

The Officer then turned to the Private Streets Layout, advising that as per the previous approval, vehicular and pedestrian access to the development was to be taken from an existing right hand turning lane into the Kiltonga Industrial Estate – the access was to be upgraded to provide for two marked out lanes exiting onto the Belfast Road. A new footpath was proposed along the Belfast Road to the north of

the site. The dwellings would benefit from at least two in-curtilage parking spaces with additional visitor parking in accordance with recommended standards.

Dfl Roads had provided no objection in terms of roads safety subject to recommended planning conditions.

Objections had been received from three separate addresses. Issues raised related mainly to access and parking, flood risk and drainage and impact on natural heritage interests. All of these matters had been considered in detail in the Case Officer Report and no objections had been received from the statutory consultees.

In concluding, the Officer advised that the planning history of this particular zoning had established the principle of non-industrial development. It was considered that the layout would provide a high-quality residential development with substantial landscaping and areas of open space. Having considered all material planning considerations it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

The Chair wished to ask some questions of clarification. He recalled that when the development had previously been passed it was going to be essentially a retirement village linked to the nursing home with over 55's living in the houses. That had been put forward by the then owners as the plan for the site. Almost immediately after the Planning Committee, they had appealed that condition. Alderman McIlveen recalled the discussion that previously occurred at the Committee with the land having been zoned for industrial land and the exception had been made due to the recognised need. The Chair sought clarity on how that could now not be taken into consideration.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the condition had been successfully appealed to the PAC changing the Use Class of the proposed dwellings. Case law had established that PAC decisions must be accepted and respected or challenged through the courts. That decision had not been challenged by the Council and what was detailed was the established planning history for the zoning.

The Chair stated that the previous planning permission was applied given as the Committee were told there was a shortage of that type of accommodation and asked if that could be given consideration. The Officer stated that the PAC had deemed the Use Class to be a misconception and the relevant use class should be C1: dwelling houses. The nursing home was to be built first and a level of care within the houses could be provided. The developer could now choose not to build out the nursing home and proceed only with the C1 dwelling houses. The argument for the need for over 55 accommodation to rely on the facilities of the adjacent nursing home had therefore been removed.

There had previously been a condition in relation to over 55 accommodation and the Chair asked if that need was now being ignored and was that now not a material consideration. The Officer stated that without the nursing home she was unsure if the land would be the best location to have over 55 dwellings given that there was no easily accessible shops or services in the vicinity. Consideration now had to be given to what was before the Committee as opposed to what was preferred.

The Chair expressed his disappointment that the good will of the Committee was treated in the way it was, and the Council had been left in the position. The land had been zoned as industrial land and would not have been changed only for the argument for the nursing home and over 55's accommodation.

The Head of Planning commented that she fully appreciated the frustration, but that unfortunately, there was now the need take as a material consideration the findings of the PAC. To rely on that over 55's condition would not be recommended now that there was a perceived lack of need for the build out of the nursing home. The Head of Planning stated that there were several options for the Committee to look at the matter further.

Alderman McDowell expressed his disappointment and concern that more industrial zoned land was being lost to housing across the Borough. In referring to the noise from the industrial estate, he noticed there were proposed conditions in that regard and noted there had been complaints from residents in respect of noise over the years and he was worried that noise complaints would put pressure on businesses within the industrial estate. Alderman McDowell was also concerned regarding the safety of the pond, with young families moving into the area and asked if that had been given consideration. He also referred to the flood risk and asked if the extra development in the area would cause problems in Braeside which was very low lying. He expressed a number of serious concerns about the development, and noted that there had been similar applications in Newtownards for nursing homes and he wondered if the same ploy was occurring.

The Officer stated that in terms of the noise, a noise assessment was submitted as part of the application, noise monitoring had been carried out in a number of locations around the site and it was determined that the primary noise was as a result of the road. There were conditions in relation to the upgrade of windows and ventilation which would not be uncommon for a residential development within a settlement limit. There was fencing proposed to mitigate any outside noise. The Council's Environmental Health Department had provided no objection to the application.

Alderman McDowell was surprised by the response and noted over the years there had been numerous smell and noise complaints in relation to the industrial estate and questioned if the correct information had been received.

The Officer reiterated that a noise assessment had been carried out for this and the previous application and was not deemed to be unacceptable by Environmental Health.

Alderman McDowell felt that matter needed be checked further. In relation to the safety of the pond, the Officer stated that it was not uncommon to see bodies of water in areas of open space. There had to be personal and parental responsibility and referred to Rivenwood and Rathgael as examples of residential developments with ponds.

Councillor Kendall noted that the history of the site was a material planning consideration however questioned how that applied to the zoning. In terms of the

planning balance, the Officer explained that the Planning Act required Officers make a determination in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations dictated otherwise. The PAC decision and the extant permission for a nursing home would be very significant material planning considerations which should attract substantial weight.

The extant development plan had zoned the land for industrial use and Councillor Kendall questioned if that was not as significant as a planning decision. The Committee had made an exception previously taking into account the land was zoned for industrial use. Councillor Kendall wondered why the Committee could not go back and stated that the zoning was a significant issue.

The Head of Planning clarified that the area was zoned in the development plan however given the subsequent permission that was granted that was deemed to be a significant material consideration. She urged caution and noted the fall-back position.

Councillor McCollum expressed concern regarding the apparent de-zoning. The case was made for a nursing home with evidence she imagined was produced at that time.

The Officer stated that the previous planning permission was granted on 5 September 2019.

Councillor McCollum noted the pressing need for industrial land and stated that the demand for over 55 accommodation and nursing homes had not disappeared. She could not understand what had occurred.

The Officer stated that the change was due to the planning history as a result of the PAC decision. The dwellings were no longer deemed as Class C3 residential institutional dwellings and no longer fell under the same class as nursing home. The PAC removed the condition requiring the nursing home to be built out before the dwelling houses. The hotel was not approved on the basis of need by the DoE. A hotel had previously been approved for the site noting the long planning history of the site for non-industrial uses. The consideration was not solely based on the demand viability report, and the Officer noted the unsuccessful marketing of the nursing home for the site and the nursing homes in the locality were also factors.

Councillor McCollum was not persuaded that there was not a need for greater nursing care provision in the area. She questioned the weight attached. The demand viability report was not independent, and she wondered if it should be investigated. The Officer explained that non-compliance with the plan had been established by the principle of development by both the C3 nursing home use and the C1 dwelling houses. Whilst the demand viability report was a factor to be considered amongst others, the fact there was a long planning history on the site for non-industrial zonings she believed was the key consideration.

Councillor McCollum remained concerned.

Councillor Smart shared the concerns and found it frustrating that the PAC had such a significant role, and the decision had been changed so soon after the Committee meeting was concerning and disappointing. Referring to the need that had been highlighted, the Borough had an ageing population and asked if a long view could be taken in that regard. Had the Council not been impacted by PAC decision, Councillor Smart felt the wider consideration of the site and the noise complaints that he had been involved would be a challenge for the properties and the businesses.

The Officer stated that there was no mechanism within the planning permission for the dwelling homes that required the nursing home to ever be built. There was nothing to compel any developer to build out the nursing home. Consideration needed to be given what could be sustained at appeal given the planning history on the site.

Councillor Smart appreciated that the Council could not impose the building out of the nursing home but felt it could still decide what ground was left to be developed.

The Officer stated that if the Council were to insist on an industrial use at this stage, vehicles would need to drive through a residential development to gain access. The majority of the site had now been given up for residential development.

For additional clarification, the Head of Planning urged caution as general housing had been approved.

The Chair referred to the conditions and the reasons were outlined, and he would like a legal opinion on what remained of that permission (relating to the original housing approval for which the condition relating to the nursing home had been appealed).

Councillor Morgan sought clarity in relation to the permission and noted that single storey dwellings were good for older people or for those that did not want to live with stairs.

The Officer stated that the Committee was required to make a determination based on all material factors. She referred to condition 2 in relation to over 55 accommodation and viewed the condition as hard to enforce.

Councillor Wray stated that there was clear there was a lot of concern, and he suggested that legal opinion be sought, and engagement occur with the PAC.

The Chair did not feel engagement could occur with PAC regarding the issue as its decision had been made some time ago.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the application be deferred to consider the matters that had been raised.

Following a discussion, the Chair suggested that the meeting be adjourned to allow Members to confer.

ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the application be deferred for legal advice to be obtained on the concerns raised by members the Committee, including

- 1. the age-related condition and the implications of that and the PAC decision,
- 2. and options open to the committee

as well as further information from environmental health in respect of the potential noise and smell issues reported by local residents from the nearby industrial estate, and the pond safety issues.

Alderman Graham was opposed to the proposal to defer and felt money and time was being wasted. The condition of the original proposal was removed and the opportunity had been missed to challenge the matter in court. Alderman Graham stated that people’s commercial activities could not be dictated and it could not be presumed that what had occurred was a tactic to obtain planning permission. People had to operate their business based on commercial realities. Alderman Graham felt the proposal was an interesting development. There were ponds in other developments and he was concerned in relation to the 1/100 flood risk however the relevant authorities had reviewed the matter.

Alderman Smith shared the views of Alderman Graham.

Alderman McDowell felt it was important to take time to investigate the matters and reiterated his concerns. The pond was a safety issue. In relation to the noise and the smell and caused the residents in the area a lot of problems which should be considered. Alderman McDowell expressed frustration regarding development plan zonings if Members were being asked to make decisions ignoring those, continuing that the Committee had a scrutiny role and that should be undertaken to the best of members’ ability.

Councillor Smart asked if it would be foreseen that the legal advice would look at the future implications of using the over 55’s criteria.

The Chair stated that the proposal was looking at the specifics of this application.

The Head of Planning stated that it was dependent on the applications and there was the option of legal agreements to bolster conditions.

The Chair felt it was important to understand where the land lay given the concern before a decision was made.

On being put to the meeting, with voting 12 FOR, 1 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 1 ABSENT, the proposal was declared CARRIED. The vote resulted as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| FOR (12) | AGAINST (1) | ABSTAINED (2) | ABSENT (1) |
| Aldermen | Alderman | Alderman | |
| McDowell | Graham | Smith | |
| McIlveen | | | |

Councillors

Harbinson
Hennessy
Kendall
McBurney
McClellan
McCollum
McKee
Morgan
Smart
Wray

Councillor

Kerr

Councillor

Cathcart

Mr Tom Stokes (Director – TSA Planning) and David Simpson (Applicant) were admitted to the meeting who were in attendance in the virtual public gallery.

The Chair confirmed with the representatives the decision that had just been made to defer the application, and given that the representatives had not used their speaking rights, the full five minutes would be available when the application came back to Committee. The application would come back to Committee at a later date.

Mr Stokes noted the decision to defer and the representatives withdrew from the meeting.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the application be deferred for legal advice to be obtained on the concerns raised by members the Committee, including

1. the age-related condition and the implications of that and the PAC decision,
2. and options open to the committee

as well as further information from environmental health in respect of the potential noise and smell issues reported by local residents from the nearby industrial estate, and the pond safety issues.

4.6 LA06/2023/2471/O - Site immediately adjacent to the rear boundary of 14 Dixon Road, Bangor - 1no. Single storey detached dwelling with detached garage

(Appendices IX, X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report and addendum.

DEA: Bangor East and Donaghadee

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

Proposal: Site immediately adjacent to the rear boundary of 14 Dixon Road, Bangor

Site Location: 1no. Single storey detached dwelling with detached garage

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located in an established residential area within the development limits of Bangor to the rear of 14 Dixon Road which was just off the East Circular Road.

There were no development plan zonings or designations applicable to the site. 14 Dixon Road was a 1½ storey dwelling. It was proposed to access the site to the rear along the eastern boundary of No. 14. In terms of the wider context, neighbouring houses on Dixon Road were predominantly detached single storey and 1½ storey dwellings.

To the rear of the site to the east are two storey townhouses within Towerview Gardens and to the immediate south of the site is Towerview Church. To the south west are the one and a half storey dwellings within Alandale. To the immediate west of the site there was also a single storey detached dwelling located to the rear of 12 Dixon Road.

Displaying photographs of the site itself, the Officer detailed that the site measured approximately 18m wide and 36.5m long. The site was relatively overgrown and the topography falling from No. 14 towards the southern boundary of the site. The boundaries of the site were defined by relatively mature hedgerows and there were also several small trees within the site.

The application as originally submitted was for two residential units. The Planning Department advised the agent that this proposal was unacceptable due to overdevelopment of the site and potential adverse impact on neighbouring properties. The agent then submitted the current amended scheme for a single dwelling. The Planning Department considered this reduced proposal to be acceptable, meeting all of the relevant planning policy requirements as set out in Planning Policy Statement 7 Quality Residential Environments. The proposed plot size and density were both very much in keeping with the existing development in the surrounding area. It was also considered that the proposal would cause no harm to the overall character of the area. The area was already characterised by medium to high density development with a precedent for backland development already established at a number of other locations in the immediate vicinity including sites to the rear of Nos. 10 and 12 Dixon Road. Both the existing dwelling at No. 14 and the proposed dwelling would have adequate in curtilage parking and private amenity space in line with the guidelines contained within Creating Places.

While the application was for outline permission, sections had been submitted by the agent to indicate the proposed finished floor level and height of the dwelling which would be modest at 4.8m to the ridge. The sections demonstrated that the dwelling would not be dominant in the context of the existing adjacent dwellings. To ensure that the privacy of the adjacent dwellings was also maintained, approval had been recommended subject to a number of conditions including retention of existing boundary hedgerows at a minimum height of 1.8m and the withdrawal of permitted development rights to prevent any additional openings being formed or any extensions or buildings being erected within the dwelling's curtilage.

A number of objections to the proposed development had however been received. At the time of drafting the planning report, a total of 10 letters of objection from six separate addresses had been received throughout the processing of the application. A further objection from an additional address was then received on 18 February bringing the total number of objections to 11 from seven separate addresses. A short addendum to the planning report was drafted to consider this late objection and circulated to members however no new material considerations were raised. It was worth noting that seven of the overall 11 representations were submitted in relation to the original superseded proposal for two dwellings therefore it was only the remaining four representations that related to the current proposal for a single dwelling. The main concerns raised included:

- Potential loss of light and privacy
- Overbearing impact on rear of houses at Towerview Gardens.
- The safety of the proposed access.
- The impact on trees

These issues had all been considered in detail in the Case Officer's Report. In terms of the impact on trees, there were several small trees within the site as shown on the aerial view and photo. Those to the rear of the site shown in the photo, would be removed to accommodate the proposed development however the two trees to the front of the site as indicated on the site layout plan, would be retained along with the hedgerows to the eastern and western boundaries.

The Planning Department did not consider that the trees proposed for removal would be worthy of protection under a Tree Preservation Order. In order for trees to be deemed worthy of protection they were required to be of high amenity value, meaning that they would normally be highly visible and make a significant contribution to the local environment, be of some historical importance or be of a particularly rare species. The trees in question do not possess any of those characteristics and were not considered to be of high amenity value given the very restricted public views from one point along Towerview Gardens. With regard to access, DfI Roads had been consulted and had raised no concerns with regard to the safety of the proposed access.

As already outlined, the impact of the development on the existing adjacent properties had been considered in detail. Residents of the properties at Towerview Gardens which back onto the site were particularly concerned about the dominant impact of the development and potential loss of light. The separation distance from the rear of the existing dwellings to the gable of the proposed dwelling would be approx. 10.8m. The 25-degree light test had been used as a tool to assess the potential dominant impact and loss of light to the rear windows of these dwellings. As could be seen on the slide, the green line indicating the 25 degrees and taken from the ground floor windows of the existing dwellings, did not dissect the proposed dwelling. Therefore, it could be concluded that there would be no unacceptable impact on the rear windows of those dwellings by way of loss of light. Given the modest single storey height of the dwelling, it was also not considered that there would be any unacceptable dominant impact. Conditions ensuring the proposal was of the height indicated on the submitted sections and positioned on the application site in conformity with the submitted site layout plan had been recommended.

In summary, the Officer detailed that the proposal was considered to comply with the development plan and all the relevant policy requirements of PPS7 Quality Residential Environments. The proposal would cause no demonstrable harm to the character or appearance of the area, the proposed density of development would be comparable to that already prevalent in the area, adequate private amenity space and parking would be provided for both the existing and proposed dwelling and there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of adjacent properties. On that basis it was recommended that outline planning permission should be granted subject to the recommended conditions.

As there were no questions for the Planning Officer, the Chair invited Mr John Harkness (ADA Architects) to come forward who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr Harkness wished to reemphasise the approval reasons:-

- The various statutory bodies had all been satisfied and that the proposal simply matched what had already been approved in neighbouring sites. Issues raised during the planning application process had been thoroughly addressed in terms of levels and boundary issues, with provision of site sections and revised site plans.
- The proposed single storey dwelling would not be unduly prominent in its context, having a ridge height comparable to that of the existing, adjacent, dwelling at 12A Dixon Road. Overall, the proposal was very similar to the dwellings approved at 10 and 12A Dixon Road. The proposal was not adding to the density of housing in the area as confirmed in the Case Officer's Report.
- It was important that the site was developed to make efficient use of land available within Bangor's Settlement Development Limit - *The principle of a dwelling is acceptable in the context of the LDP*. This proposal would help to reduce urban sprawl, reduce overall traffic movement with residents being closer to the town (work, shops, facilities etc.) and stopped land being wasted. Neighbouring properties should benefit in terms of safety and security, from the proposal, in that having an additional neighbouring dwelling provided more vigilance overlooking and avoided having waste ground which could be misused for loitering etc. That was in accordance with item (i) of QD1 of PPS7 – *'to deter crime and promote personal safety'*.
- Impact on residential Amenity - The proposed dwelling was located adjacent to the rear of dwellings within Towerview Gardens. The separation distances were acceptable and the 25-degree light test had been met.
- Private Amenity Space – Adequate amenity space had been provided to the rear of the dwelling. Existing private amenity space for the dwelling at number 14 would be unaffected by the development.
- Design, Visual Impact and Impact on the Character of the Established Residential Area - Paragraph 4.26 of the SPPS stated that design was an

important material consideration in the assessment of all proposals. With this being an outline application full details were not available for the proposed dwelling, however appropriate design parameters could be, and have been, established, such as the height, footprint and position of the proposed dwelling. These basic and fundamental provisions ensure control of the design, visual impact and impact on the Character of the Established Residential Area.

- Policy Compliant - The proposal was compliant Policy LC1 of PPS7 and Policy QD1 of PPS7.

There were no questions for Mr Harkness and he returned to the public gallery.

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

4.7 LA06/2024/0665/F - Lands at Existing NI Water Clanbrassil WwPS, Farmhill Road, Holywood, BT18 0AD (circa 40metres South West of No.1a Clanbrassil Terrace, Holywood) - Proposed Upgrade to Existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS), Including Extension of Existing Underground Chamber, Addition of Screen to Emergency Overflow, New Access Points and Path to Roof, and Boulders, Sand and Grass Banking
(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Holywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Application relating to land in which the Council has an interest.

Proposal: Proposed Upgrade to Existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS), Including Extension of Existing Underground Chamber, Addition of Screen to Emergency Overflow, New Access Points and Path to Roof, and Boulders, Sand and Grass Banking

Site Location: Lands at Existing NI Water Clanbrassil WwPS, Farmhill Road, Holywood, BT18 0AD (circa 40metres South West of No.1a Clanbrassil Terrace, Holywood)

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application, highlighting that the Applicant was NI Water and there were representatives in attendance should Members have any clarification. The site was located at the end of Farmhill Road adjacent to the shore of Belfast Lough. The site was located within Seapark (an area of open space), with the site containing grass areas, tarmac paths and sand adjacent to the shore. The site itself comprised of an underground tank within an existing area of open space.

Farmhill Road formed the boundary of Seapark, beyond which was the listed Clanbrassil Terrace which was located at a higher level. At the end of the lane the

coastal path continued along the shore to the east and followed a narrow path with a small strip of sand leading to the water.

The area was within the development limit of Holywood as stated in the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 and the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. Within the draft BMAP the site was within the proposed Cultra, Marino and Craigavad Area of Townscape Character (HD 12). Part of the site was also located in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Coastal Area and was within an area of land zoned for Open Space. It was also within a Local Landscape Policy Area (HD 20).

Members were advised that the WwPS already existed and would only be subject to minor changes to provide upgrades and a small extension to it, the principle of development had already been established at this location. NI Water had stated that the works were required to improve NI Water's operations at this facility and increase the storage capacity to reduce the risk of pollution to Belfast Lough.

The proposed development involved an upgrade to this existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS), including extension of existing underground chamber, additional screen to emergency overflow, new access points and path to roof, and boulders, sand, and grass banking. The Head of Planning referred to visuals which showed the proposed site layout and plans/sections.

During the works - A temporary construction compound, along with temporary pedestrian path, would be provided during the construction phase to ensure that all works were contained within the site, whilst also protecting accessibility for users of the surrounding open space area and coastal path. The location of the temporary construction compound/working area and temporary path were shown in Case Officer's report. There would be no harm to setting with a LLPA and an ATC and no loss of open space. The proposed upgrades would be concealed within the existing underground WwPS chamber and along with the extension which was also underground any visual impact would be minimal. Regrading and reprofiling of ground above the proposed extension chamber would be sloped to match the existing adjacent ground profile concealing the extension from view. The temporary path required for any works would be conditioned to be removed after completion of works HED was consulted due to the application sites proximity listed structures. Environmental Health had requested hours of operation of works to be conditioned Given the application sites proximity to Belfast Lough which had environmental designations, both NED and SES were consulted with both having no objections stating that *'the proposed development will not have any impact upon protected species and is therefore compliant with Policy NH2 of PPS2. It is unlikely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - National, I.e., Belfast Lough ASSI and is therefore compliant with Policy NH3 of PPS2.'*

The Head of Planning stated that in summary, as the proposed development was policy compliant, with no objections from consultees and was considered to be essential infrastructure thereby reducing the risk of pollution to Belfast Lough by increasing the storage capacity of the existing WwPS, the grant of planning permission was recommended.

As there were no questions for the Head of Planning, the Chair invited Mr Michael Graham (Chartered Town Planner and Director of Tetra Tech) and Mr Paul Cooke (Director of Tetra Tech's Water team), who were in attendance on behalf of NI Water to come forward who were speaking in support of the application.

Mr Graham was pleased Council's Planning Department had recommended approval and thanked the Planning Officers for their efforts in progressing this to a positive recommendation.

Mr Graham stated that the proposed development involved an upgrade to the existing Wastewater pumping station, including extension of existing underground chamber, additional screen to emergency overflow, new access points and path to roof, and boulders, sand, and grass banking. It was required to improve NI Water's operations at this facility and increase the storage capacity to reduce the risk of pollution to Belfast Lough.

The existing underground facility comprised a WwPS with emergency storage and a high-level overflow to the sea. Under normal operating conditions, the facility received flows from a gravity pipeline and pumped that forward via a pressure pipeline for treatment at a wastewater treatment works. The storage and high-level overflow were there to make sure that, in emergency conditions, e.g. excess flows entering the facility or equipment failure, flows could be stored safely before eventually overflowing to the sea.

The proposed upgrade works would provide supplementary storage and screening to the existing underground facility. That would allow more flow to be stored, and a longer time to elapse, before emergency discharge occurs. It would also allow solid matter to be screened out of the emergency overflow prior to discharge. The additional storage and associated screening would therefore represent a clear, demonstrable benefit to the environment.

The proposed works utilise materials and finishes that accord with that of the existing underground WwPS. Its appearance would therefore be minimally altered from its present state, resulting in no adverse impact on the overall character of the area. It also involved regrading and reprofiling of the ground above the proposed extension chamber to be sloped to match the existing adjacent ground profile thereby concealing the extension from public view.

Overall, Mr Graham explained that the works would help integrate the development into the landscape and would also assist in maintaining the character, whilst also respecting the built form of the area.

A temporary construction compound, along with temporary pedestrian path, would be provided during the construction phase to ensure that all works were contained within the site, whilst also protecting accessibility for users of the open space area and coastal path.

Consultations were undertaken with NIE, Environmental Health, NIEA Natural Environment Division, and Water Management Unit, Shared Environmental Service, DfI Rivers, and Historic Environment Division and all were content with no

objections. No third-party representations were received. Council's Planning Department had considered the planning history, requirements of the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995, Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015, SPPS, PPS2, PPS6, PPS6 Addendum, PPS8, PPS11 and PPS15. Mr Graham had reviewed the Planning Department's suggested conditions and was content with same.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor McCollum was familiar with the area and asked how long the construction works would last. Mr Cooke envisaged those would last 8-10 weeks.

Councillor McCollum further raised questions in relation to operational matters including noise disturbance and construction vehicles. Mr Cooke advised that there would be a period that contractors would need to break through from the existing to the new facility and that work would last no more than a couple of days and be during working hours. Rock was not expected to be broken through, and excavation should be reasonably quiet. A temporary compound would be established for the construction works in the vicinity of the existing facility within the Seapark site.

Mr Graham added that in terms of noise disturbance a condition was attached to the application restricting the hours of construction to during the daytime.

Councillor McCollum referred to the flood risk assessment and noted that there a flood at the area almost every time there was heavy rainfall. The area was in the verges of the marine flood plain. The structure was contained therefore no risk of egress. The works would make permanent improvements with addition screening and storage providing lasting benefits for the environment.

Councillor Kendall asked the time of the year the works would take place conscious that the area was busy during the summer period. Mr Cooke advised that effort would be made to aim to undertake the works before the summer period. One of the final stages before construction could begin was the production of a Construction Environmental Management Plan which needed to be agreed, and engagement had commenced with SES and Water Management Unit in that regard.

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

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

Councillor McCollum and Councillor Morgan welcomed the improvement works.

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

- 4.8 LA06/2024/0913/F - Land between 12-35 Queen's Parade, Bangor - Proposed 1 year temporary car park for public use (scheme composed of 97 new car parking spaces, 6 of which are disabled parking spaces & 20 motorcycle spaces)**
(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: An application made by the Council

Proposal: Proposed 1 year temporary car park for public use (scheme composed of 97 new car parking spaces, 6 of which are disabled parking spaces & 20 motorcycle spaces)

Site Location: Land between 12-35 Queen's Parade, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application. The application was made by the Council, was for a temporary car park on land owned by the Department for Communities. If approved, its development and directional/information signage had been approved under the DfC Urban Regeneration Programme budget.

Members would be fully aware of the proposals for the redevelopment of the wider area of Queen's Parade for a major mixed use regeneration scheme, comprising of residential, hotel, retailing, food and beverage, open space and leisure and significant public realm.

Given that work was due to commence on the Marine Gardens side of the scheme in the first instance, there was opportunity to utilise the existing site at The Vennel on the land side of Queen's Parade as a car park for a temporary period. That would assist the city centre in the immediate term when car parking spaces at Marine Gardens were removed to develop the stretch of public realm. The works were relatively minor in nature and involve bitmacing the site and marking out spaces alongside some low level lighting.

(Councillor Kendall withdrew from the meeting – 10.45 pm)

The site would provide some 97 new car parking spaces, 6 of which were disabled parking spaces and 20 motorcycle spaces. Statutory consultees were content, given the context of the site which was to be redeveloped in totality under an extant planning approval.

Only one objection was received which considered that use of this site as a car park would hamper redevelopment works and the programme for redevelopment, and that other car parks nearby should be signposted accordingly. As set out in the Case Officer's report, the proposal was not considered to hamper the overall redevelopment, the developer was aware of the scheme, and the proposal was temporary in nature. As reported to the Place and Prosperity Committee at its meeting in October 2024, whilst the development works at Queen's Parade were the responsibility of the developer, who would have a visible presence on site throughout

the build, the Council needed to proactively assist with the challenges brought about by the loss of the spaces in Marine Gardens as the first phase of the wider scheme. In addition to this proposal, officers would introduce measures to manage the movement of the public between car parks and deliver a communications and awareness campaign to help residents and businesses prepare for change.

The recommendation was to grant planning permission for a temporary period of one year.

Councillor Morgan asked why there was no cycling parking included. The Head of Planning advised that no cycling parking had been included as part of the proposal and the Planning Department was not required to ask for such.

Councillor Morgan viewed that as very disappointing.

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

The Chair noted that parking was being removed as part of the overall Queen's Parade development, yet the proposal sought to provide parking for only one year.

(Councillor Kendall re-entered the meeting – 10.47 pm)

The Chair viewed that as a waste of money.

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

4.9 LA06/2024/0960/A - Land 27m south of 7 Portaferry Road, Cloughey - Village Sign
(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Village Sign

Site Location: Land 27m south of 7 Portaferry Road, Cloughey

Recommendation: Consent

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application. The sign was similar to previously approved signs as part of the Council's ongoing signage for towns and villages in the Borough with a distinctive design for each to mark the local identity of a settlement. The site was located just outside the settlement limit of Cloughey approximately nine metres south of the settlement limit. DfI Roads was consulted and had no objection. A visual of the proposed sign was shown, the local beach was well known and was reflected within the sign and it was recommended that consent was granted.

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

Councillor Wray welcomed the design and the location, whilst Councillor Kerr welcomed the signage for Cloughey.

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

5. SERVICE UNIT PLAN 2025/2026

(Appendix XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Planning Service Plan 2025/26 for approval. The report detailed that Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

The 2025-26 Service Plan for Planning in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.

- Sets out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Is based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached Service Plan for Planning.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report outlining the detail to Members.

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

6. PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

(Appendices XV, XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Item 6a Appeal decision - 2023/L0007 and Appeal decision - 2023/A0109. The report detailed the undernoted:-

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was dismissed on 22 January 2025.

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| PAC Ref | 2023/L0007 |
| Council Ref | LA06/2022/1295/CLOPUD |
| Appellant | Dr Stephen Glover |
| Subject of Appeal | Erection of Shed |
| Location | 40 Ballymacreeley Road, Killinchy |

The Council refused the above application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of a Proposed Use or Development on 3 August 2023 in relation to a proposed shed as it was not considered to meet the requirements of The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015 – i.e. development not requiring express planning permission.

The main issue in this appeal related to whether the proposed shed would be lawful.

Section 170 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 made provision for the issuing of a certificate of lawfulness for a proposed use or development. Section 170(1) stated that if any person wished to ascertain whether any proposed use of buildings or other land or any operations proposed to be carried out in, on, over or

under land, would be lawful, that person may make an application for the purpose to the appropriate council specifying the land and describing the use or operations in question.

Part 1 of the Schedule to the Order related to development within a residential curtilage with Class D making provision for any building for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house.

The Council considered that the development would not meet Class D criterion (b) which stated that development is not permitted if any part of the building is situated on land forward of a wall which (i) faces into a road; and (ii) forms either the principal elevation or a side elevation of the original dwellinghouse

Claims were made of contradictions in the Council’s approach to the CLOPUD application; however, the Commissioner determined that the submitted statement of case is taken as the Council’s final position on the matter.

There was no concern in relation to the height of the proposed building and the impact of the appellant’s proposed shed on visual amenity.

Information regarding the surveillance system and pergola on the appellant’s property were outside the remit of the appeal and any reference to Scottish and English planning system’s permitted development rights, Scotland’s Guidance on Householder Permitted Development Rights raised by the appellant, including any reference to claims in relation to support for the proposal by other councils within this jurisdiction, did not have determining weight in this case. A letter to the appellant from Dfl dated 6th March 2023 was not official guidance with no such considerations contained within the legislation.

The side elevation of the appellant’s dwellinghouse faces onto Ballymacreeley Road with the proposed shed forward of this wall. Given that the proposed building would be forward of a wall which faces into a road and forms a side elevation of the original dwelling house it therefore sits outside the provisions of Part 1 Class D(b) of the GDPO and therefore was not permitted development.

The appeal was dismissed.

2. The following appeal was dismissed on 11 February 2025

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| PAC Ref | 2023/A0109 |
| Council Ref | LA06/2023/2156/O |
| Appellant | Mr Gareth Horner |
| Subject of Appeal | Refusal of planning permission for 2no. dwellings |
| Location | Between No. 2A and No. 4 Coach Road, Comber |

The above planning application was refused on 01 March 2024 for the following reasons:

- The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY 8 of Planning Policy Statement 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the proposal would, if permitted, result in the creation of ribbon development along Coach Road.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY 1 of Planning Policy Statement 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- The proposal is contrary to Policy CTY 14 of Planning Policy 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the dwellings would, if permitted, result in a detrimental change to the rural character of the countryside by creating a ribbon of development.

Whilst the Commissioner agreed with the Council that there was a substantial and continuously built up frontage (consisting of three or more buildings), the gap site would be suitable to accommodate more than two dwellings. As such the appeal site did not represent an exception under Policy CTY8.



The appellant’s reference to Building on Tradition Guidance and other gap site frontages which were deemed acceptable within the Council district was not considered to assist their case given the policy requirement for the proposal to respect the existing development pattern along the frontage (emphasis added). It followed that what was acceptable on one frontage may not be acceptable on another and in any event each proposal must be assessed on its individual merits.

The Council’s reasons for refusal were upheld, with the exception of concerns regarding removal of hedgerow to facilitate sight splays which the Commissioner considered could be conditioned on any approval.

New Appeals Lodged

The following appeal against an Enforcement Notice was lodged on 04 February 2025.

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| PAC Ref | 2024/E0044 |
| Council Ref | LA06/2021/0144/CA |
| Appellant | Mr William & Mrs Helen Wylie |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Subject of Appeal | Alleged unauthorised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ancillary building; • wooden pergola; • extension of domestic curtilage which includes concrete path; • building; • building; • shelter; • laying of hardstanding laneway. |
| Location | Lands at 107 Comber Road, Newtownards |

The following appeal was lodged on 28 January 2025.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| PAC Ref | 2024/A0114 |
| Council Ref | LA06/2023/2149/O |
| Appellant | Alexis Clarke |
| Subject of Appeal | Refusal of planning permission for 2 No. in-fill dwellings with domestic garages |
| Location | 40a and 42 Deer Park Road, Newtownards, BT22 1PN |
| Proposal | 2 No. in-fill dwellings with domestic garages |

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachments.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report outlining the detail to Members.

The Chair was mindful regarding the discussion earlier in the meeting regards the PAC decision in relation to the Kiltonga application. He wondered if there was a concern from Officers in relation to a decision from PAC, would a commentary be provided. If PAC decisions were not challenged and became binding the Chair wondered if at a point those decisions should be challenged.

The Director explained that the PAC decisions were not caselaw, they formed a material consideration which were given a substantial weight. It was delegated to Planning’s authorised officer to take legal cases and that had occurred previously, in respect of previous challenges to PAC decisions, however, Officers were mindful of that and noted the costs associated, but would certainly advise Members accordingly.

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

7. QUARTER 2 2024/2025 STATISTICS
(Appendix XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Statistical Bulletin. The report detailed that the Department’s Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch published provisional statistics for Planning activity on 12 December 2025 for Quarter 2 (July – September) of 2024/25.

Members could view the full statistical tables at :<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-july-september-2024>

Local Applications

The Council determined 160 residential applications in Quarter 2 of 2024/25 compared to 140 such applications in the same period of the year before. The majority of applications received in Quarter 2 were in the residential category at 68% (118 out of 174).

The average processing time for applications in the local category of development in Quarter 2 was 18.6 weeks, higher than the statutory performance indicator of 15 weeks but lower than Quarter 1 at 19 weeks.

Major Applications

Recorded in the statistics was one application determined in the major category of development with an average processing time of 85.8 weeks against the statutory performance target of 30 weeks.

This application related to the redevelopment of the former Redburn Primary School site in Holywood for a post-primary school with car park, bus drop-off area and playing pitches with floodlighting.

Further information on majors and locals was contained in Tables 3.1 and 4.1 respectively of the Statistical Tables.

Enforcement

The Planning Service opened 50 new enforcement cases in the second quarter of 2024/2025, whilst 121 cases were concluded resulting in a conclusion time of 53.7% against the target of 70%.

122 cases were closed with the reasons as follows:

| Closure Reason | Number |
|---|--------|
| Remedied/Resolved | 48 |
| Planning permission granted | 3 |
| Not expedient | 24 |
| No breach | 39 |
| Immune from enforcement action | 8 |
| Enforcement appeal upheld i.e. planning permission granted under ground (a) appeal | 0 |

Householder Applications

During Quarter 2 the Planning Service processed 111 applications within the householder category of development.

53 of these were processed within the internal performance target of 8 weeks (48%), with 83 being processed within the 15-week statutory performance indicator (75%).

Additional Activity

Additional activity details the "non-application" workload of the Planning Service, and includes Discharge of Conditions, Certificates of Lawfulness (Proposed & Existing), and applications for Non-Material Changes.

| Type | No. Received | No. Processed |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| Discharge of Conditions | 15 | 11 |
| Certificates of Lawfulness (Existing/Proposed) | 18 | 14 |
| Non-Material Changes | 11 | 10 |
| Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) | 4 | 2 |
| Proposal of Application Notice (PANs) | 3 | 1 |
| Consent to carry out tree works | 11 | 16 |

The Planning Service continued to work with a significant number of vacancies at a variety of levels within Development Management, for which ongoing recruitment was continuing, as well as suffering a number of long-term sick absences and resultant file reallocations, which continued to have impacts on case processing times.

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

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

8. BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that the Planning Service's Budgetary Control Report covering the 9-month period 1 April to 31 December 2024. The net cost of the Service was showing an underspend of £7k (0.6%).

Explanation of Variance

The Planning Service's budget performance was further analysed on page 2 into 3 key areas:

| Report | Type | Variance | Page |
|----------|---------------------|------------------|------|
| Report 2 | Payroll Expenditure | £183k favourable | 2 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Report 3 | Goods & Services Expenditure | £37k favourable | 2 |
| Report 4 | Income | £214k adverse | 2 |

Explanation of Variance

The Planning Service's overall variance could be summarised by the following table:

| Type | Variance £'000 | Comment |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Payroll | (183) | A number of vacancies due to resignations and resultant backfilling, where possible, exist – some recruitment exercises have been unsuccessful and are continuing. Agency staff employed where available to backfill lower posts. |
| Goods & Services | (37) | Range of small underspends (advertising, planning portal, tree services etc.) |
| Income | 214 | Mainly planning application fees. Limited major applications received to date. |

| REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Period 9 - December 2024 | | | | | |
| | Year to Date Actual | Year to Date Budget | Variance | Annual Budget | Variance |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Planning | | | | | |
| 730 Planning | 1,228,339 | 1,235,300 | (6,961) | 1,740,400 | (0.6) |
| Total | 1,228,339 | 1,235,300 | A (6,961) | 1,740,400 | (0.6) |
| REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Planning - Payroll | | | | | |
| 730 Planning | 1,708,352 | 1,891,800 | (183,448) | 2,522,500 | (9.7) |
| Total | 1,708,352 | 1,891,800 | (183,448) | 2,522,500 | (9.7) |
| REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Planning - Goods & Services | | | | | |
| 730 Planning | 173,318 | 210,700 | (37,382) | 367,500 | (17.7) |
| Total | 173,318 | 210,700 | (37,382) | 367,500 | (17.7) |
| REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Planning - Income | | | | | |
| 730 Planning | (653,331) | (867,200) | 213,869 | (1,149,600) | 24.7 |
| Totals | (653,331) | (867,200) | 213,869 | (1,149,600) | 24.7 |

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

The Head of Planning provided an overview of the report.

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

9. UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDER AND WORKS (Appendix XVIII)

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the content of this report.

The Principal Professional and Technical Officer (C Barker) was in attendance via Zoom to present the report.

She advised that one provisional TPO had been served at Lands at Nos. 1, 2, 2a, 3, 4, 5 and 6 The Grange and Nos. 7-12 Carnesure Mews, Comber. There had been one consent for works protected trees decision at 160 High Street, Holywood. That application sought to fell two trees, carry out works to 39 trees which involved crown cleaning, removal of dead wood and ivy. All the work to the protected trees were in line with Council's health and condition report. The two trees recommended for felling were roadside ash trees which had showed significant ash dieback and deterioration, as such the Council had no objection to their removal subject to a replanting condition on a one to one basis on the roadside boundary.

In relation to the recent storm and areas where there were tree preservation orders, Councillor McCollum wondered if there was requirement on residents to notify that trees had fallen in the storm. The Officer stated that there was no obligation, any tree that was considered dangerous would be considered exempt from protection. It was good practice to notify Planning of the trees that had fallen and that those had fallen as a result of the storm as the onus would be on those residents from an enforcement perspective to provide that evidence.

Councillor Kendall thanked the Officer (C Barker) for the recent workshop she had organised in respect of tree preservation orders.

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

10. UPDATE ON PLANNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

(Appendix XIX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching correspondence from Permanent Secretary of DfI to Council Chief Executives, Minutes of Interim Commission meeting and copy of presentation by PAC to the Commission. The report detailed that Members would be aware of the Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) following publication of a report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office on Planning in Northern Ireland and followed by the report by the Public Accounts Committee in February and March 2022, respectively.

The Permanent Secretary of DfI had written to Council Chief Executives to advise on collective progress achieved to date which included:

- delivery of legislation to enable councils to produce local validation checklists which will improve the quality of applications and performance (reported to Committee in November 2024)
- work through the Planning Statutory Consultee Forum with 80% of statutory consultations responded to within the statutory target. (Council still awaiting breakdown of statistics re DfI consultations as requested by Committee in October 2024)

- delivery of training to statutory consultees and planning staff on of Environmental Impact Assessment, as part of the Department's Environmental Governance Work Programme.

The next phase would focus on specific areas of collective action and initiatives across the 12 planning authorities to support the long-term sustainability of the system; as well as improving overall performance with the objective of reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiencies of processes

The next phase of the programme would include:

- completing a Review of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015
- streamline the planning application process
- facilitating and encouraging greater participation in the process
- collaborative work and actions to improve effectiveness and efficiencies
- effective enforcement with the Department will continuing to work with councils to ensure regional compliance with environmental obligations
- working to review and improve the efficiency of the implementation of the local development plan process
- addressing financial sustainability of the system

The importance of addressing issues and weaknesses in processes was recognised while also focusing on capacity and capability to ensure that planning resources were fit for purpose and able to deliver a good planning service.

The Department would explore ways to improve the skills of staff across the 12 planning authorities through a collective training and development programme with both graduate trainee and apprentice schemes for planners and ensuring succession planning for the future.

The approach advocated by Dfl was focused on outcomes, rather than actions. The achievement of that would require the establishment of a new Planning Performance & Improvement Framework (PPIF) for all 12 planning authorities (including DFI) as agreed in the initial phase of planning improvement.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report and attachments.

The Head of Planning spoke to the report outlining the next phase of the programme.

Councillor Kendall asked if there had been any progress in relation to statutory consultees responding quicker to planning applications.

The Head of Planning detailed that whilst the report stated that 80% of statutory consultees responded on target, the Ards and North Down Borough had not received adequate response times. Efforts had progressed with Dfl Roads, with an Officer from Dfl Roads now meeting with the Planning team each month to discuss applications. The onus was on Officers to be clear on what was being asked of statutory consultees and go back and challenge if responses were not of quality. Challenges remained with NIEA, applications were not being prioritised, and a pilot

was being undertaken in an aim to address that matter. All Councils did not experience the same delays.

In response to a question from Councillor Morgan, the Head of Planning stated that Members were aware of the delays experienced. Councillor Morgan had previously requested a breakdown of statistics in relation to statutory consultees and that would be provided at the next Planning Committee meeting.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

11. UPDATE ON PLANNING ENFORCEMENT CASE

(Appendix XX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person.

12. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

(Appendix XX)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

This report is presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 11.22 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 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McAlpine

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom)
Cummings

Councillors:

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Blaney (Zoom) | Kerr (Zoom) |
| Boyle | McKee (Zoom) |
| Douglas | McKimm (Zoom) |
| Edmund | Morgan |
| Irwin | Wray |

Officers: Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Interim Head of Regulatory Services (R McCracken), and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Mayor (on Council business), Councillor Harbinson and Councillor McLaren.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

NOTED.

3. 2025-26 SERVICE PLANS

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

Community Plan – published every 10-15 years

Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually

Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached were the 2025-26 Service Plans for Assets and Property Services, Regulatory Services and Waste and Cleansing Services in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable the Council to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plans:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Were based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plans may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Directorate Service Plans.

3.1 Assets and Property Services
(Appendix I)

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Assets and Property Services Directorate Service Plan.

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

3.2 Waste and Cleansing Services
(Appendix II)

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Waste and Cleansing Service Directorate Service Plan.

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

Councillor Wray referred to the SWOT analysis for the section and asked for an explanation of the issue with street washing and traffic management. The Head of Waste and Cleansing replied that staff could not work on high speed roads without a traffic management plan. Permission was also required from DfI Roads which stipulated the conditions. He went on to give the example of the A2 road to Belfast where cleansing was only permitted at weekends and not at all during the month of December. It was also noted that one of the two street washing machines was out of order and difficulty had been experienced in sourcing spare parts for that. Alternatives such as leasing or hiring equipment were being considered.

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

3.3 Regulatory Services
(Appendix III)

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Regulatory Services Directorate Service Plan.

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

Councillor Douglas asked about why Project Ella had been stalled within local schools and it was explained that there had been issues around communication, which had now been addressed and the programme would be restarted and further progressed within the new school year.

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

4. ITEM WITHDRAWN

5. GRANT OF AN 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 follows:

1. Circus Vegas, land adjacent to 10 Comber Road, Newtownards, BT23 4QP

Applicant: Olivia Mulvaney, Circus Vegas American Circus, 1 Earl Street, Longford, Co Longford

Days and Hours: 14 Unspecified days within 12 months, 11am – 10.30pm

Show times usually followed the below schedule:

Thursday 4.30pm & 7.30pm

Friday 4.30pm & 7.30pm

Saturday 2pm & 5pm

Sunday 2pm & 5pm or 12noon & 3pm

Type of entertainment: A Circus

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants an Entertainments Licence to Circus Vegas subject to satisfactory final inspection by Licensing and Regulatory Services.

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

6. CAR PARK CAPITAL RESURFACING WORKS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing:

Strategic Context

The Council's agreed Maintenance Strategy incorporated a "needs based" approach for its refurbishment programme.

Car Parks were scored every year and the lowest scoring of them was earmarked for resurfacing, subject to budgetary constraints.

Capital Budget

As resurfacing works were carried out from the Council's capital budget, a set amount was required to be identified each year to facilitate accurate capital budget forecasting.

Historically, an annual figure of £50k was included in the capital budget, however as noted in previous reports and the Council's Car Park Strategy, that amount was inadequate in terms of achieving a vision of a modern, attractive and fully fit for purpose public car park estate.

Maintenance Issues within Car Parks

A large proportion of the Council's 70+ car parks were transferred to the Council from DfI during the Review of Public Administration in 2015. Many of

those car parks were in a poor state of repair, with poor surfacing and marking and old inefficient lighting. Many car parks still had not had the title transferred from DfI and some had issues involving land ownership and unauthorised entries/rights of way.

Modernisation of Car Parks

The Council's Car Park Strategy, agreed in 2021, set out a vision for a high standard public asset that realised its full potential in helping to promote a sustainable Borough – driving forward economic, environmental and social well-being. The implementation of a number of key improvements to the car parks was essential, including:

- Resurfacing
- New line marking, utilising the upper end of the standard widths for parking spaces to help accommodate the larger, SUV type vehicles that had increased in popularity in recent years.
- New fully DDA compliant spacing with drop-kerbs for wheelchair use.
- LED lighting that provided a clearer, brighter light but used less power and incorporated automatic dimming features.

In addition to the above, several further enhancements had been identified as being important in terms of realising the Council's vision for high quality modern car parks, including:

- Enhanced signage
- Enhanced environmental features, planting etc.
- Bicycle and motorcycle parking facilities
- EV charging infrastructure

The implementation of such an improvement programme would not be possible within the current budget availability.

Cross-Departmental Working

Cognisance of wider strategies and plans for those assets was essential to reducing the likelihood of spending significant sums of money on assets that may be disposed of or replaced in the foreseeable future. Therefore, discussions with relevant officers had taken place to ensure that proposed works reflected any known plans for the assets concerned.

Any car parks with known imminent works to be carried out had been exempted from the scoring.

Condition Scores

The table below provided a list of all car parks. They had been surveyed and ranked in order of their condition. Pay and Display car parks had had a weighting added to lower their scores so that they gained priority over others. Similarly, car parks within town/village centres had also had a (slightly lesser) weighting added so that they

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|--|--|---------------|------------|---------------|
| | | <65% | | | 0 | £15,947.50 | |
| Town Centre car parks high use. | x 0.9 | | | | £0.00 | £2,392.13 | |
| Village Centre car parks. Town outskirts. Medium use. | x 1.0 | | | | £0.00 | £18,339.63 | £18,339.63 |
| Country Car parks. Minor car parks. | ix 1.1 | | | | | | |
| | | <75% | | | £149,040.00 | £15,947.50 | |
| | | | | | £22,356.00 | £2,392.13 | |
| | | | | | £171,396.00 | £18,339.63 | £189,735.63 |
| | | <85% | | | £1,879,860.00 | £15,947.50 | |
| | | | | | £281,979.00 | £2,392.13 | |
| | | | | | £2,161,839.00 | £18,339.63 | £2,180,178.63 |

Required Works

Line marking was seen as priority work in the Council's charged car parks as defective lines could contribute to incorrect parking and disputes over ticketing. However, in some car parks the surfacing was in a relatively poor condition and line marking could not be carried out until it had been resurfaced. As indicated in the table above, around £16k of line marking was proposed for this year. The work could not be capitalised so must be taken from routine maintenance revenue budgets.

As highlighted previously in the report, the Council currently had budgeted £50k per year in capital budgets for car park resurfacing. Unfortunately, that was insufficient to complete all of the necessary works to the lowest scoring car park - Holborn Avenue, Bangor.

Notwithstanding that, an ongoing legal matter meant that it was inadvisable to proceed with substantial works at this car park until this had been further resolved. In the meantime, more minor essential repair works would be undertaken there during the incoming financial year.

The second lowest scoring location, Old Cross East, Newownards could however be resurfaced within the budget allocated for the year.

Potential for Increasing Budget

As indicated in the table above, the Council currently had £171k of priority capital works required to its car parks that fell below a 75% condition score (shaded red), and that budget requirement increased to £2.1M if a higher condition score of 85% was to be achieved (shaded amber). Note: An 85% condition threshold was in line with what had generally been considered acceptable for its buildings over past budgeting cycles.

At the current budget allocation, achievement of an 85% condition score would take 38 years to complete, and in the meantime those and other car parks would continue to deteriorate and require further work. Indeed, the expected lifespan of the bitmac surface would be approximately 20 years, meaning the Council would perpetually be "behind the curve" when trying to address the backlog of work with the budget available. It was therefore clear that the current budget allocation was insufficient if even a reasonable standard of car park condition was to be achieved.

Members would be aware that a new tariff structure for charged car parks had been agreed as part of the Car Park Strategy, with financial modelling showing that that

should yield approx. £0.5M in additional income based upon current usage patterns. However, implementation of the new tariffs had been delayed pending the outcome of efforts to ensure legislative support for that. Officers were currently actively working on options to move forward in that regard, and a further report would be brought to the Council on that subject as soon as possible.

When new tariffs could be introduced, the projected additional income would provide much needed additional funds to support an expansion of the annual capital programme for car park maintenance and enhancements, and a report would be brought in due course regarding that. That would ensure that the car park users paid for that service (which was not a statutory service provided for by default rates income), rather than the cost being levied through general rates to all ratepayers irrespective of whether they used car parks.

In the meantime, within the current limits of the agreed 2025-26 capital budget for car park works, it was planned that the following works would be undertaken in accordance with the prioritisation process outlined in the report:

- Line marking at various car park listed
- Resurfacing of Old Cross East, Newtownards
- Localised repairs to Holborn Avenue Car Park

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the planned car park works for 2025-26.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter understood that this was a relatively small sum of money to spend on improvements to the car parks of the Borough and suggested that if lines were being re-marked that they be made a little bigger to accommodate the larger vehicles and even coaches. Other works required to the car parks would need substantial capital. The Director agreed and pointed out that it had been highlighted in the report that designated parking bay size would be towards the upper end of the standard set for width, although he was unsure of the technical detail around that. Referring to coach parking spaces officers were also alive to that, and locations were identified within certain car parks under the Car Park Strategy proposals.

Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the report but recognised that the Council would have a long term financial and legal challenge both to maintain car parks and in dealing with landowner issues. The Director stated that there may be some light at the end of the tunnel with the new tariffs that the Council had agreed, and the financial modelling suggested that income under the new tariff structure should much more adequately cater for the maintenance and improvement of the car parks going forward. Councillor Boyle hoped that would be the case and thanked the Director for his comments.

Councillor Wray agreed with the challenges in relation to the car parks which had deteriorated badly and that it was difficult to do anything significant with such a small pot of current funding. He considered that it seemed that some car parks

were not well used and wondered if the land could be sold to bring revenue to the Council. The Director replied that as part of the Car Park Strategy, all car parks were assessed and one or two were suggested for potential repurposing or redevelopment - but they were all kept under ongoing review, the Strategy was not set in stone but was fluid and dynamic and could be adjusted and amended as necessary.

Councillor Morgan stressed the need to remember the placement of cycle parking facilities in car parks and thought that the Council needed to be sharper when considering that. She also asked what the timeframe was for new tariffs. In response the Director said that proposals for cycle parking featured in the Car Park Strategy and was an integral part of the Council's vision. He went on to state that the Strategy could only be fully implemented with a sufficient revenue stream, and it was hoped that the agreed new tariff structure could be implemented in the current financial year following positive reassurances from the Department.

It was proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that the recommendation be adopted with the addition that the Council write to the Department for Infrastructure to urge the implementation of promised legislative changes around the making and repealing of Car Park Orders, which was necessary to allow the Council to progress with implementation of its Car Park Strategy.

Councillor Morgan thought this should be added to make it clear to the Department the position the Council found itself in. The Member referred to her disappointment that there were no cycle racks proposed to be placed at Queen's Parade and the Director explained that decision was constrained due to the limited budget and the fact that the new car park area referred to was designed to be temporary.

Councillor Irwin raised the point made previously by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter in respect of the size of car parking spaces and also asked for sufficient disability as well as parent and child spaces going forward.

Councillor Edmund believed that assessment should be made on whether cycle parking was really necessary and referring to South Street in Newtownards, he indicated that he had never seen bicycles parked there.

Councillor Douglas informed officers that some Dfl signs were still in place within car parks and encouraged the Council to follow up on that. The Head of Regulatory Services explained that the old signage was in the process of being changed across the Council's car park estate and should be dealt with in the near future.

Councillor McKimm referred to cycle parking and remembered the budget for safe cycle parking coming from an external source in the past. Responding the Director was not aware of that initiative, but he was aware that there were external sources potentially available and the Member had made a good point. The Council would scan the environment for funding opportunities to develop that further. Sustainable travel had been discussed at length and the Council would place cycle parking in the right locations and market that availability to residents and visitors to the Borough.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that the recommendation be adopted and further agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to urge the implementation of promised legislative changes around the making and repealing of Car Park Orders, which is necessary to allow Council to progress with implementation of its Car Park Strategy.

7. ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT – DECEMBER 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Environment 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 £310k (1.5%) – box A.

Explanation of Variance

Environment's budget performance was further analysed into 3 key areas:

| Report | Type | Variance | Page |
|----------|------------------------------|------------------|------|
| Report 2 | Payroll Expenditure | £699k favourable | 3 |
| Report 3 | Goods & Services Expenditure | £344k adverse | 3 |
| Report 4 | Income | £45k adverse | 3 |

Explanation of Variance

The Environment Directorate's overall variance could be summarised by the following table (variances over £25k): -

| Type | Variance £'000 | Comment |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Payroll | (699) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste and Cleansing (£366k) – vacancies within Waste Collection which are being recruited Assets and Property (£161k) – vacancies within Property Operations and Fleet Management Regulatory Services (£170k) – vacancies within Building Control and Neighbourhood Environment Team |
| Goods & Services | | |
| Waste and Cleansing Services | (116) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste disposal costs (£199k) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Landfill (£73k) ii. Recycled Waste (£127K) Borough Cleaning £25k. Range of running costs over budget to date. |

| Type | Variance £'000 | Comment |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Collection £21k. Range of running costs over budget to date. |
| Assets and Property | 420 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory and Planned maintenance £436k – Aurora pool floor repairs large part of this. Energy costs (£225k) – electric £129k, gas (£163K), Oil (£32k), Derv (£165k) Sewerage/ trade effluent charges £83k. Other expenditure £124k – Transport running costs |
| Income | | |
| Waste and Cleansing | 160 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade waste income £132k. Special collections income £26k. |
| Assets and Property | (163) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind Turbine (£91k). Property Maintenance (£37k) Technical Services (£37k) |
| Regulatory Services | 48 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Control income (£60k). Car Park income £69k Licensing income £21k |

| REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Period 9 - December 2024 | | | | | |
| | Year to Date Actual | Year to Date Budget | Variance | Annual Budget | Variance |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Environment | | | | | |
| 200 Environment HQ | 155,462 | 156,700 | (1,238) | 211,700 | (0.8) |
| 210 Waste and Cleansing Services | 13,018,617 | 13,339,400 | (320,783) | 17,782,500 | (2.4) |
| 220 Assets and Property Services | 7,331,849 | 7,235,700 | 96,149 | 9,758,300 | 1.3 |
| 230 Regulatory Services | 326,225 | 410,300 | (84,075) | 571,900 | (20.5) |
| Total | 20,832,152 | 21,142,100 | A (309,948) | 28,324,400 | (1.5) |
| REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Environment - Payroll | | | | | |
| 200 Environment HQ | 128,078 | 130,800 | (2,722) | 174,300 | (2.1) |
| 210 Waste and Cleansing Services | 7,129,430 | 7,495,000 | (365,570) | 9,971,600 | (4.9) |
| 220 Assets and Property Services | 1,645,833 | 1,807,100 | (161,267) | 2,415,200 | (8.9) |
| 230 Regulatory Services | 1,549,458 | 1,719,200 | (169,742) | 2,292,500 | (9.9) |
| Total | 10,452,799 | 11,152,100 | B (699,301) | 14,853,600 | (6.3) |
| REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Environment - Goods & Services | | | | | |
| 200 Environment HQ | 27,384 | 25,900 | 1,484 | 37,400 | 5.7 |
| 210 Waste and Cleansing Services | 7,011,265 | 7,126,900 | (115,635) | 9,261,800 | (1.6) |
| 220 Assets and Property Services | 6,012,680 | 5,592,300 | 420,380 | 7,542,000 | 7.5 |
| 230 Regulatory Services | 484,433 | 446,400 | 38,033 | 582,400 | 8.5 |
| Total | 13,535,763 | 13,191,500 | C 344,263 | 17,423,600 | 2.6 |
| REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT | | | | | |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Environment - Income | | | | | |
| 200 Environment HQ | - | - | - | - | - |
| 210 Waste and Cleansing Services | (1,122,078) | (1,282,500) | 160,422 | (1,450,900) | 12.5 |
| 220 Assets and Property Services | (326,665) | (163,700) | (162,965) | (198,900) | (99.6) |
| 230 Regulatory Services | (1,707,666) | (1,755,300) | 47,634 | (2,303,000) | 2.7 |
| Totals | (3,156,410) | (3,201,500) | D 45,090 | (3,952,800) | 1.4 |

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

8. LETTER TO DAERA – NAPPY RECYCLING SERVICE (NOM 635)

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that further to a Notice of Motion agreed by the Council in November 2024 highlighting the need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland, the Council wrote as agreed to the DAERA Minister.

A letter of response has now been received from the DAERA Minister as attached.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the contents of the DAERA Minister's response.

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

As proposer Councillor Douglas explained that the Notice of Motion had been brought by Alderman McIlveen and she appreciated the Minister's response noting that although there were no plans to introduce a scheme at this point, officials were keen to engage with local Councils to explore the initiative further.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter also welcomed the Minister's comments and asked about setting up a working group. The Director informed Members that there was a Government Waste Working Group which focussed on strategic issues affecting both central and local government, and he would look at ensuring that this issue was tabled at that forum.

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

9. DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Deposit Scheme for drinks containers (England and Northern Ireland) Regulations 2025 were approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and came into force on Friday 24 January 2025.

Similar schemes already operated in more than 50 countries worldwide with Germany, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland reporting an average return rate of over 90% for single use drinks containers.

The introduction was seen as contributing to the Circular Economy with returned containers recycled into new containers. Single use drinks containers were also recognised as a major contributor to street and roadside litter, and to beach/marine litter, so it was anticipated that the measures would have a positive impact in terms of reducing litter.

As all the containers within the scope of the scheme could currently be recycled through the Council's blue bin collection service it would help with capacity issues for some households, although aluminium, steel and PET plastics attracted the best prices in terms of recycling, so a reduction in their presence in blue bin materials may impact the overall value of our blue bin recyclables mix.

The regulations provided powers to appoint the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) which would operate the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) that would launch on 1 October 2027. The regulations also set out:

- The scope of the DRS
- The role of retailers, drinks producers and suppliers
- The functions of the DMO
- The monitoring, compliance and enforcement measures that would be in place to support the running of the scheme.

From 1 October 2027, customers would pay a refundable deposit for certain single-use drink containers under the new DRS.

Businesses that produced or sold drinks in England and Northern Ireland would have new responsibilities. A DMO would be appointed in April 2025. They would provide detailed guidance for businesses and set the deposit amount.

Drinks Containers Included in the Scheme

The deposit would apply to all single-use drinks containers that:

- Were made wholly or mainly from aluminium or steel, or polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic.
- Had a capacity of between 150 millilitres and 3 litres.
- Were likely to be used only once or for a short period of time.

Containers with a lid made from other materials were still included.

The deposit would not apply to containers if they were:

- Not single use
- Made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE) – that was the material used to make milk bottles, for example.
- Made from glass
- Used for liquid medicines

The scheme did not include any liquid which was used only to add flavour to, or enhance the flavour of, a beverage suitable for human consumption, or to sweeten a beverage suitable for human consumption, such as coffee flavouring syrup, sugar syrup or hot sauce.

The attached appendix set out in detail the responsibilities for:

- Suppliers

- Producers
- Retailers
- Those selling drinks for consumption on premises
- The DMO
- Enforcement authorities

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the contents of the report.

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

Councillor Morgan welcomed this initiative and hoped that it would have a positive impact on litter. Councillor McKee referred to the long delay in reaching this point but pointed to other great examples around the world of the success of this type of scheme that the Council could learn from. He knew that when a similar scheme had been introduced in the Republic of Ireland it had led to a positive impact on litter levels and was one part of solving the problem of litter. Councillor Kerr agreed with the comments and was struck by 90% of the litter being single use containers.

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

10. REVIEW OF CITY / TOWN CENTRE CCTV

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that in September 2022, the Council agreed to undertake a review of the current town centre CCTV system. An internal project group had been scoping the subject, but did not have the relevant expertise or capacity to undertake the full detailed review process in a sufficiently robust way. It was therefore agreed that expert consultancy support be engaged to complete the review and provide options/recommendations for the Council's consideration.

It was estimated that the review process would cost circa £35k. A dedicated budget was not allocated for the current financial year, however in year budget underspend within the Environment Directorate could now be utilised to complete the review by 31 March 2025. In accordance with procurement requirements, AECOM was appointed to commenced the review.

The review would include the following factors as identified by Council officers with PSNI input in 2022:

- The ageing infrastructure that currently existed, with ongoing operational challenges and defects arising that affected the reliability and continuity of the service (at the time of writing the report, the latest significant issue arising was a complete breakdown of the recording function, with the Council's maintenance contractor currently assessing the viability of repair/cost).
- The technical limitations of the outdated equipment, and the likelihood that that was impairing the potential value of the system as an optimised community safety tool.

- The views of various stakeholders in relation to the role of a future town centre CCTV system, including local town centre chambers of commerce, PSNI and PCSP.
- The potential options for new CCTV technology and relative merits/added value.
- Potential future scope/coverage of a town centre CCTV system, towns covered, camera locations etc.
- Routine management arrangements for a future town centre CCTV system, operational responsibility/control, system review and reporting etc.
- Data protection/legal issues.
- Potential funding models and opportunities, internal/external.

A report detailing the outcome and recommendations of the review would be brought back to the Council for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Morgan believed that this was a positive development, and the Council had been waiting for it for some time. Councillor Wray shared that view and had been delighted to read the report. Alderman Cummings acknowledged the partners around the table and that was critical to ensure the work was future proofed and sustainable. The Director explained that options would be considered and then agreement would be reached on the way forward. He indicated that there would be significant costs involved in the implementation of any agreed improvement programme, and if funding needed to come from the Council's internal budgets it would have to be budgeted in the 2026/27 financial year at the earliest.

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

11. Q3 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

(Appendix V)

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

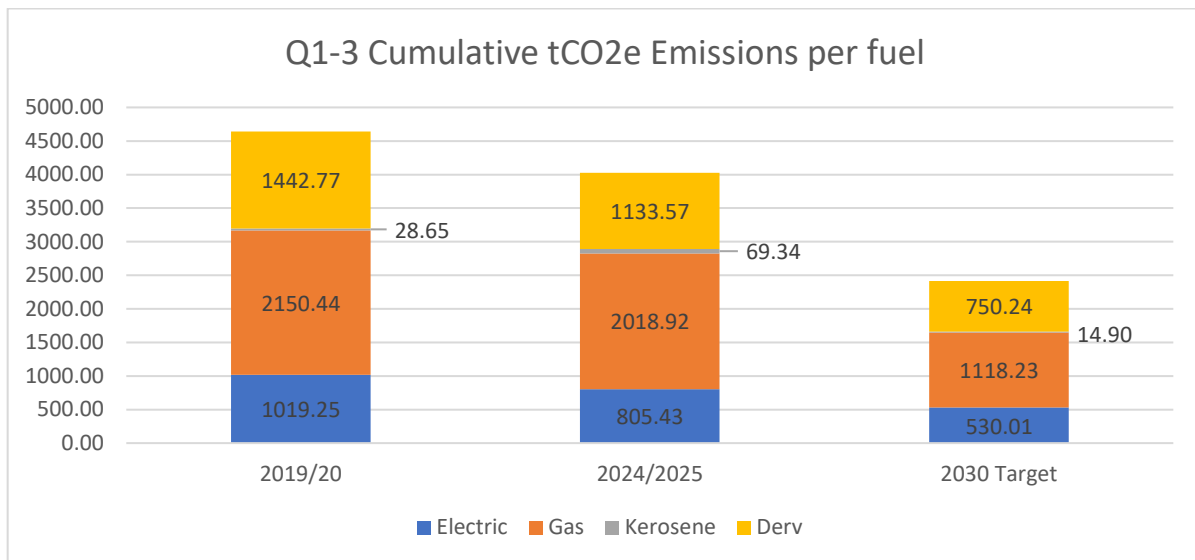
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management would ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and the action plan would be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance would improve energy performance by ensuring actions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

Reporting Periods

This quarterly report looked at energy consumption against a 2019 baseline and outlined current and forthcoming energy saving initiatives.

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

Energy Consumption for this Period



Electricity

As could be seen in the graph above the Council’s electricity consumption had maintained a cumulative decrease of 21% for Q3 in comparison to its baseline year of 2019/2020. The Council had been reviewing its electric consumption year on year and had made conscious efforts to replace lesser energy efficient equipment with modern efficient versions as well as pushing the ethos to staff to reduce energy where they could.

There had been a decrease in Q3 in comparison to the baseline year, and the Council would try to reduce that further by continuing to introduce measures and educating new and existing staff to help move towards the 2030 target.

Natural Gas

With regard to the Council’s natural gas consumption that had cumulatively reduced by 6.2% for Q3 in comparison to the baseline year of 2019/2020. That had been the result of reviewing time controls for boilers and reducing temperatures where possible. The Council had also been reviewing the BMS controls of certain buildings and the parameter settings.

Kerosene

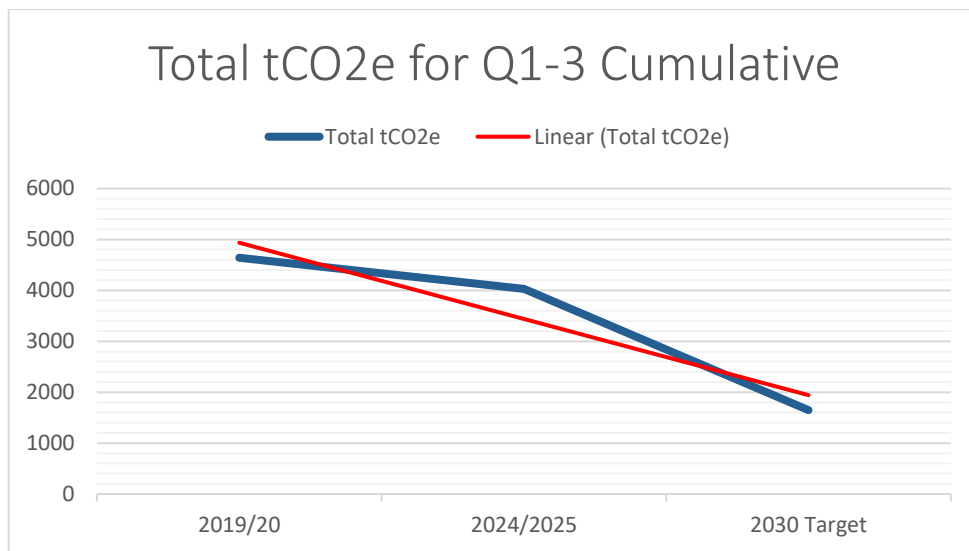
Kerosene consumption had cumulatively increased from the baseline year of 2019/20 for Q3, and that was similar to the buildings using electric heating. Additional kerosene was needed to temporarily heat premises while new energy efficient gas and electric boilers were being installed during the period.

Diesel

The figures showed that the Council had decreased the cumulative consumption of Derv (Diesel) in the third period of the business year in comparison to the baseline year. It was hoped that it could continue to improve on that in Q4.

Targets and Trends

In the graph below it showed the Council's overall fuel carbon emissions for the period, against the 2019/20 baseline and the 2030 target. The Linear trendline showed the path the Council should be on to meet its 48% reduction by 2030, and it could be seen that it was progressing reasonably well towards that.



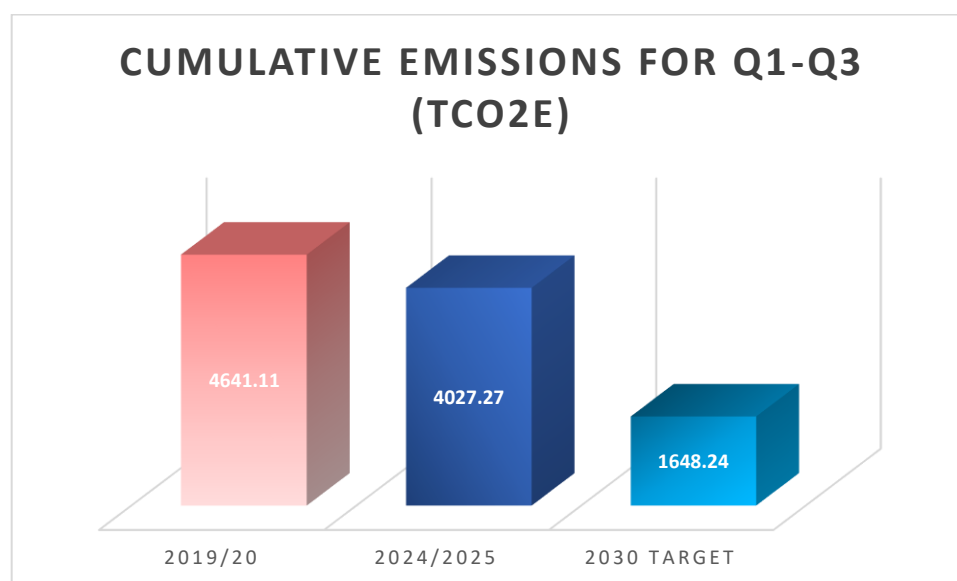
Consumption Costs

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

| Quarter 3 | 2019/20 | £/unit | 2024/2025 | £/unit |
|------------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| Utility | | | | |
| Electric | £218,370 | £0.15 | £348,032 | £0.29 |
| Gas | £175,759 | £0.04 | £287,282 | £0.07 |
| Kerosene | £2,412 | £0.43 | £4,381 | £0.52 |
| Derv | £165,454 | £1.01 | £220,912 | £1.11 |
| Total Cost | £561,993.89 | | £860,606.67 | |

Cumulative Emissions for 2024/2025

The charts below showed a cumulative total for Q1 – Q3 in 2024/25, against the same period in the baseline year of 2019/20 and the target year 2030.



So far, the Council had achieved a 13.3% reduction in emissions for 2024/25 in comparison to its baseline year of 2019/20. That meant that it needed a further reduction of circa 35% over the next five years if the Council were to achieve a 48% reduction on the 2019/20 baseline figures.

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives taken in this Period

- LED lighting and controls upgrade at Walled Garden Depot Work Shed
- Controls maintenance at Londonderry Park and Hamilton Hub
- LED lighting replacement schemes at Community Centres
- Electric showers and instantaneous water heaters at Ward Arras Sports Pavilion to replace existing hot water calorifiers
- High efficiency boiler replacements to a number of communities properties
- Early stages of pre-planning for Data Centre at ABMWLC and Aurora for heat recovery to provide pool water heating
- Progressing with PV panel installation following a cross-border grant award
- Installation of EV charging points for small and medium vans in fleet has commenced at North Road Depot

Attached was an updated Sustainable Energy Action Plan which showed a full update on each of the actions noted.

Future Measures Currently Under Consideration/Planning

- Replacement of boilers at various Council properties and upgrade of control systems
- Lighting control and LED replacement projects at numerous Council properties
- PV panel installation at chosen Council properties
- Park lighting projects
- Walk-round surveys of properties to examine existing controls and settings

- Surveys of existing assets for insulation installation to be carried out and implemented
- Energy targets and KPI’s for service unit managers to be agreed for 2025/2026
- Possible introduction of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) systems in highest consuming buildings

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor McKee was happy to read the report and knew that it was something that everyone could support and indeed the Council had been working on this agenda for some time. Effectively it was a spend to save initiative. He referred to the point in the report that the Council was pre-planning for a Data Centre at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex for heat recovery to provide pool water heating, and considered that an excellent move towards sustainability. The Director confirmed those investigations had started, and there was the potential to have an additional such facility at Bangor Aurora as well. Officers were actively engaged in terms of the technical issues, and it was hoped to bring back a report to the Council on that in the near future.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Morgan suggested that these were hard won gains and there was still a lot more hard graft required to make improvements, but she thanked officers for the report and thought it was in a ‘win-win’ position.

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

12. Q3 NET ACTIVITY REPORT (OCT – DEC 2024)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 October to 31 December 2024. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Team, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance.

Applications to the Neighbourhood Environment Team

Dog Licences - The Dogs (NI) Order 1983

It should be noted that those figures included block licences where one licence could be issued for multiple dogs in specific circumstances.



| | Period of Report Oct – Dec 2024 | Same 3 months Oct – Dec 2023 | Comparison |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Dog licences issued during the three months | 4576 | 4822 | ↓ |

Concessionary licences remained at 81% of dog licences issued over the period. That included the categories of neutering (£5) / over 65 (Free – 1st dog) / over 65 subsequent dog (£5) and income related benefits (£5). Standard dog licence £12.50 and block licence £32. The application fees were set by statute.

| DOG CONTROL – Dog Licences | 2024 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Full Cost | 869 | 777 |
| Reduced – Neutered | 2308 | 2500 |
| Reduced – Benefits | 462 | 486 |
| Free – Over 65 | 810 | 935 |
| Reduced – Over 65 Subsequent Dogs | 113 | 113 |
| Block Licence | 14 | 11 |
| TOTAL | 4576 | 4822 |



Investigations

The Neighbourhood Environment Team responded to a range of service requests. In terms of time spent, some types of service requests would be completed immediately whilst others required a longer-term strategy to find a resolution. The breakdown within the categories for the types of service requests received had been detailed in an appendix.

| SERVICE REQUESTS | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| | Period of Report Oct - Dec 2024 | Same 3 months Oct – Dec 2023 | Comparison |
| DOG CONTROL | 680 | 142 |  |
| ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL | 363 | 374 |  |


Fixed Penalty Notices

The Neighbourhood Environment Team issued **84** Fixed Penalty Notices for various offences in the Borough.

| FIXED PENALTY NOTICES | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| | Period of Report Oct - Dec 2024 | Same 3 months Oct – Dec 2023 | Comparison |
| DOG CONTROL | 57 | 25 |  |
| ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL | 27 | 31 |  |

Prosecutions

Breakdown of cases being prosecuted through the Court.

| PROSECUTIONS | | | |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| | Period of Report Oct – Dec 2024 | Same 3 months Oct – Dec 2023 | Comparison |
| DOG CONTROL | 9 | 3 |  |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----|---|---|
| | 10 | 1 |  |
| ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL | | | |

Educational Programme

October 2024

Plastic Oceans – The presentation which highlighted the issues with the health of our seas, problems with litter and impact on biodiversity was delivered to –

- P4 – Clandeboye PS, approximately 30 pupils were in attendance.

December 2024

- An information session was delivered to teachers in Donaghadee Primary School regarding Project ELLA and a new innovative art project that would be available in early 2025. That has led to the Art Club at the school committing to engaging with the art project in January 2025.
- Cry of the Wolf – The interactive presentation which looked at the history of human impacts on the local landscape and the natural world was delivered to P4, Ballywalter Primary School – 30 pupils were in attendance.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor McKimm asked the Director if he was aware of a recent spike in reports of dogs being off leads in Castle Park. The Head of Regulatory Services responded that the Department was aware of that and had increased patrolling in the area which was now considered a ‘hot spot’ for enforcement targeting.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor McKee referred to the improvements in the statistics and the increased issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices which showed that the Council was taking its work seriously and had staff on the ground to make sure that the public was abiding by the rules.

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

13. Q2 NI LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024













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

The key aims of the report were to:

1. Report progress in relation to key quarterly waste management performance statistics.
2. Provide some detail around operational waste service management activities/actions that had been implemented during the quarter with the aim of improving performance.

In summary, all key indicators had again been very positive for the reporting period relative to the Council's comparator 2021-22 baseline year. The residual (non-recycled) waste disposal cost saving for the quarter, relative to the same period during the 2021-22 baseline year, equated to almost £257k at the current disposal cost. Our overall Borough household waste recycling rate increased by 6.7% against the same quarter in the 2021-22 baseline reporting year - compared to a Northern Ireland Council average increase of just 0.7%.

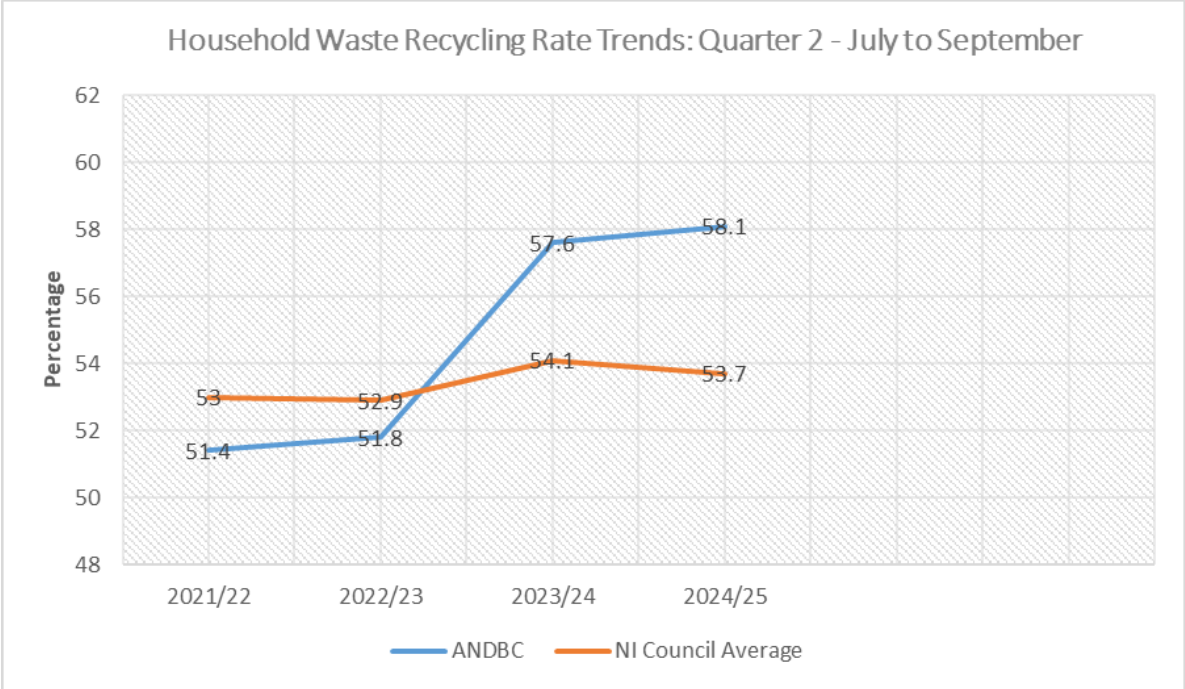
Summary Table of Key Changes Q2 2024-25

| | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Change on Previous Yr |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| Household Waste Recycling Rate | 51.4% | 51.8% | 57.6% | 58.1% |  0.5% |
| Recycling Rate Ranking | 9th | 6th | 4th | 3rd |  Same |
| Composting Rate | 32.7% | 33.2% | 38.4% | 38.1% |  0.3% |
| Dry Recycling Rate | 18.2% | 18.3% | 18.7% | 19.5% |  0.8% |
| Total HRC Waste | 8602T | 7675T | 6995T | 5971T |  14.6% |
| HRC Residual/Landfill Waste Received | 2998T | 2527T | 2035T | 1445T |  29% |
| HRC Recycling Waste Received | 5604T | 5148T | 4960T | 4526T |  8.8% |
| Proportion of HRC Waste Received for Recycling | 65% | 67% | 71% | 75.8% |  4.8% |
| Total Kerbside Waste | 15596T | 14443T | 14812T | 15666T |  5.8% |
| Kerbside Residual Waste Received | 6956T | 6366T | 5747T | 6136T |  6.8% |
| Kerbside Recycling Waste Received | 8640T | 8077T | 9065T | 9530T |  5.1% |
| Proportion of Kerbside Waste Received for Recycling | 55.4% | 56% | 61.2% | 60.8% |  0.4% |

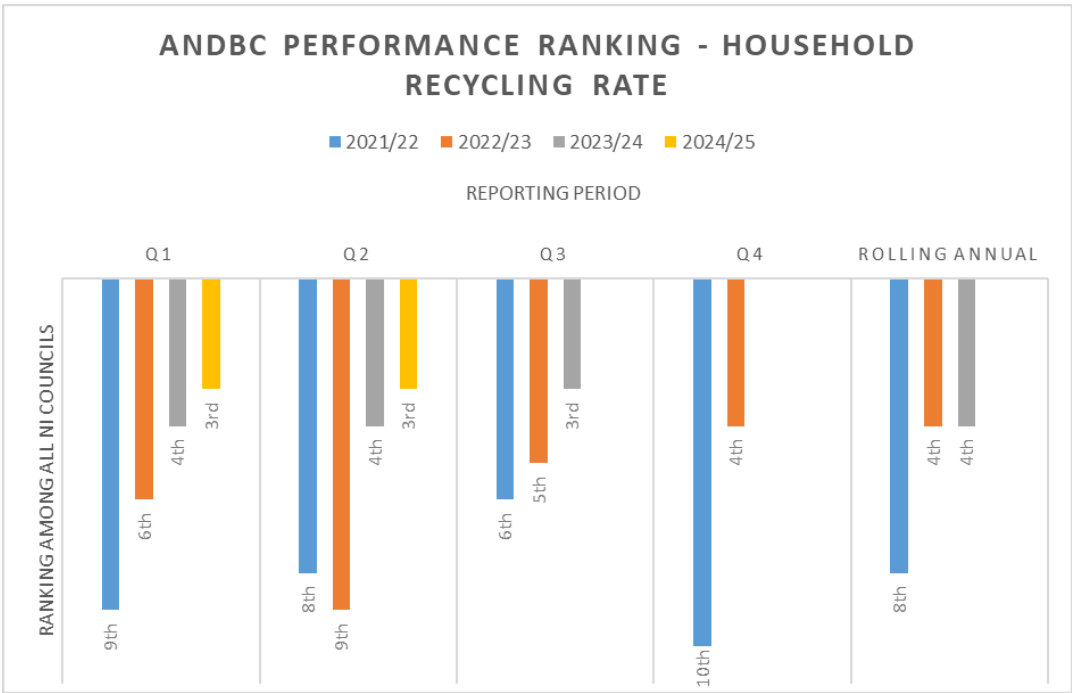
Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics – July to September 2024

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

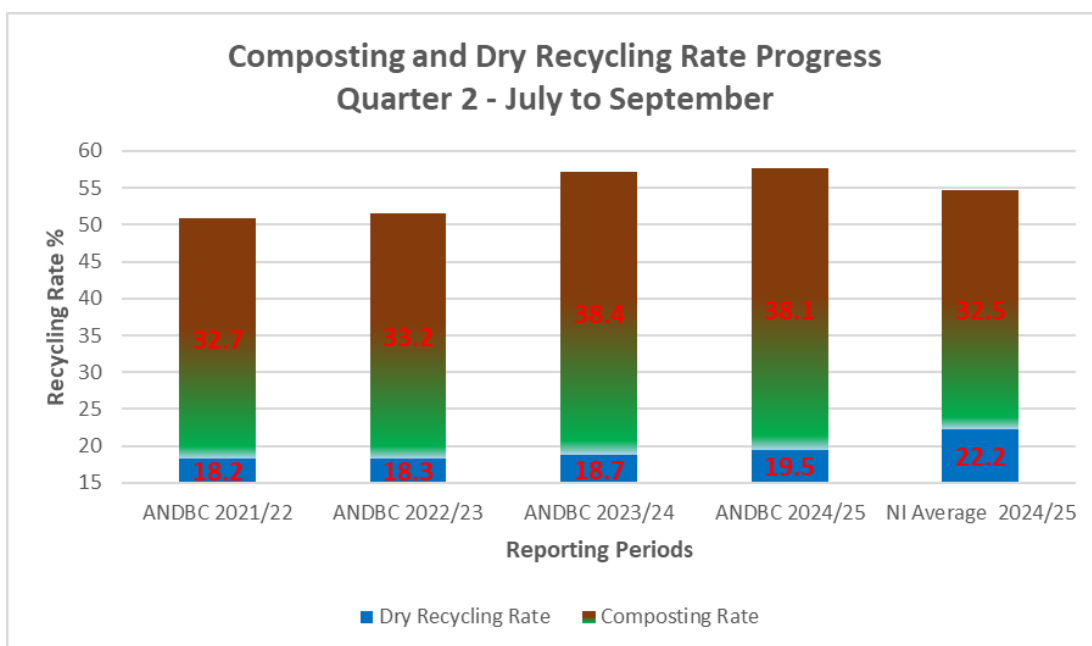
- i. The Council’s household waste recycling rate **increased** by a further 0.5% compared to Q2 last year, from 57.6% to 58.1%. The Northern Ireland Council average **decreased** by 0.4%.



- ii. The Council’s household waste recycling rate of 58.1%, was 4.4% **higher** than the Northern Ireland average of 53.7%.
- iii. The Council was ranked **third** out of the eleven Northern Ireland Councils for its household waste recycling rate.



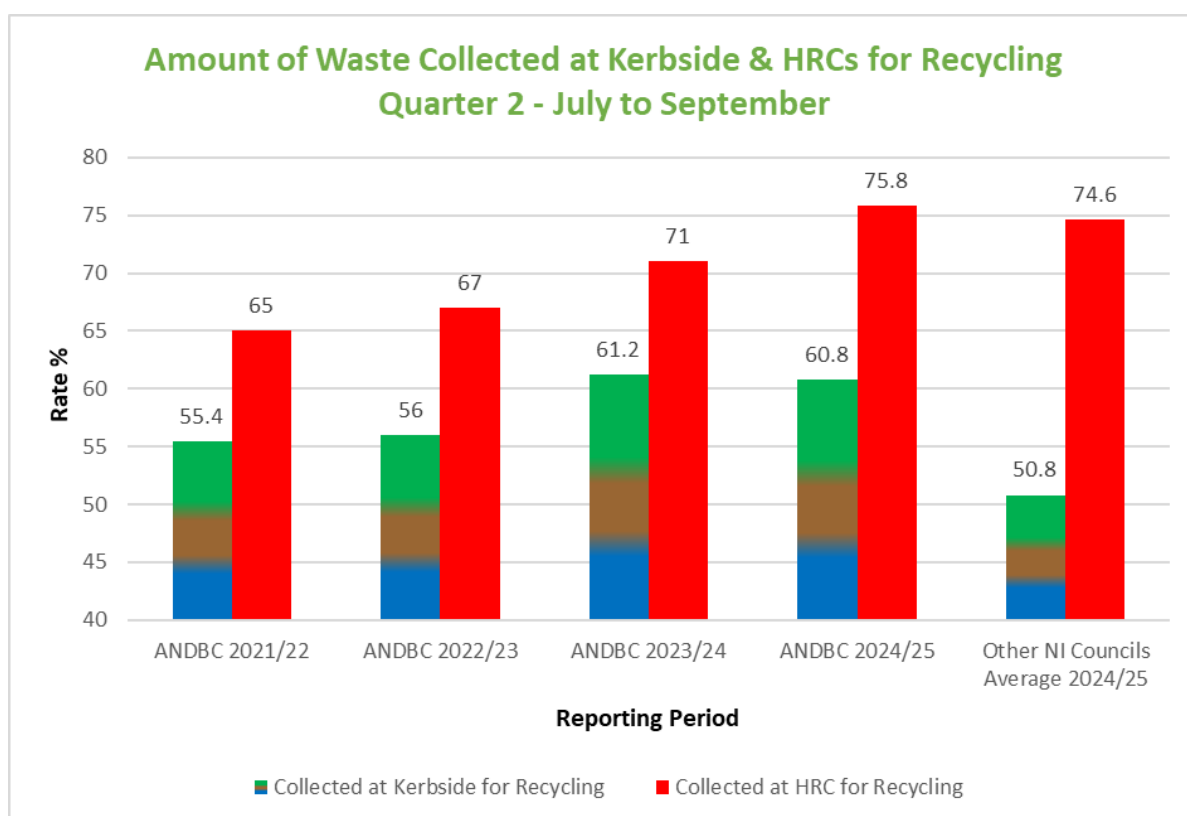
- iv. The Council’s household waste composting rate **fell** slightly by 0.3% - from 38.4% to 38.1%. The household waste dry recycling rate **rose** by 0.8% - from 18.7% to 19.5%.
- v. The Council’s household waste composting rate of 38.1% was 6.8% **higher** than the Northern Ireland average of 31.3%.
- vi. The Council’s household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 19.5% was 2.7% **lower** than the Northern Ireland average of 22.2%.



- vii. The Council’s kerbside recycling capture rate of 79.3% for household compostable waste materials compared to a Northern Ireland Council average of 71.8%.
- viii. The Council’s **lowest** kerbside capture rate for recyclable materials was for mixed plastics, at 21.4%.

| Recyclable Material | Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling % | NI Average Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling % |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Glass | 63.8 | 49.6 |
| Paper & Card | 59.4 | 53.2 |
| Mixed Metals | 32.7 | 31 |
| Mixed Plastics | 21.4 | 22.5 |
| Organic/Compostables | 79.3 | 71.8 |

- ix. The Council was still at the **bottom** end of the performance table for ‘dry’ recycling rate, ranking ninth out of eleven Councils.
- x. The Council received 7.2% **less** waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other Northern Ireland Councils, compared to 17.4% **more** during the same period the previous year.
- xi. The proportion of waste collected at the Council’s HRC sites for recycling was **more** than the average for other Councils – 75.8%, compared to an average rate of 74.6% for other Councils.
- xii. The Council collected 12.6% **more** waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services compared to the average for other Councils.
- xiii. The proportion of waste collected for recycling through the Council’s kerbside bin collection system was significantly **higher** than the average for other Councils – 60.8%, compared to an average of 50.8% for other Councils.
- xiv. The percentage of total municipal waste to landfill which was biodegradable was the lowest of any Northern Ireland Council – 37.3% compared to a Northern Ireland Council average of 46.9%.



Operational Performance Improvement Measures

Marketing and Communications Indicators

MC1 – 20 social media posts were issued, with associated engagement/management of feedback across Waste and Recycling on ANDBC corporate channels.



MC2 – 3 Bin-Ovation ‘News and Info’ articles were published, 5 Bin-ovation ‘Push Notifications’ issued, and 1922 Bin-ovation downloads recorded. We currently have a total of 70,531 Bin-ovation householder users across the Borough.



MC3 – 12 community engagement and education events were delivered, talking to over 840 people.

- 6 summer schemes
- 5 schools
- 1 Council event



Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC1 – Volume of blue bin recyclable materials captured on-site for recycling: 640,660 litres



That equated to approximately 27 tons of blue bin waste, a significant proportion of which was recyclable waste extracted from bags of mixed waste that was initially intended to be placed landfill skips at HRCs. A collateral benefit of that practice of requiring removal of blue bin recyclables from black bags of mixed waste before using the landfill skip was that it should help to 'educate' householders - promoting more efficient separation of waste in the home and greater use of blue bins at the kerbside.

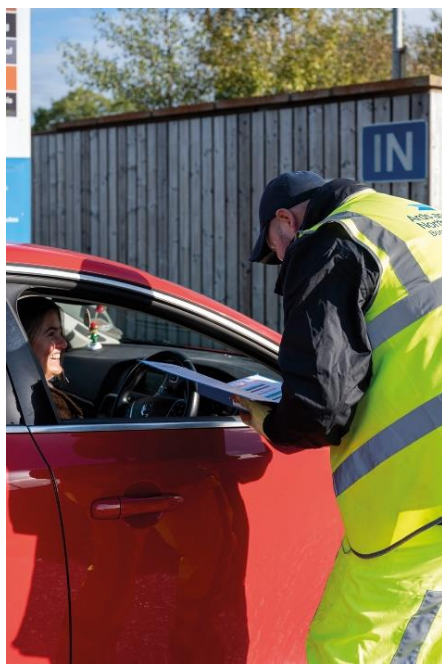
That represented just one type of recyclable waste category which was prevented from entering landfill skips at HRCs as a consequence of the Council's more focused attention to supervision of landfill skip access; many other recyclable waste types would also have been prevented from entering the landfill skips as reflected in KPI, HRC3.

HRC2 – Number of visitors turned away from site: 844

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

HRC2a (new indicator) – Number of HRC bookings: 85,381

HRC2b (new indicator) – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.19 (averaged across the 71,788 households in the Borough)



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

- The Council experienced a **31% decrease** in the total amount of waste received at its HRCs, from 8602T to 5971T.

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

- The Council experienced a **52% decrease** in the amount of waste received for landfill at its HRCs, down from 2998T to 1445T.

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

- The Council experienced an **19% decrease** in the amount of waste received for recycling at its HRCs, down from 5604T to 4526T.

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

- The Council experienced a **10.8% increase** in the proportion of all waste received at HRCs which was collected for recycling, up from 65% to 75.8%.

Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators



- KS1** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 2837
- KS2** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 224
- KS3** – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 112
- KS4** – % change in tonnage of total waste collected (compared to same period in baseline year 2021-22)

- The Council experienced a **similar** total amount of waste collected at the kerbside, slightly up from 15,596T to 15,666T.

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

- The Council experienced a **12% decrease** in the amount of grey bin waste collected, down from 6956T to 6136T.

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

- The Council experienced a **10% increase** in the amount of waste collected at kerbside for recycling, up from 8640T to 9530T.

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

- The Council experienced a **4.8% increase** in the proportion of kerbside waste that was collected for recycling, up from 56% to 60.8%.

Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

| Indicator Reference | Monitoring Period 7 (July 2024 – September 2024) |
|---|--|
| MC1 Social media posts | 20 |
| MC2 Print press and online articles | 3 |
| MC3 Engagement events/sessions | 12 |
| HRC1 Blue bin waste (litres) | 640,660 |
| HRC2 Visitors denied entry | 844 |
| HRC2a No. of bookings | 85,381 |
| HRC2b | 1.19 |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough | |
| HRC3 Total HRC waste compared to same period 2021/22 | 31% Decrease |
| HRC4 Landfill skip waste compared to same period 2021/22 | 52% Decrease |
| HRC5 Recycling skip waste compared to same period 2021/22 | 19% Decrease |
| HRC6 Proportion of HRC waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22 | 10.8% Increase |
| KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins | 2837 |
| KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins | 224 |
| KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins | 112 |
| KS4 Total kerbside waste compared to 2021/22 | No change |
| KS5 Grey bin waste compared to 2021/22 | 12% Decrease |
| KS6 Kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22 | 10% Increase |
| KS7 Proportion of kerbside waste collected for recycling compared to same period 2021/22 | 4.8% Increase |

Summary Analysis of Indicators

The report showed another very encouraging picture and generally conveyed a sustained improvement in its sustainable waste resource management performance against its baseline year of 2021-22. Following changes to the waste service model design and the associated education and engagement campaigns, the Council was experiencing sustained and further improving falls in the amount of landfilled waste as well as improvements in its recycling rates. During the reporting period, the Council experienced:

1. Sustained falls in the total amount of landfill waste both at HRCs and kerbside. In total, the Council received/collected 2,278 tons less residual/non-recycled waste over the 3-month reporting period compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22; at current landfill cost, that represents a **£257k landfill saving**.
2. Falls in the total amount of waste collected at both HRCs and kerbside. In total the Council's municipal waste arisings **fell by 10%** compared to the same period in 2021/22, compared to just a 2.4% drop across other Councils.
3. A significant further rise in the recycling rate at HRCs. The percentage of materials collected for recycling at HRCs rose by 10.8% compared to the same period in the baseline year of 2021/22. **The overall Borough household waste recycling rate rose by 6.7% compared to the same period in 2021/22.**

Whilst the indicators set out in this report were very encouraging indeed and reflected a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of the Council's waste and recycling teams, the Council undoubtedly had much further progress to make if it was to have any chance of ultimately reaching the 70% recycling target for 2030 that was laid down in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Continued bedding in and ongoing careful management of the new booking system for HRC

access, the planned review of the kerbside collections model and a strategic review of the Council's HRC capital assets, would be critical.

It was important to reiterate that 'step change', sustained improvements in both the Household Recycling Centre and kerbside recycling rates would be required to move the Council towards the new 70% target.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Wray thanked officers for the report and recognised that the Council had achieved improving statistics. Councillor Edmund echoed that and was pleased to see the turnaround after all the effort that the Council had put in to improve its recycling figures.

Councillor Morgan asked why Ards and North Down was at the bottom of the list for its dry recycling and the Director replied explaining that most other Councils had contracts in place to retrieve recyclables from grey bin waste before going for incineration, which was adding to their overall dry recycling rates. Ards and North Down Borough Council had recently awarded a similar contract, which should contribute to its official dry recycling in the future. The Council was also looking at ways of remodelling its kerbside waste collections model to promote diversion of more of the significant amount of recyclable from grey bins to recycling bins, and that would further improve the reported dry recycling rate helping to move closer to the target 70% Borough recycling rate.

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

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

14.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Cummings and 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.

Alderman Cummings introduced his Motion explaining that the Comber branch of the Royal British Legion had been presented with a list of names, historically researched and collated, as being omitted from the town's War Memorial. The period of time covered the 1914-1918 First World War.

On receiving the information, the branch undertook to start a process as per the War Memorial Trust Guidelines by establishing a working group to further scrutinise the names and began a process of verification. The reason the Motion was being

presented to the Council was due to the Council being the custodian of the memorial and gardens and the desire of the Legion to establish the guidelines around the design and positioning of the additional plaque(s).

He went on to say that there was no request for financial assistance as the Legion stated that it felt strongly, indeed duty bound, that it should undertake this responsibility.

An initial meeting between the Legion and the Council outlining their plans had already taken place and officers had indicated willingness to work together with a view to facilitating the Comber Royal British Legion in their endeavours.

The Alderman asked Members for their support to authorise officers to commence the process.

Councillor Douglas said that she was grateful for the opportunity to second this Motion being brought by her colleague. She agreed with his comments and would like to acknowledge the efforts that had already been made regarding the fact gathering and research information of the fallen Comber heroes during the First World War and that they deserved to be included on the War Memorial in Comber.

She hoped that everyone would agree that recognition of the people who had fought and died for peace and freedom should not be forgotten. Without their sacrifice she said we would be living in a very different world.

On a personal note, her great uncle had lost his life in the First World War and even though his remains were lying at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, he had a headstone in the Church of Ireland graveyard in Comber, which commemorated the sacrifice he had made. That had been a great comfort to generations of her family knowing that he was remembered for giving his life for freedom.

She finished by asking that the Notice of Motion be given support and that a report be brought back outlining the design, cost and positioning of an additional plaque on the War Memorial in Comber Square to include names of further historically researched individuals.

Councillor Wray rose to support the Motion and thanked the Members for bringing it before the Committee. He agreed that it was important to remember the fallen heroes and he paid tribute to the volunteers and those doing the research and for the Royal British Legion in the payment for the work.

Councillor Morgan rose to support what was a really important Motion and she agreed that all the fallen heroes should be represented at the memorial in Comber.

Alderman Cummings thanked Members for their support.

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

15. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

16. ASSETS AND PROERTY SERVICES STAFFING REVIEW

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION WHICH IS LIKLEY TO REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL

A report relating to proposed changes in staffing arrangements below Service Unit Manager Level within the Assets and Property Services Department was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that the Council approves the implementation of the proposed staffing changes as set out in the report.

17. EXTENSION OF VARIOUS EXISTING TENDERS

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report on the extension of various tenders was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that the Council agrees to the following contracts being extended for one further year, in line with the terms set out in the original tender.

- 1. Provision of New and Replacement Play Areas**
Lot 1 Northern Area – Garden Escapes (Ireland) Ltd.
Lot 2 Southern Area – Play and Leisure Services.

- 2. Repair of Plumbing Works**
Irwin M+E Ltd.

18. CAR PARK ENFORCEMENT OUTSTANDING DEBT

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report relating to outstanding car parking enforcement debt was considered.

It was agreed to recommend that the Council approves write off of the outstanding debt from the former car park enforcement contract as detailed in the report.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.53 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 6 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Gilmour

Alderman: Adair McDowell
Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom)

Councillors: Ashe Hollywood
Edmund McKimm (Zoom)
Hennessy Smart (Zoom)

Officers in Attendance: Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Interim Head of Economic Development (A Stobie) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor McCollum, Councillor McCracken, Councillor Thompson, the Interim Director of Prosperity and the Interim Head of Regeneration.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest notified.

NOTED.

3. ITEM WITHDRAWN

4. REGENERATION SERVICE PLAN (FILE 160127)

(Appendix I)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years

- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Regeneration in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- This was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may have needed to be revised.
- It would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Service Plan.

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

Alderman Adair praised the Regeneration team on the delivery of its previous Service Plan and the new plan attached, welcoming an ambitious approach from such a small team.

He asked when the new Village Plans would be available for the Committee to view and the Director of Place advised that those would follow in the next two to three months with a report and presentation.

In a further query, Alderman Adair referred to the proposed public realm works at Millisle and wondered if an underspend from the Portaferry public realm works would be redirected to allow that project to proceed. He was advised that planning applications had been worked up and officers were working in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure which would undertake the work and that approach should result in a quicker completion. It would be the intention to proceed with those works once an underspend had been identified from the finalised accounts of the Portaferry scheme with a report coming to the Committee beforehand. The Director spoke of the economic value of the project noting that there were currently a number of closed business premises on Millisle's Main Street.

Alderman Adair appreciated that the team had many projects already worked up in anticipation of funding becoming available at short notice. He felt therefore it was important to protect that budget to enable that approach to continue.

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

5. STRATEGIC CAPITAL PROJECTS SERVICE PLAN (FILE 160127)

(Appendix II)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached is the 2025-26 Service Plan for Strategic Capital Development in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.

- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- It had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- It was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there have been significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan would need to be revised.
- It would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Service Plan.

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

Alderman Adair appreciated that the Director of Prosperity, responsible for the Planning Service, was not in attendance but wanted to place on record his thanks to that section. He noted that the Planning Service was working under challenging circumstances often facing lengthy delays to applications due to slow response times from statutory consultees which presented a big problem for Capital Projects.

The proposer referred to the challenges around funding timeframes and how the Portaferry Public Realm scheme for example had come close to the wire. Other projects had also fallen behind due to those delayed response times. He sympathised with the Planners and thanked them for their efforts, adding that statutory agencies needed to step up to the plate and work to get responses forward as quickly as possible.

The Chair noted that one of the lessons learned, highlighted in the report, had been to pre-empt and front-load planning applications to mitigate delays caused by response times from statutory consultees, ensuring smoother and more efficient project progression.

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

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE PLAN (FILE 160127)

(Appendix III)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Economic Development in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- It had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identifies the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

- It was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan would need to be revised.
- It would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Service Plan.

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Hennessy, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman McDowell, felt it was the start of exciting times with the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships and he anticipated some additions to the plan once those LEPS were up and running. He asked if this was an annual plan and if it could be changed or adapted as needed.

The Director added that it was an annual plan, but targets and aspirations would roll over into future years if necessary, rather than just drop off after the year one period.

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

7. TOURISM SERVICE PLAN (FILE TO/MAR4/160167)
(Appendix IV)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Tourism in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- It was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may have needed to be revised.
- It would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the Service Plan.

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

Councillor Edmund congratulated officers on their work and noted there would be a six-month update which would be helpful in order to keep members informed. He was sure that it would be a very successful operation.

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

8. GROWTH EVENT FUND – YEAR ONE UPDATE REPORT (FILE TO/EG69)
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that in September 2023, Council approved the introduction of a multi-year events fund - the “Growth Events Fund” (GEF) and a budget of £150,000 per year subject to the annual rates setting process.

In January 2024, Council approved one Growth Events Fund award to Open House Festival for 2024/25 to the value of £105,000, subject to rates setting, and awards of £105,000 for 25/26 and £105,000 for 26/27 subject to annual key performance indicators and adherence to terms and conditions with the Letter of Offer (LoO).

In May 2024, Open House Festival received a LoO for £105,000 subject to a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and aligned to targets set by the organiser at the time of application.

There were three objectives within the Growth Events Fund:

- Grow our Local Economy
- Grow our Visitor Experience and Destination and
- Grow the potential of our local Community and Place.

Each of the above had a series of KPIs which Open House Festival was required to meet annually, with supporting evidence. Should a KPI not be met, a rationale as to why this was the case was required. Further detail on the individual KPIs relating to Open House Festival was provided in Appendix 1.

The Event

The Open House Festival was delivered between 29 June 2024 and 31 August 2024 as per the LoO description. There were several key elements to the festival, delivering 88 events in total.

1. Picnic in the Park - free concerts at Ward Park every Sunday in July and August - 18,200 attendees.
2. Seaside Revival Vintage Festival - one day free event at Bangor Seafront - 20,000 attendees.
3. Pickie to Pier – 700 attendees with 161 competitors.
4. The Walled Garden series of events - ticketed events ranging from music to comedy*
5. Court House programme of events ticketed events ranging from music to comedy*
6. Folk on a Boat*
7. Additional fringe events*

NB. *total attendees 9,422 for these events. Other free event activities e.g. music sessions made up the total attendee figure.

Performance against Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

This objective sought to understand the origin of participants and attendees, bednights generated and the investment/partnership opportunities with local businesses.

| | | OoB | Bednights |
|--------------|--------|-------|-----------|
| Participants | 832 | 48.5% | 20 |
| Attendees | 50,677 | 23% | 609* |
| Total | 51,509 | | 629 |

*Market research for bednights captured via ticketed events only (9,422 tickets).

Investment and partnership opportunities included local traders, retailers, hot food providers and local arts-based premises. Open House Festival promoted Translink through the event programme, but despite best efforts there was no sponsorship like previous years.

The organiser of the event had indicated a return on Council investment as £16.84. This had been calculated by:

- £34.32 average spend per person (as per market research carried out by the organiser)
- multiplied by 51,509 attendees
- equals £1,767,788 total economic benefit
- divided by £105,000 award

OBJECTIVE 2: GROW OUR VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND DESTINATION

This objective sought to understand how the event met sustainability principles and increased awareness of AND nationally and internationally.

As per the LoO, 60% of total expenditure was to be raised via other sources of income, in 2024 65% of income was secured from box office and stall fees.

The engagement evidenced within the marketing plan overview showed growth in increased web views by almost 5% and increased subscriptions to the mailing list by 12% in comparison to 2024.

The overall media reach was 18.5 million (including social media reach) with an advertising value of c£169,000. Throughout the coverage, Council was mentioned within press releases, including quotes from the Mayor, tagged in social media posts and the logo was displayed on banners at key festival venues.

The organiser worked closely with Council staff across several services, including Tourism Events Service, Parks Service and Recycling to introduce recycling stations at both Seaside Revival on Bangor seafront and Bluegrass Picnic in Ward Park. These were staffed by specially trained Open House Festival volunteers, which produced good results, leading to reduced litter and increased recycling at both events.

A disability access audit of Ward Park was undertaken in conjunction with the Council Tourism Events Service. As a result, a fully accessible area was created, which operated at all eight Picnic in the Park events. The organiser received a letter of thanks from the North Down Disability Action Forum and overall, the feedback was excellent.

OBJECTIVE 3: GROW THE POTENTIAL OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND PLACE

The final objective sought to understand how the event supported and invested in local people, businesses, venues and assets. This included volunteer recruitment

and training, strategic partnership development and the use of unusual event spaces.

A total of 100 volunteers were recruited and trained. There were 438 individual volunteer shifts and a total of 1,696 volunteer hours. Volunteer induction sessions included in-depth training on recycling stations and on disability access.

Strategic partnerships were developed including media partner County Down Spectator, along with specific partners for Pickie to Pier Swim - Bangor Marina, RNLI, and Safer Waters and Lightfoot food pop-up provision.

Event spaces included Bangor seafront for Seaside Revival event at the McKee Clock Arena, Marine Gardens and Queen's Parade car park, Ward Park – Picnic in the Park at the bandstand, Skippingstone Beach – start and finish of Pickie to Pier swim, as well as the Court House and the Walled Garden.

Budget

The organiser reported the cost to deliver the event was £341,800. £223,707 of the income total was from raised income (box office, traders, bar sales) £13,901 from the Arts Council National Lottery Fund and the remainder from the Council contribution.

Support Services

In addition to financial support from Council via the Growth Events Fund, the Tourism Events Team offered the following additional support:

- A dedicated Case Officer who offered advice on completion of risk assessments and Event Management Plan alongside preparing the organiser for presenting the paperwork to a Safety Advisory Group.
- Event Management Toolkit to ensure all event organisers were equipped with skills/knowledge to run their event safely, the Council had established an online toolkit, which was a valuable resource for all event organisers, irrespective of the size of the event.
- Festivals Forum – A member of Open House Festival staff attended the Festival Forum. The Forum met up to four times annually and Open House had key input to each session.

Year 2 – 2025/26

The LoO issued on 24 May 2024 offered Open House Festival grant funding of up to £105,000 for 2024/25 and a provisional sum of up to £105,000 for 2025/26 and up to £105,000 for 2026/27, towards eligible costs in respect of each event annually, subject to all terms and conditions being met.

Officers had validated the claim against the LoO and were proceeding with the payment of the award at £105,000 for Open House Festival, in line with the Council approved Scheme of Delegation for the 2024/25 event. The organiser had satisfactorily evidenced meeting of objectives to a sufficient level meeting the terms and conditions associated with the LoO.

The organiser was asked to submit an initial budget and plan for the 2025 event at the end of 2024. Officers are content that the information received warrants the award of £105,000 for Year 2, demonstrating sufficient projected growth across the three objectives of the GEF. Therefore, the appendices including KPIs will be re-drafted and issued based on the objectives above, and aligned to further growth. It should be noted that the organiser has indicated a decline in projected overall attendee numbers in 2025 due to a change to one of the key events within the LoO, i.e. Seaside Revival.

Seaside Revival

The organiser had met with Council officers on several occasions regarding the future of Seaside Revival, due to its current location at the Seafront. Open House had assessed the possibility of moving Seaside Revival to another venue (such as Ward Park) but feels that this was not close enough to the 'seaside', therefore an alternative genre-specific mini-music festival is currently under development. The proposed event would take place throughout central Bangor during August's Open House Festival over the bank holiday long weekend, Thursday 21 to Monday 25 August 2025 inclusive. The organiser planned to co-programme free events in approximately 10 local bars / venues in addition to a series of ticketed shows in the Court House. Whilst Open House recognised the reduction in potential attendees in comparison to Seaside Revival, it had indicated the following potential impacts of this alternative event:

- Greater number of performers, many of whom would be local and estimated at more than 100 artists.
- Approximately 25% of performers from outside of Northern Ireland, requiring local accommodation, creating bednights and local spend.
- Events would take place inside local venues rather than in the open air, which would guarantee visitors to those premises and in turn, spend within their businesses.
- As the event would take place over five days, rather the one day of Seaside Revival, attendance would be at events over multiple days for many audience members, and consequently should return a higher rate of bednights.
- The event would not be weather dependent as performances would be located inside venues.
- Other local businesses would have the opportunity to "piggyback" on the events e.g. branding, curated music playlists, their own fringe events etc.

The organiser had indicated that it planned to bring back Seaside Revival in the future when the Seafront redevelopment had been completed.

Growth Events Fund – Year 2 and Year 3

In September 2023, Council approved the Growth Event Fund which stated that 'the number and size of grants approved in Year 1 of the Fund (2024) would determine whether the GEF would reopen in Years 2 or 3.'

The full £150,000 was not allocated in Year 1 due to insufficient applications and, therefore, allowing the Fund to reopen in Years 2 and 3. Year 2 of the Growth Events Fund opened on Monday 7 November 2024 and closed on Monday 4 November 2024. As per Fund guidance, two event organisers contacted the Tourism Events

Officers to discuss potential applications. One of those was eligible to apply to the Fund. After meeting with officers, the potential applicant made the decision to apply to the Tourism Events and Festivals 2025/26 Fund instead of the Growth Event Fund.

It was unlikely that a suitable applicant would be in the position to meet the criteria aligned to this Fund for one year only i.e. Year 3 – primary aim being that Council could support events to grow from year to year, therefore, the Fund reopening in autumn 2025 for funding year 2026/2027 would be kept under review.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McKimm welcomed the report and the feedback which was in real tangible terms. He wished to thank the team at Open House for what it had delivered into the city with clear financial benefits so he wanted to place on record his thanks to the team which had gone above and beyond.

Councillor Smart added his thanks to the officers and the partnership working which had been exemplary and seen a growth to the Open House Festival which brought such a vibrancy to Bangor in terms of arts and entertainment. It was an example that could be built on in the future.

The Chair praised the benefits to the economy as well as the arts scene and recognised that there was a vast army of volunteers behind the work, recalling that she had been able to appreciate their work throughout her Mayoral term and noted that without their contribution the events could not happen. She had also noted that those volunteers at Open House also volunteered in other aspects of community activity.

Councillor Hennessy commended the Open House Festival, noting the number of visitors it brought to the Borough which was good to see. He had found it disappointing that Translink had not communicated with regard to sponsorship so he hoped there would be more success next year and that arrangement could be back in place.

The Head of Tourism explained that the KPI had been set following previous sponsorship but unfortunately that had not happened as reported. She hoped that it could have been a simple miscommunication error and that the arrangement could be picked up again in the coming year.

In a further query, Councillor Hennessy referred to page 5 of the document noting that two applicants had decided not to proceed with the funding opportunity and that funding could be reviewed in the financial year 2026/27. He asked if that could impact funding for the Open House Festival.

The Head of Tourism clarified that Council had approved a budget of £150,000 for the Growth Event fund through the Rate setting process and there was one

successful applicant in Year 1 which was Open House and it had secured the amount stated in the report.

Last year the programme was reopened for other applications for the remainder of the fund. As a matter of accuracy, the officer explained that the dates of the application window included in the report related to October and not November as stated.

Continuing, the officer explained that one applicant had decided that the funding was not suitable and another applicant opted to apply for an alternative grant. That meant that there was still an amount running into Year 3 and that would be the final year of the Growth Fund.

There would be an opportunity for an applicant, which ran an existing event perhaps, to come in at that point but it would be difficult for an applicant to demonstrate growth over that one remaining year. That did not affect the Open House funding which would receive a Letter of Offer and new KPIs for Year 2 and then there was a further commitment to Year 3 which was subject to the Rate setting process.

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

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

9.1 Notice of Motion (652) received from 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.

(The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, attending in person, was invited forward to speak to his motion – 7.16pm)

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

The Deputy Mayor thanked the Chair and Committee for allowing his Notice of Motion to be deferred from last month's agenda due to his attendance at a Deputy Mayor engagement on the same evening.

The Deputy Mayor outlined the area that his motion referred to which began on a path at the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour and ran over a 300 to 350 metre stretch along two beaches, locally known as the first and second beaches. That path continued on to a third beach that led on to Cove Bay and was a very popular route.

There was an issue at nightfall however when it was pitch black along the route, but despite this, it continued to be very well used into the evening for many different activities – dog walkers, runners and moonlight sea swimming were some examples he referred to.

Over time the Deputy Mayor had received approaches and requests from constituents around lighting of the path and those had reached a level where he felt it was now justified to bring this to Council.

He highlighted some of the health and safety concerns that had been raised which included a 6ft to 7ft drop from the path to the beach in parts of the route, there were trip hazards due to seaweed building up on the path and a fear of crime due to people not being able to walk in a well-lit area. He felt that the lighting would also make it a more welcoming place for people to visit. He also pointed to an issue with dog fouling over the years.

This was not a request for blazing floodlights, but just some low-level lighting that would be soft and appropriate for the area. While it was too late to be included in the 2025/26 budget, the proposer was asking for a report to come back with costings and to explain what the project could look like with a view to being funded in the following financial year or if funding unexpectedly became available in the incoming year.

The seconder, Councillor Hollywood rose to support the motion believing that the initiative presented a valuable opportunity to enhance safety in a beautiful part of the Borough. It would provide visibility for those who exercised regularly and would lower the risk of accidents. It would tie in with the Borough's healthy living strategy and address dog fouling issues. It would add to the charm and make it more inviting for visitors and he hoped the Council would buy in to this when finances allowed.

Councillor McKimm was supportive of the motion but wanted to see some reassurance that an Environmental Impact Assessment would be undertaken to ensure there would be no harm to wildlife whilst Alderman Adair rose to support the proposal and pointed to the benefits that lighting had brought to Ballywalter and Portavogie coastal paths.

The Director clarified that if the Council approved this, a project would be worked up and planning permission would be sought, if needed, and accompanied by a habitats assessment with appropriate conditions attached.

Both Councillor Hennessy and Councillor Edmund added further support for the motion referring to the health and wellbeing and safety benefits that the proposed lighting would bring.

The Chair recalled a similar proposal for a lighting scheme in Holywood which had attracted some concern from the community with regard to potential antisocial behaviour so she was pleased that there was a public desirability element included in the motion which would allow any ASB concerns to be raised.

In summing up, the Deputy Mayor thanked the Committee for their comments and support.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chambers, left the meeting – 7.27pm)

9.2 Notice of Motion (648) received from 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.

(Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall, attending remotely, were admitted to the meeting – 7.28pm)

The proposer, Alderman Brooks, advised that the motion was straight forward and acknowledged the success and benefits of the competition. His motion was to ask that the event and benefits it brought could be shared around the four towns and one city on a rotational basis. This was for officers to look at its potential and bring back a report. He felt it would be marvellous to see other towns host the event and pointed to Donaghadee's proven track record for hosting large public events and this would provide a good opportunity to enjoy the economic benefits it would bring.

The seconder, Councillor Kendall added that all councillors would have probably received feedback from constituents at some point claiming that one area received more than others and she felt that sometimes that perception was true but it was not always as true as that. She added that the Council took a 'Whole Borough' approach and this motion would look at how this popular event could be hosted in other areas of the Borough for the reasons set out by the proposer – she highlighted economic and cultural diversity as two examples.

Alderman Adair would support the motion at this stage as it was only asking for a report. It was important to ensure that the Pipe Band Championships remained in Ards and North Down and he spoke of the popularity of the event and the footfall it generated as it rotated every year between Newtownards and Bangor, an arrangement he was happy with given previous lengthy debates. One other factor to consider was that the wishes of the Pipe Band competition organisers were adhered to, but he would be interested to see the report which didn't necessarily mean he would be supportive at that stage.

Councillor Hennessy supported the motion which would at least look into the viability of rotating the locations of the event. Donaghadee had successfully held numerous large events over the years as part of its Summer Festival and he was aware that Donaghadee Community Development Association was very supportive of this report which would at least look at the possibility of holding the event in the town.

Councillor McKimm welcomed the proposal and felt it important to get the report and understand the facts and figures, but he also wanted to look at the methodology in which Council would fully engage with the community to ensure how it could go about representing those constituents rather than making another inhouse decision. He believed that there was strong feeling about that approach from the community.

The Chair explained that as Mayor she had had the pleasure of being Chieftain twice at the Pipe Band Championships both at the Airfield in Newtownards and at the UK Pipe Band Championships when it was hosted at Ward Park. She recalled feedback from the organisers indicating that Ward Park was a better site because the Airfield was more open and exposed and left instruments and equipment more vulnerable to bad weather. The Chair recalled Council discussions over the years in terms of identifying the right locations from a long list of options. Many of those had been discounted for various reasons but there had always been a focus on working with the Pipe Band as an organisation to see what suited it. This was an important consideration and there would be no point in moving the event around different locations if they were not suitable to both the community and the Pipe Band Association in terms of performance and practice space, among other venue requirements.

Given the opportunity to sum up on the proposal, Alderman Brooks added that he looked forward to the report coming back.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall left the meeting – 7.38pm)

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

11. **EXTENSION OF TOURISM EVENT CONTRACTS 2025/26 (FILE TO/PRO81)**

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 – part 3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

This report contains information relating to four Tourism Event Contracts previously awarded by Council. Following satisfactory service reviews it is recommending a further period of extension from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 as detailed in the original tender documents.

12. **GO SUCCEED QUARTERLY UPDATE (FILE ED135)**

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Schedule 6 – part 3 : Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

This report contains information relating to a funding request which has not yet approved by the PMO as awaiting a letter of offer for 2025-2026.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.41pm.

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 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Irwin

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Alderman: | Brooks (Zoom) | McRandal |
| | Graham | McIlveen |
| | McAlpine (Zoom) | Smith |

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Councillors: | Chambers (Zoom) | McCracken |
| | Cochrane | Moore |
| | Gilmour | Thompson |
| | Irvine, S | |

Officers in Attendance: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (R McCullough), Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor W Irvine.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. PROMOTING POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT AND MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICIES

(Appendices I & II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that to effectively and consistently handle persistent and unacceptable behaviour, it was essential that the Council had a corporate Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy in place both for internal and external use.

Those policies aimed to help managers and employees promote positive engagements with service users, including in difficult situations, and to appropriately manage any challenging behaviour when it presented itself.

Those policies had been developed in accordance with NIPSO guidance and the Council's Policy Development Process.

Once approved they would be communicated to all employees and available to the public on the Council website.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the following policies:

- Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy (External)
- Promoting Positive Engagement and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour policy (Internal)

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith referred to the length of the document which he felt made it difficult to retain and asked if there was a plan to have a synopsis for staff. The Head of Administration said that had not been the plan but it could be provided if it increased accessibility for users. The document gave the expectation for staff conduct in terms of good behaviour both from them and towards them and set out measures if that behaviour was not met. The Alderman did not believe that a further version needed to be considered but did feel that there was a lot of information to be retained.

Councillor McCracken thought that the policies had been well written and covered many issues in a professional way. He added that there may be a mismatch in the tone of the document and the employee experience and had a slight concern about training and how the information would be embedded within the organisation. The Head of Administration stated that there was absolutely a plan for training through both e-learning and face to face teaching through workshops.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. SERVICE PLANS

4a Finance (Appendix III)

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for the Finance Service in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve this Service Plan.

Referring to the Finance Service Plan there was a query about the SWOT analysis where a weakness was stated as poor prioritisation of core finance work due to

overly ambitious Council aspirations. The Head of Finance explained that this went back to issues discussed as part of the Estimates Process and the Council's ambition in respect of capital. The concern was that the Council get a grip on making progress on its Reserves and general fund balance and indeed it had made progress on that over the last number of years and was embedded in the long-term planning.

Councillor McCracken referred to the outdated financial systems within the Council and indeed that was a weakness in the wider public sector generally and swift changes were taking place in terms of technology and Artificial Intelligence. He asked if the Council had a plan to address that since the situation looked critical.

The Head of Finance explained that there was already a business case approved and the Council had started to implement a new system that would be a significant piece of work. The software itself would largely do what it said but with new systems would require a cultural change and reengineering and receptiveness to new technologies. That was challenging when added to the volume of work already being carried out, keeping up with the required regulations and increased complexity of the work. The Member hoped that the Senior Management Team would provide the support needed and he asked that the Corporate Committee be kept updated on the progress being made.

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

4b Community Planning (Appendix IV)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Community Planning Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.

- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve this Service Plan.

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

4c Communications and Marketing (Appendix V)

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Communications and Marketing in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017–2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve this Service Plan.

Referring to a weakness identified in the SWOT analysis Alderman Smith referred to the centralisation within the service and asked for clarification on that. The Director explained that the vast majority of the Council’s communications activity was done centrally through the Communications team but examples of where it was not, were in Leisure, which did most of its own and tourism which also did not report directly to the central Council team.

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

4d **Administration** (Appendix VI)

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Administration in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable the Council to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.

- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Service Plan is approved.

Alderman Smith referred to Climate Change and Sustainability as being a Council wide responsibility and expressed concern about the limited resources to roll that out since it was not a small piece of work. The Head of Administration reported that as of the previous week the Council had appointed a Sustainability Officer who would work cross departmentally to give support. The service was growing and it was hoped that the position could be sustained at the present time.

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

4e Human Resources (Appendix VII)

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Human Resources in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.

- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan (Appendix 1):

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Service Plan is approved.

Alderman McRandal referred to the lack of buy-in on corporate matters and the Director advised that in managing absence some improvement had been made but the Council was not where it wanted to be and that threat would be kept under review.

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

4f Strategic Transformation and Performance (Appendix VIII)

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Strategic Transformation and Performance in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable the Council to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves this Service Plan.

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

5. PERIODIC REVIEW OF ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION POLICY

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Finance Service had a suite of 11 policies in place and a further 2 in development. As part of the periodic review process the anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy had been examined. In order to address a recommendation from the external auditors the latest draft version had been amended to include fraud training for key individuals within the Council. Those changes were highlighted in orange on pages 2 and 12 of the attached draft. Other minor changes were also tracked.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve version 4.0 of the Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy.

Proposed by Alderman Graham, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McAlpine referred to the appendix on the Nolan principles where the word honesty had been repeated twice and asked for that to be amended in the published version. The Head of Finance assured her that it would be.

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

6. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES 2024-25

(Appendices X - XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the report was to consider three issues with respect of the scheme of allowances for Members:

1. Department for Communities circular increasing the maximum basic and special responsibility allowances.
2. The need to claim special responsibility allowance (SRA).
3. Classification of the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Allowances.

Members should note that a broader review of Councillor allowances had been undertaken by the Department for Communities. At the time of writing this paper, no determination in respect of the review had been communicated to the Council.

Increase in Maximum allowances

Members would be aware that the Council approved an increase in the basic allowance (BA) for the current financial year to the maximum set for the 2023/24 year. That was the first increase in four years.

Following the National Joint Council agreement for staff towards the end of 2024, the Department for Communities had now issued a further determination to increase the maximum BA and SRA that may be paid, in line with usual practice.

Consequently, the basic allowance had been increased from £17,030 to the new maximum of £17,456.

Special Responsibility Allowance

The policy of claiming SRA was introduced a number of years ago to allow for the recognition of Members (generally vice chairs) who were not committee chairs, but on occasion chaired meetings and did not receive any recompense for that responsibility.

A number of Members had raised an issue that as a result of needing to claim special responsibility allowance some Councillors were not doing so and therefore not getting what it owed to them. Officers reviewed the payment information which bore that out, with the average number of SRAs paid each month during the current financial year being 11.

The policy would therefore appear to be disadvantaging more Members than it was helping and therefore the revised scheme of allowances proposed reverting to the previous policy of paying Committee chairs an SRA each month automatically. As a result, no other Members may claim an SRA for chairing a meeting, in order not to breach the statutory limit of 20 members receiving an SRA.

Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Allowances

Under the current scheme the Mayor and Deputy Mayor received an SRA, and the Council paid for expenses of the Mayor's office under the Mayors' Allowance heading. By doing so, the Council was technically in breach of the statutory limit for payments of SRA. However, when publishing payments made to Councillors, those SRAs were classified as Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Allowances.

In order to rectify that situation, it was proposed in the new draft Scheme of allowances that the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's allowance were moved to the appropriate section of the scheme, which would therefore be made up of 3 parts:

- Mayor's Allowance
- Deputy Mayor's Allowance
- Expenses of Mayor's Office.

Budgets would be moved to the appropriate headings, and that would not result in any additional cost to the Council but would ensure that the Council met its obligations in respect of the number of Councillors who received an SRA.

All proposed changes to the scheme had been highlighted in the attached version.

A further report would be presented to the Committee to approve the scheme of allowances for the new 2025/26 financial year.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

1. consider the revised maximum allowances from the DfC
2. approve the revised scheme of allowances for 2024/25 (v 12.1) and
3. pay all Members for unclaimed SRAs in respect of the current financial year as appropriate.

Proposing the recommendation Alderman McIlveen asked that the Item be noted and that no action be taken. That was seconded by Councillor Cochrane.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the Item be noted and that no action be taken.

7. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES 2025-26 (Appendices XIII & XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that every year the Council must approve a scheme of allowances for Councillors before any payments could be made to Members.

The latest version 13 only had minor changes from version 12.1 considered earlier in the meeting. The revisions were in respect of the maximum rates of dependant carers' allowance and subsistence. Those were highlighted in orange on pages 4 and 5.

A further version would be brought to the Council should the Department for Committees issue updated maximum rates or any other changes to administrative arrangements.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the scheme of allowances for 2025.26.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen that the recommendation be adopted except in relation to the payments for chairing meetings where the Council would continue with the current arrangements. That was seconded by Alderman Smith.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted except in relation to the payments for chairing meetings where the Council will continue with the current arrangements.

8. REVIEWED LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT **POLICY APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2028** (Appendix XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the **reviewed Learning, Training and Development Policy** ensured that relevant learning, training and development was in place so that employees provided a high-quality, cost-effective service to the public. That enabled the Council to achieve its strategic aims and objectives and comply with all legal and statutory requirements.

The primary purpose of the policy was to set out the parameters governing *employee led* requests for training.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurred with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade

union partners was scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council would be advised of any significant edits requested.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the revised Learning, Training and Development policy.

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

9. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, ACTION PLAN AND PEOPLE PLAN (INTERIM REVIEW) APRIL 25 TO MARCH 26

(Appendix XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the **Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review)** was a planned approach to becoming a higher performing Council by way of improving employee engagement. The aim was to positively influence how employees approached their jobs, their careers and ultimately the communities served. Importantly, the document was based on the Investors in People (IIP) high performance framework.

The document served as an interim update before preparation for the next IIP assessment in December 2025.

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurred with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade union partners was scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council would be advised of any significant edits requested.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Organisational Development Strategy, Action Plan and People Plan (Interim Review) for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Proposed on the recommendation of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing Alderman Smith thought that this presented well and he praised officers for the work involved. As seconder Councillor McCracken noted that the report had indicated that some managers felt demoralised in respect of inconsistent management of performance and he felt that was discouraging to those managers who were performing well. He asked how that was being addressed to ensure that across the organisation the Council was managed to the same high standard consistently.

In response the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the section did its best to ensure consistency with regular training on all of the policies and provide advice to managers and review progress. She admitted that the Council was a very diverse and varied organisation and it was difficult to ensure consistency at all times.

Councillor McCracken agreed and thought that leadership was required by the Senior Management Team. The Director of Corporate Services referred to the nature of the Council and different people would have different needs and require different types of intervention particularly in respect of the work they undertook and whether it was office or externally based. While consistency was important it was also essential to reflect on the inbuilt differences and the Council was not a one stop shop so arrangements were made to suit the needs of those in different roles across the organisation.

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

10. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, APRIL 25 TO MARCH 26
(Appendix XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the **Learning and Development Strategy** was developed following a Training Needs Analysis process. It included the following;

- Corporate priorities for improving employee capabilities, skills and competencies.
- The Plan for Essential Training

As part of the Policy Review Procedure, consultation occurred with management, trade union partners and the Staff Consultative Committee. Consultation with trade union partners was scheduled for 12 March 2025. Full Council would be advised of any significant edits requested.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Learning and Development Strategy and Plan for Training.

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

11. LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER ACCREDITATION
(Appendix XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Members would be aware that the Council agreed, following a Notice of Motion and subsequent paper, to progress accreditation to become a Living Wage Employer. Officers could now confirm that the Council were accredited as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage Foundation on 18th February 2025.

The attached letter confirmed that, Ards and North Down Borough Council met the standards set by Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation by committing to the 'UK Living Wage Employer' Licence agreement and requirements. The accreditation was valid for one year and would be renewed annually.

As a Living Wage Employer, Ards and North Down Borough Council had committed to:

- Pay the real UK Living Wage to all of its directly employed staff over the age of 18.
- Ensure all its third-party contracted and sub-contracted regular staff were paid the real UK Living Wage.
- Increase the wages of those employees and contracted staff to the Living Wage, if appropriate, within six months of any rise in the calculated Living Wage rates (Reviewed annually).

A communications plan would be developed to publicise the Accreditation.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above report.

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

Councillor McCracken considered this to be very good news and offered congratulations to everyone on the Council team for bringing such a positive report. Ards and North Down Borough Council had previously been on a low tier for low pay across the Borough and that needed to be addressed. This was an example of civic leadership and would also set a benchmark for suppliers. He believed that it was important that the news was communicated to residents via multiple channels to demonstrate the Council's leadership and he asked officers to outline the plans for that.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that the communication had gone live today and Belfast had done this too successfully, it would be tied in to the Council's broader message to businesses and investors.

As seconder Councillor Thompson welcomed the comments made by Councillor McCracken and hoped the right messaging would be sent out to the public.

Alderman McRandal agreed that this was a very positive development and a good news story. He noted that the requirement would also apply to companies which did business with the Council and he asked how the Council could ensure compliance. In response the Committee was informed that it would be required as part of the contract in a tendering process that staff working directly with the Council should be paid the Living Wage.

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

12. EQIA REQUIREMENT FOR REQUEST TO HOLD ORANGE VICTIMS' DAY SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION AT THE WARD PARK CENOTAPH (Appendix IXX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Council had received a request from the Bangor District LOL 18 to hold an Orange Order Victims' Day service of commemoration at the Ward Park Cenotaph on Sunday 7th September 2025.

That would be a religious service at the cenotaph to commemorate the life of all Orangemen/Women lost during the Troubles with 50 – 100 in attendance consisting of members of Bangor District LOL 18 and band.

Section 10.2 in The lands Policy stated: Permission granted under this policy to use Council land or property is without prejudice to any planning, building control, environmental or other legislative or regulatory requirements.

Screening

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) required public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of nine categories outlined in the Act.

That request had been screened and it had been determined that the request would require an EQIA before the Council could consider the request fully.

Consultation process

Public consultation would include an online questionnaire, which would be available through the Council's Citizen Space portal; alternative paper copies and alternative languages could be requested through EQIA@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk. The ECNI recommended that for an EQIA, public authorities allowed a minimum consultation period of 12 weeks. The Council would engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them and would ask consultees what their preferred consultation methods were and would give consideration to those.

The EQIA would be advertised in The County Down Spectator, The Newtownards Chronicle, and on the Council's Social Media Platforms, as well as being emailed to all consultation groups within Equality and Good Relations Sections.

A special meeting of the Ards and North Down Consultative Panel would be held in line with the Equality Scheme and within the agreed constitution.

Due to the urgency of the request, the EQIA would be commenced following the call-in period of this committee. After the 12-week consultation, an EQIA Final Decision Report would be written and presented to the Council. That was anticipated to be July 2025.

Budget

It was recommended that by using an independent external facilitator the Council could ensure impartiality. That would include each of the seven steps of the EQIA along with the twelve-week public consultation. The cost for the EQIA exercise would be approximately £6,000. There was no budget set aside for the work, so it would require cost management within the Head of Administration's budget throughout the year to accommodate.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the report is noted.

Proposing Councillor Cochrane recognised that this was the next stage of the process and he commended Bangor District for its cooperation with the process. Referring to the approximate £6k figure that seemed significant and he hoped that this would be a one off payment and the District would not need to go through the process again.

As seconder Councillor Thompson had no further comment.

Alderman McRandal put on record that the Alliance Party supported the event taking place and also acknowledged the suffering at the loss of innocent lives. He believed that recognising and remembering the past was part of the ongoing journey of reconciliation and peacebuilding. The Council and other public authorities needed to be mindful of the Equality requirements under the Northern Ireland Act and those were in place to protect everyone so the Council had a duty to uphold that.

Alderman Smith viewed the process as taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut and it seemed crazy to spend so much money on something that would be so straightforward and uncontentious. He queried the outcomes of 'major' impact and questioned if other organisations seeking to do something in Ward Park would have to go through this and if an independent review was really necessary.

The Director of Corporate Services informed him that this was the first time for an EQIA for this event and all applications were screened and most of those were screened out. The commemoration in relation to the Somme was referenced as being of a long-standing nature and no previous complaints had been made against that historically. The commemoration was a comparatively new event and the rationale for screening it was outlined in the appendix. The figure of £6k was an estimate of the costs needed such as advertising, hiring of venues, collation of data and the preparation of reports. Every new event would go through this process if it was screened in. Other events had been screened in or not permitted to go ahead on the potential impact on good relations. Alderman Smith replied that screening was highly subjective so in terms of determining if the impact was major or not was in the eye of the beholder. The Member accepted that even though he did not agree with it.

Alderman McIlveen's point was also in relation to the subjective nature of the screening required and he did not agree with the interpretation since this was a short moment in time which would be held once a year and could not be described as

major. It was being held simply to commemorate innocent victims. He also disagreed with the comment in the report that stated that there would be a negative impact on the Roman Catholic community and if anything it would have a neutral impact. The spend required on the assessment could not be justified. Responding the Head of Administration confirmed that the Equality Commission was consulted as well as internal and external screening and was a group decision with multiple channels who determined it as screened in. Alderman McIlveen stressed there was no objective standard and he added that as a former Equality Commission commissioner that the organisation was not infallible.

Councillor Gilmour echoed a number of the Alderman's comments and agreed that the Equality Commission was not infallible and gave the example when it had taken Ashers Bakery to Court and in that case had been found to be on the wrong side of the law. The interpretation that the Orange Order only welcomed Protestant members was incorrect since one of the core principles supported by the organisation had been established by the 1688 Revolution which enshrined civic and religious liberties for all. She was not sure how anyone could take offence and the decision did not sit easily with her.

Alderman Graham expressed concern about the amount of money needed to be spent and noted that this was a good example of taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut. He had appreciated the attitude shown in the Committee to the event and Members were prepared to allow this commemoration. He imagined when innocent victims had been murdered during the Troubles that Roman Catholic neighbours would have been supportive and he pointed a finger directly at the Equality Commission and felt this was mischief making and that when the event did take place the modest numbers attending would give offence to no one.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the report is noted.

13. NOTICE OF MOTION

- a) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Councillor McLaren
- **Postponed to April Corporate Services Committee**

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the public/press be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

15. RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR PRINTING SERVICES

(Appendices XX & XXI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider extending the contract for the provision of printing services for a 12-month period following a satisfactory service review.

The recommendation was adopted.

16. RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider extending the contract for the provision of an Employee Assistance Programme for a 12-month period following a satisfactory service review.

The recommendation was that Council approves the extension of the Employee Assistance Programme contract for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option.

The recommendation was adopted.

17. RENEWAL OF TENDER FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider extending the contract for the provision of Occupational Health Services for a 12-month period following a satisfactory service review.

The recommendation was that Council approves the extension of the Occupational Health Services contract for a further 12-month period under the existing Tender Option.

The recommendation was adopted.

18. LEASE TO ORIGIN GYMNASTICS (Appendix XXII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to provide consent for installations as required under the Lease to Origin Gymnastics. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request.

The recommendation was adopted.

19. REQUEST FROM DFI TO USE PART OF KENNEL LANE CAR PARK, NEWTOWNARDS AS A SITE COMPOUND (Appendix XXIII)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:5 – INFORMATION IN RELATION TO WHICH A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE COULD BE MAINTAINED IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS.

The Council was asked to consider a request from Dfl to use Council Land at Kennel Lane car park, Newtownards for a site compound.

The recommendation was adopted.

20. YEAR END 2024/25 OUTTURN FORECAST

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:4 INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS, OR CONTEMPLATED CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS, IN CONNECTION WITH ANY LABOUR RELATIONS MATTERS ARISING BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OR A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND EMPLOYEES OF, OR OFFICE HOLDERS UNDER, THE COUNCIL.

Council was asked to consider a year end 2024/2025 forecast outturn report and consider how any surplus derived may be used to improve the Council's financial position.

The recommendation was adopted.

21. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT (Appendices XXIV - XXVI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:4 INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS, OR CONTEMPLATED CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS, IN CONNECTION WITH ANY LABOUR RELATIONS MATTERS ARISING BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OR A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND EMPLOYEES OF, OR OFFICE HOLDERS UNDER, THE COUNCIL.

Council were provided with an update on absence and the Council's absence management action plan.

The recommendation was adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.40 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid (in person and via Zoom) meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, and via Zoom, on Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Brooks

Alderman: Adair
Cummings (Zoom)
McRandal

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Councillors: | Ashe 7.10pm (Zoom) | Hollywood |
| | Boyle | S Irvine |
| | Chambers | Kendall |
| | Cochrane | McClellan |
| | Douglas | Moore 7.19pm (Zoom) |

Officers in Attendance: Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development (A Faulkner), Head of Community and Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

Also in Attendance: Councillor Edmund (Zoom)

1. APOLOGIES AND CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

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

Apologies had been received from Councillors W Irvine & McBurney and the Director of Community & Wellbeing.

Apologies for lateness had been received from Councillors Ashe & Moore.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

The following Declaration of Interest was notified:

Councillor Chambers – Item 27 – NCLT Q2 2024-2025

NOTED.

(Councillor Ashe joined the meeting this stage via Zoom – 7.10pm)

3. **DEPUTATIONS**

3.1. **Society of Saint Vincent de Paul – North Down and Ards Area Council**

The Chairman welcomed Sean Johnston, North Down & Ards Area President, Society Saint Vincent De Paul (SVP) accompanied by:

- Anne McLarnon, Ballyholme/Donaghadee;
- Tracey Colaluca, Newtownards; and
- Pauline McGimpsey, Holywood.

The Chairman invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Johnston thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and proceeded to provide members with a brief overview of the work carried out by SVP. SVP had a shared interest with elected members in trying to assist people to overcome difficulties and problems in their lives. It helped a lot of people across the entire Council area but with very limited support from the Government or the Council. The assistance provided in 2024 was particularly limited when the scale of the help being delivered by SVP was considered. Current criteria for the Hardship Fund precluded SVP from getting help to provide support in all areas of the Council. As such Mr Johnston believed that the criteria needed to be reconsidered to facilitate Council support across all areas, as SVP's experience showed that deprivation existed in all areas.

Mr Johnston provided members with a brief history of SVP as detailed:

- SVP was founded in Paris in 1833;
- Established in Ireland and Britain in 1844;
- Set up initially in Newtownards in 1893.

Focus of SVP Work:

- Helping people experiencing financial hardship to live a life of dignity by providing the key essentials of daily living;
- Delivered through home visitation by trained volunteers;
- Only criteria for receiving help was to be in need;
- The focus of its work was on areas of deprivation – mostly in areas of social housing and increasingly, the private rental sector.
- Encourage self-sufficiency through referrals to other agencies who could provide complementary help and by providing advice and support.

Main Types of Help Provided:

- Food and food vouchers;
- Electricity and gas top ups;
- Heating oil;
- Clothing, including help with school uniforms;
- Help with educational costs such as school trips, books/equipment for university/college;

- Essential white goods (cookers, washing machines & fridge/freezers);
- Beds and mattresses;
- Deliveries of food from Storehouse North Down and Newtownards Foodbank;
- Referrals to Kiltonga Christian Centre for help with other furniture (settees, tables, chairs, chests of drawers and wardrobes).

Area Where Help was Provided:

SVP provided support in all areas of Ards and North Down through six local groups, known as Conferences as follows:

- **Bangor**: covering Bangor West, Whitehill, Kilcooley. Crawfordsburn, Helens Bay and Clandeboye/Newtownards Road.
- **Ballyholme/Donaghadee**: covering Bangor city centre, Bangor East/ Ballyholme, Rathgill, Bloomfield, Breezemount, Conlig, Groomsport, Donaghadee and Millisle.
- **Newtownards/Comber**; covering Newtownards and Comber.
- **Kircubbin**: covering Carrowdore, Greyabbey, Portavogie, Ballywalter, Ballyhalbert and Cloughey.
- **Hollywood**: covering Hollywood and Redburn.
- **Portaferry**: covering Portaferry.

At this stage Mr Johnston introduced Anne McLarnon, Ballyholme/Donaghadee Conference who provided members with the following information.

Main Circumstances Giving Rise to Need for Help:

- Benefit delays/disallowances;
- Illness/disability;
- Family break ups;
- High rents necessitating people having to take money from their benefits to top up the Housing Benefit contribution;
- Breakdown of essential household items;
- Moving to a new home;
- Shortfall in school uniform grants;
- Any additional unanticipated expenditure.

Sources of SVP Referrals:

- Community Advice;
- Self-referrals;
- Social workers;
- Health & Social Care staff;
- Women's Aid;
- YMCA;
- Simon Community;
- Link Centre;
- Politicians.

Scale of Direct Support Provided to People in Ards and North Down:

- 2022: £313,036
- 2023: £304,000
- 2024: £340,973
- All support was provided by volunteers, so very little overheads – virtually all money received was distributed to people in need.
- Number of visits carried out in 2024 = 3,347.
- Number of households helped in 2024 = 1984.

Source of Funds:

- Church door collections;
- Donations – Rotary, other churches, schools' fundraising, businesses;
- Legacies/wills;
- Vincent's charity shop, Kircubbin;
- SVP Sharing Fund.

Summary:

- No signs of demands for help easing.
- SVP played a key role in helping to alleviate deprivation in Ards and North Down.
- The social value it added was very considerable.
- SVP believed that Council's criteria for allocating funding needed to be reviewed so as not to preclude those organisations that had a long history of providing substantial and tailored help to people in need throughout the Council area.
- SVP recognized that Council resources were limited but in view of the scale of support SVP was providing to people in acute need, it believed there needed to be a more equitable distribution of the available funds.
- SVP was willing to contribute to any such review by the Council.

At this stage Ms McLarnon thanked members for taking the time to listen to their concerns and advised that she would be content to be involved in any review of criteria that the Council wished to take.

The Chairman thanked Mr Johnston and Ms McLarnon for their presentation and invited questions from members at this stage. The following comments were made.

The Chairman commented that as a Rotary member he was aware Christmas was a particularly busy and hard time and as such he asked how SVP kept the public aware of its fundraising activities.

Ms McLarnon agreed that Christmas was a busy time but a lot of fundraising activity did take place which was well publicised. Funds had notably dwindled throughout the past few months within her own Conference as the need was increasing. Mr Johnston added that the month of September generally saw a peak in demand with people panicking about heating their homes throughout winter and the additional demands associated with the Christmas period.

Alderman Adair thanked the representatives of SVP for their presentation stating that he knew firsthand the work SVP did throughout the Ards Peninsula. When he had been first elected to Council, SVP had been the first organisation to reach out to him to tell about the help that was available to his constituents. He added that while he was aware that it was a Christian organisation, it helped everyone across the Borough, regardless of their religious background. Referring to the Council decision around funding he stated that he believed the wrong decision had been made at that time. As such he asked if there was any way that SVP could potentially tailor its constitution a little bit locally.

Mr Johnston stated that the advice they had received at the time was that the applications were all the same but while the narrative was the same, the officers and bank accounts in each area were different.

Alderman Adair thanked Mr Johnston for the clarification and commended him for the ongoing work of SVP, which he felt was phenomenal.

Councillor Boyle expressed his thanks for the presentation adding that he was all too familiar with the work of the SVP particularly in his home town of Portaferry. He noted the confusion there had been around the criteria for funding particularly as a number of applications had been submitted around the same time and all of which had to go through the same process. Continuing he suggested that SVP may be in danger of spreading itself too thinly as need had become more greater than ever and donations were not coming in to match that demand. Increases in the cost of living were also a likely contributory factor.

Ms McLarnon advised that there were six Conferences with the Borough and any money collected within those Conference areas was spent in that area. Any surplus funds would be shared amongst those neighbouring areas within the Borough.

Mr Johnston added that Conferences in other areas of Northern Ireland who received greater amounts of money than they did from collections would be expected to put that into a central pot and share it out with those who maybe did not get as much. However he stated that they had never been able to do that as they were already short of money. Continuing he added that chapel door-to-door collections were a big part of their income, approximately a third.

Alderman McRandal was offered to speak by the chairman but he expressed that his question had already been asked by another member and responded to by SVP.

Councillor Hollywood also expressed his thanks for the informative presentation adding that he was familiar with the good work carried out by SVP. As such he stated that if there was anything the Council could do to help the organisation and similarly anything that he could do personally to be in touch with him. He stated that SVP was a wonderful organization and thanked them for the work that they did.

Councillor Douglas also expressed her thanks to SVP for coming along and making their presentation which had given members a very useful insight into the work they did on a daily basis. She added that she had made contact with some the Conferences in the Borough through her work with Michelle McIlveen MLA and

nothing was ever too much trouble. As such she offered them her full support adding that she would continue to support and promote their good work in any way that she could.

As a Councillor for Hollywood which was sometimes referred to as the 'gold coast', Councillor Kendall stated that she was only too well aware that was not the case in all areas. She asked if the criteria was widened or considered differently in terms of the grant or other grant funding a lot of groups would criticize the Council because it had a very limited pot and as a result groups would receive less money.

In response Mr Johnston suggested that they would need to look at the continuity of the service and the degree to which there was added value. As it was mostly volunteers anything that they received was given out to those in need and they essentially just put the head down to get on with it all in confidence. He added that in a sense, they did not make a song and dance about it and instead just get on with it. He did however believe that the criteria needed to be significantly refined to reflect those organisations that had that degree of continuity and on the ground practical support for people in need. He appreciated that was not easy to do but was something which needed to be done.

Councillor Kendall added that she believed there was a fine balance to be struck when it came to the amount of help which the Council provided to those groups out in the local community.

The Chairman thanked Mr Johnston and Ms McLarnon for their presentation and wished them well for the future.

(Mr Johnston and Ms McLarnon returned to the Public Gallery at this stage – 7.28pm)

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Council tasks officers to bring forward a report to the Community and Wellbeing Committee to consider support and funding opportunities from Council to assist the work of St Vincent De Paul Ards and North Down.

The proposer, Alderman Adair thanked SVP for coming along to make their presentation to the Committee. He believed that it had been very worthwhile to give those members who were not so familiar with their work an insight into the help they provided. He expressed the view that SVP had been hard done by in respect of funding from the Council. The amount of people in this Borough that they helped in practical ways was commendable and was all done through volunteers. As such he believed that the Council owed consideration to this for the sake of its constituents who benefited from the invaluable work carried out by SVP.

Alderman McRandal indicated that he was very happy to support the proposal.

Councillor Boyle added his support to the proposal stating that he would look forward to the report coming back which would hopefully detail a proposed structure which would work for all.

At this stage Councillor Kendall commented that she would look also forward to the report coming back and would welcome reconsidering potential grant criteria which could lead to the inclusion of more groups. She did however voice some concern as that could lead to requests from other charities and groups and if those were denied the Council could be seen to be unfairly treating other deserving groups. As such she believed the Council going forward needed to ensure that it was operating in a fair and equitable manner.

By way of summing up Alderman Adair noted that SVP was the only group which had not been successful, adding that other groups had not applied for the funding. He expressed the view that the Council had made the wrong decision in respect of SVP hence his proposal. Alderman Adair added that if a member was aware of any other group which would be eligible for this funding that they were encouraged to apply for it through the appropriate channels.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Council tasks officers to bring forward a report to the Community and Wellbeing Committee to consider support and funding opportunities from Council to assist the work of St Vincent De Paul Ards and North Down.

3.2. Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group and Sanctuary UK

The Chairman welcomed Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Sanctuary UK) and Helen Sloan along with Monika Ciok-Giertuga (Bangor Asylum and Refugee Working Group) and invited them to make their presentation.

Ms Sloan thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting on behalf of the Bangor Asylum and Refugee Group, managed by North Down YMCA, to present information on the current work in Bangor regarding asylum seekers who were being housed in the Marine Court Hotel. At this stage she also thanked Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Sanctuary UK) for being in attendance. The request to present was as a follow-up to a vote which was taken by the Council on 3 December 2024. On that evening, a proposal for the Council to become party to the City of Sanctuary network was narrowly defeated. Ms Sloan believed that this was due in the main to a lack of knowledge of the City of Sanctuary organisation and myths which at times blighted society.

The Bangor Asylum and Refugee Group was made up of statutory agencies, voluntary sector representatives, churches and relevant charities and met every month to offer support for the newcomers welfare and safety. Sign posting was provided to English classes while support groups provided information by orientation walks and created spaces of safety for those seeking welcome in the community. Ms Sloan advised that those people who were here were legally seeking asylum and many people from the local community supported them whilst they went through the proper process with the Home Office. It was noted that process would result in them either receiving refugee status or not.

Ms Sloan indicated that she was available as was North Down YMCA and other agencies to share more about this working together model that was in place to assist

those who had arrived in the local community seeking a safe place to dwell after fleeing from war-torn countries, being trafficked and much more. As such she stated that this was a broad overview to give the Council the opportunity to hear firsthand of the work of the City of Sanctuary organisations and to ask questions.

At this stage Ms Sloan handed over to Maggie Filipova (Sanctuary UK).

Ms Filipova-Rivers thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting advising that she was a Deputy Leader for an English Local Authority. She stated that she was attending this meeting in her role as City of Sanctuary Program Manager for Local Authorities to offer support to develop strategic approaches that were effective and compassionate in supporting new arrivals to rebuild their lives and thrive. She believed there was a lot of support and agreement for this which would see those people become fully contributing members of the local community.

After doing a bit of research in terms of the percentage of people seeking sanctuary in the Borough, Ms Filipova-Rivers believed that it was 0.1% across the many different schemes, including Homes for Ukraine, resettlement, people in the asylum system who were seeking protection and those on other government schemes. Councils she stated had no control over who came and indeed those people came because they were hosted or placed. She added however that what Councils did have control over was what happened to those people in local communities. Continuing Ms Filipova-Rivers referred to riots which had occurred in the UK which had resulted from community tensions stating that she believed the negative narrative around migration was a massive factor. Another important fact was that there had been a failure to really think about integration and community cohesion seriously and address it.

At this stage Ms Filipova-Rivers congratulated officers for the work which had been undertaken to date throughout the past few months developing ways of supporting new arrivals and working in partnership with a wide variety of other groups throughout the community. She added that she believed there remained some misunderstandings about what the Scheme was about and ultimately everyone needed to learn to live together and to contribute to a common vision of what a community was. The City of Sanctuary organisation believed that welcome or inclusion was everyone's business and not just for cash strapped voluntary sector organizations and faith communities. Ms Filipova-Rivers stated that many other organizations had a role to play by simply looking at the services they already provided and tweaking them, uplifting them or removing barriers to access where they existed in order to also include people seeking sanctuary. In respect of funding it was noted that most Councils throughout the UK used external funding such as Government funding from the Home Office in order to meet those specific needs. As such there was no need for Councils to spend additional money, but instead ensure that any new arrivals had the opportunity to access the plethora of local services that were provided.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sloan and Ms Filipova-Rivers for their presentation and invited questions from members at this stage. The following comments were made.

Councillor Boyle expressed his thanks for the presentation commenting that he was in no doubt that the Council had made the wrong decision back in December 2024 through a lack of understanding. He outlined a compass course of 25 people that he attended in August 2024 to present certificates and went on to say that he believed a more welcoming and kinder approach needed to be adopted along with more tolerance. Officers had got it right in his opinion and he was disappointed that the Council had not accepted the report.

At this stage Alderman McRandal stated that the Alliance Party supported the Council becoming a Borough of Sanctuary and believed the decision which had been taken was a shame and could almost be considered a backward step. Continuing he asked if the presenters had a specific ask of the Council and if they could explain how those who had arrived into the Borough could be disadvantaged by the Council not being a Borough of Sanctuary.

In response Ms Filipova-Rivers suggested that given that a lot of strategic work had already taken place, it would be good for that to be that decision to be reviewed by the Council. She added that this was a very highly politicized area of work and migration had been politicized, and as such it was a real shame that this incredibly vulnerable yet quite inspirational group of people had been demonized for a variety of reasons. In terms of the kind of criteria that had to be met, the question was would officers continue to deliver that work and work in partnership with community groups and other statutory and voluntary sector organisations in order to give them an opportunity to thrive and contribute. She added that she would hope members of the Committee would try to work to depoliticize this as it was a deeply humanitarian issue.

At this stage Councillor Kendall stated that she too was also on the side of the defeated alongside Councillor Boyle and others and had felt that it was a real shame. Unfortunately, with the current political landscape it was unlikely to see the numbers of people wanting to escape and flee harm cease or slowdown in any way. She recalled that some of the reasons given on that evening were that in becoming a Borough of Sanctuary and in helping and joining with that movement, the Council might well be seen to be supporting illegal immigration and potentially then human trafficking or other illegal activities. She asked what the presenters thoughts were on that.

Ms Filipova-Rivers indicated that was something which they were asked quite a lot. Those people who were seeking asylum, the minute that they claimed asylum, their status was regularised. A such there was no such a thing as an illegal asylum seeker. However there were those who made their way via irregular routes to seek safety in another country. At this stage she referred to an 18 year old boy who had arrived in the UK from a village in Sudan which he had fled after his village was set on fire. On his arrival he would not have had an understanding of the local systems which were in place and as such what he and others sought was safety and support to be able to thrive.

Councillor McClean indicated that he wished to refer back to previous debate and asked whether it would be helpful for the Council to commit to doing everything reasonably practical within its communities and in its dealings for the efficient and

compassionate management of issues relating to refugees and those who were seeking to gain asylum.

In response Ms Filipova-Rivers reiterated the role of the Council was to support people to integrate as it had control over what the potential barriers to that may be. Many local authorities in the UK were having an increasing role to play in integration across the UK.

At this stage Ms Sloan thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting stating that if any members wished to get in touch with them to do so and they would happily introduce them to people to hear firsthand their stories which would change their lives.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sloan and Ms Filipova-Rivers for their comments and wished them well for the future.

(Ms Sloan and Ms Filipova-Rivers left the Council Chamber at this stage – 8.03 pm)

NOTED.

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

4. IN BLOOM FUNDING (FILE PCA85)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report was to consider the 21 applications for the annual Ards and North Down in Bloom funding grants.

Ards and North Down Borough had a reputation for leading the way with its floral displays. The Borough had won regional and national competitions in recent years and the common theme throughout all the success was the incredible hard work and enthusiasm shown by its staff and the local communities they worked with.

The grant scheme assisted the Ards and North Down in Bloom initiative which had been developed with three overlapping objectives: horticultural excellence, community participation and environmentally sustainable practices. Those were in line with objectives of Translink Ulster in Bloom and other regional awards schemes.

By actively supporting this competition, applicants not only made their communities more attractive, but also contributed to the Borough's entry to the Translink Ulster in Bloom Competition and other regional awards. In recent years this had proved to be a great success, particularly in the towns of Comber (runner-up through 2021 and 2022) and Donaghadee (Winner 2021, 2022 and 2024). Donaghadee had also been nominated for the prestigious Britain in Bloom Competition 2025, a fantastic advertisement for the Borough.

Ards and North Down Borough Council currently made budget provision for the allocation of funding to community groups in order to assist with floral displays in the

city, towns and villages throughout the Borough, to assist with the Council's commitment to the Translink Ulster in Bloom competition.

The allocation for funding was intended to supplement floral display and amenity area maintenance currently carried out by the councils Parks and Cemeteries Service. This may be in the form of hanging baskets, planters, flower beds, sustainable wildflower displays etc. either on Council or other statutory bodies land or privately owned non-domestic areas in public view.

The maximum limit for floral funding was £1,250 per annum per group. This increase was approved by Council at Community and Wellbeing Committee in January 2025. A further grant may be provided for funding, in whole or in part, for appropriate liability insurance covering the floral display work over and above the group's normal insured activities. Insurance grants could be provided for up to 40% of the total project costs. Funding would be allocated with 80% advance payment, with the further 20% paid upon the receipt of invoices.

Council wished to encourage a collaborative approach by groups, where there were more than one group applying in a city, town or village, consideration may only be given to one project.

The 21 applications were assessed against the following criteria:

- Meet the core objectives of Ards and North Down in Bloom – Horticultural excellence, Environmental Sustainability and Community.
- Provide a vision as to how the funding will enhance the particular areas and how this will be sustained in subsequent years.
- Evidence of approval from relevant landowner where works are to be carried out.
- Where appropriate insurance liability cover is in place, copy of certificate and schedule to be submitted.
- How the works are to be carried out, and by whom.
- Detailed breakdown of how funding will be utilised, and receipts submitted accordingly.

Appendix 1 summarised how each application met the criteria. In the assessment, 19 of the applications were considered to have met the criteria. 2 applications were declined with the reasoning for this detailed in Appendix 1.

However, the Council acknowledged that not all community groups may fully understand the sustainability requirements and objectives associated with its funding initiatives. As such, the Council was committed to raising awareness of those important factors when distributing grant funding, ensuring that all recipients had a clear understanding of the expectations and opportunities for sustainable impact. With this in mind, two groups had their funding slightly reduced to exclude the use of weed killers as requested in their application. This was in line with Council's Herbicide Reduction Policy.

Currently, there was a budget allocation of £31,000 for the In Bloom programme. The 19 applications amount to a total of £22,472.59. A further round of funding would be advertised in late summer to utilise the remaining unused budget.

RECOMMENDED that Council awards funding to the 19 applicants marked with 'approval' in appendix 1.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Adair, took the opportunity to commend the ongoing success of the In Bloom applicants, adding that this was money well spent.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Boyle concurred with Alderman Adair's comments noting the maximum amount of funding available was £1,250.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that a policy change had been agreed the previous month by members which saw the funding increase from £1,000 to £1,250.

At this stage Councillor Douglas thanked all of the volunteers and community groups for their hard work throughout the year and made special mention of this in her own DEA in Comber and Ballygowan.

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

5. MIND BODY BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEME APPROVAL (FILE EHPD 19)
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of this report was to align the current Mind, Body, Business (MBB) small grants scheme with the Council's new Grants Policy approved by Council in 2024 with a formalisation of the process into a policy document.

Mind, Body, Business (MBB) was a project originally funded to the value of £6000 per year by the Public Health Agency (PHA). For the year 2025/26 Council had agreed to fund this as the PHA had withdrawn this funding. The purpose of the project was to facilitate and encourage businesses in Ards and North Down to prioritise employee health and wellbeing. This was in recognition of the fact that a healthy workforce contributed greatly to the success and economic well-being of the business and hence the local community.

Ards and North Down Borough Council currently provided allocation of a small amount of 'one off' in year funding to business groups who signed up to the MBB project.

In 2023/24, 25 businesses with over 1,093 employees benefited from various Health and Wellbeing Initiatives through MBB including the Small Grant Scheme. This year 2024/25 to date: 12 businesses received the small grant, benefitting 738 staff. 27 businesses also availed of the health checks (75 places) and 16 businesses were represented on the first aid courses (23 places).

The MBB Small Grants Scheme attached set out the guidelines and criteria for Mind, Body, Business (MBB) funding applications, how the funding should be utilised and how success would be evaluated.

By adopting this, it would:

- Formalise the protocol previously used to award the MBB Small Grants
- Provide general alignment with the Council Grants Policy approved in 2024
- Allow up to £250 per business per grants tranche with priority given to first time applicants in line with the purpose of MBB i.e. to encourage businesses to support employee health and wellbeing

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the attached Ards and North Down Mind, Body, Business (MBB) Small Grants Scheme.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor Kendall welcomed the report adding that she appreciated all of the important work which had been undertaken to date. She stated that she was baffled that the PHA had pulled out of funding this and she was grateful the Council was now going to fund this.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Hollywood sought clarification that the Scheme was for private sector businesses. The Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development confirmed that to be the case.

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

6. PUBLIC ANALYST (FILE CW61)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council had previously collaborated with Belfast City Council in setting up and using a contract for the provision of Public Analyst Services. The existing contract was due to expire on 31 March 2025.

A new collaborative tendering exercise for the provision of Public Analyst Services was recently undertaken by Antrim & Newtownabbey Council, with Ards and North Down Borough Council named as a user of the contract along with the other ten Northern Ireland Councils.

The prices achieved had proved to be very competitive and demonstrated that collaboration, where it made sound business sense, enhanced buying power and achieved improved value for money savings.

Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd (Public Analysts) Public Analyst Scientific Services Ltd was awarded the contract for a two-year period, commencing 1 April 2025, with the option to extend for up to a further 24 months.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the continued use of the collaborative contract and enters into agreement with Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd (Public Analysts), Public Analyst Scientific Services Ltd.

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

7. VE DAY 2025 – ADDITIONAL DATES (FILE CDV26)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council agreed in February 2025 to offer grants for VE Day events taking place from 8 May - 12 May 2025, for constituted organisations and community groups.

During the Council grants information sessions held on 20 February 2025, a number of those attending asked if the VE day commemorations could be held between Monday 5 May to 12 May 2025 to allow them to be held on the Bank Holiday, if required.

The application process for the VE Grants funding was due to be launched on 10 March 2025 in order for successful applicants to receive letters of offer and enable groups to plan for events.

RECOMMENDED that Council grants approval for VE day events to be held from Saturday 3 May to 7 May 2025 in addition to dates already approved, so that communities can avail of the May Bank Holiday weekend for their event if they wish, and for this to be included in the grant application pack.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Boyle agreed that this was a common sense approach which would provide a greater scope for events to be held over the Bank Holiday.

Concurring with those comments the seconder, Councillor Kendall stated that she was aware of a wide variety of Community Groups who were keen to become involved.

The Head of Community and Culture confirmed that this would be advertised on the Council website and social media platforms and that the date referred to was 5 May, not 3 May.

Councillor Cochrane also welcomed the report particularly as his colleague Councillor Gilmour had brought forward the proposal to increase the funding available.

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

8. HERITAGE GRANTS (FILE HER 01/R1 03/25)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the 2025/2026 Heritage Grants opened in November 2024 and closed at 12pm, on 21 January 2025. Seven applications were received. The grants were advertised under the previous grants policy and therefore required approval. The Heritage grant scheme would be tabled at a future meeting to enable the 2026/2027 grants to be awarded under the updated grants policy.

Three members of the Arts and Heritage Panel assessed the applications along with the Heritage Development Officer.

The grants were advertised in the local press, social media and on the Councils web site.

There was a total of £5,000 available with a maximum of £500 per application awarded. As shown in the accompanying Scoring Matrix, each application was scored out of 100. Recommendation for award of grant was based on a minimum score of 60.

Application Assessment Scoring

| GRANT REF: | ORGANISATION | PROJECT TITLE | SCORE | AWARDED |
|-------------------|--|--|--------------|----------------|
| HER-PG001/2526 | Portaferry & Strangford Trust | Booklets - A Wee Bit of Maritime History | 90 | £500.00 |
| HER-PG002/2526 | Kilcooley Women's Centre | Research & Exhibition - Her Story | 58 | 0.00 |
| HER-PG003/2526 | Discover Groomsport | Leaflets – Little Bits of History of Groomsport | 78 | £500.00 |
| HER-PG004/2526 | Ards Historical Society | Booklet – Newtownards the Town I Know so Well by Ivan Coffee | 83 | £500.00 |
| HER-PG005/2526 | Upper Ards Historical Society | Journal - The 2025 Journal of the Upper Ards Historical Society | 86 | £500.00 |
| HER-PG006/2526 | Donaghadee Community Development Association | VE-Day History Panels and Floral Display - Donaghadee: Least We Forget | 75 | £500.00 |
| HER-PG007/2526 | Donaghadee Heritage | Booklets - The Story of the Sir Samuel Kelly: A | 75 | £500.00 |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|--|-----------------|
| | Preservation Company | Children's Guide to Donaghadee Lifeboat | | |
| | | Total awarded | | 3,000.00 |

The total amount recommended for award was £5,000 leaving £2,000 available for a further application process to be undertaken during 2025/2026. The unsuccessful applicant above would be provided with feedback on their application and encouraged to apply for Round 2.

RECOMMENDED that Council award grants as outlined in the table above.

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

The proposer, Alderman Adair acknowledged that many of these organisations were run by volunteers and as such he commended them all for the work which they did.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Cochrane noted the wide variety of organisations which had applied for the Grants.

Councillor Boyle noted that Kilcooley Women’s Centre had been unsuccessful on this occasion and asked if any advice had been offered to them.

In response the Head of Community and Culture indicated that she believed some information had been missing from their application but she would confirm that with the member. She added that once an application had been submitted officers were not in a position to communicate with any of the applicants.

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

9. GOOD RELATIONS STRATEGY 2025-2028 AND ACTION PLAN 2025-2026 (FILE GREL433)
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council’s current Good Relations Strategy and annual Action Plan was due to end on 31 March 2025 and in order to access funding from The Executive Office a new three-year Strategy and Annual Action Plan had to be submitted by 31 January 2025. The attached Draft Strategy and Draft Action Plan had been submitted, subject to Council approval.

Third Sector Connect were appointed in October 2024 to carry out the necessary consultation to inform the development of the Strategy and Action Plan in tandem with the PCSP Strategy and Action Plan. A comprehensive consultation process had been undertaken as follows:

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Engagement with stakeholders to ensure the strategy was rooted in the needs and priorities of the community. This began with a series of face-to-face consultations held across the Borough, with at least one event in each District Electoral Area (DEA). These consultations provided residents, Council staff, and local stakeholders with a platform to discuss their specific community safety concerns and suggest improvements. By hosting at least one event in each DEA, it ensured representation across the Borough, allowing PCSP to capture diverse local insights and priorities.

| DATE | VENUE |
|----------|---|
| 4/11/24 | Hamilton Hub Community Centre |
| 4/11/24 | Donaghadee Community Centre |
| 5/11/24 | Redburn Community Centre |
| 6/11/24 | Portavogie Community Centre |
| 7/11/24 | Comber Community Centre |
| 8/11/24 | Ballygowan Village Hall |
| 11/11/24 | Ards Arena |
| 12/11/24 | Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor |
| 12/11/24 | St Patrick's Community Centre, Portaferry |

Alongside the face-to-face sessions, a survey was designed and distributed to widen the reach of the consultation process. This survey was designed to gather perspectives from a broad audience, including the public, council staff, elected members, PCSP members, and other stakeholders. It was distributed via social media and to those on the community database. The survey data helped identify recurring themes and unique community safety challenges, while also providing a quantitative measure of community feeling. Several 1 to 1 meetings were also held via Microsoft Teams with key stakeholders. Those individual sessions provided an opportunity for detailed discussions on specific topics and allowed stakeholders to share perspectives in a confidential setting.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached Good Relations Strategy 2025-2028 and Action Plan 2025-2026.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Kendall acknowledged the significant amount of work which had gone into this and noted two issues of concern. Those being around Transport and Economic Disparity. She asked if the Council had carried out any engagement with Translink to date.

In response the Head of Community and Culture suggested that those matters would be considered under Community Planning and the Labour Market Partnership of which Translink was a member.

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

10. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY (2025-2028) AND ACTION PLAN (2025-2026) (FILE PCSP/DOJ)

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council’s current Policing and Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan would end on 31 March 2025. In order to access funding from the Joint Committee (Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board) a new three-year Strategy 2025-2028 and Annual Action Plan 2025-2026 needed to be submitted by 18 February 2025.

Third Sector Connect were appointed in October 2024 to carry out the necessary consultation to inform the development of the Strategy and Action Plan. A comprehensive consultation process had been undertaken to inform the key strategic priorities which were:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Priority 1: | To ensure effective delivery in response to local need, and improve the visibility and recognition of the work of the PCSP through effective consultation, communication and engagement |
| Strategic Priority 2: | To improve community safety by prioritising and addressing local community safety issues, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour |
| Strategic Priority 3: | To support confidence in policing, including through collaborative problem-solving with communities |

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Engagement with stakeholders was completed to ensure the strategy was rooted in the needs and priorities of the community. This began with a series of face-to-face consultations held across the Borough, with at least one event in each District Electoral Area (DEA). Those consultations provided residents, Council staff, and local stakeholders with a platform to discuss their specific community safety concerns and suggest improvements. By hosting at least one event in each DEA, it ensured representation across the Borough, allowing PCSP to capture diverse local insights and priorities.

| DATE | VENUE |
|----------|---|
| 4/11/24 | Hamilton Hub Community Centre |
| 4/11/24 | Donaghadee Community Centre |
| 5/11/24 | Redburn Community Centre |
| 6/11/24 | Portavogie Community Centre |
| 7/11/24 | Comber Community Centre |
| 8/11/24 | Ballygowan Village Hall |
| 11/11/24 | Ards Arena |
| 12/11/24 | Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor |
| 12/11/24 | St Patrick's Community Centre, Portaferry |

Alongside the face-to-face sessions, a survey was designed and distributed to widen the reach of the consultation process. This survey was designed to gather

perspectives from a broad audience, including the public, council staff, elected members, PCSP members, and other stakeholders. It was distributed via social media and to those on the community database. The survey data helped identify recurring themes and unique community safety challenges, while also providing a quantitative measure of community feeling. Several 1-to-1 meetings were held via Microsoft Teams with key stakeholders. Those individual sessions provided an opportunity for detailed discussions on specific topics and allowed stakeholders to share perspectives in a confidential setting.

“Turning the Curve” Exercise with PCSP Members

A "Turning the Curve" exercise was conducted with PCSP members on 25 November 2024 to refine the strategic direction going forward. This workshop-based exercise facilitated a focused discussion on key indicators of community safety, with participants brainstorming ways to shift negative trends and improve outcomes. The "Turning the Curve" approach enabled PCSP members to prioritise strategic actions and set achievable goals, ensuring that the strategy was both ambitious and feasible.

The Policing and Community Safety Strategy (2025-2028) and annual Action Plan (2025-2026) was approved by the Policing and Community Safety Partnership on 27 January 2025 and was submitted in draft to the Joint Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the PCSP Strategy 2025-2028 and Action Plan 2025-2026.

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

Welcoming the report, Councillor Moore acknowledged the amount of work which had been undertaken to ensure the PCSP met its objectives and engaged with stakeholders.

Concurring with those comments, the seconder Alderman Cummings also applauded the work of officers to ensure those objectives were met. He suggested that perhaps currently there was a lack of awareness around the PCSP and the work which it carried out adding that was something which could possibly be looked at going forward.

The Head of Community and Culture confirmed that a Communications Strategy was being developed in order to raise the profile of the PCSP adding that a new officer was now in post who would be tasked to look at this going forward including social media and further information on the website.

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

11. SERVICE PLAN 2025-2026 COMMUNITY AND CULTURE (FILE CW22)

(Appendix V)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Community and Culture in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Service Plan.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder Councillor Kendall noted the increasing number of Groups and the impact that could have on the amount of Grant funding which was available and as such she would welcome officer considering this going forward. She added that she would be in favour of the Council giving further consideration to the budget for this as community and culture was significantly valued by the community.

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

12. SERVICE PLAN 2025-2026 LEISURE SERVICES (FILE LS/LA 14)

(Appendix VI)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for Leisure Services in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.

- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Service Plan.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Kendall welcomed the Leisure Strategy coming onboard having been an advocate for this and she also noted reference to Queen's Leisure Complex, Hollywood and welcomed comments around that. Continuing Councillor Kendall noted the excellent performance against budget despite some very difficult conditions and empathized the importance of recognising this.

At this stage Alderman McRandal expressed his thanks to officers for the work which had gone into producing each of the Service Plans. He noted within the Risk and Assessment element reference made to customers using facilities without paying and sought further clarity around that.

The Head of Leisure Services advised that this happened quite regularly and reminded members that at Aurora over £100,000 had been spent on upgrading the entrance barriers to stop people doing this. In terms of outdoor leisure facilities it was noted that over half if not two thirds of the usage was not charged for and receipts not received. It was further noted that training was done without bookings being made and the required resources were not in place to police that.

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

13. SERVICE PLAN 2025-2026 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION & DEVELOPMENT (FILE cw22)

(Appendix VII)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

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

Attached was the 2025-26 Service Plan for XXXX in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

Plans were intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context.
- Provide focus on direction.
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and individual plans and activities.
- Motivate and develop staff.
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice.
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes.
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached Plan:

- Had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan (2017 – 2032) and the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management, and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.
- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- Would be reported to Committee on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Service Plan.

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

14. SERVICE PLAN 2025-2026 PARKS AND CEMETERIES (FILE CW22)
(Appendix VIII)

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually
- Service Plan – developed annually

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP. Attached was the Draft Service Plan for Parks & Cemeteries in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy and Handbook.

This Plan was intended to:

- Encourage compliance with the new legal, audit and operational context
- Provide focus on direction
- Facilitate alignment between Corporate, Service and Individual plans and activities
- Motivate and develop staff
- Promote performance improvement, encourage innovation and share good practice
- Encourage transparency of performance outcomes
- Better enable us to recognise success and address underperformance.

The attached plan:

- Had been developed to align with objectives of the Big Plan (2017 to 2032), the Corporate Plan (2024 to 2028). This Service Plan was created in association with various stakeholder feedback including a staff business planning day held on 29 November 2024. In addition, the plan was based on

the agreed budget for Parks & Cemeteries. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may need to be revised.

- Set out the objectives for the Service for 2025-26 and identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.
- Was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Plan may need to be revised.
- The Community & Wellbeing Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan on a six-monthly basis as undernoted.

| Reference | Period | Reporting Month |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Quarter 1 and Q2 | April – September | December |
| Q3 and Q4 | October – March | June |

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached plan.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McRandal noted reference within the Plan to a limited variety and consistency of sites within the geography of the Borough and sought further clarification around that.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that assessments had been carried out on the percentage of green space within local areas and it had been noted there was less green space in some areas compared to others. He reminded members that the Council had committed further funding to the purchase of land to increase the tree canopy throughout the Borough as outlined in the Tree Strategy.

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

15. COMMEMORATIVE TREE PLANTING REQUEST – PORTAFERRY WI (FILE PCA4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that members would be aware that Council had facilitated the planting of commemorative trees on Council land in conjunction with local groups and organisations in line with the Commemorative Tree Planting Policy.

The policy aimed to provide a consistent and fair approach to the decision-making process on whether or not to approve any request to plant a commemorative tree on Council property. It was critical that all tree planting contributed to the Councils overall Tree and Woodland Strategy. Members were advised that the

Commemorative Tree Planting Policy did not apply to or replace the memorial tree planting which took place in Council cemeteries.

Council had received a request for commemorative tree planting as detailed below:

- Portaferry Women’s Institute (Portaferry WI) – 90th Anniversary tree. Nine sizeable Deciduous Trees, (one for each decade) within Portaferry district. Species include Acer Autumn Blaze, Fagus Purpurea/Copper Beech, Fagus Sylvatica/Green Beech, Betulus Pendula/Silver Birch, Quercus Robur/English Oak and Castanea Salvia/Sweet Chestnut. Location of planting would take place on an unused grassland behind Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry. Officers could confirm that this request complied with the criteria in the policy.

Location of Tree Planting - Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry



RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Commemorative Tree Planting request as outlined in the report.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Adair congratulated Portaferry WI on its 90th anniversary adding that the commemorative trees would provide a lasting legacy to the Group. He acknowledged the great work which they did in and around Portaferry adding that it was greatly appreciated. He added that anytime he had an occasion to visit them he had been well received and had been able to witness firsthand the charitable work they carried out as well as the practicable work which included knitting for babies in hospital. In summing up he congratulated them on their 90th anniversary and wished them well for many more years to come.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Boyle stated that this was another fantastic group in Portaferry which had a growing membership, were active in the local community and which offered great activities for all of its members. He commended them on reaching their 90th anniversary and wished them well for the future.

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

16. DISPLAY BED APPLICATIONS – ARDS FC (FILE PCA5)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council had an agreed policy for the use of Display Beds in the Borough, which required applications received by external organisations to be reported to Council.

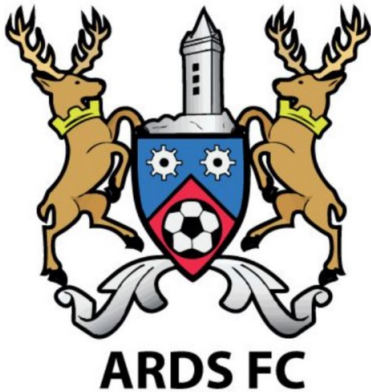
The Council had received an application from Ards F.C for use of the display beds, officers had assessed the application and determined it met the criteria in the policy and was recommended for approval. The application was deemed by officers to not require equality screening.

The application was as outlined below and the proposed design of the display was to include the Ards F.C. logo below. The Parks team would endeavour to facilitate the design requested as far as possible; however, detail design may alter in order to facilitate installation. If necessary officers would liaise with the applicant if the installation may have to be significantly different from that proposed.

| Name of Group / Organisation | Display Bed applied for | Proposed dates of display | Reason for the display |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Ards FC | Court Square, Newtownards | 20.10.25 – 28.11.25 | To celebrate 125 th Anniversary of Ards F.C. and |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | <p>are planning a number of events to mark this significant milestone, including hosting an exhibition at the Townhall in Newtownards.</p> |
|--|--|--|

Ards F.C. logo to be included in the design



RECOMMENDED that Council approve the proposed display bed application.

Councillor S Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor S Irvine thanked officers for facilitating this which would acknowledge this milestone for the Club.

In response to a query from Councillor Boyle around EQIA screening, the Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that the Policy itself had been screened under E179 as was normal practice.

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

17. ARDS FC CONSULTATION RESPONSE (FILE CW173)
(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Ards Football Club’s appointed consultants S3Solutions recently met with Council officers to update Council on the clubs proposed development to create a community sport stadium at their Portaferry Road site. The consultants provided a brief overview of the proposed project as summarised below:

“The preferred development option is to build a community stadium on the site which meets the highest standards of IFA criteria. This would include 3G Pitch, pavilion and main grandstand @ 380 seats and 360 standing. Away stand @260 seats. Energy Efficient Floodlighting. PV Solar Panels to Pavillion. Within the main stand, there will be a multi-purpose community space and function room. Good storage facilities and a room divider will enable the space to be flexibly arranged for community use. The stadium will have hospitality provision in place. The proposal has sustainability at the heart of design with active travel considerations , rain water harvesting, natural energy utilisation and recycling management across the site. Equality and Inclusion Impacts:

Inclusion is one of the core values of Ards FC and the facilities have been designed to foster diversity on the pitch and within the attendance. Wheelchair accessible viewing provision is ample and in prime locations in the stadium. Other amenities include: accessible listening provision, wheelchair accessible gates, lifts, W/Cs, disability parking for supporters and again in the staff/official’s car park. The accessibility specification is of the highest standard throughout the stadium. Ards FC have an award-winning Inclusion team – this was only established in 2020 but has been a huge success. The Inclusion team have members aged 15-52, male and female with a diverse range of disabilities. They have 36 members who play in four competitive teams. Unfortunately, they are now at capacity and have a waiting list as they cannot expand further. They train on Wednesday nights, sharing a single pitch with the Ards FC reserve team due to the lack of available space. In reality this means they have 36 members with special needs on one-half of a pitch in Londonderry Park. There are four competitive Inclusion teams so they subdivide the half pitch into four. The maximum membership they can accommodate is therefore capped at 36. They would like to be able to train more nights and take on more members but cannot get space, they therefore supplement the training nights with two social nights during the week (bowling etc). Many members live in supported accommodation and have day activities but little to do on the evenings. Lots of friendships have been forged in this group and the positive outcomes span way beyond the football field. Any issues with the schedule or the block bookings are very disruptive for the Inclusion team as they have many neurodivergent members who are isolated and depend heavily on their routine remaining the same. The new stadium would mean they could open again to new membership and train on additional nights during the week. The Ards FC Inclusion Team won the annual IFA Football for All award in Autumn 2024, national recognition of the work they do to support inclusion in grassroots football.

Community Impacts:

It is also worth noting that as well as the senior team and reserves team, Ards FC are extremely active at grassroots level in the local community. Their academy have 270 members aged from 4 to 17. They train at hockey pitches at Regent House School and multi-use games area at the Dome in Blair Maine although neither venue fully meets their needs. They also use a local gym. The academy works with 6 local schools providing afterschool and in-school physical activity sessions. They train two nights per week and provide a broad range of experience (yoga, mindfulness), social interaction and football skills training across the 24 academy teams. They run popular football camps during holiday periods such as Easter. They are also at capacity, they need a third night to train in order to expand but cannot currently secure a space.”

The consultants provided Council officers with a consultation questionnaire for Council to complete. A proposed response to the consultation request was included in the Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the submission as outlined in Appendix 1.

Councillor S Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor S Irvine commended the Council and officers for the support which had been offered to the Club particularly during this its 125th anniversary year. The Club appreciated the support and were now keen for a final push to get its proposals over the line and reap the many benefits those would bring for the Club and the town of Newtownards.

Concurring with those comments, Councillor Boyle acknowledged that everyone was pulling together for the benefit of the Club which was celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. He agreed that there could be no question that the Club needed to secure its proposals which he believed would enhance the excellent facilities already in place at Londonderry Park, Newtownards.

Councillor Moore welcomed the report and the support for the Club adding that having a home ground was an issue of huge pride within the town of Newtownards. As had been outlined she agreed that it was essential for the Club to have a great facility with an emphasis on sustainability which would complement the provision that was already in place at Londonderry Park. Councillor Moore noted the strong grassroots football activities in the town and across the Borough and as such was very happy to support the recommendation.

At this stage Councillor McClean commented that as some members sat on the Planning Committee their responses had been somewhat muted and as such they had to be seen as being impartial. He acknowledged the need for the Club to have its own stadium given its size standing with local football leagues.

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

REPORTS FOR NOTING

- 18. DEMENTIA FRIENDLY UPDATE FEBRURY 2025 (FILE EHPD11)**
(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that as part of Council's work on a "Dementia Friendly Borough", a Dementia Friendly Partnership had been established through the Community Planning process to engage with stakeholders in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area, which included Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, the Down part of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and all of Ards

and North Down Borough Council. The purpose of this report was to update Elected members to on the ongoing work in relation to Dementia across the Borough.

Background to Workstream:

The SE Dementia Friendly Partnership was established to provide opportunities for statutory and community organisations to work together to help make communities in SEHSCT area dementia friendly. A dementia friendly community focused on reducing the stigma of dementia and was inclusive of those living with dementia diagnosis. The partnership was overseen and chaired by the SEHSCT.

Workstream Update:

As part of the Age Friendly work, Ards and North Down Borough Council had committed to be a welcoming Borough for all. This included striving to be a Dementia Friendly Council and Borough. Becoming 'Dementia Friendly' was a key commitment of the Council and was incorporated within the Community Plan and Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan. Previous work included:

- the nomination of the two Dementia Champions, Alderman McIlveen and Adele Faulkner, Head of EHPD;
- the delivery of dementia awareness sessions to staff;
- collaborative work between the PSNI and Dementia NI to launch the Herbert Protocol in the Borough. The Herbert Protocol was an initiative that helped locate a person with dementia if they went missing. Information was collated and stored and would greatly assist with searching for the missing person with a view to locating them quickly and safely.

Thirteen Key developments:

1. The Age Friendly Coordinator and Community Planning Officer continued to attend the meetings of the SE Dementia Friendly Partnership on a quarterly basis and as and when required. The SE Dementia Friendly Partnership engaged with those living with dementia and their carers, using a focus group approach, to gain a better understanding of the issues important to them. Carers of loved ones and family members or friends living with dementia completed a survey to provide feedback on issues that were important regarding their caring role. The purpose of the survey and the focus groups was to develop an action plan for the SEHSCT area to support people living with dementia and their carers.

The key findings of the survey were;

- More support needed for people living with dementia
- More information needed both pre and post diagnosis
- Easier path to diagnosis – GP's access
- Signposting guide / who to go to for help
- Financial advice / support
- Lack of support for carers
- Education for retail staff important (awareness raising / training)

The key findings of the Focus Group were;

- Transport issues / access to wheelchair friendly transport
- Accessibility (physical and to services)
- Awareness raising / Business education / training
- Better communication required between services
- Support for those living with dementia and their carers
- More information needed on where to go for help / support (Signposting)

It was recommended that the main themes identified by both the online survey and focus group were used to create and develop an Action plan for the Dementia Friendly Partnership (attached). Those themes were:

- Awareness raising and Information Sharing
 - Training and Education
 - Community Participation
 - Dementia Friendly Partnership
2. The development of promotional materials which included pull ups stands, information hubs and tabletop stands that would help to promote and raise awareness of the SE Dementia Friendly Partnership and support services available for carers and people living with dementia.
 3. A planning workshop with SE Dementia Friendly Partners on 28 February to look at priority planning areas.
 4. Age Friendly took the lead in the development of an information booklet ("Worried about your memory?") with helpful tips and guidance to help signpost people who were worried about their memory to relevant support organisations. The booklet had further since been shared with the SEHSCT to replicate for the wider trust area.
 5. The SE Dementia Friendly Partnership ran an awareness raising campaign across the SEHSCT area for Dementia Action Week (13- 19 May 2024). The Partnership provided
 - 54 information packs to businesses across the SEHSCT area
 - Engaged with 54 business.
 - Held an information session in Bow Street Mall Shopping Centre, Lisburn.
 6. Age Friendly took the lead in the plans for the Borough which included the distribution of 30 packs to businesses in Newtownards, engagement with the 30 businesses and an information session was held at Ards Arts Centre with 15 exhibitors and 30 people in attendance. In addition, the Council developed a dementia awareness module within the e-learning portal that approximately 100 staff had accessed and facilitated two Dementia Awareness Sessions for 30 front line staff.

7. The SE Dementia Friendly Partnership held a workshop on the 30 July 2024 to develop a draft action plan. It was envisaged that a final copy would be available by October 2024.
8. The SE Dementia Friendly Partnership in collaboration with Ards and North Down Borough Council had launched seven active Information Hubs for people living with dementia and their carers across Ards and North Down. Each hub contained leaflets in dementia related services; Dementia Navigator service, Alzheimer's Society Service as well as an Information Booklet with helpful tips and guidance to signpost people who were worried about their memory to relevant support organisations. The Information Hubs would be located within each of the six local libraries across Ards and North Down and Peninsula Healthy Living, Kircubbin.
9. The Council in collaboration with SE Dementia Friendly Partnership facilitated two information sessions at Ards Shopping Centre and Bloomfield Shopping Centre, Bangor to mark World Alzheimer's Day, 21 September. In addition, the Council with SE Dementia partners developed a What's On Guide, promoting support services for carers and people living with dementia.
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/World-Alzheimers-Month
10. The creation of a Dementia Action Plan 2024- 2027 for the SEHSCT area, copy attached.
11. Facilitation of Demetia Awareness Sessions for front line Ards and North Down Borough Council staff and Age Friendly Alliance partners,
12. Council recently secured £155,000 in funding from the UK Prosperity Fund to deliver the new Dementia Friendly Sensory Garden. The garden was currently being constructed in the space outside Carnegie Library which was the old play park site. The area was to be transformed into the new community space by the end of March this year. The project was fully funded by the Department for Communities Shared Prosperity Fund 'Community & Place' Project, with the Parks team leading on the transformation work.

To ensure this garden was created to meet the specific needs of those it was designed for, Council engaged with the following organisations, as well as people with dementia, their carers and representatives:

Dementia NI
 Alzheimer's Society
 Making Connections
 South Eastern HSCT Dementia Friendly Partnership

During a series of meetings, the partners discussed and reviewed the experience of a user in a garden, what aids and challenges their experience, what they enjoy seeing, hearing and smelling. The findings formed the basis for the overall design, planting scheme, layout and features. Once built, it was envisaged the Garden would host workshops for people living with Dementia and their carers to provide time and activity in a tranquil outdoor setting.

13. Community Planning leading the development of a Dementia Safeguarding Scheme, which would see smart wristbands and hand tags for people living with dementia launched during Dementia Action Week, 2025.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the ongoing work in relation to a Dementia Friendly Borough.

Councillor Douglas proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Douglas thanked officers for the report noting that her colleague Alderman McIlveen was the Council's Dementia Champion. She commented that most people would have been affected in some way by Dementia and as such she agreed that it was important to raise awareness and offer support for those affected. Councillor Douglas praised staff for their efforts to secure funding for a variety of projects throughout the Borough adding that she looked forward to the better weather which would enable visitors to enjoy the new Dementia Friendly Sensory Garden.

The seconder, Councillor Kendall commented that she had firsthand experience of the effects of Dementia adding that it had been very difficult to navigate. She commended all of those who had been involved with the work outlined in the report.

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

19. PLAY REFURBISHMENTS 2025-2026 (FILE CW4)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Ards and North Down Borough Council produced a Play Strategy for the period 2021 to 2032 which recommended that the Play Park refurbishment budget be increased to enable more Play Parks to be updated each year. Those Play Parks scoring the lowest within the Annual Independent Inspectors Report would be prioritised for refurbishment. Also, within the Play Strategy it was recommended that budget be made available for the delivery of older children provision (Skate Parks, Pumps Tracks, Parkour, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)) based on a settlement hierarchy approach.

As previously reported, Council had now procured contractors to deliver designs complying with modern standards ensuring minimum levels of equipment for each Tier of play park, appropriate age specific equipment ratios and a minimum of 30% inclusive equipment etc, this was also consistent with the design guidance as outlined in the Play Strategy. They also complied with the relevant British and European industry Safety Standards.

In 2024/2025 the following play parks had been completed or were nearing completion:

- The Green/Shore Kircubbin - Completed

- Multi Use Games Area, Kircubbin - Completed
- New Harbour Road, Portavogie - Completed
- Londonderry Park, Newtownards – due for completion March 2025
- Ward Park, Bangor – due for completion March 2025
- Seapark, Hollywood – due for completion March 2025
- Millisle Outdoor Gym – due for completion March 2025
- The Commons Outdoor Gym – due for completion March 2025

It should be noted that the refurbishment of Ward Park had benefitted from £76,000 of funding from the UKSPF Levelling Up Fund, Seapark had received £250,000 and The Commons Outdoor Gym in Donaghadee had received £45,000.

The additional consultation for the Older Children Provision in Holywood had now been completed and reported to members in February 2025 with the preferred location being Seapark and facility type a MUGA. This facility would be delivered in 2025/2026 subject to planning etc (cost approx. £150,000). It should be noted that the budget for the older children provision was separate from that of the play park refurbishments.

There may also be the opportunity to deliver an older children facility at Moss Road, Ballygowan as part of a wider project that was taking place there. A consultation would be carried out locally to ascertain what type of older children facility was preferred (cost approximately £150,000).

Below was a list of play parks that were identified for prioritisation for refurbishment by the annual Independent Inspectors Report for the incoming year. It should be noted that the budget available for play park refurbishments for the 2025/2026 Financial Year was £500,000, a business case was submitted for additional budget to cover the inflationary costs and cover the additional costs of refurbishing play parks that would now not be closed, but this additional budget was not agreed. The budget going forward would be reevaluated upon the review of the Play Strategy, which would be completed this year and brought back to members for consideration.

It was reported in June 2024 that due to inflationary costs (40% increase in costs per play park) more budget was required to deliver the same quality of play park that Council was able to provide prior to the covid/cost of living crisis. To that end and to ensure consistency across the play park portfolio the higher level of spend relevant to Tier had been applied.

Parsonage Road, Kircubbin

Parsonage Road (Tier 2) was first identified for refurbishment in a report that went to Council in February 2023. The outcome of a public consultation exercise in September 2023 was that The Green/Shore was to be upgraded (from a Tier 2 to a Tier 1) and Parsonage Road Play Park was to be closed and converted into a Sensory Garden, subject to community consultation. However, this decision was then put on hold, following a decision agreed at the March 2024 Council meeting.

Following a Members Workshop and subsequent report, it was agreed by Council in June 2024 that the Tier 1 upgrade of The Green/Shore was to continue and the

MUGA was to be installed adjacent to it. It therefore remained that Parsonage Road was still amongst the lowest scoring play parks in the Borough and in need of refurbishment. However, given the level of investment in Kircubbin recently in relation to play, it may be prudent to prioritise another play park in a different location, to help ensure more areas/settlements had access to a recently refurbished facility.

Shorefront and Springwell (Crescent) Groomsport

In the March 2024 report, both play parks at the Shorefront and Springwell (Crescent) were identified as being low scoring in the Inspectors Report, both were classified as Tier 2 play parks.

The Play Strategy (and the report in March 2024) proposed closing Springwell (Crescent) and upgrading the one at the Shorefront to a Tier 1, which would serve the settlement of Groomsport. It also recommended that potentially a Multi-Use Games Area could be located on one of the existing tennis courts. However, it was now proposed that a separate area of land be used, and the tennis courts retained as they had recently been refurbished. Given the Council decision taken in June 2024 not to close any play parks (at this time), nor conduct any consultations in relation to closures etc, neither play park was refurbished nor was a consultation carried out to establish which type of older children provision Groomsport preferred.

Given the more prominent location it was considered that the play park at the Shorefront be prioritised for refurbishment as a Tier 2 (cost approx. £165,000). It may be necessary to moderately relocate the play park to the grass area to the west to accommodate a larger footprint to be able to deliver a more modern sized play park. It was also proposed to conduct a consultation to establish which type of older children provision would be preferred in a location adjacent to the play park at the Shorefront. This could then be delivered later when budget allowed.

Northfield and Beechfield (Donaghadee)

In the March 2024 report both the play parks at Northfield and Beechfield were identified as being amongst the lower scoring parks in the Inspectors Report. Again, given the decision taken by Council in June 2024 not to close any play parks (at this time), nor undertake consultations, neither play park was refurbished. Both were Tier 2 play parks, and it was considered that Northfield, given its proximity to the surrounding open space, should be prioritised for refurbishment (cost approx. £165,000).

North Street and Island View, Greyabbey

Both play parks were Tier 2 and were low scoring. Given the more central location of Island View it was proposed to prioritise it for refurbishment (cost approx. £165,000).

While the above list represented the play parks that could be delivered within the available budget of £500,000, if any funding opportunities presented themselves, other play parks may be able to be refurbished, such as Bangor Sportsplex, The

Commons, Breezemount, Conlig, Bowtown, Skipperstone & Ballyhalbert which were all amongst the next lowest scoring. As decided through a Notice of Motion in February, a more detailed report on Bowtown would be brought forward to inform its upgrade.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Council proceed with the upgrade of play parks at Ballyhalbert, Groomsport, Donaghadee and Greyabbey along with planned older children facilities in Holywood and Ballygowan as outlined in the report and further task officers to source external funding and surplus budgets for upgrade of the lowest scoring play parks as outlined in the report including Parsoange Road, Kircubbin. Furthermore that Council task officers to look at fencing options at Skipperstone play park to ensure public safety.

The proposer, Alderman Adair welcomed the report commenting that the need for play parks was vast throughout the Borough. He particularly welcomed plans for the park at North Street and Island View, Greyabbey. His proposal was asking for one slight change which was to ask the Committee to include Ballyhalbert on the list to replace Parsonage Road, Kircubbin which would then go onto the Reserve List.

Alderman Adair noted that Kircubbin had recently had its play park at The Green refurbished whereas Ballyhalbert had not received any Council investment to date in respect of play parks. Indeed he noted there had been no investment during the past 21 years and he believed that investment was now required giving the growing population in the village. Continuing Alderman Adair encouraged officers to become more proactive and to seek external funding streams and encouraged members to support his proposal.

Councillor Boyle stated that he was happy to second the proposal, agreeing that Kircubbin had been well catered for in respect of the refurbishment of its play parks. He added that each member in the Council Chamber would be able to bring forward cases for play parks in their respective DEA's. Councillor Boyle agreed that Ballyhalbert was expanding rapidly and as such he was happy to support the proposal. At this stage he took the opportunity to express his thanks to officers for all of their hard work undertaken in respect of this matter.

The Chairman noted funding of £165,000 which had been set aside for Northfield, Donaghadee and advised that he was aware Donaghadee Community Development Association would like to engage with the Council regarding the location because they were concerned with future plans for road changes and the impact that may have.

At this stage the Head of Parks and Cemeteries clarified that the report listed three play parks for refurbishment those being the Shorefront Groomsport, Northfield Donaghadee and Islandview Greyabbey. Kircubbin was not being included in this list and there was only funding available for three play parks.

Alderman Adair disagreed, commenting that the report clearly referred to four play parks listed for upgrade, Groomsport, Donaghadee, Greyabbey and Kircubbin.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries apologised for any confusion and explained that given the level of funding which had already been invested in play in Kircubbin it had been considered prudent to prioritise another play park in a different location. Hence three play parks listed below in the report at Shorefront Groomsport, Northfield Donaghadee and Islandview Greyabbey.

Alderman Adair disagreed stating that the report was not clear and suggested that officers would now need to find the extra funding to facilitate the funding of four play parks. He asked members to support his proposal.

Referring to the play park at Shorefront Groomsport, Councillor Chambers queried why it had been downgraded from a Tier 1 facility to Tier 2.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that a business case for additional monies to accommodate the considerable increases in play park costs had been undertaken which was subsequently rejected. As such officers were always having to work within the budget they had which no longer went as far as it had done in the past.

Continuing Councillor Chambers made reference to plans for a potential MUGA for the village and welcomed that the tennis courts would not be replaced by such a facility. However he would welcome that being located elsewhere in the village at some point in the future. He also referred to play park in the Springwell Estate in Groomsport which had been earmarked for closure and sought an update on that.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries referred to the Council decision that it would put on hold any further closures and that remained the case. He added that a review report would be presented in September to the Committee for consideration.

At this stage Councillor McClean sought clarity around the scoring process for play parks in respect of refurbishment and how those were then prioritised for those works.

Members were advised that the Council's existing Play Strategy had a scoring mechanism which was agreed by Council a few years ago. This set out annually a score for the lowest play parks and that then meant that there was some fairness exposed as to why an asset was being renewed and others were not. The list had then been put into order so that the Council was keeping to the Strategy but what had been proposed would deviate from that.

Councillor McClean referred to the play areas at Skipperstone Bangor commenting that the Mayor was very exercised about this one and would like to see an upgrade given the ongoing safety issues at that location. It was located on a very steep hill and next to a river and as such it was felt there may be a danger to people using it. He noted the proposal was asking that something could be done at Skipperstone in the meantime.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that would be taken into account when the independent inspector carried out their inspections. He commented that

currently there was not anything specifically wrong with that site but agreed it would need be replaced in the long to medium term.

Councillor McClean suggested that it was really about usage and this was considered a good sign because it meant that it had been very well used.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries added that given the amount of money being spent on play parks he would hope that 20 years was the very least that could be hoped for in terms of lifespan. Anything that was not lasting that long through heavy use may need to be replaced with wooden frame equipment which would maybe stand the test of time a bit better.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at this stage 9.03pm and recommenced at 9.13pm.

NOTED.

Councillor Douglas welcomed the report particularly the proposals for an older children facility at Moss Road, Ballygowan as part of a wider project that was taking place there. She added that she would look forward to that being taken forward.

At this stage the Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development sought clarification on Alderman Adair's proposal. She appreciated that the way the report had been written meant there was some lack of clarity around the options. However the report intended to outline the priorities for the play parks was number one Shorefront and Springwell Groomsport, number two, Northfield and Beechfield Donaghadee, number three, Northfield and Island View Greyabbey and then continuing on with the list, the horizontal list of Bangor Sportsplex, Commons and so on with Ballyhalbert at the end of that list. She indicated that she wanted clarity around what the proposal was from Alderman Adair.

Alderman Adair stated the report tabled before members clearly stated that Parsonage Road Kircubbin, Shorefront Groomsport, Donaghadee and Islandview Greyabbey were to be upgraded. He confirmed that his proposal was to move Parsonage Road Kircubbin and put it into the reserve list and move Ballyhalbert out of the reserve list onto the main list to be refurbished. He stated that it was not members fault that the report tabled before them was incorrect as it clearly outlined that four play parks were going to be upgraded this year rather than three and all members were in agreement with that. As such he stated that his proposal included Ballyhalbert in those four and if passed his proposal would see four play parks upgraded this financial year. Members relied upon the information presented to them in reports and as such it was officer's fault if those reports were not correct. Continuing Alderman Adair stated that members were under the impression four play parks were going to be upgraded and his proposal swapped Ballyhalbert and Kirkcubbin around as it had substantial investment last year with a MUGA and a tier one play park, while Ballyhalbert had had no investment. To be clear he reiterated that if the proposal was passed four play parks would be upgraded and it would be up to the officers to find the money to do that.

At this stage Councillor Kendall noted the available budget of £500,000 which equated to the refurbishment of three play parks. If Alderman Adair’s proposal was agreed that would increase the funding to £660,000 and she sought clarity around that.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that the report recommended Shorefront Groompsort, Northfield Donaghadee and Islandview Greyabbey at a cost of £165,000 each, which equated to £495,000. This meant that the Council was within its budget of £500,000. The addition of Ballyhalbert would increase that amount.

Councillor Kendall asked where that additional amount of funding would be sourced.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that a number of funding options could be explored through the usual Council procedures or external funding sources.

Further to Councillor Kendall’s comments, Alderman McRandal noted that Alderman Adair had suggested that everyone was in agreement that the report stated there were four play parks marked for upgrade this year. He indicated that he did not agree with that and instead was of the opinion that the proposal was ambiguous and as such he could not support the proposal.

By way of summing up Alderman Adair suggested that any confusion had arisen from the officer’s report from which members had been asked to make a decision. The report he stated clearly indicated that Parsonage Road Kircubbin would be upgraded and his proposal would instead see that change to Ballyhalbert with Parsonage Road Kircubbin going onto the reserve list. The report stated that “given the level of investment in Kircubbin recently in relation to play, it might be prudent to prioritise another play park in a different location to help ensure more area settlements have access to a recently refurbished facility.” Alderman Adair suggested that the officers had been at fault and as such if reports were not accurate, they should not be tabled before members. He therefore stood by his proposal and had noted the officer’s comment that the money could be sourced from somewhere and it would be up to officers to enact that decision that the members had made. He added that he would not settle for less than four play parks being upgraded as outlined and proposed and asked all members to support him.

Alderman Adair asked for a Recorded Vote to be taken.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 8 voting For, 3 voting Against, 3 Abstentions and 2 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| FOR (8) | AGAINST (3) | ABSTAINING (3) | ABSENT (2) |
| Alderman | Alderman | Alderman | Councillors |
| Adair | McRandal | Brooks | W Irvine |
| Cummings | Councillor | Councillors | McBurney |
| Councillors | Ashe | Hollywood | |
| Boyle | Moore | Kendall | |
| Chambers | | | |
| Cochrane | | | |

Douglas
S Irvine
McClellan

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Boyle, with 8 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 3 ABSTENTIONS and 2 ABSENT that Council proceed with the upgrade of Play Parks at Ballyhalbert, Groomsport, Donaghadee and Greyabbey along with planned older children facilities in Holywood and Ballygowan as outlined in the report and further task officers to source external funding and surplus budgets for upgrade of the lowest scoring play parks as outlined in the report including Parsonage Road, Kircubbin. Furthermore that Council task officers to look at fencing options at Skipperstone play park to ensure public safety.

20. DONAGHADEE SPORTS FACILITIES (FILE CW55)

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the following report was in response to a recent Notice of Motion as approved by Council following it being tabled at Community and Wellbeing Committee on 15 January 2025 as follows:

“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 Sport Clubs in Donaghadee around facilities to ensure the development and investment to improve sports provision and facilities. Further to this Council Officers will bring back a report exploring external funding opportunities, or in the absence of external funding, options for direct funding for upgrades to Donaghadee Sport facilities.”

Members would be aware that the Donaghadee Sports Project had been ongoing for well over ten years. The project was first proposed by representatives from the town when they raised the need for quality sports/leisure facilities in Donaghadee. Those discussions led to the Council awarding a grant to the Donaghadee Sports Hub committee to fund a scoping document to identify what was needed to bring the facilities in the town up to a standard befitting the needs of the various sporting clubs that were identified through this work. The clubs identified at this time were the Rugby, Hockey, Football and Cricket Clubs with options to add other sports/clubs if a need could be identified.

In 2017 Strategic Leisure who undertook the scoping exercise presented a feasibility study that proposed a single hub site where Rugby, Hockey, Cricket and Football sharing one site that would create sporting synergy in the town. The site was to include a substantial pavilion that would incorporate a bar/social area, a fitness suite as well as the usual changing and toilet facilities that would meet the needs of the four identified Clubs. Those were ambitious plans that also included the possibility of adding facilities for running, tennis and bowls if a suitable site could be

procured/developed and if those Clubs were minded to utilise the developed facilities.

A Business Case was then developed based on the feasibility study recommending that the single site hub be developed and Officers began discussions with Clubs and other stakeholders to fully understand what they would want from this development.

A design team was appointed, and plans were prepared showing all four Clubs sharing a single site with a clubhouse and social and fitness facilities to be a focal point for the town. At this time the project was estimated to cost in the region of £7.6 million. This was very much in line with Sport NI proposals, at that time, for single hub sites in strategic locations around Northern Ireland and Council officers were working very hard at that time to secure funding from Sport N.I. towards the cost of developing this “shared site” project. It was anticipated that if secured this funding would be in the region £1 million.

At the time it was recognised that none of the existing Club sites had sufficient space to fully support this ambitious project and officers began talks with a local land owner to see if a suitable site relatively close to Donaghadee town centre could be acquired but this was curtailed by advice from Planners who advised that such a development in a designated Green Space would be unlikely to get approval. Further explorations of potential sites led to a consideration of an expansion to Donaldson Park and the potential purchase of adjoining land to facilitate all four sports being delivered on the one site and the significant advantages that would bring. Work continued on this model over a period of years.

It was around this time that Council introduced a revised business case development process for Capital projects. Council had also undertaken a review of all “live” capital projects and this review concluded that the original brief, developing a central one site facility for this project had a very narrow options base and that the process would benefit from a new business case that would identify further options rather than just the single hub site of the previous business case.

The new business case was completed in May 2022. This new business case highlighted that the Cricket, Rugby and Football Clubs were all relatively happy with their existing locations, they just needed the facilities to be substantially improved, the Hockey club, who were playing and training in Bangor were keen to move to their hometown and different options for this were explored.

The new Business Case delivered by S3 Solutions in May 2022 identified a number of different options ranging in cost, at the time, from £7 million to £10.5 Million and noted how the potential new facilities might look and be configured. S3 Solutions also considered several alternative management options for the facilities. Internal discussions and discussions with the clubs and stakeholders determined that two of the developed options be taken forward for consideration by Council with the estimated costs detailed and submitted to the Council for approval for the scheme to be placed on the Councils Capital list of projects. Briefly, those proposed that Cricket stays at a minimal developed site at Northfield, Soccer remained at a significantly developed site at Crommelin Park and Rugby would have a significantly enhanced facility at Donaldson Park. The only main difference between the two options being

the location of Hockey that would either be developed at an extended Donaldson Park or on the current site at Crommelin Park.

Officers had continued engagement with the four Clubs and stakeholders on a number of occasions to explore what the clubs and other stakeholders want/expect in terms of facilities and more importantly how each of the sites might be managed in the future. The facilities options were pretty straightforward in terms of pitches, floodlights and changing rooms but the Rugby club had always expressed their desire/need for a bar to help offset their running costs. This was based on their current operating model where a bar was an essential element of how the club operated.

Taking this into account all the Clubs have now expressed their desire to explore the potential to lease the facilities, either in a developed format or undeveloped format, depending on the various cost estimates associated with the options. This would mean that they have total control over how the site operated, as well as full responsibility for maintaining the site, including all costs associated with operating the site and keeping the site to an acceptable standard during the period of the lease. Recent correspondence from both the Soccer and Rugby Club was included in the attached Appendix.

It should be noted that the Donaghadee Cricket Club had recently merged with Ards Cricket Club who, members would recall benefitted from a significant investment at Londonderry Park in 2015. This new Cricket Club had also recently applied for a lease for the Cricket site in Northfields, Donaghadee and it was the understanding of officers that given that they now played out of two locations in the Borough they no longer needed Council assistance as part of this facility development process. Officers were liaising with Club Officials in seeking to understand their future needs at Londonderry Park as considerable costs were incurred in maintaining cricket facilities at the site that may no longer be needed by this new "joint" Club.

It should be further noted that whilst this project had been developing the Council had continued to invest in and maintain leisure facilities in the town. For example Crommelin Park had approximately £80,000 invested in a new drainage system for the existing grass pitches and in previous years Council had carried out significant work to the changing pavilions at the site.

Council officers were continuing to work with the three remaining Clubs to determine their preferred way forward. Recent meetings between the Chief Executive, Council officers and Rugby Club officials had been extremely helpful in progressing the Clubs desire to seek improvements to the facilities at Donaldson Park and to extend the current lease to facilitate the Club carrying out further significant upgrades by applying for grants in the future.

Council officers continued to engage with the Soccer Club to develop facilities at Crommelin Park and in the interim, as detailed above had spent considerable funds on upgrading both the changing facilities and the playing surfaces at the site.

Council officers had also held recent discussions with the Ladies Hockey Club to seek their intentions following the proposal from the Rugby Club and once this was confirmed by the Club, the Council could progress plans for both sites.

A further report on the Clubs preferences (Rugby, Football and Hockey) and costs associated with those would be brought to Council for consideration and approval when a potential way forward had been provisionally agreed.

Council officers would continue to assist all sport Clubs to identify any potential funding opportunities through the work of its Sports Development team and the Boroughs Sport Forum.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Cochrane noted that the Council would not be supporting Ards and Donaghadee Cricket Club and asked if engagement had taken place with them.

In response the Head of Leisure Services advised that Donaghadee Cricket Club was pursuing a lease at Northfield and had had no engagement with the Council over the past six months. He added that his door and that of his officers were always open to assist with any queries.

Referring to DfI's Active Travel Strategy, Councillor Cochrane noted plans for a cycle lane along the Killaughey Road, Donaghadee and asked if the Cricket Club ground would be affected as part of this. The Head of Leisure Services indicated that he did not know the detail of the DfI travel plan.

In response to a further query from Councillor Cochrane around future public access at Cromelin Park, the Head of Leisure Services indicated that plans were a long way off completion at this stage. However he indicated that access would be up to individual clubs.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Chambers referred to the Hockey Club stating that he was not really sure what was happening with them. He indicated that he was aware there was potential for them to maybe go to Donaldson Park with the Rugby Club or maybe even go to Cromelin Park. As such regardless of where they went he asked if there were any future plans for the old gravel pitch Cromelin Park.

The Head of Leisure Services advised that Options three and four were both being delivered by the Council and the Rugby Club had subsequently met with the Hockey Club to discuss their plans. At this stage confirmation was just being awaited from the Hockey Club to advise what its intentions were and he reiterated that both options remained on the table. In respect of the gravel pitch he indicated that there were other projects which were considering it for a car park amongst other things.

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

21. BI-MONTHLY UPDATE ON PORTAVOGIE 3G, PENINSULA 3G AND PORTAFERRY SPORTS CENTRE FLOOR (CW74)

(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that In February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

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

This report provided the three updates requested on a bi-monthly basis, and for the two capital projects, in a ‘RAG’ format as further requested by the proposer in May 2024.

1. The update report for the Portavogie 3G project was attached at Appendix 1.
2. The update report for the Peninsula 3G project was attached at Appendix 2.
3. The status update for the defective floor at Portaferry Sports Centre was attached at Appendix 3.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the three update reports.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman Adair referred to the update report for the Portavogie 3G project expressing disappointment at the lack of progress. He reminded members that the project had previously secured full Planning Permission but that had now lapsed. A new application had been submitted but Dfl had raised a number of issues with that and as such he believed the Council had dropped the ball in respect of this matter particularly as it had been ongoing for many years now. He added that he would look forward to some progress being made during the coming months.

Concurring with those comments Councillor Boyle sought clarity around what those issues were which had been raised by Dfl.

The Head of Leisure Services advised that as far as he was aware the issues were around the number of vehicles which would potentially be using the proposed new entrance. He confirmed that presently no planning permission was in place for the

proposal adding that officers were also working with representatives of the Education Authority (EA) in an attempt to resolve a number of other issues.

Referring to the defective floor at Portaferry Sports Centre, Councillor Boyle noted that following a recent meeting further comment was being sought from EA. The Head of Leisure Services reported that the Council was currently using a section of the floor which was deemed to be safe for a number of classes with an instructor including Spin Classes. He informed members that since the last meeting he had sent three letters of correspondence to EA and to date had not received a response.

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

22. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG MARCH 2025) (FILE SD151)

(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Ards and North Down Sports Forum administered grants for sporting purposes on behalf of Council under the Councils Grants Policy agreed in 2024. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2024/2025 revenue budget for this purpose. In October 2024, officers advised members that an additional sum of circa £11,000 could be required above the £45,000 budget agreed for 2024/25 to meet the expected level of applications based on current trends of the grants scheme year to date and subsequently, Council approved the allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year with the surplus being sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

During January 2025, the Forum received a total of 23 applications: **21 applications for 2024/25** (12 Goldcard and 9 Individual Travel/Accommodation), and **two applications for 2025/26** (One Event and One Individual Travel/Accommodation). A summary of the **23** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Goldcard 2024/25, Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation 2024/25, Successful Event 2025/26 and Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation 2025/26 Appendices.

| 2024/25 Budget £45,000 | Annual Budget | Proposed Funding Awarded January 2024 | Remaining Budget |
|---|---------------|---|-------------------------|
| Anniversary | £1,000 | £0 | -£1,999.90 |
| Coach Education | £3,000 | £0 | £1,195.00 |
| Equipment | £14,000 | £0 | *-£4,874.80 |
| Events | £6,000 | £0 | £869.46 |
| Seeding | £500 | £0 | £500 |
| Travel and Accommodation | £14,500 | *£1,340 | *-£7,075.07 |
| Discretionary | £1,000 | £0 | £1,000 |
| Schools/Sports Club Pathway | £5,000 | £0 | £4,570 |
| 12 Goldcards Awarded in January (58 Goldcards in total during 2024/25) | | | |

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£4,874.80** was based on withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£137.61**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£7,075.07** was based on a proposed award this month of **£1,340**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 was **-£5,815.31** (113% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

| 2025/26 Budget £75,000 | Annual Budget | Proposed Funding Awarded January 2024 | Remaining Budget |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Anniversary | £1,500 | £0 | £1,500 |
| Coaching | £3,500 | £0 | £3,500 |
| Equipment | £25,000 | £0 | £25,000 |
| Events | £10,000 | *£1,000 | £9,000 |
| Seeding | £2,000 | £0 | £2,000 |
| Travel and Accommodation | £30,000 | *£150 | £29,850 |
| Discretionary | £1,000 | £0 | £1,000 |
| Schools/Sports Club Pathway | £2,000 | £0 | £2,000 |

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached report detailing grants that have been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum relating to applications in January 2025.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Boyle welcomed the report and thanked all of those who had been involved with this.

The seconder, Councillor S Irvine concurred with those comments.

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

23. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS AND CAPITAL GRANTS REVIEW (FILE SD151)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Council approved an updated Corporate Grants Policy in September 2024. Following this, Leisure officers undertook a review of both grants schemes administered by Council's Sports Development Section, the Sports Forum Grants and Capital Grants schemes, and had subsequently determined that several amendments to those moving forward in 2025/26 would be beneficial. Those changes were outlined below.

Sports Forum Grants Scheme updates

As part of the 2025/26 rate setting process, Council approved an increase in budget for Sports forum Grants from £45,000 to £75,000, reflecting the ever-increasing financial burden on sports clubs and individuals and the subsequent increase in volume of grant aid requests received by the Sports Development Unit.

Based on the increased budget in 2025/26 financial year, Leisure officers proposed to update the profile of the Sports Forum Grants budget as stipulated in the table below:

| Grant category | Annual funding by category 2024/25 | Proposed funding by category 2025/26 |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Anniversary | £1,000 | £2,000 |
| Coach Education | £3,000 | £3,000 |
| Equipment | £14,000 | £25,000 |
| Events | £6,000 | £10,000 |
| Seeding | £500 | £2,000 |
| Travel and Accommodation | £14,500 | £30,000 |
| Discretionary | £1,000 | £1,000 |
| Schools/Sports Club Pathway | £5,000 | £2,000 |
| | £45,000 | £75,000 |

In addition to the reprofiling of the budget allocations for each of the funding streams officers proposed to make several other minor changes to the Sports Forum Grants scheme, as noted below:

| Grant Category | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|----------------|---|--|
| Seeding | Maximum grant amount £250 | Maximum grant amount increased to £1,000 |
| | Grant can be utilised for purchase of sports equipment and/or towards the cost of facility hire | Proposed to include an option for a new club/section to avail of a maximum amount of £200 within their grant application for the purposes of promoting the new club/section. |
| Equipment | Maximum grant amount £1,000 | Maximum grant amount increased to £1,500 |
| | Grant open year round on a monthly rolling basis | Grant to be opened for tranche three times per year to facilitate inclusion of scoring criteria/matrix and post funding evaluation. |
| Events | Maximum grant amount £1,000 | Maximum grant amount increased to £1,500 |
| | Grant open year round on a monthly rolling basis | Grant to be opened for tranche three times per year to |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| | | facilitate inclusion of scoring criteria/matrix and post funding evaluation. |
| Travel and Accommodation | Grant open year round on a monthly rolling basis | Applicants may submit a maximum of two applications per year, with multiple events permitted in each application. This is to improve efficiency of grant administration. |
| | | Proposed increase of grant awards according to location of event. Please see table below for breakdown of awards. |

| Location of Event | Max. claim amount 2024/25 | Max. claim amount 2025/26 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| N. Ireland//Squad training | £50 | £50 |
| Ireland - | £100 | £150 |
| Great Britain - | £150 | £200 |
| Mainland Europe | £170 | £250 |
| Outside of Europe | £200 | £300 |

Capital Grants Scheme Updates

As part of the 2025/26 rate setting process, Council also approved an increase in budget for Capital Grants from £45,000 to £75,000.

Based on the increased budget in 2025/26 financial year, Leisure officers proposed a minor change to the maximum value of grant aid available to applicants and minor change to the percentage funding available for any particular application.

Under the previous scheme, applicants could avail of a maximum grant amount of £5,000 with a maximum of 50% of the project cost to be met by the Council grant contribution. In 2025/26, officers proposed that the maximum grant available to any applicant was increased to £6,000, with a maximum of 60% of the total project cost to be met by Council funding.

Conclusion

The changes as outlined were in line with the Council's approved Corporate Grants Policy and would be put into place for the 2025/26 Sports Forum Grants and Capital Grants Schemes.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the report and the good work which had been carried out as part of those Schemes.

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

(Councillor Hollywood left the meeting at this stage – 9.38pm)

24. NOTICE OF MOTION

24.1. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN ADAIR AND COUNCILLOR EDMUND

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by 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.

The proposer, Alderman Adair stated that it gave him great pleasure to bring forward this motion for the village of Greyabbey, home to the very successful Rosemount Rec Football Club which had recently been promoted to the Intermediate Football League. Continuing he referred to the recent work had been carried out to refurbish the car park adding that had been very welcome. However the football pitch had now fallen into disrepair so much so that it was almost at an unplayable condition. In order to retain the Football Club in Greyabbey investment was urgently needed. Continuing Alderman Adair referred to the recently installed disabled toilet at the pitch but was dismayed that it had been situated at the 'away changing rooms' and as such would remain locked. He asked that officers also looked into that. By way of summing up he commended the players and committee at Rosemount Football Club and encouraged members to support his proposal.

The seconder, Councillor Edmund concurred with Alderman Adair adding that there were many other teams throughout the Borough which had reached the Intermediate League. As such he felt other teams could also benefit from this and therefore he agreed that it was important for a plan to be put into place through this proposal. Councillor Boyle congratulated Rosemount Rec Football Club on its achievements. However having been involved in previous discussions around Intermediate Football he did not believe this was the best way forward for the Club and that it was the wrong motion at the wrong time. Instead he suggested that all relevant stakeholders met to consider what the best way forward was taking into consideration NIFL requirements which he referred members to. Councillor Boyle indicated that he could not support the proposal but would work with those in the village of Greyabbey find an effective solution.

At this stage Councillor S Irvine commented that any report coming forward would need to be a blueprint for junior clubs as well following consideration of Irish Football Association (IFA) guidelines. He stated that he was in favour of the proposal as he recognised the success of Rosemount Rec and its place in Greyabbey as a community hub.

By way of summing up, Alderman Adair stated that he was asking for a report to engage with the Football Club adding that he was aware the IFA was releasing new guidelines later in the month. The current pitch at Rosemount would not meet Intermediate Football Standards in its current state and as such required investment and he encouraged members to support his proposal.

Alderman Adair asked for a Recorded Vote to be taken.

At this stage Councillor Edmund indicated that he would like to speak, adding that he had indicated this by using the hand function on the Zoom screen.

The Chairman informed him that he had already spoken on the matter and following further dissent from Councillor Edmund, he asked Democratic Services to remove him from the meeting.

(Councillor Edmund was removed from the meeting at this stage – 10.04pm)

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 11 voting For, 1 voting Against, 1 Abstention and 3 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| FOR (11) | AGAINST (1) | ABSTAINING (1) | ABSENT (3) |
| Alderman | Councillor | Alderman | Councillors |
| Adair | Boyle | Brooks | Hollywood |
| Cummings | | | W Irvine |
| McRandal | | | McBurney |
| Councillors | | | |
| Ashe | | | |
| Chambers | | | |
| Cochrane | | | |
| Douglas | | | |
| S Irvine | | | |
| Kendall | | | |
| Moore | | | |
| McClellan | | | |

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, with 11 voting FOR, 1 voting AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 3 ABSENT 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.

25. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

26. BONFIRE CLEARANCE TENDER EXTENSION – PROVISION OF PRE AND POST BONFIRE SERVICES (FILE PRO 144)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SCHEDULE 6:3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing detailing the contract extension for the provision of pre and post bonfire services.

The report recommended that Council extend the contract for a further and final one year period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The terms and conditions agreed at the initial award of the contract would apply to this extension.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Having declared an interest in the next item, Councillor Chambers left the Council Chamber at this stage – 10.08pm)

REPORTS FOR NOTING

27. NCLT Q2 2024025 (FILE CW51) (Appendix XIV)

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

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

A report was presented to Community and Wellbeing detailing NCLTs quarter 2 2024-2025 activity and performance.

The report recommended that Council note the report.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Councillor Chambers returned to the Council Chamber at this stage – 10.09pm)

28. PCSP MINUTES

(Appendix XV)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing the confidential minutes of the PCSP meeting on 9 September 2024, 25 November 2024 and 27 January 2025.

The report recommended that Council note the minutes.

The recommendation was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.10pm.

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 March 2025 |
| Responsible Director | Director of Corporate Services |
| Responsible Head of Service | |
| Date of Report | 12 March 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 | Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures |
| Attachments | |

Background

Council has received correspondence from the Department of Finance (DoF) on the Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures and which will close to responses on 25 April 2025.

For context, following previous consultations in relation to revenue raising and rating measures, the Finance Minister has put forward two preferred proposals relating to Domestic rating policies:

1. An increase in the maximum capital value cap within the domestic rating system from £400k to £485k; and
2. Reduction in the Early Payment Discount from 4% to 2%.

However, the structure of the consultation does not allow for multiple responses to be submitted. As such, it is probable that individual Councillors/Parties will have different views and as such no Corporate response has been drafted.

Not Applicable

208

The link to the consultation is here: [Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures - Consultation Paper](#)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council consider sending individual responses to the consultation.

Unclassified

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Item 9**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Report Classification | Unclassified |
| Council/Committee | Council |
| Date of Meeting | 26 March 2025 |
| Responsible Director | Chief Executive |
| Responsible Head of Service | |
| Date of Report | 13 March 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 | National Association of Councillors - Local Government Finance Conference |
| Attachments | Appendix 1 - Correspondence Appendix 2 - Booking Form |

The Council has received an invitation from the National Association of Councillors inviting Members to its upcoming Conference on Local Government Finance.

The Conference will be held at the Royal Hotel, Scarborough from 11th-13th April 2025.

Information on the event is included in the attached correspondence and the booking form provides the following details regarding delegate and accommodation fees:

Delegate Fees: £350 plus VAT – Metropolitan, County, Unitary, Borough & District Councils.

Accommodation is available for delegates at the Conference Hotel at the special NAC Conference Delegate rate of £85 plus VAT per night.

Unclassified

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the Conference.

From: General Secretary
Sent: 05 March 2025 15:00
Subject: NAC Finance Conference, Scarborough

National Association of Councillors Conference

Local Government Finance

Royal Hotel, Scarborough 11th-13th April 2025

Dear Colleagues,

You are invited to the upcoming Conference on Local Government Finance. This event is relevant for Parish, Town, and Unitary Councillors involved in budget setting.

Preparing local government budgets is a complex yet essential process to ensure effective allocation of financial resources to meet community needs.

The conference will feature speakers discussing:

- **Budget Planning and Allocation**
- **Financial Oversight and Governance**
- **Financial Challenges and Solutions**
- **Workshops and Interactive Sessions**

Additionally, there will be practical workshops on financial planning and interactive Q&A sessions.

This event offers opportunities to hear from experienced speakers in local government, participate in Q&A sessions, and contribute to workshops. It is designed to benefit elected members across all tiers of local government.

Please refer to the attached booking form for details on how to register.

Sincerely,

Councillor Brian Nelson

National Secretary

National Association of Councillors

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS

Conference

Local Government Finance

The Royal Hotel, Scarborough, 11th-13th April 2025

Delegate Booking Form

Name of Delegate.....

Organisation

Delegate's Address.....

Postcode.....Telephone Number.....

Authorising Signature.....Order No if reqd.....

Printed Name.....

Position.....Organisation.....

To Register – Complete the delegate details above, and Email a copy of this form to Cllr Brian Nelson
Generalsecretary@nationalassociationofcouncillors.org

Delegate Fees: £350 plus VAT – Metropolitan, County, Unitary, Borough & District Councils

£295 plus VAT - Town, Parish and Community Councils

INVOICE – please send invoice to

Accommodation is available for delegates at the Conference Hotel at the special NAC Conference Delegate rate of £85 plus VAT per night. The accommodation fee is payable by delegate on arrival at the hotel unless otherwise indicated on the booking form.

Delegate Accommodation Friday & Saturdays nights YES / NO

Local Authority to be billed direct for accommodation YES / NO

Please note that double and family rooms are also available (prices available on request)

Booking Condition: Please note that a charge is payable on any bookings cancelled. These charges will be kept to a minimum and will be in accordance with cost incurred by the NAC.

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 March 2025 |
| Responsible Director | Director of Corporate Services |
| Responsible Head of Service | Head of Administration |
| Date of Report | 07 March 2025 |
| File Reference | DIR/ADM4 |
| Legislation | NA |
| Section 75 Compliant | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: |
| Subject | National Association of Councillors (NAC) Enterprise Champions, Request for Nominations |
| Attachments | NAC Invitation and Details |

Members are asked by the NAC (NI) to consider 3 or 4 nominations (1 of which may at Council's discretion be a senior support officer), to 4 learning and development workshops on the subject of **Planning and Delivering Sustainable Local Enterprise**.

Nominations are asked to participate in all 4 of the workshops, in order to complete the strategic learning and development aim of fostering a council wide network of informed Local Enterprise Champions.

The total cost for each participant for all 4 workshops is **£395** with a closing date of Friday 10 April for nominations. Further details are set out over, with supplementary information in the enclosed invitation.

Not Applicable

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| Workshops | Venue | Date and Time |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Overview of the Local Economy | Ulster Bank, Donegall Square East, Belfast | Friday 25 April 12.00 to 15.45 pm |
| 2. Strategies, Funding & Key Partners | North West Regional College (tbc), Strand Rd, Derry / Londonderry | Friday 30 May 12.00 to 15.30 pm |
| 3. Roles & Responsibilities of Councillors | Craigavon Civic Centre, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (1200 – 1545), | Friday 20 June 12.00 to 15.45 pm |
| 4. Enterprise Site Visit & Champions Forward Plan | Mallusk Enterprise Park (tbc), Mallusk Park, Newtownabbey | Friday 05 September 12.00 to 15.45 pm |

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve up to 4 nominations, at a cost of £395 each, to the National Association of Councillors Enterprise Champions workshops, to be funded from the approved Member Development budget.



National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region

3rd March 2025

FAO: Susie McCullough, Chief Executive

Dear Susie,

Who Will Be Your Council's 2025 Local Enterprise Champions?

The National Association of Councillors (N. Ireland), whose membership covers the 462 elected members of our 11 councils, is delighted to offer a unique opportunity for each local authority's members and officers to participate in 4 Learning and Development workshops on the crucial subject of planning and delivering sustainable, local enterprise.

NAC (NI) is keen to support its strategic aim of enabling councillors, supported by officers, to have a better understanding of how enterprise is fostered and works, what the local building blocks are, planning and investing in our future, sustainable, local economies, together with adding real value and an innovative approach to the emerging Local Economic Partnerships in each council area.

Following on from three NAC (NI) led interactive conferences on Local Enterprise training, entitled "Developing a New Economy," over the past 18 months, together with practical development of next steps with partner bodies including SOLACE, APSE, and Ulster University, NAC (NI) seeks your council's nominations to participate in the 4 afternoon workshops per below:

Friday 25 April 2025, Ulster Bank, Donegall Square East, Belfast (1200 – 1545),

Friday 30th May 2025, North West Regional College (tbc), Strand Rd, Derry / Londonderry (1200 – 1530),

Friday 20th June 2025, Craigavon Civic Centre, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (1200 – 1545),

Friday 5th September 2025, Mallusk Enterprise Park (tbc), Mallusk Park, Newtownabbey (1200 – 1545).

Importantly, your nominations are asked to participate in all four of the workshops, in order to complete the strategic learning and development aim of fostering a Council Wide network of informed Local Enterprise Champions in 2025, and beyond.

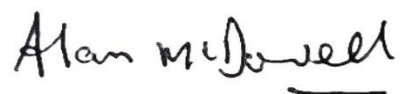
Each workshop has the same framework, allowing fully interactive debate following a networking lunch, and the creation of an outcomes report co-designed by participants and facilitators for the benefit of council and its enterprise partners. It's also proposed that ALL participants will be brought together for a VIP Recognition Event after the final workshop.

NAC (NI) is ensuring that all participants share, learn and develop their own enterprise insights, using the principle of co-design. As such, the workshops will be interactive, collaborative and outcomes driven via core, specialist facilitation rather than "top-down" presentations. To ensure the very best outcome for all proposed Local Enterprise Champions, we are encouraging three or four nominations from each of our 11 councils, one of which may at Council's discretion be a senior support officer.

We have designed the entire workshop series for £395 per participant (for all 4) and the attached Workshop Outline and Nominations Page provides finer detail.

We look forward to receiving your Council's Local Enterprise Champions nominations for the Class of 2025, through forwarding to relevant Committees, members and ultimately per Full Council.

Yours sincerely,



Alderman Alan McDowell
Chair
NAC (NI)



Councillor Joe Boyle
Secretary
NAC (NI)

Enc: Workshop Outline and Nominations Details

OUTLINE OF WORKSHOPS

A. WORKSHOP 1 (FRI 25th April, Belfast)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Overview of the Local Economy. Three hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, and a facilitator, with the emphasis on interactivity, oral / written input from the floor. Overview, Analysis, Emerging Trends. Emphasis on practical data and simple, strategic info that assists participants to “design out” local economy weaknesses and “design in” local economy strengths, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Two.

1545: Close

B. WORKSHOP 2 (Fri 30th May, Derry/Londonderry)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Strategies, Funding, Key Partners. Two and a half hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, and a facilitator with interactivity emphasis, breakout sessions to enable participants to provide & take away core info – including lateral thinking such as crowd funding, participatory budgeting for entrepreneurs, working outside of but in concert with the “big” strategies and grants, building place and people led local investment architecture, bringing it back to the full group, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Three.

1515: Close

C. WORKSHOP 3 (Fri 20th June, Craigavon)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Roles & Responsibilities of Councillors. Three hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, potentially including a former councillor and a facilitator, again with interactivity emphasis, breakout sessions to enable participants to build on the core info in terms of legislation, being a champion, scrutiny, effective, inclusive decision taking (21st Century Councillor building blocks tailored to local enterprise, community wealth building, locality-based investment), Local Economic Partnerships, short presentations by participant sub groups on how they would fulfil the roles and responsibilities, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Four.

1530: Close

D. WORKSHOP 4 (Friday 5th September, Mallusk)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Enterprise Site Visit and Champions Forward Plan. Three hours, in person. Participants are shown considered by enterprise peers' best practice by local enterprise partners and host council members / officials. Participants see and discuss "someone else's enterprising back yard." This will focus on successful start-ups, local enterprise planning and performance, council led initiative breaking the mould, a partner agency's high impact social value work, with reflections and summing up. Action summary and Forward Plan Outcomes Report drafted for each newly affirmed "LOCAL ENTERPRISE CHAMPION" to finalise and submit back.

1545: Close

A VIP Recognition Event for participants completing the four workshops is planned for 12th September, details to follow.

Who Will Be Your Council's 2025 Enterprise Champions?

How to Nominate:

Councils are cordially invited to nominate elected members (and senior / support officers, if desired) to attend the full Workshop series, no later than Thursday, 10th April 2025, by e-mailing Councillor Hazel Legge –

office@nac-ni.org

THANK YOU.

Unclassified

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ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Report Classification | Unclassified |
| Exemption Reason | Choose an item. |
| Council/Committee | Council Meeting |
| Date of Meeting | 26 March 2025 |
| Responsible Director | Director of Corporate Services |
| Responsible Head of Service | |
| Date of Report | 18 March 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 | Updated Redundancy Policy |
| Attachments | ANDBC Updated Redudancy Policy including Appendix |

Members will be aware that Council previously approved the Redundancy Policy in November 2023. On review a number of small inconsistencies, highlighted in red, have come to officers attention which require clarification.

These updates are relatively minor in nature, with no significant changes to the policy's overall intent. For example, there was a typo on page 9, where the policy referred to a two-year limit, rather than a three-year limit. This has been corrected. Additionally, some changes have been made to the layout of the document to improve its clarity and readability, and a definitions section added to ensure greater understanding of key terms.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approve the updated Redundancy Policy

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Document control

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Policy Title | Redundancy Policy |
| Document Reference | |
| Policy Summary | Ards and North Down Borough Council agreed a Redundancy Policy in November 2023. The Policy sets out the Council's approved process to managing redundancies. |
| Review Requirements | Section 75 Compliant |
| Document Owner/Job title | Director of Corporate Service |
| Council Approval | Date November 2023 Updated March 2025 |

Version Control Record

| Version Number | Version Date | Author (s) | Comments |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1.0 | 27 October 2023 | Alison Curtis | |
| 1.1 | March 2025 | Louise Murray | Updates to typo's / clarifications |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Consultation

| | CLT | HOST | SCC | Unions |
|----------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Date completed | March 2025 | 27/10/2023 March 2025 | March 2025 | March 2025 |

Screening

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Reference No | 307 |
| EQIA Required? | Yes |

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Policy Statement

Introduction

The Council has a duty to ensure the maintenance of appropriate staffing levels in the delivery of Council services. The Council also has a responsibility to safeguard wherever possible the job security and prospects of its employees.

The Council is aware that due to rapid changes in the economic and/or technological environment or alternatively business planning related reasons, there may be at times a need to change staffing levels. In these circumstances there may be a requirement to carry out a service restructuring exercise or a complete organisational re-structuring review.

The Council will always aim to avoid compulsory redundancies in the first instance, however where this is unavoidable, alternatives will be explored including redeployment, re-training, early retirement, and voluntary redundancy.

This document sets out the Council's approach to managing organisational change impacting employees.

Policy Scope

Applies to all employees.

Consultation

The Council is committed to keeping employees and recognised Trade Unions consulted throughout periods of organisational change and redundancy processes. This will be done in a number of ways depending on the circumstances.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Policy Statement, Continued

Individual Consultation

A redundancy consultation meeting will be held with the employee to advise them that their post is 'at risk' of redundancy. The meeting will be comprised of the employee, line manager and a HR representative. The employee will also be advised that they may be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or another employee of the Council. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Outline the reason for organisational change
- Outline mitigation for avoiding redundancies
- Outline how employees have been selected
- Discuss any suitable alternative employment
- Outline the employee's obligations during the process and the next steps.

Collective Consultation

A collective redundancy situation would arise where the Council proposes to make redundancies relating to 20 or more employees. The aim of collective consultation is to avoid the termination of employment contracts, minimise the number of employees affected and mitigate the consequences of any proposed compulsory redundancies. Meaningful collective consultation will be undertaken with a view to reaching an agreement. Although as much time as practical will be provided, the Council will abide by the statutory minimum timeframes:

- 30 days before the first redundancy where there are 20-99 proposed redundancies
- 90 days before the first redundancy where there are 100 or more proposed redundancies.

The law requires meaningful consultation, and it is not enough only to inform. In collective redundancy, employee representatives must have written notice of the:

- a) Numbers of employees and job categories
- b) Reasons for redundancy
- c) Selection criteria
- d) Procedures and timescale
- e) Compensation.

Additionally, consultation must include discussions on ways to:

- a) Avoid or reduce redundancies
- b) Mitigate its consequences.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Policy Statement, Continued**Collective Consultation**, continued

Information will also be provided to relevant Trade Unions where there are implications for employees not directly affected by the redundancies but whose work may be affected by measures taken in respect of the proposed changes.

Employees who are absent from the workplace during the consultation process such as on a career break, long term sick, or maternity/adoption leave will be provided with relevant notification and information.

The Council will also notify in writing the Department of Economy when there is a proposal to make 20 or more employees redundant at one 'establishment' over a period of 90 days, as is the statutory requirement. For consultation purposes each site is usually a separate 'establishment', however it may be more appropriate in some cases to identify an organised group of staff across different sites e.g., employees with a particular job title. The selection pool will be determined by the service potentially reducing or ceasing. The Council will also consult with the Local Government Staff Commission.

Avoiding Compulsory Redundancy

In the first instance the Council will consider steps that might, depending on the circumstances be taken to avoid the need for compulsory redundancies. Examples of such steps include, but not limited to:

- Reviewing the use of agency staff, self-employed contractors, casual workers, and consultants
- Restricting recruitment in affected categories of employee and in those areas into which affected employees might be redeployed
- Reducing overtime (in affected departments) to that needed to meet contractual commitments or provide essential services
- Consulting recognised Trade Unions on the introduction of shorter time contracts
- Career breaks
- Natural turnover
- Identifying suitable alternative employment
- Voluntary Severance
- Early or Flexible Retirement.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Policy Statement, Continued**Suitable
Alternative
Employment**

During the consultation process the Council will review all vacancies to identify any potential suitable alternative employment opportunities, liaising with employees and managers as appropriate. There is no guarantee that suitable alternative employment will be found. For redeployment purposes, the term ‘suitable’ means:

- Provide suitable earnings – usually no more than one grade above* or below their current grade or the same as their current grade – if the employee moves to a post below their current grade, their substantive rate of pay will be protected from the date the change of pay is applicable for a maximum 3-year period. All protected pay is pensionable.
- Have similar status.
- Be within the employee’s capability – with a reasonable amount of training the employee could undertake the new role
- Not involve unreasonable additional inconvenience
- Have similar terms and conditions
- Be in a similar location.

* the only exception to this is in a restructuring exercise, if a post/s disappear from the structure, if there is a higher-level post available in the new structure, the displaced employee/s may be ringfenced into the position/positions. However, it is important that they have the qualifications and/or experience (depending on the role, qualifications not held may be substituted for years of experience) knowledge and skills when assessed against the essential criteria for the redeployment role/s. If more than one person is ringfenced to a higher-level post, a recruitment exercise will take place.

If an “at risk” person does not wish to accept an offer of suitable alternative employment, they should outline in writing the reasons as to why they do not deem it to be suitable.

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Policy Statement, Continued

Trial Period Employees are allowed to have a minimum four-week trial period in the new job subject to the nature and requirements of the job without losing redundancy rights. Where required the trial period may be extended beyond four weeks by written agreement between the employer and the employee and every reasonable measure should be taken to allow adequate time for retraining. At the end of the trial period, the employee and the employer are of the view that the person is able to effectively carry out the duties of the post, the employee will be confirmed in post without having to undertake a recruitment and selection exercise.

If the employee feels the new job is not a suitable alternative to the old one they should notify the employer in writing at the earliest opportunity and before the end of the trial period.

If the employee rejects the new job before the end of the trial period, because it turns out not to be a suitable alternative to their old job, he/she will be considered to be redundant from the date the original employment ended. But if a redundant employee unreasonably refuses a suitable offer of alternative employment no discretionary redundancy payment will be due.

Voluntary Severance

Invitations to volunteer for redundancy may be offered to employees affected by the proposals. At the discretion of management, employees who are not directly affected may also be invited to put themselves forward for voluntary redundancy in order that consideration can be given to redundancy transfers, moving an employee from a redundant post to another post and instead making the person who volunteered redundant.

Employees eligible to put themselves forward for Voluntary Severance must have more than 2 years' continuous service. It is the decision of eligible employees if they wish to put themselves forward for Voluntary Severance and managers should not initiate any relevant discussions. The principles of any Voluntary Severance Scheme would be:

- Consideration will be given to whether the post may be removed and what impact this would have on service delivery and continuity

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Policy Statement, Continued

Voluntary Severance,

continued

- The need to retain types of knowledge and skills believed to be essential to meet future needs will be taken into account to ensure that there remains a balanced workforce with diverse skills
- Equality screening will be conducted at all stages and the Council will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, having dependants or not, political opinion and marital status
- Permanent part-time employees will not be treated differently to permanent full-time employees
- There should be no expectation of approval and every case will be considered on its own merit

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Policy Statement, Continued

Compulsory Redundancy

Following all reasonable efforts in a situation where, it is not possible to avoid redundancies, the Council will advise all affected employees and recognised Trade Unions and commence the consultation process.

The criteria used to select posts to be potentially made redundant will be objective, transparent, fair and based on the range of skills, competencies etc. required to meet Council's existing business needs.

To aid the objectivity of assessing an employee against the selection criteria, a points matrix system, which assesses the factors considered important to the current and future business needs of the Council, will be used. The selection criteria (Appendix 1) will be applied to those employees in a redundancy situation. The length of service as a selection factor will only be used if all other factors have been exhausted.

As part of the consultation process with the individual and the Trade Unions there will be an attempt to identify suitable alternative employment at the earliest opportunity i.e., when the employee is formally made aware that the post is at risk.

Employees selected for redundancy will be given notice of termination of employment in accordance with their contracts and written confirmation of the payments they will receive. There is an opportunity for the employee to appeal this decision. Appeals should be made to the relevant Director within 5 working days outlining the grounds of appeal.

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Policy Statement,Continued**Redundancy Payments**

The total costs associated with any enhanced redundancy payment must not exceed an employee's gross annual salary multiplied by three years. If the costs exceed this **three-year** limit, it will affect the Council's contribution to the cost of paying unreduced retirement benefits early (i.e. **the excess amount will be deducted from the employee's severance lump sum**).

The Enhanced Redundancy Costs include:

- Redundancy payment
- Capital cost paid to the pension provider for the early payment of an unreduced pension (if applicable)

How an Employee's Annual Salary is Calculated:

- Gross annual salary
- Employer's national insurance contribution
- Employer's pension contribution
- **Apprenticeship levy**

Statutory Redundancy Pay

The statutory redundancy pay entitlement is based on the **Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996**, and the **Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government) (Modification) Amendment Order 1999**. This allows for prior service with certain associated employers to be counted towards continuous service, provided there is no break in service.

Employees with less than 2 years of service will receive statutory redundancy pay only. Statutory redundancy pay is calculated as follows:

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Statutory Redundancy Pay continued

- **Under 22 years old:** Half a week's pay for each full year of service
- **Aged 22 to 41 years:** One week's pay for each full year of service
- **Over 41 years old:** One and a half weeks' pay for each full year of service

This is capped at 20 years of service. Please refer to Appendix II **Redundancy Pay Table** for statutory pay based on age and length of service.

Enhanced Redundancy Payment

The enhanced redundancy payment includes the statutory redundancy pay plus a compensation payment. The Council applies a multiplier of 2.4 to the statutory redundancy pay to calculate the enhanced redundancy payment.

Eligibility for the enhanced redundancy payment requires employees to:

- Have more than two years of service.
- Sign a Conciliation Agreement with the Labour Relations Agency, which waives their rights to any tribunal claims in exchange for the enhanced termination payment.

A week's pay is based on the employee's actual basic contractual pay, calculated by dividing the basic annual salary by 52.14. The statutory cap on weekly earnings does not apply.

Note: The Enhanced Termination Payment is inclusive of the Statutory Redundancy Payment (i.e. an employee will not receive both an Enhanced Redundancy and a Statutory Redundancy Payment).

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Policy Statement, Continued**Total
Redundancy
Package Costs**

The total costs of an individual's enhanced redundancy package must not exceed an amount equal to 3 times the employee's annual salary. The total redundancy package includes:

- Redundancy Payment (being either the Statutory Payment or the Enhanced Payment depending as outlined above) Capital cost for early payment of an unreduced pension
- Employer pension contributions (if more than £30,000)

Components of an individual's salary for calculation purposes:

- Gross salary
- National Insurance contributions
- Employer pension contributions
- **Apprenticeship levy**

Where an individual's costs would not fall within the 3-year payback period, consideration may be given to the negotiation and agreement of a reduced Enhanced Termination Payment.

In some cases, consideration may be given to aggregating the payback period, for example, at a service area level or across other groups of employees.

Pension

Employees who are aged 55 or over and in the pension scheme, will be entitled to immediate payment of their unreduced pension benefits in line with the Councils Policy statement on employers' discretions.

Continued on next page

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**Policy
Statement**,Continued**General Guidelines**

In all cases, the payment of severance must be supported by a business case.

The Enhanced Termination Lump Sum Payment cannot exceed a total of 104 weeks' pay, in accordance with the Local Government Northern Ireland regulations (Early Termination of Employment Discretionary Compensation Regulations 2007).

Record keeping

Appropriate records should be kept at each stage of the procedure which will be managed in line with the Council's Data Protection Guidelines.

Definitions

Definitions outlined in Appendix III.

**Monitoring
and Review**

The Council will review this policy on an ongoing basis.

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
SELECTION CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS**

Appendix 1

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1. Introduction

It is essential that during a redundancy process the Council uses a fair and transparent criterion for selection for redundancy and this is applied consistently. This will help employees to understand the process & also assist managers when explaining to employees the reason for their selection.

As a preliminary stage to selection, volunteers for redundancy will be invited to express an interest (EOI Application Form) and be considered by a panel of 3 persons. However, the Council is under no obligation to accept these volunteers. Care must be exercised when selecting from a list of volunteers to ensure that a balanced workforce (with appropriate skills, competencies, qualifications, experience etc) remains in order to meet the future demands of the service.

2. Redundancy Pool

The Director of Corporate Services or designated officer, appropriate Departmental Director and another Officer (at least Head of Service level) will begin by identifying a group of employees from which redundancies can be made, as identified by a documented Service Review process. It is to this 'selection pool' that the Departmental Director or nominated manager (e.g., Head of Service) will apply the appropriate selection criteria to determine posts that can be made redundant. This analysis should focus on the following areas of the workplace: -

- Individual post(s)
 - Specific category of post(s) or post(s) tied to a function or job role which it is intended will cease or diminish.
- The Departmental Director must ensure that the pool for redundancy can be justified showing that it has been based on rational considerations such as a Service Review process.
- To ensure that the Council has acted reasonably in determining the selection pool the following factors should be considered:

- Whether other groups of employees are doing similar work to those selected.
- Whether employees' jobs are interchangeable.
- Whether the employee's inclusion in the pool is consistent with his/her current position.

Where voluntary redundancy, or early retirement, does not produce suitable and sufficient numbers of volunteers or where there is a surplus of volunteers then management in consultation with the relevant trade unions will identify the selection criteria to be used and the weighting, if any, to be applied. All criteria should be objective, and the overall test will be one of reasonableness and justifiability.

The Director of Corporate Services must be informed of all potential redundancy situations to ensure that statutory consultation and notification requirements are met. In the interests of applying fairness and consistency, the Head of HR and OD or an appropriate HR Manager will be involved in all panels.

3. Selection Criteria

3.1 Process

The Council does not believe it is possible or appropriate to stipulate specific criteria to be used in all redundancy situations. The criteria used will be based on the future workforce needs of the service as identified through Service Reviews and other processes. The aim of the redundancy exercise will be to ensure the Council retains a sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable workforce to deliver the future service requirements. However, in most cases the criteria will relate to employee's skills/competencies, experience, qualifications, disciplinary record, attendance record (absence related to a disability or COVID 19 should be discounted) and length of service (only when all other factors have been exhausted).

Selection criteria will be applied fairly, objectively, consistently, carefully and reasonably to ensure equitable selection. The criteria utilised must be measurable, reasonable and required for business purposes.

In every case the Director of Corporate Services or designated officer e.g., Head of HR and OD), appropriate Departmental Director and another Officer (at least Head of Service level) is responsible for clearly recording the reasons for the scores awarded, all decisions must be evidence based.

The Departmental Director, or nominated manager (e.g., Head of Service) is responsible for co-ordinating the redundancy exercise within their department. The Director of Corporate Services or designated officer e.g., Head of HR and OD will be available to assist with the process and give advice and guidance as required.

Each employee will be notified in writing the outcome of the decision and a copy of their individual scoring assessment will be provided. Where an employee considers that the selection criteria has been unfairly applied in their particular case, they will be entitled to appeal the decision on these grounds only. The employee or his/her representative shall write to the Departmental Director stating in detail the specific inequity in his/her individual case. Such notification must be lodged within 10 working days from the date of the decision on selection.

The Appeals process will be arranged at the earliest possible date. The appeal panel will be made up of the Chief Executive (or nominee) a different Departmental Director, HR representative and a TU representative who have not been involved previously in the process. The Panel's decision will be final. The employee will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal. The Council's Grievance Procedure does not apply.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

SKILLS & COMPETENCIES:

Assessment of skills & competencies should be based on those which will be required for continuing business/service needs. Allocation of scores should reflect the range of skills & competencies that the individual has which are relevant to the job. It is important that assessment about skills & competencies should have a direct link to the job role which the individual is being assessed against and not broader skills & competencies which have no bearing on the job role for which redundancies are being considered. Managers using skills & competencies as redundancy selection criteria should make sure that they have clearly identified the full skills set & competencies required for the job, so that fair assessments can be made with reference to the current job description and person specification for the post.

| Score | Definition |
|-------|--|
| 8 | Outstanding – clearly exceeds the skills* required in the area and would be a role model for others |
| 6 | Good - meets and generally exceeds the skills required in the area |
| 4 | Acceptable - meets the skills required in the area |
| 2 | Below Standard – partially meets the skills required in the area and may require some development |
| 0 | Unacceptable - falls well below the skills required in the area |

(*this may include ICT skills over and above the standard Word, Excel which are stated in the Job Description/Specification, but which are now relevant in the job role e.g., Access, Power point, Use of Teams/Zoom etc). An employee's learning and development record may be utilized in respect of an assessment of relevant skills and competencies acquired.

EXPERIENCE

Assessment of experience should be based on that which is directly relevant to the continuing needs of the business/service. Allocation of scores should reflect the depth and breadth of experience which is relevant to the job. It is important that assessment of experience has a direct link to the job role which the individual is being assessed against and not on wider experience which has no bearing on the job role for which redundancies are being considered. Managers using experience as redundancy selection criteria should make sure that they have clearly identified previous experience, which is relevant to the job role and, where appropriate, should indicate the length and breadth of experience required. Managers should guard against solely defining timeframes of experience required as this may contravene current equality legislation.

| Score | Definition |
|-------|---|
| 8 | Outstanding – clearly exceeds the experience required in the area and would be a role model for others |
| 6 | Good - meets and generally exceeds the experience required in the area |
| 4 | Acceptable - meets the experience required in the area |
| 2 | Below Standard – partially meets the experience required in the area and may require some development |
| 0 | Unacceptable - falls well below the experience required in the area |

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**QUALIFICATION**

Use of qualifications as a selection criterion should be based on the essential and desirable qualifications or equivalent listed in the person specification. If there are no qualifications required for the post, then this selection criterion should not be used.

| Score | Definition |
|--------------|---|
| 8 | Fully qualified or equivalent as specified in the employee specification and has additional relevant qualifications |
| 6 | Fully qualified or equivalent as specified in the employee specification |
| 4 | Part qualified and actively working towards full qualification |
| 2 | Part qualified but not actively working towards full qualification |
| 0 | Unqualified |

DISCIPLINARY

Only live disciplinary warnings are to be considered. Care must be exercised not to unfairly disadvantage staff for warnings which have expired.

| Score | Definition |
|--------------|--|
| 8 | No current disciplinary warning |
| 6 | Current verbal warning/Stage 1 |
| 4 | Current written warning/Stage 2 |
| 2 | Current final written warning/Stage 3 |
| 0 | Current final written warning/Stage 3 plus action short of dismissal (e.g. withholding increment or downgrading of post) |

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**Attendance**

The absence period to be considered will be from (previous years dates) (all COVID related absences will be excluded). Both days lost due to sickness absence and the number of occasions over which absence was taken will be used for this criterion. Sickness absence related to pregnancy and disability will not be used. Sickness absence linked to work related stress will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The scores for each (Days + Number of occasions) will be added to give a total score for attendance. 3* = weighing

Examples:

| | A (occasion) | B (no of occasions) | A + B | = C (TOTAL OF AXB) |
|------------|--------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Employee A | 1 occasion | 81 working days absent | 8 x 3* | 24 |
| | 8 | 0 | | |
| Employee B | 2 occasions | 5 working days absent | 12 x 3* | 36 |
| | 6 | 6 | | |
| Employee C | 3 occasions | 18.5 working days absent | 4 x 3* | 12 |
| | 4 | 0 | | |

WORKING DAYS ABSENT BETWEEN (previous full year)

| Score | Definition |
|-------|---|
| 10 | No absence |
| 8 | 1 – 3 days absence |
| 6 | 4 – 6 days absence |
| 4 | 7 - 10 days absence |
| 2 | 11 – 15 days absence |
| 0 | 16 days + absence* (Care must be exercised not to disadvantage for one-off traumatic event e.g., accident or one-off illness e.g., major surgery) |

NUMBER OF OCCASIONS OF ABSENCE (start date of previous year)

| Score | Definition |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 10 | No absence |
| 8 | 1 occasion of absence |
| 6 | 2 occasions of absence |
| 4 | 3 occasions of absence |
| 2 | 4 occasions of absence |
| 0 | 5 occasions of absence |

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**LENGTH OF SERVICE (to be used in a situation where all other factors have been exhausted)**

Length of service with ANDBC is used as a criterion (including continuous service where applicable)

| Score | Definition |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 10 | 5 years + service |
| 8 | 4 – 5 years' service |
| 6 | 3 – 4 years' service |
| 4 | 2 – 3 years' service |
| 2 | 1 - 2 years' service |
| 0 | 0 – 1 year service |

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

| EMPLOYEE NAME: | | | | | JOB TITLE: | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|--|--|
| SECTION | | | | | | | | |
| CRITERIA | DEFINITION | EVIDENCE USED | WEIGHTING | SCORE | WEIGHTED SCORE | NOTES | | |
| SKILLS/COMPETENCIES | | | X2 | | | | | |
| EXPERIENCE | | | X2 | | | | | |
| QUALIFICATIONS | | | X2 | | | | | |
| DISCIPLINARY/CAPABILITY | | | X3 | | | | | |
| ATTENDANCE | | | X3 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| LENGTH OF SERVICE | | | X2 | | | | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 2 – Statutory Redundancy Pay (based on Age & Length of Service)

Redundancy Pay Table

| Age | Service (Years) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--|
| | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | |
| 18* | 1 | 1 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | 1 | 1 ½ | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | 1 | 1 ½ | 2 | 2 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 1 | 1 ½ | 2 | 2 ½ | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 1 | 1 ½ | 2 | 2 ½ | 3 | 3 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | 1 ½ | 2 | 2 ½ | 3 | 3 ½ | 4 | 4 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | 2 | 2 ½ | 3 | 3 ½ | 4 | 4 ½ | 5 | 5 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | 2 | 3 | 3 ½ | 4 | 4 ½ | 5 | 5 ½ | 6 | 6 ½ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 ½ | 5 | 5 ½ | 6 | 6 ½ | 7 | 7 ½ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 ½ | 6 | 6 ½ | 7 | 7 ½ | 8 | 8 ½ | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 ½ | 7 | 7 ½ | 8 | 8 ½ | 9 | 9 ½ | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 ½ | 8 | 8 ½ | 9 | 9 ½ | 10 | 10 ½ | | | | | | | |
| 30 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 ½ | 9 | 9 ½ | 10 | 10 ½ | 11 | 11 ½ | | | | | | |
| 31 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9 ½ | 10 | 10 ½ | 11 | 11 ½ | 12 | 12 ½ | | | | | |
| 32 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 10 ½ | 11 | 11 ½ | 12 | 12 ½ | 13 | 13 ½ | | | | |
| 33 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 11 ½ | 12 | 12 ½ | 13 | 13 ½ | 14 | 14 ½ | | | |
| 34 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 12 ½ | 13 | 13 ½ | 14 | 14 ½ | 15 | 15 ½ | | |
| 35 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 13 ½ | 14 | 14 ½ | 15 | 15 ½ | 16 | 16 ½ | |
| 36 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 14 ½ | 15 | 15 ½ | 16 | 16 ½ | 17 | |
| 37 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 15 ½ | 16 | 16 ½ | 17 | 17 ½ | |
| 38 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 ½ | 17 | 17 ½ | 18 | |
| 39 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 ½ | 18 | 18 ½ | |
| 40 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 ½ | 19 | |
| 41 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 19 ½ | |
| 42 | 2 ½ | 3 ½ | 4 ½ | 5 ½ | 6 ½ | 7 ½ | 8 ½ | 9 ½ | 10 ½ | 11 ½ | 12 ½ | 13 ½ | 14 ½ | 15 ½ | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | |
| 43 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| 44 | 3 | 4 ½ | 5 ½ | 6 ½ | 7 ½ | 8 ½ | 9 ½ | 10 ½ | 11 ½ | 12 ½ | 13 ½ | 14 ½ | 15 ½ | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | |
| 45 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | |
| 46 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 8 ½ | 9 ½ | 10 ½ | 11 ½ | 12 ½ | 13 ½ | 14 ½ | 15 ½ | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | 22 ½ | |
| 47 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | |
| 48 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 11 ½ | 12 ½ | 13 ½ | 14 ½ | 15 ½ | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | 22 ½ | 23 ½ | |
| 49 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | |
| 50 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 14 ½ | 15 ½ | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | 22 ½ | 23 ½ | 24 ½ | |
| 51 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | |
| 52 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 17 ½ | 18 ½ | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | 22 ½ | 23 ½ | 24 ½ | 25 ½ | |
| 53 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | |
| 54 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 20 ½ | 21 ½ | 22 ½ | 23 ½ | 24 ½ | 25 ½ | 26 ½ | |
| 55 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | |
| 56 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 23 ½ | 24 ½ | 25 ½ | 26 ½ | 27 ½ | |
| 57 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | |
| 58 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 24 | 25 ½ | 26 ½ | 27 ½ | 28 ½ | |
| 59 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 24 | 25 ½ | 27 | 28 | 29 | |
| 60 | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 24 | 25 ½ | 27 | 28 ½ | 29 ½ | |
| 61** | 3 | 4 ½ | 6 | 7 ½ | 9 | 10 ½ | 12 | 13 ½ | 15 | 16 ½ | 18 | 19 ½ | 21 | 22 ½ | 24 | 25 ½ | 27 | 28 ½ | 30 | |

18* - it is possible that an individual could start to build up continuous service before age 16, but this is likely to be rare, and therefore we have started from age 18.

61** - The same figures should be used when calculating the redundancy payment for a person aged 61 and above.

***The current statutory redundancy pay is capped at a maximum of £643 per week.

- **Statutory Redundancy Pay**

Statutory redundancy pay entitlement is governed by the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government) (Modification) Amendment Order 1999. Statutory redundancy pay is calculated based on the employee's age and length of service, subject to a maximum limit of 20 weeks' pay. A ready reckoner is available to estimate the potential statutory redundancy pay an employee may be entitled to.

- **Redundancy Package**

A redundancy package is a financial arrangement provided to employees who are made redundant. The Council enhances the statutory redundancy payment by applying a multiplier of 2.4 to the statutory redundancy pay, thereby calculating the enhanced redundancy payment. The Enhanced Termination Payment includes the statutory redundancy pay; therefore, an employee will not receive both an enhanced redundancy payment and a statutory redundancy payment separately.

- **Gross annual salary**

The gross annual salary refers to the total salary paid to an employee on an annual basis before any deductions, such as taxes or other contributions, are made.

- **Employees Annual Salary Cost**

This refers to the gross annual salary plus the employer's National Insurance contributions, pension contributions, and any applicable apprenticeship levy.

- **Total Redundancy Package costs**

This encompasses the redundancy payment, the capital cost for the early payment of an unreduced pension, and the employer's pension contributions where the total redundancy package exceeds £30,000.

- **Reduced Enhanced Termination Payment**

This refers to a reduction in the enhanced redundancy payment element of the redundancy package to account for costs that fall outside the designated three-year payback period required for the employee to retire.

- **Total cost of severance package**

The total cost of the severance package includes the redundancy payment (whether statutory or enhanced), the capital cost for early payment of an unreduced pension, the employer's pension contributions (if exceeding £30,000), along with National Insurance contributions and the apprenticeship levy.

Unclassified

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ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Report Classification | Unclassified |
| Exemption Reason | Not Applicable |
| Council/Committee | Council Meeting |
| Date of Meeting | 26 March 2025 |
| Responsible Director | Chief Executive |
| Responsible Head of Service | |
| Date of Report | 18 March 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. As yet no leasing application submitted from Comber Rec Football Club. | 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. Report to April C&W Committee. | Nikki Dorrian & Ian O'Neill | |

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| 522 | Corporate Services | 05.07.22 | <p>Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery</p> <p>Amendment received from Councillor Cathcart</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>*** 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.</p> | <p>Council July 2022</p> <p>Environment Committee September 2022</p> <p>Corporate Services January 2024</p> | <p>April 2023 - Letter requesting permission to use the Royal Name sent to the Cabinet Office and awaiting response</p> <p>January 2024 - Report brought to Corporate Committee Amendment Agreed and advice sought from Cabinet Office</p> <p>December 2024 - Advice still outstanding</p> <p>February 2025 - Advice now recieved, update report to be presented to April Corporate Committee</p> | <p>Alison Curtis (Head of Administration)</p> | |
| 525 | Community & Wellbeing | 24.08.22 | <p>Councillor Cooper, Councillor T Smith & Councillor Irvine</p> | <p>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</p> | <p>Council August 2022</p> <p>Corporate Committee October 2022</p> | <p>Legal advice has been sought and a report will be brought back to Community & Wellbeing Committee on receipt of this advice.</p> | <p>Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture)</p> | |

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| 529 | Environment | 22.08.22 | Councillor Dunlop & Councillor Douglas | <p>That this Council agrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All pedestrians should feel safe on our pavements, yet street clutter can make walking and wheeling unsafe, forcing people onto the road which is dangerous; •Street furniture should be clean, have a purpose and be consistent; and •Street clutter should be removed. <p>Therefore, Council tasks officers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Carry out an audit of street infrastructure including street signage, project information; posts, etc; •Remove historic street clutter which has no current purpose or future benefit; •Ensure relevant signage is cleaned and fit for purpose; •Ensure signs have the appropriately-named Council on it, where this applies; •Identify a nominated officer within the Council to lead on the audit to ensure items are listed and removed; and •Write to the Department for Infrastructure to request they complete a similar de-clutter across the Borough. | Council September 2022 Environment Committee October 2022 | <p>Letter sent to Dfl (Mark McPeak) 11/01/23</p> <p>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> | Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services) | |
| 545 | Community & Wellbeing | 16.11.22 | Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings | <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> | Council November 2022 Community & Wellbeing December 2022 and March 2023 and June 2023 | <p>Officers have asked HED to confirm return arrangements and will report to future C&WC when final arrangements for return of the stones is confirmed.</p> | Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture) | |

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| 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 & Wellbeing Committee January 2024</p> | <p>Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&W Committee. Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee ratified at Council. Report going to March Community and Wellbeing Committee. N Dorrian met with White Ribbon in January 2025. Report to May C&W Committee.</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 & PSNI by CEx</p> | <p>Nigel Martin (Head of Waste and Cleansing Services)</p> |
| 564 | Community & Wellbeing | 08.02.23 | Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery | <p>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.</p> | <p>Council February 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023</p> | <p>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. 26.02.25 Email received from Virginia Lowe of the EA confirming there is no further update at this time.</p> | <p>Ian O'Neill (Head of Leisure)</p> |

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| 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 Committeee March 2023 | <p>A response has been received from the Cabinet Office and a report went back to Committee</p> <p>30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>February 2025 - Advice now recieved on other requests, update report to be presented to April Corporate Committee</p> | 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&P 6 February 2025 (Item 11)</p> <p>P&P 13 June 2024 (Item 15)</p> <p>P&P 15 June 2023 (Item 28.1)</p> <p>Council 29 March 2023 (Item 22.1)</p> | <p>Update report presented to 06.02.25 P&P Cttee</p> <p>Further report to be brought back to Committee</p> | Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead | |

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| 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 Environment Committee November 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024</p> | <p>Report to C&W Committee in January 2025. Further report requested to future C&W Committee to include site visits to Causeway Coast & Glens and Newry Mourne and Down District Council as per amended recommendation at January C&W Committee. Since January C&W Committee a summer site visit has been organised. Report to be brought back to October C&W Committee. Meanwhile beacked continue to be monitored on a proactive basis.</p> | Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries) | |
| 588 | Environment | 17.10.23 | Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith | <p>That this council asks officers to include the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter (owned by Council), located in Main Street, Greyabbey in the 2024/25 maintenance budget.</p> <p>Furthermore Council seeks an officer's report on the feasibility of Council painting the decorative Greyabbey lamp posts (in the ownership of DFI). This is a feature of the historic village, and we understand the current shabby condition impacts not only residents of the village, but the wider tourism and regeneration potential of this scenic conservation area.</p> <p>Amendment: That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and</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. Amendment Agreed at Environment Committee. That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward. Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini public realm or streetscape project in Greyabbey.</p> | Peter Caldwell (Head of Assets & Property Services) | |

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| 586 | Corporate Services | 16.10.23 | Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin | 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. | Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023 Corporate Services Committee September 2024 | Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor. July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor. Report to Corporate Committee in September 2024. March 2024: Proceeding through compliance team. | Alison Curtis (Head of Administration) | |
| 595 | Community & Wellbeing | 16.11.23 | Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney | 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. | Council 29.11.2023 | Initial report to December 2024 C&W Committee. Second report to April 2025 C&W Committee | Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture) | |
| 599 | Community & Wellbeing | 21.11.23 | Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour | "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) | Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024 and September 2024. Corporate Committee September 2024 | Project ongoing for 24 months with reports brought to C&W Committee as necessary. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway. Regular Updates will be brought. Next report will be to April 2025 Committee. | Nikki Dorrian (Interim Head of Community and Culture) | |

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| 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 & 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&P</p> | <p>Donaghadee Signage Working Group established. Audit completed of existing signage to provide rationale for additional signage. Update report to future P&P Committee Agreed at 5 Sept P&P and ratified by 25 Sept Council</p> | <p>Brian Dorrian - (Interim Director of Place) to lead</p> | |

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| 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. Report to June C&W Committee regarding next steps and plans for enhancement of the site. | 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 took place in 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) | |

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| 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</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 (GWWG) 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) | |

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| 638 | Place & Prosperity | 22.10.2024 | Councillors Harbinson & McCracken | <p>that this Council should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade, Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Council's Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments. 2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use. 3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive | 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 | Reconsidered at P&P 6.2.25 - Agreed report to be prepared Agreed at Cttee 09.01.25 - report to be presented | Brian Dorrian (Interim Director of Place) to lead | |

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| 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. Post Office decision on which branches are to close is due mid March 2025. | CEX Office | |

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| 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. 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 to note. | CEX Office | To be removed following March Council. |
| 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. Report to April C&W Committee. | Stephen Daye (Head of Parks and Cemeteries) | |

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| 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 | Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity) | Adopted 4.2.25- further reports to be presented to P&P |

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| 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) | Went to March C&WC. To be removed after March Council call in has passed. |
| 648 | Place & Prosperity | 10.12.24 | 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 | P&P 09.01.25 - Item 9.2 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.6) | P&P Committee 09.01.25 - NOM Withdrawn | Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity) | |
| 649 | Place & Prosperity | 5.12.24 | Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken | That this Council, recognising the opportunities of the Green Economy to bring substantial funding to this Council, make significant savings and create new local jobs, sets up a working group comprised of Councillors and Officers to bring forward detailed proposal to achieve these benefits and in the process, help reduce carbon emissions in the Ards and North Down area" | P&P 09.01.25 Council 18.12.24 (Item 15.7) | Agreed C.26.2.25 that the following members be appointed to the Green Economy Working Group: Cllr Kendall Cllr Smart, Cllr Blaney, Ald McDowell Cllr McCracken, Cllr Boyle, Ald Graham & Cllr Kerr | Ann McCullough (Interim Director of Prosperity) to lead | |

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| 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> | <p>Place and Prosperity February 2025 (Item 12.1) Council January 2025</p> | <p>Agreed at P&P 6.2.25 - report to be prepared</p> | <p>Director of Prosperity/Head of Tourism</p> | |
| 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> | <p>Council January 2025, Community and Wellbeing February 2025</p> | | | |

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| 652 | | 16.01.25 | 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 position lighting scheme along the promenade at Groomsport beach. | Postponed from Place and Prosperity February 2025 to Place and Prosperity March 2025 Council January 2025 | Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion | | |
| 653 | Environment | 21.01.25 | 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 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 | Council January 2025, Environment Committee February 2025 | Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 05.02.2025. Report to future EC. | Richard McCracken | |

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| 654 | | 20.01.25 | Alderman Brooks and Councillor Kendall | <p>This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards.</p> <p>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 Brough brings cultural, social and economic benefits, fostering a sense of whole- Borough inclusivity.</p> <p>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.</p> | Council 26.02.2025 - Place & Prosperity Committee March 2025 | Agreed at P&P 6.3.25 to adopt Notice of Motion | | |
| 655 | Environment | 18.02.2025 | Alderman Cummings and Councillor Douglas | <p>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.</p> | Council 26.02.2025 - Environment Committee 5 March 2025 | Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion - Environment Committee 05.03.2025. Report to future EC. | Peter Caldwell | |

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| 656 | | 18.02.2025 | Councillor Wray & Councillor McLaren | <p>That this Council recognises the impact that recent severe weather events have had on residents and business owners within our Borough.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | Council 26.02.2025 - Corporate Services March 2025 | Postponed to April CS Committee | | |
| 657 | | 18.02.2025 | Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund | <p>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.</p> | Council 26.02.2025 - Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2025 | <p>Agreed 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</p> | | |



Minutes of the 513th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 12th December 2024 at 10.30 in Corrs Corner Newtownabbey

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Cllr Aaron Skinner
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

Cllr Aoife Finnegan
Ald Stephen McIlveen
Ald Keith Kerrigan
Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Derry City & Strabane District Council
Mid Ulster Borough Council

Virtual:

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Ald Amanda Grehan
Cllr Sean McGlinchey
David Polley
Gerry McAreavy

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Department for Communities
Department for Communities

In Attendance:

Brian O'Kane
James McFall
Maria McLaughlin
Kelly Cameron

NI Housing Executive
NI Housing Executive
Executive Assistant
Secretary, Housing Council

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

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| 1. | Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. | |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest There were no declarations. | |

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| 3. | <p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 14th November 2024</p> <p>Amendment to the Minutes, it was noted that Deirdre Varsani had tried to join the meeting last month via the Teams link, but due to technical difficulties was unable to join.</p> <p>Subject to the above amendment, the minutes were Proposed by Cllr Mary O’Dowd and Seconded by Cllr Aaron Skinner</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>It was noted that the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons has agreed to meet the Housing Council and his Office the liaise with the Secretary early in the New Year to get a suitable date.</p> <p>It was noted that due to the Ministers recent announcements in relation to Housing Supply Strategy and Intermediate Rents, the list of questions will be reviewed at the ‘Closed Session’ in January, prior to the meeting with the Minister.</p> <p>4.2 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>It was noted that the three vacancies from the Housing Council to the NIHE Board will have taken place by 19th December and it is hoped that appointments should be made early in the New Year.</p> <p>4.3 Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>In accordance with the Housing Council Standing Orders, a letter had been sent to Belfast City Council, in relation to their representative’s non-attendance at meetings and a reply has not been received.</p> <p>It was agreed that a letter should now be sent to the Lord Mayor, Belfast City and the Leaders of the main political groups expressing total disappointment and lack of regard towards the Housing Council.</p> <p>Cllr O’Dowd expressed her dismay that Cllr McCusker has been unfairly criticising the Housing Executive in the media in relation to homelessness over recent weeks, and added that if he attended the Housing Council he would have an excellent platform to address and contribute to resolving some issues.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p> | <p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p> |

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| 5. | <p>Department for Communities – Housing Top Issues</p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>Update on Homelessness (In attendance Brian O’Kane & James McFall)</p> <p>Brian O’Kane gave Members an update on Homelessness. Members noted that the figures as of March 2024 were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47,312 applicants on the Waiting List in Northern Ireland; • 35,464 applicants deemed to be in ‘housing stress’ (award of over 30 points); • 29,394 applicants accepted as statutorily homeless (FDA); where a statutory duty is owed to accommodate. <p>Members received useful statistical data and B O’Kane explained the ways in which the Housing Executive are attempting to tackle homelessness through several programmes, action plans and projects.</p> <p>In relation to Domestic Abuse victims, Members concerns are that there is not enough places for women & children when they present themselves.</p> <p>Members welcomed that the Minister for Communities had met with the Housing Associations to seek void properties in their areas which may be used potentially for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>David Polley also highlighted that it was recently published that the Loan to Acquire Move-on Accommodation (LAMA), aims to fund the purchase of properties by homelessness charities as a route into housing for those who cannot access permanent social housing or private rented accommodation. A £10m fund running for five years will be made available to Homelessness charities in Northern Ireland, projected to provide 80 – 100 units off supported accommodation for clients with a range of support needs who would benefit from a move away from the traditional staircase model approach to homelessness.</p> <p>Cllr Grehan commended the change in Chapel Hill Mews, Lisburn which was a difficult area and has been taken on by a Social Enterprise providing accommodation with wraparound services for tenants and would be keen for more of these schemes to progress through Social Enterprises.</p> <p>Several Members alluded to the Finland model in tackling homelessness and Chair & Vice Chair undertook to provide slides from the Housing Conference they had attended in September.</p> <p>Referring to the lack of social housing, Members were encouraged locally to challenging planning for developments and welcomed the Housing Executive powers being reinstated to build again. Several Members also reiterated the challenging issue of the infrastructure, in particular the major problem of the water service needing to be addressed, which is vital for new developments.</p> | CH/VC |

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| | <p>Agreed: Brian O’Kane agreed to provide the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated - Demand Waiting List (as at October 2024); • Breakdown of ‘Out of Hours’ figures by new Presenters in each Council area and summary details of the underlying issues; • Breakdown of Domestic Abuse & Single Lets presenters & services by Council area; • A copy of the Youth Homelessness Action Plan; • Homewards Coalition/Steering Group to check why a representative from the Housing Council was not invited to sit on the Group. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse Action Plan to be circulated to Members. • Referring to the former ‘Living over the Shops’ initiatives - D Polley to seek more information on housing led regeneration scheme in various villages; <p>The Chair thanked B O’Kane and J McFall for a very informative presentation.</p> | <p>B O’Kane</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>D Polley</p> |
| <p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>NIFHA Responses</p> <p>Members noted the responses.</p> <p>Updated NIFHA – Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)</p> <p>It was noted that NIFHA had updated the MOU, which the Chair has now signed off, it will be presented to the NIFHA Board on 11th December, which will give the opportunity to develop a close working relationship.</p> <p>Conduct of Meetings</p> <p>Cllr Finnegan referred to a recent meeting where she had referred to a case in her area, as a way of illustration of as a greater issue, only to be stopped and told by the Chair at that particular meeting, that a Housing Executive official could not respond. She felt the role of the Chair should be clearly understood and how it is managed.</p> <p>It was noted this particular meeting, was not Chaired by Cllr Cooper.</p> <p>In response, Cllr Cooper felt in his role as Chair he is transparent and open in his conducting of meetings. He added that specific local issues should be passed to either local area staff or to the Secretary who can triage to the relevant Officers.</p> <p>The Chair assured Cllr Finnegan’s her concerns will be taken Into account.</p> | |

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| 7.4 | <p>It was also noted that in the event of both the Chair and Vice Chair being absent from a meeting, the Members present shall nominate a representative to preside over the meeting.</p> <p>Review of the Housing Council Standing Orders</p> <p>It was agreed that the Standing Orders required to be reviewed and a date will be arranged early in the New Year.</p> | Secretary |
| 8. | <p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 9th January 2025 at 10 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast.</p> | |

Meeting ended 12.30 pm.



Minutes of the 513th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 9th January 2025 at 10.30 in the Housing Centre, Belfast

Present:

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| Cllr Mark Cooper | Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council |
| Cllr Aaron Skinner | Mid & East Antrim Borough Council |
| Cllr Mary O'Dowd | Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council |
| Ald Keith Kerrigan | Derry City & Strabane District Council |

Virtual:

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| Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |
| Ald Amanda Grehan | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council |
| Cllr Sean McGlinchey | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council |
| Cllr Deirdre Varsani | Mid Ulster Borough Council |
| Cllr Aoife Finnegan | Newry, Mourne & Down District Council |
| Ald Stephen McIlveen | Ards & North Down Borough Council |
| Kelly Cameron | Secretary, Housing Council |

In Attendance:

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| David Polley | Department for Communities |
| Christopher Mills | Department for Communities |
| Grainia Long | Chief Executive, NIHE |
| Jonny Blease | Head of Communications, NIHE |
| Maria McLaughlin | Executive Assistant, CX & Chair Support Office |
| Ana Angelova | Observer, CX & Chair Support Office |

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

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| 1. | Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. | |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest There were no declarations. | |

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| 3. | <p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 12th December 2024</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Cllr Mary O’Dowd and seconded by Cllr Aaron Skinner</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>It was noted that the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons has agreed to meet the Housing Council and his Office will liaise with the Secretary to get a suitable date.</p> <p>It was noted that, due to the Ministers recent announcements in relation to Housing Supply Strategy and Intermediate Rents, Members to review the list of questions, prior to the meeting with the Minister.</p> <p>4.2 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>It was noted that interviews had taken place in relation to the Housing Council appointments to the Housing Executive Board. The outcome is awaited.</p> <p>4.3 Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>In accordance with Housing Council Standing Orders, a letter had been issued to Belfast City Council in relation to their representative’s non-attendance at meetings. The Lord Mayor responded advising he has passed the letter to John Walsh, Chief Executive for response.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p> | Secretary |
| 5. | <p>Housing Executive’s Emerging Issues & Strategic Items</p> <p>Grainia Long gave an update on emerging issues, by exception, under the following headings:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget & Monitoring Round update and completion of bid for 2025/26; • Corporate Plan for consultation and finalisation of the Business Plan for 2025/26; • Final quarter completion; major focus on new build programme, completion of our planned maintenance programme; • Winter provision (SWEP) and ongoing work to increase temporary accommodation portfolio; • Working with DfC on early delivery priorities for the Housing Supply Strategy; • Awaiting decision on rent in January- rolling out rent decision; and • New Foundations programme. | |

Secretary

GL

Agreed:

- G Long suggested that it may be useful meeting some of the Housing Apprentices who have joined the Housing Executive through the new Foundations programme.
- G Long undertook to provide an update on the new build programmed schemes for the remainder of 2024/25 financial year, subject to additional monies being made available by Council area.

Councillor O'Dowd commended Housing Executive staff during the severe weather period and asked that her appreciation be noted.

Councillor Skinner welcomed the Housing Executive's commitment to a collaborative vision for tackling youth homelessness for young people leaving care and asked if it was possible to provide information digitally to these young people. J Blease explained that, as there are a number of people not on-line, this wouldn't be suitable and while the Housing Executive had a tenant portal only around one quarter of tenants had registered on it.

The Chair added that it might be helpful to reach out to communities through the Central Housing Forum and HCN.

The Chair thanked G Long for a very useful and informative update.

6. Presentation on Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039

The Chair welcomed David Polley & Christopher Mills who were giving a presentation on the Housing Supply Strategy.

Members noted that the Housing Supply Strategy 2024-39 was agreed and published by the Executive in December 2024.

The aim of this 15-year Strategy is to create a housing system that can deliver on housing needs and demands. This includes an ambition to deliver at least 100,000 homes and more, if needed, with one third of these being social homes.

The housing challenges faced are significant. Nearly 48,000 households are currently on the social housing waiting list, of which over 36,000 are in housing stress. With numbers increasing, it is clear this trend is not sustainable.

Housing affordability is a growing problem. Construction costs continue to increase, borrowing rates are as high, the private rented sector is under pressure and home energy costs are placing a disproportionate burden on household budgets.

A new approach is required and issues such as water infrastructure constraints, land-use planning, construction skills and land availability must be addressed.

Members noted the five main objectives of the Strategy, as follows:-

- Creating Affordable options;
- Prevention and Intervention;
- Improving Housing Quality and Safety;
- Better Places;
- A Fair Path to Low Carbon Housing.

D Polley explained that the ambition (it is not a target) is to create a housing system that can deliver at least 100,000 homes and more, if needed. One third of these will be social homes, alongside an increased supply of intermediate homes delivered throughout the strategy lifetime.

Members welcomed this Strategy and commended all the relevant government departments working collaboratively and the partnership approach taken in its development.

Responding to Councillor Cooper, D Polley confirmed that he hoped there would be an announcement on the Intermediate Rents policy soon.

Several Members expressed concern on the high rental costs charged by private landlords and who sets the amount, as well as how often a landlord can increase rents for a property. D Polley advised the amount charged is the responsibility of the landlord. He also undertook to provide an update on landlords increasing rent multiple times a year.

DP

Councillor Varsani reiterated her concerns on the water infrastructure that is prohibiting several schemes proceeding, and if they have to provide water plants, in turn adding an extra cost, of approximately £30,000, to each property within the scheme, which adds more pressure to housing stress. She suggested that a mapping system, from DfC, in relation to viable land and sites would be beneficial, in order to progress schemes etc.

D Polley agreed that the infrastructure in wastewater capacity is a challenge. He added that it is vital to work collaboratively with NI Water to help identify how best to facilitate housing growth and encourage Housing Associations / developers to engage early with NI Water, to identify and try to resolve any wastewater capacity issues.

Agreed:

- D Polley undertook to provide a link for the Ordnance Survey for Northern Ireland;
- An update on the introduction of the limitation of frequency of private rent increases to once a year (and the requirement for 3 months notice of rent increases).

DP

The Chair thanked David Polley and Christopher Mills for a very informative presentation.

DP

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| 7. | Any Other Business | 273 |
| 7.1 | Village Catalyst Grant Scheme Members noted the information provided by DfC. | |
| 8. | Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 13 th February 2025 at 10 am in the Mid Ulster Council offices, Magherafelt. | |

Meeting ended 12.05 pm.